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# How to unravel pathbreaking trajectories in the left-behind areas of Istanbul?

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## Abstract

Entrepreneurial and growth-oriented urban development models see left-behind areas as opportunities in need of redevelopment and upgrading, which can be subjected to speculation. We argue that pathbreaking trajectories emerge during this redevelopment process in distinct ways depending on the adaptive capacity of urban communities and flexibility in the planning practices. Focusing on the squatter areas in Istanbul, we map out pathbreaking trajectories in institutional and policy contexts and unravel societal responses. We conclude that the authoritarian entrepreneurial governance landscape operates in a dual context in which its impacts on re-politicization of urban communities and their engagement with policy networks can vary.

## KEYWORDS

pathbreaking trajectories, left-behind areas, urban regeneration, path analysis, Istanbul, entrepreneurial governance

## JEL CLASSIFICATION

R52, R580

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Economic growth-oriented urban development and entrepreneurial governance go hand in hand (Swyngedouw et al., 2002). As a result, left-behind areas turn into a playground for policymakers to collaborate with market parties. Left-behind areas, which are economically lagging and declining places in cities, have become the shorthand for key hotspots of disadvantage and discontent (MacKinnon et al., 2022). In growth-oriented and entrepreneurial urban development environments, they are seen as marginalized and abandoned places that are in need of redevelopment and upgrading, and can be subjected to speculative redevelopment. Property market actors are involved in the process of redevelopment of left-behind areas in collaboration with policymakers. The entrepreneurial governance landscape that reshapes these places is usually perceived as a process that accommodates the complex relationships between disadvantaged and discontent communities, opportunistic property market actors, and public organizations that are eager to upgrade these areas.

This article argues that the relationships that transform left-behind places do not contain such simplistic positions, but rather, display pathbreaking trajectories that are triggered by critical junctures of legal and institutional settings and community's adaptive capacity manifested in distinct ways in marginalized areas. Viewing trajectories from a historical institutionalism perspective that emphasizes path dependence allows us to analyze how past events and decisions can shape the course of political and social development (Choi et al., 2019). By identifying critical junctures, or moments when choices and decisions can significantly alter the path of development, we can deconstruct the trajectories of particular institutions or policies. This approach helps us to understand how specific historical events and contexts have influenced the development of current political and social structures. In this way, the historical institutionalism perspective allows us to examine the role of contingency, path dependency, and agency in shaping the outcomes of political and social processes that lead to pathbreaking trajectories (Choi et al., 2019; Sorensen, 2015; Taylor, 2013). We aim to operationalize these trajectories with path analysis to unravel unexpectedness(es) in the regeneration of left-behind areas and to delineate the emerging transformation patterns in Istanbul at large.

Throughout Turkey's history, the state has had a significant influence on the economy, but the approach to economic development has changed from managerial import-substitution industrialization to policies focused on entrepreneurial growth and state intervention with an authoritarian perspective. In this authoritarian entrepreneurial model, state organizations often use regulatory powers to bypass decisions of democratically elected local authorities (Baser & Öztürk, 2017). Within this framework, planning regulations, often manipulated by by-laws and acts that are issued by the state apparatus, enable the transformation of left-behind and marginalized areas into upmarket residential projects. In authoritarian regimes, there is an expected trajectory in which people are suppressed and crushed under top-down forces. While urban movements emerge as a response to this suppression, their voices are often silenced (Eraydin & Taşan-Kok, 2014). However, transformative practices also emerge in institutional contexts in which there is no room for social innovation (Arslanalp & Deniz Erkmén, 2020; Evans, 2019; Owen, 2020). As we will illustrate, these practices can arise as a result of self-organization capacity of urban communities, which is nurtured by conflicts resulting from flexible planning practices, even under the presence of overregulated and interventionist state regimes such as in Turkey. To demonstrate how pathbreaking trajectories operated in the left-behind areas of Istanbul, we chose two large-scale urban regeneration initiatives, namely Derbent and Fikirtepe. These squatter areas provide a great laboratory to study the unexpected consequences of top-down and market-driven policy environments due in particular to their divergent self-organization capacity (Eckstein, 1990; Melese, 2004).

Several scholars studied how the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) government in Turkey has implemented centralized decision-making mechanisms and changes in the legal framework, resulting in authoritarian neoliberalism and the suppression of local actors (Alici, 2021; Ergenc & Yuksekkaya, 2022; Tansel, 2020). Though there were earlier attempts at decentralization, they were ineffective (Koyuncu & Sertesén, 2012), and the concentration of power in the hands of a few<sup>1</sup> has undermined democracy and eroded civil society (Tansel, 2020). From this

<sup>1</sup><https://haber.sol.org.tr/devlet-ve-siyaset/sozde-yerellesme-rantta-merkezilesme-haberi-14560>.



point forth, this research addresses a gap in the literature regarding how trajectories of change operate in different contexts beyond the centralization trajectory, by path analysis. It focuses on understanding how different urban settings experience pathbreaking trajectories in the face of the state's authoritarian turn, particularly in left-behind areas. Additionally, the research demonstrates that entrepreneurial governance landscape has dual impacts on re-politicization and engagement with policy networks.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: the literature discussion examines the complex and interdependent institutional processes and urban regimes that shape urban regeneration in left-behind areas. It proposes using path analysis to understand critical junctures and trajectories in these transformation processes. Moving on from this, the paper first analyzes the urban development trajectory of Istanbul in light of large-scale urban transformation projects. In doing so, it explores legal and institutional settings, critical junctures created by these settings by either accelerating or decelerating, and pathbreaking trajectories as a consequence of junctures' gradual development and unexpected events. It then applies this analytical framework to the Derbent and Fikirtepe cases to investigate how these trajectories of change have been navigating in different urban settings. Lastly, the paper concludes by shedding light on how pathbreaking trajectories unfold with their distinctiveness in left-behind and marginalized areas.

## 2 | UNRAVELING THE UNEXPECTEDNESS IN URBAN REGENERATION

While policymakers play a significant role in shaping urban development, they also navigate a complex landscape that includes competing interests. Central and local governments play an important role in defining the institutional frameworks of land and property development, but they also contain complex interdependencies with the private sector and communities. The complex interdependencies refer to socio-spatial practices defined through relational embeddedness and shifting positionality within a broader, interscalar framework of patterns where relationships exist (Brenner, 2019). The interdependencies bring about changes in the way cities are transformed, which involves a mixture of larger political and economic influences as well as smaller-scale processes of regeneration at the local level.

### 2.1 | Understanding urban regeneration through macro-institutional shifts

Previous studies on path analysis enable us to understand these categories of shifts that enable the study of complex trajectories of change that lead to unexpected consequences or changes in cities. These studies chart the trajectories of change by examining contingent events that define creative and destructive moments in cities within the framework of hybrid neoliberal institutional transformations (Golubchikov et al., 2014; Rezafar & Turk, 2022). These creative and destructive moments define shifts that are instigated by macro-institutional transformations. Neoliberalization brings in several macro-institutional transformations that lead to urban scale changes. We collected them under three general groups, which also helped us to frame our analysis (see Table 2), namely: shift from managerial to entrepreneurial governance; shift from planning to spatial governance; and shift from top-down to bottom-up networks.

The transition from a managerial to an entrepreneurial urban governance system is linked to the shift from welfare to neoliberal forms of state. This transformation decentralized the delivery of public services and responsibilities through urban governance practices that are driven by what Harvey (1989) calls 'mechanisms of inter-urban competition.' Seeing urban governance as a process of blending and coordinating public and private interests, Pierre (1999: 374) refers to corporatist and pro-growth models of governance that are based on interactions and partnerships between public and private sector actors as an entrepreneurial shift in governance (ibid.). In this form of urban planning, property- or opportunity-driven forms of urban development become the main source of financing



urban regeneration projects, through diverse forms of partnerships, property investment, and development formulations, with the expectation that they will lead to social change (Swyngedouw et al., 2002). Criticizing this form of shift from plan-led to property-led forms of urban development, some scholars argue that planning practices have evolved from trying to rigidly define and control spatial development to spatial governance practices that enable adopting flexible and strategic mechanisms that enable the accumulation of spatial developments, highlighting the importance of interpreting these shifts through dynamic spatial governance landscapes (Brenner & Schmid, 2015; Healey, 2006). These approaches enable for the better understanding of complex urban regeneration processes that reshape urban space through property-led strategies, pointing out a shift from planning to neoliberal spatial governance (Allmendinger, 2016; Allmendinger & Haughton, 2013) that highlights the shift from a tradition of centralized and top-down plan-making to more fragmented and private interest-driven forms of planning. In this form of planning, spatial governance structures allow for projects to flourish through flexible and adaptive processes (Özogul, 2019). As we will provide evidence for in our analysis, left-behind areas that are subject to urban regeneration processes provide an interesting laboratory not only to see these transformations and their background, but also to enable us to establish the pathbreaking trajectories that they formulate. Observing these institutional shifts in governance and planning systems at a macro level, we can also see that agency plays a significant role in these transformative processes. Hence, as the third layer of frame of analysis, we see the shift from top-down to bottom-up networks as a crucial element in reengaging urban residents in this property-driven and entrepreneurial planning environment. This process, as we will show later in the case of Istanbul, also has a re-politicizing effect, as experienced in diverse contexts including authoritarian and top-down urban governance models such as China (Li & Wu, 2012), or in more democratic neoliberal governance contexts such as Germany (Leitheiser & Follmann, 2020).

## 2.2 | Understanding unexpectedness in left-behind areas

Recently, academic studies have put more emphasis on ‘left-behind areas’ that are characterized by high vacancy rates, a lack of a property market, and diminished authority in urban land (Herbert, 2018). Some others refer to the ‘deliberate speculation’ (Horn, 2022) on the left-behind areas in valuable locations by holding prime sites off the market in anticipation of future appreciation, and creating an artificial scarcity of land available for development (Rybeck, 2020). The ‘soft’ characteristics of these spaces are also highlighted for their existence outside, alongside, or in-between the formal statutory scales of governance (Haughton et al., 2013). Some others (Leitner et al., 2022) see these spaces as a part of the land development system.

Left-behind areas are compelling subjects of study due to the emergence of unexpected trends that forge pathbreaking trajectories, which are defined by intricate narratives that have been underscored by the scholarship mentioned earlier. For instance, it is noted that people who live in these areas may turn them into opportunity zones by simply following the formal regulations (Hegazy, 2016; Parsa et al., 2011). In addition, there are social movements initiated by marginalized and oppressed residents that break the trajectory of oppression and claim rights to the city (Medrado et al., 2020). Residents organize themselves to deal with the injustices they face while the official planning and zoning processes continue simultaneously, making it a complex and chaotic experience to follow. All these examples indicate that urban regeneration in left-behind areas does not follow a straightforward, linear path. Instead, it involves complex narratives and critical junctures. This article goes beyond the historical institutionalist perspective that stresses how the past and path dependency shape current settings, and delves into on what basis this analysis can be deepened and how pathbreaking trajectories can help in this deeper reading.

Some scholars suggest following ‘regime analysis’ to investigate the complex and chaotic processes in left-behind areas as governance regimes (Yung & Sun, 2020). Urban regimes refer to the informal agreements and relations that enable public entities and private companies, as well as communities, to work in conjunction to formulate and execute decisions (Strom & Mollenkopf, 2007). In Stone’s (1989) formulation, the central elements of the urban regime concept are agenda setting, coalition building, resource mobilization, and schemes of cooperation.



Considering these aspects, the regime analysis perceives urban regimes as cooperative structures through which local governments and private actors unite to establish the ability to govern fragmented power relations. Because of the resources it controls, the private sector, especially the property industry, is a key participant in these coalitions (Mossberger & Stoker, 2001).

### 2.3 | Path analysis as a tool to unravel unexpectedness in urban regeneration

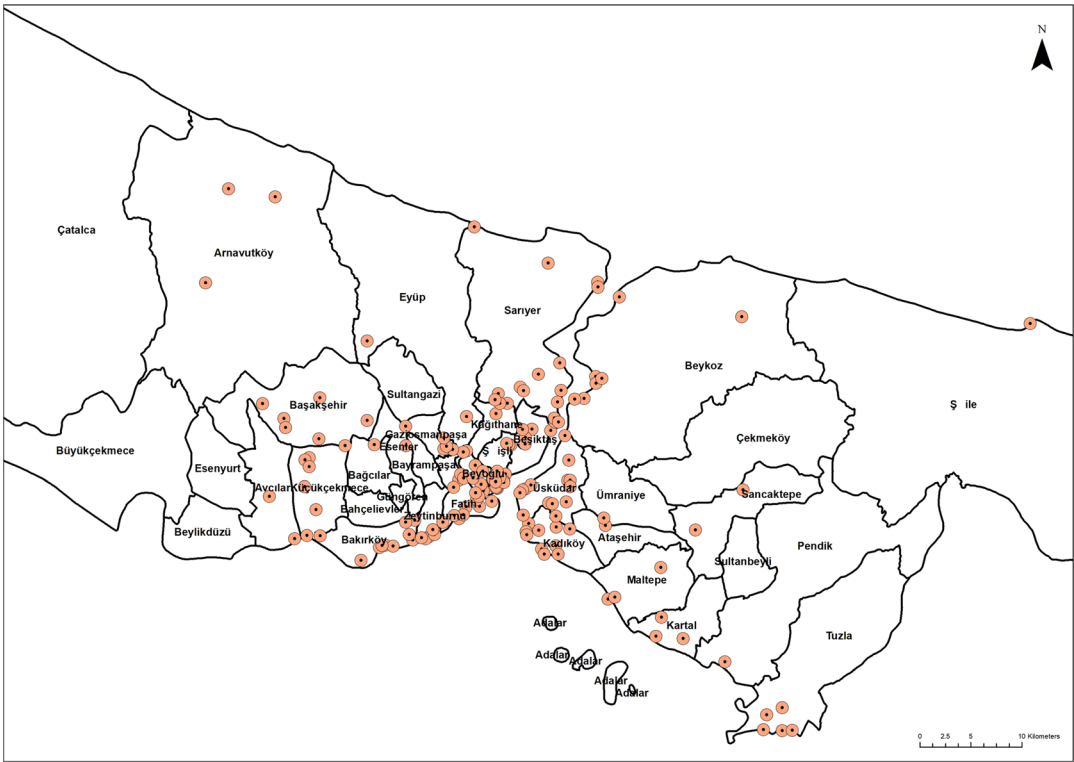
Path analysis, which is an analytical tool to investigate the trajectories of exogenous contingent events that are defined by destructive and creative moments (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007; Uyttebrouck et al., 2022), operationalizes regime analysis by adding useful tools to enable temporal dimensions. Connecting path and regime analysis enables us to understand the institutional transformations not only through time, but also by considering wider macro-economic or political factors and formal and informal relations. The events that occur in different time periods are connected by these wider societal processes, which ultimately define critical junctures (Sorensen, 2015, 2022). Path dependence can lead to divergence in urban transformation processes in relation to wider hybrid neoliberal transformations (Tasan-Kok, 2015) and to suboptimal development patterns as well (Hensley et al., 2014). As our analysis will illustrate later, linking regime and path analysis enables the reading of pathbreaking trajectories within the context that shapes the relations between diverse actors, and enables the reading of critical junctures through multiple angles.

Studying urban regeneration in left-behind areas necessitates methods and tools to understand complex transformation processes, as it is difficult to prepare for, initiate, and steer a path-deviant transformation of urban areas (Wolfram, 2019). There is a lack of capacity to make urban regeneration approaches transformative, which suggests that path dependencies can make it difficult for urban regeneration approaches to become transformative. However, there is a discursive path dependency in urban regeneration, suggesting that some policies are more likely to continue being used even if they are not effective (Matthews, 2010). Reading unexpected events, occurrences, or trajectories, which we define as critical junctures, through path analysis helps to understand the discursive, complex interdependencies that shape regimes established by formal efforts of local and national policymakers, private companies, and the residents' self-organized actions in rapidly changing transformation areas.

Studying left-behind areas in a country with an authoritarian regime adds new dimensions to the discussion on urban regeneration, as regimes that form urban regeneration coalitions and the trajectories of change show extreme cases of critical juncture points, making them easier to map. Following the idea of 'travelling concepts' (Robinson, 2011), that is, that concepts might work in different situations, we can look to the authoritarian regimes of urban development as experienced in Istanbul, and by deconstructing their pathbreaking trajectories we can inform as to how unexpected results may occur in urban regeneration in general. It is surprising, as we will show in the following section, that despite being centralized and authoritarian, the flexible planning approaches within this regime have facilitated entrepreneurial tendencies, which in turn have allowed certain communities to become re-politicized even under such circumstances. Later on, as presented in Table 2, it becomes apparent that Turkey's urban regeneration trajectories in left-behind areas were set in motion by a series of institutional transformations that reflect the shifts we have summarized in this section.

## 3 | METHODS AND CASE SELECTION

This study employs path analysis combined with an analytical framework also informed by 'regime analysis' to examine the emergence of pathbreaking trajectories in left-behind areas of Istanbul. In Turkey the central government has been the key actor that shaped urban development with its pro-growth development agenda after the 2000s (Erkut & Sezgin, 2014). To read the complex governance landscape and decipher the complex relationships, we run



**FIGURE 1** Spatial sprawl of ‘Mega’ practices in Istanbul (Source: Author creation based on fieldwork conducted by Ebru Kurt Özman in Istanbul in 2019).

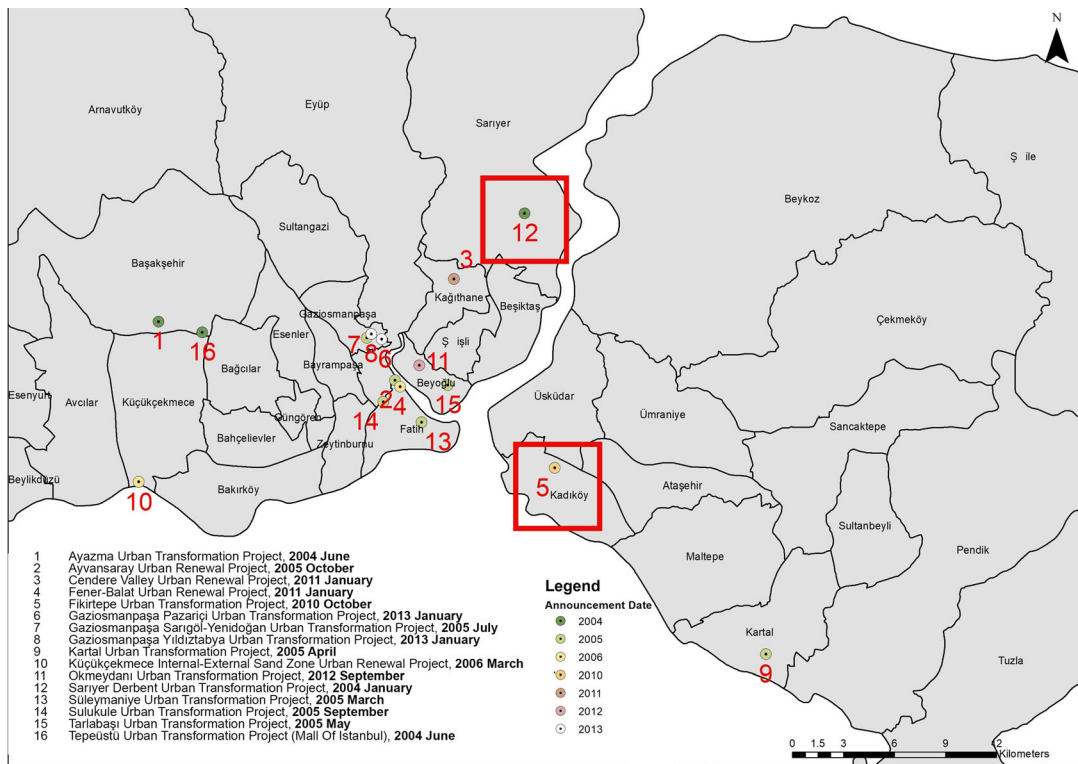
our analysis in two stages: first, running path analysis to understand the legal and institutional urban development strategy of Istanbul, and second, in-depth analysis of pathbreaking trajectories of selected case studies where we can analyze the regimes that were shaped by agreements, regulations, and other forms of relations that enable public and private organizations, as well as communities, to work in conjunction and formulate and execute decisions.

A deductive approach with three steps was followed to select case studies. First, all large-scale projects in Istanbul were mapped (Figure 1) by using the data drawn from the ‘mega’ projects database<sup>2</sup> created by Istanbul Association of Architects in Private Practice (IstanbulSMD). A total of 128 large-scale projects in the Istanbul city region were recorded, whose project types vary from transportation to land reclamation and so on. Figure 1 shows how megaprojects sprawled over the city and beyond its boundaries. While their announcement to the public dates to the years between 2004 and 2013, the vast majority of these projects are still ongoing. They are not only ‘large’ in size, but they also change natural habitats, built environments, and socioeconomic structures in the city by ‘bulldozing’ the existing urban tissue.

Megaprojects have significant impacts on the urban environment due to their complexity, high investment costs, long-time timelines, and involvement of multiple stakeholders. These factors create risks, uncertainties, and conflicts among social groups, political interests, and market forces (Machiels et al., 2021). However, comprehending the chaotic processes that accommodate many trajectories requires multiple elaborations. Understanding urban transformations in Istanbul is complicated, not only because it is a megacity with a complex social, political, and economic

<sup>2</sup><https://en.megaprojeleristanbul.com>.





**FIGURE 2** ‘Mega’ urban regeneration in Istanbul by year (Source: Author creation based on fieldwork conducted by Ebru Kurt Özman in Istanbul in 2019).

structure, but also because it is rife with political conflicts created by the state’s interventionist attitude in urban development through urban megaprojects using its regulatory powers.

In the second step of case selection, we searched for regeneration initiatives out of 128 projects. There were a total of 16 in number that were categorized in the database under ‘urban transformation’ project type (see Figure 2). In the first stage of our analysis, we run path-based analytical framework for these 16 large-scale urban regeneration initiatives so as to understand legal and institutional urban development strategies of Istanbul.

In the final step of case selection, we examined these 16 projects to identify the ‘left-behind’ areas where we can analyze relevant trajectories. As indicated in Table 1, we created a framework where we studied all 16 projects in light of location, time period of development, legislative basis, and transformation frame.<sup>3</sup> After conducting both desk research and fieldwork in project areas, we determined that the Derbent and Fikirtepe cases (numbers 5 and 12 in Figure 2) are the most relevant due to their time period, legislative diversity, and transformation framework (selected cases in bold in Table 1).

Although the narrative of the development trajectory may seem linear with various turning points, this article emphasizes that institutional transformations identify critical junctures that can lead to pathbreaking events. Through critical junctures, contingent events, and pull and push factors, these trajectories are broken into new trajectories (Sorensen, 2015, 2022; Uyttebrouck et al., 2022). The cases we selected demonstrate that residents are being pushed around and (some) evacuated by power dynamics that aim to suppress. At the same time, these groups had the capacity to self-organize and defend themselves, breaking the trajectory of suppression, and though not exactly

<sup>3</sup>Transformation frame refers to the land use function within which urban regeneration initiatives occur.





**TABLE 1** 'Mega' regeneration initiatives in Istanbul and case selection.

URBAN REGENERATION PROJECTS	LOCATION		TIME-PERIOD		LEGISLATION				TRANSFORMATION FRAME				
	Europe	Asia	2000-2010	2010 and after 2010	6306 <sup>1</sup>	5366 <sup>2</sup>	5393 <sup>3</sup>	3194 <sup>4</sup>	4046 <sup>5</sup>	Historical Areas	Gecekondu Areas	Brownfield Areas	Public Space / Waterfront
Sarıyer Derbent	X		X		X						X		
Ayazma-Tepeüstü													
Süleymaniye													
Kartal													
Tarlabaşı													
Sulukule													
Ayvansaray													
Küçükçekmece Internal-External Sand Zone													
Fener-Balat													
<b>Fikirtepe</b>		X		X	X						X		
Cendere Valley													
Okmeydanı													
Gaziosmanpaşa													
Haliç Port (Haliç Yacht Port and Complex Project)													

<sup>a</sup>The Disaster Law No. 6306.

<sup>b</sup>The Law on Protection and Usage of Historical and Cultural Immovable Assets of by Renewal Law No. 5366.

<sup>c</sup>The Municipality Law No. 5393.

<sup>d</sup>The Zoning Law No. 3194.

<sup>e</sup>The Law on Privatisation No. 4046.



as desired, it was not completely removed from their wishes either. We use ‘critical junctures’, as defined by Sorensen (2015), to illustrate and explain pathbreaking processes. Critical junctures refer to the moments of major change when new institutions are established or existing ones are restructured through major regulatory changes (Sorensen, 2015). In other words, a path-based approach allows us to see that different outcomes resulted through differently broken trajectories. To better examine this nonlinear development process, it is also important to adopt a deterministic perspective, emphasizing the role of conditions and constraints in shaping the course of events and outcomes.

## 4 | ANALYSIS OF PATHBREAKING TRAJECTORIES IN ISTANBUL’S URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Several scholars studied the centralized decision-making mechanisms and authoritarian trends in Turkish cities. Detailed analysis show how the ruling AKP government has restructured the state in a way that reproduces authoritarian neoliberalism through centralized decision-making processes and changes in the legal framework of metropolitan municipalities, leading to the marginalization and suppression of local actors (Alici, 2021; Ergenc & Yuksekkaya, 2022; Tansel, 2020). Despite being marginalized and constrained by regulations that circumvented their jurisdiction, local governments and communities were still engaged in decision-making processes, which at times resulted in favorable outcomes, albeit with occasional setbacks.

As explained above, within this context, we operationalize how pathbreaking trajectories emerge during this redevelopment process firstly by path analysis to understand Istanbul’s urban development strategy and secondly by analyzing case studies on regeneration processes by public and private organizations and communities to understand the pathbreaking trajectories in these left-behind areas.

### 4.1 | Operationalizing path analysis to delineate transformation patterns in Istanbul

Istanbul’s urbanization trends began in the 1950s, when it was among the few metropolitan cities that offered job opportunities for people from impoverished regions who were searching for a better life. Due to the lack of appropriate housing stock and policy measures to accommodate them, a massive internal migration from rural to urban areas gave rise to informal housing processes in large cities (Bozdoğan, 2018). The military coup of 1980 marked a turning point by establishing a political and economic climate that aligned with the tenets of neoliberalism. State-controlled economic policies up to the 1980s led to high inflation, resulting in widespread poverty and a culture of economic expansion and consumption (Genç, 2022). After the adoption of neoliberal policies in the 1980s, the country transitioned toward a culture of urban development that heavily relied on market forces. In 1999, a catastrophic earthquake hit the Izmit province of Turkey, causing significant loss of life and leading to an economic crash in subsequent years. This unexpected destructive moment has broken a new path forward. After the earthquake, the AKP was elected as the ruling party in 2002. The party’s agenda aimed to address people’s despair and apprehension following the earthquake by promoting economic growth, social equality, and justice. The AKP subsequently implemented urban regeneration as a government policy, developing the legal and institutional framework required for large-scale regeneration that was previously lacking (Kuyucu, 2022; Özden, 2010). This new political era also marks the beginning of the 20-year development trajectory of urban regeneration analyzed in this article.

To unveil pathbreaking trajectories, a path analysis framework has been created by identifying the critical junctures (Sorensen, 2015, 2022) through scrutinizing the institutional transformations in Istanbul’s urban regeneration landscape. Economic growth-oriented urban development models lead to shifts in planning, governing, and networks. To realize these shifts, existing legislation and institutions are either transformed or newly established. Critical junctures mark the profound transformation occurrences as a consequence of the establishment of new institutions



(Sorensen, 2015, 2022). In other words, this institutional restructuring creates critical junctures whose gradual impacts (either accelerating or decelerating) may cause a trajectory to change or to break. Critical junctures themselves may not necessarily trigger a trajectory. Unexpected events are also decisive herein, as we present in the analysis of Derbent and Fikirtepe. Figure 3 shows how critical junctures defined by institutional transformations perform an unexpected trend in a growth-oriented urban development model due to pathbreaking trajectories.

What is seen in Figure 3 is based on a quantitative scoring method created by considering the 'creative' or 'destructive' impacts<sup>4</sup> of large-scale regeneration projects and relevant institutional regulations. Accordingly, we ran the analysis over two basic trajectories: expected and unexpected development trajectories. The expected path reflects a scenario in which all large-scale regeneration projects and relevant institutional regulations end up with creative impacts in the development trajectory. Furthermore, the unexpected trajectory demonstrates the realized impacts of the projects and regulations by considering critical junctures as well as the unexpected creative and destructive impacts of centralization, Gezi Park protests, and presidentialism. Additionally, the orange dotted line shows the moving average trendline of the unexpected trajectory, which highlights how unexpectedness itself creates a divergent path from its own average trend. The gray zone accommodates the trajectories that clarify the gap between the expected and unexpected development paths, in other words, pathbreaking trajectories. Table 2 summarizes the institutional transformations moving on from the shifts in planning, governing, and networks that resulted from the economic growth-oriented urban development model. Furthermore, it provides critical junctures that lead to pathbreaking trajectories, and presents the detailed characteristics of these development trajectories in Istanbul at large, and in the two case studies, the left-behind areas of Sariyer Derbent and Fikirtepe.

Although many projects have previously been declared as development areas in local land use plans, as in Fikirtepe and Derbent (or hints to interventions in particular areas taking place in upper-scale zoning/master plans), these large-scale renewal projects (16 projects in total) were announced to the public after 2000 and started soon after. Considering the AKP government's neoliberal agenda, these projects represented 'engines of growth' for the city and the government itself owing to their state-led and private-sector-driven implementation models.

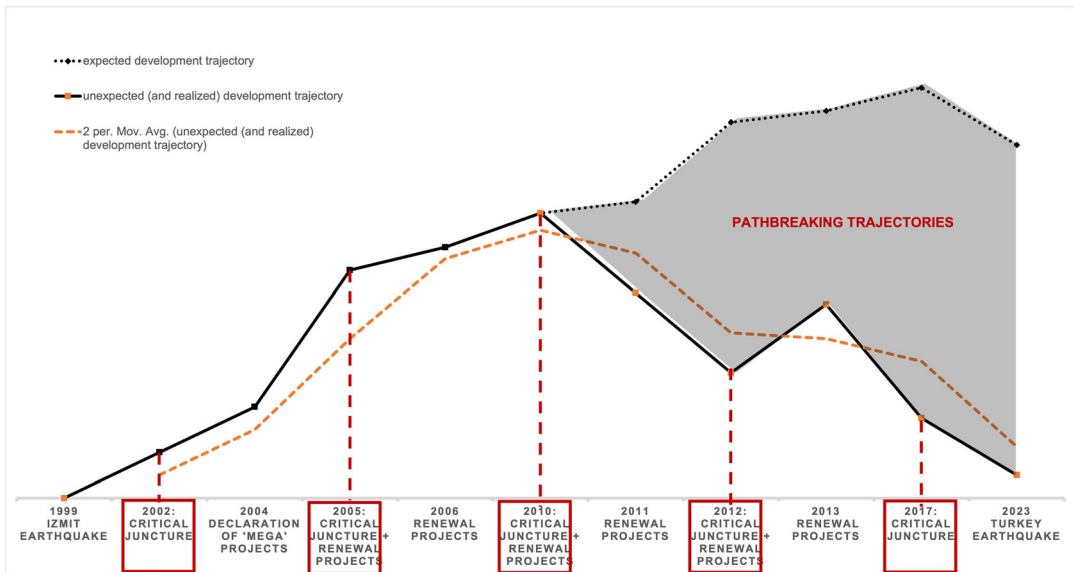
Starting from the very beginning of its rule, the government has had an entrepreneurial identity and has acted through the property market. The government was quick to create Turkey's urban transformation framework, which did not exist before (Kuyucu, 2018; Özden, 2010), and started to invent regulations and institutions to accelerate processes, and projects thus grew in number. In the light of the government's neoliberal agenda, 2005 stands as a critical juncture, with the establishment of two major legal regulations and the restructuring of a key institution just before. The state-owned Turkish Mass Housing Development Administration (TOKİ) is the major institution that was completely restructured in-line with the government's agenda and was actively authorized in 2005. Its mission transformed into acting through the market as a property market actor rather than its purpose when founded in 1984, that is, producing affordable housing.

Law no. 5366<sup>5</sup> followed as one of the legislations in question. It grants broad authority to municipalities to determine renewal areas and implement projects (with property market actors) in historical protection areas (Tarakçı & Türk, 2021). On the basis of Law no. 5366, the renewal of historical areas of Süleymaniye, Tarlabası, Sulukule, Ayyansaray, and Fener-Balat (and many others with diverse project area sizes and locations) has legally started. This law, and the projects carried out within its framework, have been discussed extensively, specifically over the concepts of displacement, land speculation, and gentrification (Durusoy Özmen & Can, 2018). Another critical law passed in 2005 assigning municipalities as the principal implementing actors (together with TOKİ) of urban regeneration.

Municipalities Law no. 5393 has been revised many times since. Ayazma-Tepeüstü, Fikirtepe, and Cendere Valley projects were started within this same legal framework, albeit with different transformation frames. The Fikirtepe project has morphed into a complicated long-lasting case, and with a newly invented legal framework as well. Even

<sup>4</sup>'Creative' and 'destructive' impacts are used to describe the influence of particular moments that accelerate or decelerate development in the trajectory.

<sup>5</sup>The Law on Protection and Usage of Historical and Cultural Immovable Assets of by Renewal Law no. 5366.



**FIGURE 3** Istanbul's urban development trajectory in light of 'mega' regeneration (Source: Author creation based on desk research conducted by Ebru Kurt Özman in 2023).

after the amendment to Law no. 5393 in 2010, the Ayazma-Tepeüstü and Cendere Valley projects were highly criticized from a public interest perspective, and its implementations were contested (Özalp & Erkut, 2016). The critical juncture of 2005 points out a twofold transformation of legal and institutional processes; first, regarding how the Turkish planning system shifted to a project-based approach to ease the mushrooming of urban projects' implementations – accordingly, this prioritization has seen a radical legal restructuring with inconsistencies – and second, transformation has shifted the role of the state to an entrepreneurial entity, which led the state to be a very market-like actor in urban development processes.

As of 2010, there had already been three occasions of major changes, making 2012 a critical juncture. It started with an up-scaling of governance, and then escalated to centralization. With the amendment to Law no. 5393, the authority designating renewal zones was transferred to metropolitan municipalities at upper-scale local administrations from lower-level district municipalities (Law no. 5998). These authority transfers, and their uncertainties, created controversial processes for projects that had already started, for instance, the Ayazma-Tepeüstü and Cendere Valley projects. Given the critical juncture in Turkey's path-dependent urban development trajectory in 2012, the institutional setting that was established just before it is more understandable. In 2011, a dominant authority armed with powers in every phase of planning and implementation, the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation, was established (renamed to the Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change in 2021). It was an explicitly ground making move toward a more centralized urban policy.

In 2012, Disaster Law no. 6306 was enacted in Turkey with the purpose of dealing with natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, etc. However, it has also been used as a legal tool to enable two centralized institutions, the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation and TOKI, to merge into one and become the sole authority for interventions (Güzey, 2016). Additionally, the authorities have used the law's provision for designating 'disaster' areas at their discretion. This has facilitated several projects, including the Derbent and Gaziosmanpaşa urban transformations (three projects), as well as Fikirtepe and Okmeydanı. For example, the stalled processes in Derbent and Fikirtepe were restarted using this law, which will be detailed in the following chapter. Notably, these large-scale regeneration projects focusing on *gecekondu*, or squatter areas, require specific regulatory frameworks for property rights. The Disaster Law also brings some compulsory 'flexibilities' in property rights.



TABLE 2 Path analysis of the development trajectories in urban regeneration projects.

Institutional transformations	'Mega' urban regeneration in Istanbul	Sarıyer Derbent urban regeneration project	Fikirtepe urban regeneration project
<p>1. Shift from managerial to entrepreneurial governance</p> <p>State-led (and private-sector-driven) urban development.</p> <p>The populist authoritarian turn.</p> <p>An authoritarian approach to entrepreneurial governance.</p> <p>Authoritarian entrepreneurialism.</p>	<p><b>Location</b></p> <p>Observing the spatial distribution of urban transformation projects by year, the projects are concentrated on the European side and in the districts of Fatih, Beyoğlu, and Gaziosmanpaşa. These projects are large-scale urban interventions that spread across the city's peripheries.</p> <p>Projects focusing on the transformation of historical areas are concentrated in the district of Fatih on the historical peninsula.</p> <p><b>Time period</b></p> <p>All large-scale ('mega') urban regeneration initiatives (16 projects in total) were announced to the public after 2000 and have commenced.</p>	<p><b>Entrepreneurial governance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* 2004: Declaration of the neighborhood as an urban regeneration area by the Sarıyer Municipality (local government).</li> </ul> <p>Authoritarian interventions of the entrepreneurial state:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* 2006: First authoritarian intervention into the neighborhood to demolish the association building that was built by the neighborhoods (Ertbaş &amp; Kızılay, 2015).</li> <li>* 2011: Another police intervention during the demolition of the buildings purchased by the Atatürk Building Society.</li> </ul> <p>Authoritarian entrepreneurialism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* 2013: The state's entrepreneurial moves to promote this project at the MİPİM real estate exhibition held in France.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Entrepreneurial governance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* 2005: Designation of the district as a 'special project area.'</li> <li>* 2007: Adoption of the district as an urban transformation area with a planned amendment.</li> <li>* 2010: Announcement of the transformation project to the public by Mayor Kadir Topbaş, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İMM) Zoning plan report related to region between Kadıköy center, Istanbul (2005)</li> </ul> <p>State entrepreneurialism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Deactivation of the local government in the district (Kadıköy Municipality) in the planning authority.</li> <li>* Private sector led urban development.</li> </ul> <p>Up-scaling governance moves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Declaration of the neighborhood as a 'risky area' by the Ministry in 2013.</li> <li>* 'Urgent expropriation' (Kuyucu, 2022)</li> </ul>
<p>2. Shift from planning to spatial governance</p> <p>Overregulated urban transformation policy.</p> <p>Flexibility in regulatory sources on urban transformation initiatives.</p>	<p><b>Legislation</b></p> <p>The legal basis of the vast majority of urban transformation projects (12 projects out of 16) is based on Renewal Law no. 5366 (Durusoy Özmen &amp; Can, 2018; Tarakçı &amp; Türk, 2021) and Transformation Law no. 6306 (Güzey, 2016; Tarakçı &amp; Türk, 2020).</p> <p>Legal regulations that came into force in this process boosted 'neoliberal urbanization' by initiating/facilitating a large number of large-scale ('mega') projects.</p>	<p>Joint transformation plan of the İMM and the Sarıyer Municipality in 2005</p> <p>2009: Cancellation of the joint project by newly selected local government.</p> <p>Piecemeal revisions in legal regulations and overregulation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* An amendment to Municipality Law 5393 in 2010: 'local municipality' authority to designate renewal zone was transferred to the upper-scale administrations (metropolitan municipalities).</li> <li>* 2011: Establishment of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation.</li> </ul>	<p>exclusion of the Kadıköy Municipality (local administration) from the renewal process at the very beginning.</p> <p>Flexible spatial planning in Fikirtepe through plan notes instead of rigid zoning plans (Tarakçı &amp; Türk, 2018, 2020)</p> <p>Shift from negotiation-oriented process to persuasion-oriented ones.</p> <p>Monitoring-based strategy of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İMM) as the main implementing actor (Türk et al., 2020)</p> <p>Disaster Law and the 'urgent expropriation' source.</p>

(Continues)



TABLE 2 (Continued)

Institutional transformations	'Mega' urban regeneration in Istanbul	Sarıyer Derbent urban regeneration project	Fikirtepe urban regeneration project
<p>3. Shift from top-down to re-politicized networks.</p> <p>Bottom-up networks</p> <p>Self-organization capacity.</p> <p>Institutionalization of self-organization.</p>	<p><b>Transformation frame</b></p> <p>The transformation created by the neoliberal process in the urban areas/transformation geography of Istanbul took place in the following transformational frames:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Renewal of housing areas, historical areas, and <i>gecekondu</i>/squatter areas.</li> <li>2. Renewal of brownfield areas.</li> <li>3. Renewal of public space/waterfront regeneration.</li> </ol> <p>Projects focusing on the transformation of <i>gecekondu</i>/squatter areas are concentrated in various districts such as Sarıyer, Başakşehir-Küçükçekmece, Kadıköy, and Gaziosmanpaşa (Özalp &amp; Erkut, 2016).</p>	<p>* Bypassing local authorities through centralization instruments (Baser &amp; Öztürk, 2017; Tasan-Kok, 2015)</p> <p>Centralization and flexibilities</p> <p>*2012: Disaster Law 6306.</p> <p>* Amendment to the Disaster Law, expanding of the 'risky area' definition (Tarakçı &amp; Türk, 2020).</p>	<p>Individual case-based opposition: e.g., 'single house.'</p> <p>Promise of resolution rather than action: the Fikirtepe Summits organized by the government to meet residents to discuss the problems of the proposed solutions (the 2nd Fikirtepe Summit organized by the government)</p> <p>Long-delayed self-organization: Neighborhood associations: Fikentder, Fidem, Fikirder, and Yenifikirder (Ay &amp; Penpecioglu, 2022)</p>

Source: Author creation based on desk research conducted by Ebru Kurt Ozman in 2022.



According to this law, a two-thirds majority of landowners is considered ‘sufficient’ for decision-making, and if this is not met, urgent expropriation may be used in the public interest (Tarakçı & Türk, 2020). Metropolitan Municipality Law no. 6360, passed in 2012, is not directly related to urban transformation but instead contributes to centralization by removing all lower-level district municipalities. This law played a role in legitimizing the critical intersection/juncture of 2012.

The contingent events that made 2012 a critical juncture created institutional transformations across three dimensions. Firstly, the planning regime was transformed into a project-based approach within the events between 2002 and 2005. However, as of 2005 and afterward, this approach became overregulated by a bunch of laws and regulations that also created incredible flexibilities for piecemeal implementations (Koramaz et al., 2018). This overregulation ended up causing legal and institutional conflicts (Kuyucu, 2018; Tarakçı & Türk, 2021). Secondly, the entrepreneurial role of the state went far beyond this, and it took an authoritarian approach by harnessing its self-made regulations, stressing an aggressive centralization as of 2010, both legally and institutionally. Thirdly, these two major transformations, specifically state entrepreneurialism, accordingly led to escalated authoritarian interventions of the state-led urban movements all over the country (Eraydın & Taşan-Kok, 2014).

Following the critical juncture in 2012, a shocking (specifically from the state’s end) and forceful pathbreaking trajectory took place in 2013 – the so-called Gezi Park protests. This urban movement, which was basically a public space defense struggle, was subjected to disproportionate use of police force against marchers. Although it was associated with different causalities by the mainstream, it was essentially a protest against the authoritarian interventions of the state-led urban movements.

The Gezi Park protests were explicitly fueled by small but accumulated moments (turning points) over time. One recent example of this is seen in the transformation of the *gecekondu*/squatter areas in the Okmeydanı Project. The protest here started as an urban demonstration but grew into a larger urban opposition with cases such as Derbent and Fikirtepe. Furthermore, the presidential system that was introduced in 2017 and began being implemented in 2018 not only empowered the authoritarian entrepreneurialism of the state, but also innovated the self-organization of the residents.

## 4.2 | Pathbreaking trajectories for ‘left-behind’ areas: the Derbent and Fikirtepe urban transformations

The scrutinization of the 20-year development trajectory of Istanbul’s urban renewal draws a clear picture in addition to unraveling recently emerged (transformed) institutional settings. These critical junctures do not necessarily create breaking points for every single large-scale urban transformation project. However, in the cases of Sariyer Derbent and Fikirtepe, they manifest in distinct ways depending on how public and private organizations and communities in these areas respond. We deconstruct three pathbreaking trajectories in these cases in light of institutional and societal impacts and responses: (1) authoritarian entrepreneurial governance; (2) overregulated and flexible urban planning trajectory; and (3) institutionalization of self-organization.

### 4.2.1 | Authoritarian entrepreneurial governance

The entrepreneurial path in Turkey began in the 1980s and accelerated in the 1990s with the rise of neoliberalism and populist discourses. However, the issue of *gecekondu*/squatters, which has been a driving force behind sociopolitical transformation for decades, dates back to the 1950s, long before the rise of neoliberalism and entrepreneurialism. These informal areas emerged as a result of internal migration from rural to urban areas, providing shelter to the newcomers to large cities, who lacked access to formal housing. Despite their informality, the administration tolerated and even encouraged the proliferation of these settlements due to the advantages (win-win situation) they





created. On the one hand, inhabitants provided the labor force for local industries. On the other hand, they represented a valuable voting bloc for populist politicians, who promised to formalize their property rights in exchange for their support. This overview highlights how the government purposefully marginalizes and leaves informal areas behind from the outset, while also excluding them from formal planning processes. Being 'left behind' is an issue of informal housing, and can also be evaluated using particular spatial data, such as access to basic services, land tenure, and housing quality, as analyzed in Iban's (2020) work.

From the 2000s, the AKP government launched its neoliberal agenda for entrepreneurial activities, specifically state-led, large-scale regeneration initiatives (Kuyucu & Ünsal, 2010). The vast majority of these areas that were planned to undergo renewal processes were *gecekondu*/squatter areas and historical areas including Sariyer Derbent and Fikirtepe. These locations were already attractive for property market actors and the state due to their centrality. However, due to project-based planning approaches that created uncertainties instead of providing a holistic view, they have completely turned into speculation zones (Tasan-Kok, 2008). Their transformation has been more profitable than ever before. To regulate the circulation of capital in the neoliberal development process (Jessop, 2015), the state has taken a more influential role in the property market. This entrepreneurial type of governance has turned into state entrepreneurialism, with centralized policies that were created as of 2010, and authoritarian interventions have followed it.

With this trajectory in mind, we analyze the cases on an individual basis. Sariyer Derbent was officially declared an urban regeneration area by the local government of Sariyer Municipality in 2004, even though its development story dates back to the 1950s. The first authoritarian intervention into the Derbent neighborhood took place in 2006, soon after the declaration. The police demolished the association building, which was built by the neighborhoods for collaboration purposes during urban regeneration processes because it was illegal (Erbaş & Kızılay, 2015). It was ironic because this was how this neighborhood existed from the very beginning. However, a new trajectory, in which authoritarianism increased, has been in charge now. In 2011, another police intervention took place during the demolition of 40 buildings that the Atatürk Building Society had purchased. It was a conflictual (speculative) situation because there were inhabitants of Derbent who had with them title deed allocation documents. The Atatürk Building Society had bought a large area with a tender from Derbent in the 1990s. The lawsuit is still ongoing. Meanwhile, the state's entrepreneurial moves continued by promoting this project at the MIPIM (from the French, Le Marché International des Professionnels de L'immobilier) real estate exhibition held in France in 2013.

Fikirtepe was designated as a 'special project area' in a 1/5000 scale zoning plan in 2005.<sup>6</sup> The urban transformation area for the district was adopted in 2007 with a plan amendment. However, this urban transformation initiative was announced to the public in 2010 in a speech from the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) by Mayor Kadir Topbaş.<sup>7</sup> State entrepreneurialism took a different approach from Derbent in Fikirtepe. Firstly, the Kadıköy Municipality (local government) under the opposition party (Republican People's Party, CHP) was deactivated in the planning authority from the very beginning, designating Fikirtepe as a 'special project area.' Even though the IMM was in charge of the planning authority in Fikirtepe under the AKP at that time (2005), the IMM left the renewal process almost entirely to property development actors. Along with the 'inactive role of the state' (Turk et al., 2020), there was also an unsupervised issue concerning the involvement of contractors in the project. No criteria regarding their financial proficiency (see the story of the contractor who contracts with families, but failed at starting implementation from the very beginning, and went to court with a request for bankruptcy<sup>8</sup>: Url-2) or previous experience to enter into such a large-scale and long-term project was required (Turk et al., 2020), creating a major conflict in Fikirtepe, particularly from the inhabitants' perspective. Upper-scale governing moves followed instead of active lower-scale involvement. The Ministry declared the neighborhood as a 'risky area' under the Disaster Law (6306) in 2013. Therefore, the central government (in addition to property development actors, albeit indirectly) gained the

<sup>6</sup>IMM Zoning plan report related to region between Kadıköy center and E5 (D-100) Highway, Istanbul (2005).

<sup>7</sup><https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/arsalar-birlesip-istanbul-donusecek-issizlik-bitecek-16093428>.

<sup>8</sup><https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/bu-da-donusum-haczi-22768285>.



authority to violate the property right of one-third of the property owners by ‘urgent expropriation’ (Kuyucu, 2022) as soon as the construction companies reached agreement with two-thirds of them.<sup>9</sup>

#### 4.2.2 | Overregulated and flexible urban planning trajectory

The trajectory starting in 2002 was introduced through a regulatory restructuring, followed by the first comprehensive regeneration regulatory framework (Özden, 2010). Many planning regulations followed this new framework of transformation and were used as a means of urban interventions. The number of amendments in existing regulations increased considerably after 2000 when compared with pre-2000 (Özalp & Erkut, 2016). This overregulated, 20-year development trajectory, which was initiated with institutional and legislative ‘innovations’ as Kuyucu (2018) stated, reached a critical juncture after 2010. From 2010 and beyond, it evolved into a period in which centralization increased and/or escalated. In fact, centralized policies instrumentalized planning itself to carry out property-led urban development as well as state-led development. Tailored flexibilities were extracted from numerous regulations, but this resulted in legal and institutional conflicts. The process was performed entirely on a project basis, and as a result, divergent events emerged in each project.

In 2004, the AKP’s Sariyer Municipality declared Derbent a renewal area, which marked the beginning of regulatory efforts in the neighborhood. The following year, IMM and Sariyer Municipality announced their joint transformation plan. However, after the opposition party CHP won the 2009 local election, the project was cancelled. In response, the renewal zone designation authority was transferred to the metropolitan municipalities through an amendment to Municipality Law 5393 in 2010. With the establishment of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation in 2011, regeneration policy took on a more centralized and upper-scale form, bypassing local authorities. The central government’s interest in taking the ‘lion’s share of the growing property market’ (Tasan-Kok, 2015) led to a centralization process, particularly in areas with high land prices. Another significant move toward centralization occurred with the passing of Disaster Law 6306 in 2012. This law allowed any area deemed ‘risky’ in terms of earthquake conditions to be included in the scope of the law and subject to transformation with the Ministry’s authority. Derbent was declared a ‘risky area’ using this legal source, resulting in legal and institutional conflicts. This declaration led to the ‘flexibility that occurred by the using of discretionary power’ for the case of Derbent. In 2014, the 13th division of the state council cancelled the ‘risky area’ decision due to lack of ‘technical report’ (Tarakçı & Türk, 2020). However, in 2017, the amendment to the Disaster Law re-declared Derbent as ‘risky’ with an expanded definition of a risky area.

The central government’s overregulation led to flexibility in spatial planning in Fikirtepe, as noted by Tarakçı and Türk (2020). Instead of a rigid zoning plan, a plan based on notes was used for implementation, acting as a flexible planning tool (Tarakçı & Turk, 2018). In Turkish planning practice, rigid zoning plans can provide ‘notes’ that offer flexible conditions to define new built environments. However, this approach created uncertainties since the plan notes and their implementation derive from local plans that lack legal power and depend on bargaining between landowners and property market actors (Turk et al., 2020). This turns the process into one in which the developer tries to persuade the landowner, instead of negotiating with them (Interviewee<sup>10</sup>). Regarding Fikirtepe, the local municipality was excluded from the process from the start in 2005 with the area’s designation as a ‘special project area’. Additionally, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality’s (IMM) strategy was to ‘monitor the process’ (Turk et al., 2020) instead of assuming the most active role as the main actor in the area’s renewal process. Spatial, financial, and ‘institutional bottlenecks’ occurred (Ay & Penpecioglu, 2022) at the start of the process and have deepened by the continuation of the renewal on a highly centralized axis with the Disaster Law and the ‘urgent expropriation’ source.

<sup>9</sup><https://megaprojeleristanbul.com/print/fikirtepe-kentsel-donusum-projesi>.

<sup>10</sup>Interview with a resident from Fikirtepe, on February 24th, 2021.



#### 4.2.3 | Established (institutionalization of) self-organization

Given this 20-year development trajectory, the foremost and most prominent pathbreaking event by means of urban/social movement has been the Gezi Park protests in 2013. This movement was born against the increasingly centralized policies of the state, and its subsequent authoritarian interventions, especially in urban public spaces. In fact, with these demonstrations occurring all over the country, different groups came together and tried to be heard and visible to the authorities (Genç, 2022). However, these protests did not get the expected response. On the contrary, a more authoritarian approach of government and constitutional and administrative reforms concerning centralization (e.g., the presidential system, which was accepted with the 2017 referendum and commenced implementation in 2018) reveal the 'limits to urban revolution', as emphasized by Bayırbağ et al. (2022). As the authors infer, what comes to fore within the regime shaped by the AKP is 'negotiated political processes'. In this article we showed that the self-organization that boosts its capacity in negotiation processes can mobilize and politicize residents and local networks and can be an active negotiating party at the table for property rights, rather than be convinced by other parties. Thus, the responses from residents are more negotiation-based processes beyond urban movements.

In the case of Derbent, self-organization efforts can be traced back to the very beginning. In 1975, the Istanbul Squatters Association (Istanbul Gecekonducular Derneği, İGEK-DER) was established with the initiative of the residents to establish the infrastructure of the neighborhood. Although this association consolidated through the left-socialist line, it was pacified with the 1980 military coup (Erbaş & Kızılay, 2015) and has contributed significantly to developing opposition culture in the neighborhood. This very early rooted solidarity move was followed by the establishment of the Derbent Neighborhood Beautification and Solidarity Association (Derbent Mahallesi Güzelleştirme ve Yardımlaşma Derneği) in 2005. As aforementioned, two major authoritarian interventions by the state took place in 2006 and 2011 in Derbent. These interventions were responded to by residents taking to the streets and fighting with the police to prevent house demolitions (Kuyucu, 2022). However, inhabitants' responses afterward morphed into a more institutionalized (though informal) approach. With the lawsuit the residents filed, the decision declaring the area as a 'risky area' was cancelled by the 13th division of the state council in 2014. This was followed by the negotiation processes between the cooperative and the Sarıyer Municipality in 2016, and the sending of improvement plans to the IMM for approval in 2017 (Aksümer & Yücel, 2018). Even though the area was declared a 'risky area' again, with the related law's scope expansion in 2017, Derbent's established (informally institutionalized) self-organization capacity, supported by academic knowledge transfer and experiences, pushed the authorities to come to the table and negotiate with them.

Furthermore, what Fikirtepe has experienced in terms of self-organization remains quite divergent from Derbent.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the inactive roles of the authorities in charge, and a process that is almost entirely carried out by property market actors, this image best interprets the process: 'a single house' completely surrounded by the construction site, stood alone for 3 years as a symbol of the resistance in the area. However, in August 2014, this 'single house' on 31 acres of land resisted alone during the transformation process, but was eventually demolished.<sup>12</sup> Even though meetings were held where the problems that prolonged the urban transformation process and the proposed solutions were discussed (see the 2nd Fikirtepe Summit organized by the government<sup>13</sup>), the decision taken remained at the level of promise. As a consequence of the lack of 'well-established' local organizations, only case-based individual protests took place, which had no impact. The current situation demonstrates that various neighborhood associations were established around 2014–2015 (Interviewee<sup>14</sup>), such as Fikentder, Fidem, Fikirder, and Yenifikirder (Ay & Penpecioglu, 2022), and that these associations have

<sup>11</sup><https://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/haluk-eyidogan/on-bes-yildir-bitmeyen-bir-kentsel-donusumun-hikayesi-fikirtepe,30099>.

<sup>12</sup><https://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/haluk-eyidogan/on-bes-yildir-bitmeyen-bir-kentsel-donusumun-hikayesi-fikirtepe,30099>.

<sup>13</sup><https://emlakkulisi.com/fikirtepede-harekete-gecmeyen-firma-kara-listeye-alinacak/316223>.

<sup>14</sup>Interview with an urban planner from Fikirtepe.



some demands (e.g., to involve the local authority of the district, the Kadıköy Municipality, as an active actor in the process<sup>15</sup>). Yet these entities have not been as institutionalized as in Derbent and thus could not re-politicize themselves to engage in the policy network so as to be part of policymaking processes.

## 5 | CONCLUSIONS

Beyond the studies that focus on the failures and crises accompanying the transformations of the neoliberal ideology and their visibility (Kuyucu, 2022; Peck et al., 2013), this study draws attention to the unexpectedness as well as the innovative trajectories of neoliberalism, and in fact, the duality of entrepreneurial governance. In this article we provided a detailed analysis of the pathbreaking trajectories of urban regeneration in Turkey. Under an authoritarian entrepreneurial regime, not only urban regeneration processes, but all processes that went through institutional transformations, turned into pathbreaking trajectories. The ruling party, AKP, which came to power by promising to repair the deep damage caused by the 1999 earthquakes with high-level neoliberal policies, has not only centralized legal and institutional instruments in the 20-year urban development trajectory, but also squeezed them into an authoritarian framework under a one-man regime. The state's authoritarian and interventionist turn initiated many pathbreaking trajectories and instigated breakpoints in cities, but the 2023 earthquake showed the extreme consequences of these tendencies. As a result of the transformation in planning, governance, and networks, the disaster that occurred in 2023 turned into a pathbreaking trajectory that could not be managed.

Facilitating further centralization, what we called 'authoritarian entrepreneurialism', enables controversial processes to be implemented quickly without much room for questioning or protest. Despite the uncertainties involved in this form of planning, it has resulted in a flexible yet overregulated urban planning trajectory. Throughout this process, we have observed critical junctures in which numerous law amendments and regulations were put in place to advance controversial initiatives as quickly as possible. However, residents have unexpectedly responded to the state's interventions in local urban development, which were justified by using legislation as a tool to proceed. Despite being oppressed and discouraged from protesting, residents have organized themselves to participate in policy networks. Our study demonstrates that the capacity for self-governance is crucial, particularly in an entrepreneurial environment, to re-politicize these networks in which inhabitants are often excluded from the decision-making process.

Concluding the Istanbul case, while the same national urban transformation policy framework was in operation for both renewal projects, this study has revealed that different breakpoints occurred for each case due to the trajectories unraveled. This novel approach has demonstrated how identical contingent events and critical junctures in the same context can lead to different development trajectories and divergent breakpoints. Simultaneously, elucidating pathbreaking trajectories hints at further research on what points may matter to reach possible development trajectories. In addition, we argue that studying cases that accommodate contradictions, such as authoritarian but entrepreneurial, overregulated but flexible, and oppressed and discouraged but re-politicized, can offer transformative governance practices for international academic research, particularly for similar cases with similar contexts. The Istanbul case highlights the need for further exploration of how self-organization can flourish even under institutionalized authoritarianism by deconstructing diverse trajectories in spatial governance processes.

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<sup>15</sup><https://www.fikirtepehaber.com/gundem/ibb-de-gundem-fikirtepe-sorunlari-ve-cozum-onerileriyle-stk-lar-h4787.html>.



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**Resumen.** Los modelos de desarrollo urbano empresarial y orientado al crecimiento consideran las zonas dejadas de lado como oportunidades para la reurbanización y la mejora, y que pueden ser objeto de especulación. Se sostiene que las trayectorias pioneras surgen con formas diversas durante este proceso de reurbanización, dependiendo de la capacidad de adaptación de las comunidades urbanas y de la flexibilidad de la planificación en la práctica. El estudio se centra en las zonas de ocupación ilegal de Estambul, donde se identifican trayectorias pioneras en contextos institucionales y políticos y se desentrañan las respuestas sociales. Se llega a la conclusión de que el panorama de la gobernanza empresarial autoritaria opera en un contexto dual en el que pueden variar sus efectos sobre la repolitización de las comunidades urbanas y su compromiso con las redes políticas.

**抄録:** 起業モデルと成長志向の都市開発モデルは、後進地域を再開発と高度化を必要とする機会と見なしており、それは投機の対象となりうる。本稿では、この再開発プロセスの間に、都市コミュニティの適応能力と計画実務における柔軟性によって、明確な方法で解決への道筋が現れることを述べる。イスタンブールの不法占拠地域に注目し、制度的・政策的な文脈における道筋を示し、社会的対応を明らかにする。結論として、権威主義的な企業家統治の状況は、都市コミュニティの再政治化と政策ネットワークへの関与に対するその影響が異なる二重の文脈において作用している。