

# 8.2 **Transforming Urban Public Space through Art Initiatives: The Darağaç Collective in Turkey**

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## × **Abstract**

In the last few years, besides very few commercial galleries and art institutions, İzmir has become a stage for several art initiatives and independent art events. These initiatives are diverse, as they appear structured under different logics of production with corresponding terminological differentiation. Darağaç, the art initiative discussed in this study, is an exceptional example in terms of both the activities it organizes and the relationships it establishes with the residents of the neighborhood. This study introduces the Darağaç Collective to discuss the effects of independent art spaces and artist initiatives on regional and urban transformation. Qualitative research methods, including on-site observation, interviews, and literature review were employed to discuss how the artistic intervention affected residents and the neighborhood. The purpose of this study is to discuss the relationship between the artist initiative and the residents of the neighborhood and its role in urban transformation.

**Keywords:** urban transformation, art initiatives, artistic intervention, public space, İzmir.

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## 1. **Introduction**

The complex and dynamic systems that they are, it is inevitable for cities to undergo changes. We can observe different practices and experiences regarding urban transformation, a phenomenon closely related to the concepts of urban growth and urban change. Emerging from the interaction of many internal and external dynamics, urban transformation can occur as both a result and a modeled process. Given that urban change occurs according to the unique characteristics of a geographic area and that the approaches regarding the management of this change differ, practices and experiences in the context of urban transformation vary. Urban renewal, urban regeneration, urban redevelopment, urban revitalization, urban rehabilitation, and gentrification are some of the different forms of urban interventions aimed at achieving demographic, functional, physical, or social changes in cities (Tallon, 2010).

From the marketplaces (*agora*) in Ancient Greece to the public spaces in today's cities (Arendt, 1958), ensuring the flow of trade, communication and information, the common areas of cities, showing the urban dynamism, are important indicators of urban transformation. When public spaces, where real life and human experience take place, are the domain of rulers, they reinforce the status of power and position the public as spectators rather than participants. On the other hand, through public art objects, urban furniture, and landscaping, public space acquires a character in the eyes of those who use it (Habermas, 1997). According to Lefebvre (1991, pp. 358-359), there is a close relationship between space and social relations, and each relationship gains meaning in the space in which it takes shape. An understanding that takes into account the decision

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mechanisms of the people and the demands of the public can help to strengthen the ability to organize publicly, the ability of people to express themselves and the sense of belonging to a place. Spaces enabling the interaction of people, who are not under control and do not know each other, increase this effect.

The sample area of this study, the district Umurbey, where the 2016-founded Darağaç Collective is located, is a potential urban renewal area in the southeast of the region formerly known as Darağaç, which, close to İzmir Bay and the port, covers an area between Alsancak Stadium and Halkapınar. An integrated and systematic renewal project for the area has not been announced yet. However, both the private sector projects consisting of commercial and residential building blocks and the idle industrial buildings, which the local government recently put in working order again, give an idea about the urban renewal process that is underway. Comprised of 19th and 20th century multi-storey (but not high-rise) residential buildings, inactive industrial buildings, factories, and warehouses that are no longer operational, the area has a heterogeneous texture. Today, many of these structures are out of order, damaged and/or abandoned. Meanwhile, with its small-scale repair shops, warehouses, and workshops of craftsmen and artists, which are located behind the harbor, the area still preserves its industrial character. In addition, the buildings converted within the scope of the refunctioning projects of the İzmir Metropolitan Municipality, such as the Historical Gas Factory Cultural Center, İzmir Vocational Factory, and Yaşar Painting Museum, are mostly used for cultural events and craft-related trainings that emphasize historical values.

In this study, which examines the role and impact of art initiatives in urban transformation by looking at the Darağaç Collective in İzmir's Umurbey district, we benefited from the literature on urban transformation, public space, street art, and artist initiatives. Focusing on the case of Darağaç, this study deals with the role of participatory and collaborative artistic activities in urban transformation processes. In this context, we discuss the place of art initiatives in the broader cultural and artistic environment in Turkey, the relationship of art initiatives in İzmir with the city, and the distinct features of the Darağaç Collective in terms of its collaborative and participatory activities. The relationship between the Darağaç Collective and the residents of the neighborhood was evaluated with reference to a community-based model of transformation. Using a mixed methodology and embedded in a theoretical framework concerning public art, art initiatives, and participatory and collaborative art approaches, this article offers a case study aimed at determining the role of art initiatives in urban transformation. Two different methods of data collection were employed during this study, which is based on on-site observations and findings regarding the physical and socio-cultural structure of the neighborhood on the one and semi-structured interviews with the artists, residents, and craftsmen who were the pioneers of the urban renewal process in Umurbey on the other hand. In the light of these data, we evaluated the organic relationship established by the artists with the area as well as the effect and role of collective production in urban transformation.

## 1.1 Urban Transformation and the Community-Based Transformation Model

The force with which different models and practices related to urban transformation intervene into the urban fabric varies on a range from preservation of the status quo to reconstruction. When compared to urban conservation activities like restoration and refurbishment which require the least intervention and preserve the existing form, function, and texture of the urban fabric, rehabilitation, involving improvement and functional change, implies a higher degree of urban intervention. The greatest urban intervention and destruction comes with renewal, redevelopment, and gentrification (Longa, 2011, p. 15). Uneven growth in the production of urban space and new office housing complex projects are important causes of gentrification and displacement in today's cities (Smith, 1996, p. xviii). Generally, these projects are shaped according to the priorities of the private sector; this tends to be true even for transformation projects carried out within the scope of public-private partnerships (Harvey, 2000, p. 152).

The transformation of neighborhoods may cause effects such as displacement due to economic, physical and social changes, neighborhood changes or housing unit changes (Marcuse, 1985; Slater, 2009, p. 304). The impact of gentrification in urban transformation processes is characterized by a strongly intervening and highly destructive force. The concept of gentrification was first used by Ruth Glass (1964) to describe how, in the 1960s, the British nobility employed the services of artisans and craftsmen to transform detached Victorian houses in the central working-class districts of London into ostentatious and expensive residences, leading to the displacement of low-income workers from these areas (Hamnett, 2003, p. 331). According to David Ley (1996), the demographic characteristics and cultural values of the gentrifiers, as well as their consumption

norms and cultural preferences, lead to an aestheticization of consumption. In this framework, the first stage of gentrification is linked to counter-cultural lifestyles and involves avant-garde artists, LGBT, and activist political organizations (Ley, 1996). After the 1990s, the linking of culture with the urban economy has led to the dominance of a new and competitive mode of cultural management which is characterized by a stronger involvement of the private sector. The shift in local politics towards creative industry and entrepreneurship triggered by the strategy of attracting the creative class entails the implementation of elitist policies that encourage gentrification (Harvey, 1989). The prioritization of the preferences and interests of a small elite (Beglund & Olsson, 2010) and forms of urban planning and design that are geared towards marketing the city cause a deepening of inequalities which in turn increase social polarization. Those who have a say in determining the city marketing strategy, the image used to market cities, and the cultural elements that make up this image, also interfere with the collective memory and aesthetics of the city. In this regard, Harvey (2002) emphasizes the danger of allowing multinational capital and small local elites to monopolize the symbolic capital of cities. Towards the end of the 1990s, the issue of social exclusion and programs to prevent social exclusion came to the fore and centralist approaches were gradually replaced by approaches based on participation and the neighborhood scale that were organized around local communities (Duyar-Kienast, 2015).

In current examples of gentrification, one can observe attempts to resolve dichotomies like lower/middle class, economic/cultural, and production/consumption on the axis of common interests (Lees et al., 2008). As a new urban lifestyle, proximity to cultural activities and historical landscapes have gained value in the housing preferences of upper- and middle-class city dwellers. In the cities of Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir, where urban transformation is particularly intense, transformation projects are mostly realized in partnerships between the local government and the private sector. Criteria such as historical value and proximity to cultural activities and the old city center shape the demand in these projects. In areas where such projects have been implemented, local residents ended up being displaced (Uzun, 2013, pp. 245-250; Ergun, 2004, p. 399). The fact that the Umurbey district is an area where new housing projects are being developed and which is preferred by the urban upper- and middle-class, requires us to consider culture-based urban transformation together with concepts like cultural economy, and cultural management that became popular after the 1990s. Before the 1950s, urban policy was defined as reconstruction, while the relationship between public space and art was primarily being seen as an art object (statue) in public space.

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## 1.2 The Role of Art in Urban Regeneration

Cultural activities have begun to play a more active role in urban transformation almost all over the world since the 1980s. The increase in the number of biennials and public art projects is an important indicator of this dynamic. Art in public spaces, which is installed to enrich and aestheticize these spaces, and the broader framework of the relationship between art and public spaces are discussed with reference to notions such as art in the public interest and art as public spaces (Kwon, 1997). In the 1980s, the number of studies on the impact of art on the urban economy increased, and although many artists would still criticize concepts inspired by an industrial economy like art managers and creative sector in the 1990s, these concepts were used more frequently, and in the following decade, art managers, funders and policy makers began to use the term 'cultural industries' instead of the word 'arts' (Evans & Shaw, 2004).

In Turkey, in addition to the cultural and artistic activities carried out with the support of the public and private sectors, non-profit artist initiatives also play an active part, especially with respect to the production of art in public space. The Istanbul Biennial, first held in 1983, is an important event in the Turkish culture and arts scene in terms of the impact of art on the urban economy. The increase in biennials, festivals etc. in Istanbul in the 1990s corresponded to an understanding of art in the public interest and was supported by the public and private sectors, although the economic contribution of these events to the city was rather limited. The dense migration to the cities which occurred in the 1970s led to a rebuilding of cities and the development of new housing projects in the 1980s and 1990s. Apart from art in public spaces, approaches like art in the public interest or art as public spaces were discussed only in very small artistic circle in these years. Examples of art as public space (like *Oda Projesi*) have increased since the beginning of the 2000s. This artistic approach of interacting with neighborhoods began to play a more active role as art initiatives started to spread towards the end of the 2000s. As in Istanbul, spaces run by artists began to spring up in Izmir in the early 2000s and became an important part of the creative economy of the city after 2010.

## 1.3 Art Initiatives and Public Space

The term art initiative refers to a non-profit organization, implying that the latter is ‘artist-run’. The term ‘artist-run’ is commonly used to describe grassroots organizations founded and managed by artists. Artists establish and maintain these spaces as individuals, collectives, or groups. The term “artist-run” also emphasizes the production processes within these spaces. For us to understand these spaces, it is important that we examine the needs catalyzing the creation of artist-run spaces, and the forms of self-organization, DIY, volunteer labor, and skill that subsequently shape them. Such spaces often provide an opportunity “for emerging artists to display their work before moving on to more established venues” (Pryde-Jarman, 2013, p. 18). At the same time, due to their organizational form and the underlying understanding of a gift economy, they are likely to be a laboratory for avant-garde pursuits outside commercial art. Community-based urban regeneration models involve non-profit social initiatives and grassroots approaches which operate on a “neighborhood” scale to ensure local participation. Allowing the development of community-based cultural policies that enable the participation of local people instead of state-led (top-down) urban transformation models harmonizes with art initiatives and art as public space.

One of the important determinants of Izmir’s culture and art environment is that, compared to the population of the city, the number of exhibition venues of established art institutions, museums, galleries and art centers is rather low. For this reason, there has been a search for alternative venues other than the white cube for exhibitions and art events, especially since the 1990s. There are over three hundred art initiatives in and around Izmir. More than half of them operate within the creative industries. One of these artist-run structures is the Darağaç Collective, which has reached an audience above the art scene average with the activities it has carried out in the last five years, and which adopts a participatory approach to engage in artistic production together with the people of the neighborhood. These features distinguish Darağaç from other art collectives.

Since 2010, independent art movements and non-profit common spaces have emerged to complement the few galleries located in Izmir. In the absence of art institutions like museums and galleries, especially art initiatives, generally founded by young artists in collaboration with more established artists, play a decisive role in the culture and art environment in Izmir. By strengthening both the solidarity among artists and the relations with the local government and international institutions, artist initiatives activate the culture and art environment of the city (Kılınçarslan, 2021).

If we want to gauge the impact of art initiatives in the development of an understanding of urban transformation that is determined not as the domain of the administrators, but by the decision mechanisms of the people, while also ensuring public organization and considering the demands of the public, we can look at the activities of the Darağaç Collective and the urban revitalization process in Izmir’s Umurbey district. We will try to analyze the process of local revitalization that unfolded in the area while it was undergoing urban transformation by looking at a few examples from the activities of the art collective and examining the data obtained from interviews conducted with artists and residents of the neighborhood.

## 2. The Darağaç Collective

The Darağaç Collective is an artist-run, independent, non-profit organization founded in 2016. In 2013, some of the artists in the collective moved their studios to the neighborhood for economic and social reasons. Settling in the neighborhood for individual reasons and in a scattered manner, these artists developed an organic relationship with the people of the neighborhood. The artists who came together in 2016 to form the collective started to engage in art activities that included the neighborhood. Having acquired the official status of an association in 2020, the initiative continues to operate as a non-profit organization. Adopting the principles of street art as a search for alternative exhibition spaces apart from museums and galleries, an alternative and performative mode of production and a proposal for life (N/A, 2014, pp. 9-21), from their very first meeting, the artists of the Darağaç Collective have embraced a horizontal mode of organization in which they continuously discuss and try to develop their artistic production and exhibition strategies.

The first exhibitions of the Darağaç Collective in 2016, which were initially organized to showcase contemporary art works and contact the neighborhood, lasted only one day. This event helped to establish a relationship with the locals that made it possible to collaborate in graffiti and street art projects. Street art, which was born in the political climate of the 1960s, provided artists, who pointed out the differences and junctions in the demographic structure of the city, with a space of freedom and an opportunity to share their work

with wider social segments. Falling into the category of street art, graffiti constitutes a freer form of self-expression and of spreading one's existence across the city (N/A, 2014, p. 11). The spread of graffiti in the neighborhood has enabled both other artists from Izmir and artists from other regions to meet in the neighborhood. Today there are around 230 murals and graffiti in the neighborhood. These graffiti and street art events, which over time began to receive different funds and forms of support and were joined by artists from different cities in Turkey and abroad, bring together the actors of the culture and art environment with the locals and have had other positive repercussions in terms of Izmir's urban life. In fact, the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality has been organizing the Izmir Mural Fest since 2018, inviting artists from the Darağaç Collective to sit in the organizing committee of these events.

The participatory and collaborative processes established with the residents of the neighborhood have been supported by contemporary art's approach that blurs the border between life and art and by the value it attaches to the temporary, heterogeneous, and pluralistic. Likewise, giving room to the performative, the nature of contemporary art as well as its proposal for an alternative production and life and the corresponding artistic persona are all compatible with community-based transformation models and culture-based urban transformation models. Meanwhile, the illegal, temporary, and uncompromising nature of street art is important in terms of reintegrating local people into local democratic processes and developing civil society.

In addition to events like site-specific installations, digital art works, mural works, and performances (Altuğ, 2009), which spread over the neighborhood and are an increasing number of participants (see figure 8.2.1), the artist initiative also conducts workshops with the children of the neighborhood. Having entirely turned into a large artist workshop, the neighborhood's structure reflects the positive and sustainable social relations established between artisans, craftspersons, the local people and the artists. The artists of the collective, who embrace the neighborhood culture, create an original and constructive change in their environment. The artists turn the physical deterioration of the industrial area into an environmental advantage by using it as a value. Design-based artistic interventions done to derelict and old buildings in the neighborhood become part of the artistic production as elements that enrich the environmental texture. The Darağaç artists choose a modest, temporary artistic style and street art techniques such as graffiti and mural to create a texture that harmonizes with the area's inert

and derelict structure. The medallion designed by the collective artists in memory of Sir Alec Issigonis, the designer of Mini Cooper, who is thought to have lived in the neighborhood in the past, shows the bond that the collective established with the history and cultural heritage of the neighborhood regarding the period when it was inhabited by non-Muslim minorities. This relief medallion is the artists' first work as a collective.



► Figure 8.2.1 - The Cultural Memory of Neighborhood: Sir Alec Issigonis Medallion  
► Source: Darağaç Collective, 2018

In the context of the relationship between artist, artwork and community, we may identify concepts such as relational aesthetics, participatory art, community-based art and Ranciere's (2009, pp. 1-25) "emancipated spectator" in the activities of the Darağaç Collective. In the neighborhood, a grocery store, repair shop or home can become a performance or exhibition space, while mechanics, craftspersons, traders, and residents' figure as artists. The collaboration between artists and residents has increased since 2016. Some of the residents of the neighborhood took part in art events, taking on the roles of artists, gallerists, and collectors. The local Hüseyin Özgürtepe (see figure 8.2.2), who owns a repair shop, used his shop as an exhibition space during the Darağaç III exhibition in 2018. He exhibited a selection of works gifted to him by the artists of the collective as the Hüseyin Özgür Collection. The 2018 Darağaç II exhibition featured a performative storytelling by Nazmiye Birecik, one of the residents of the neighborhood, in front of her own house. In the performance titled "Nazmiye Bilecik Story", which she prepared together with Tuğçe Akay, one of the collective artists, Birecik told a story about Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and her father's love for him in front of the family's 50-year-old house. The items mentioned by her in the story could be seen in a room reserved for Atatürk.





► Figure 8.2.2 Hüseyin Özgürtepe (mechanic in neighborhood), Collection of Hüseyin Özgürtepe  
 ► Source: Darağaç III, 2018



► Figure 8.2.3 - Aycan Genlik, Media Assignment: Darağaç Newspaper,  
 ► Source: Darağaç III, 2018

Apart from the fact that some of the residents participate in the collective's other activities, the Darağaç event, which is held every year for the entire neighborhood, essentially is a festival. Since they bring the enthusiasm and hustle and bustle of a festive holiday to the neighborhood, residents call these events *bayram*. Fittingly, the headline of the fictional newspaper created by artist Aycan Genlik in his work *Media Assignment: Darağaç Newspaper* writes "It's Bayram today" (see figure 8.2.3). As this work indicates, the relationship between the artist and the neighborhood has started to create its own value and collective memory. These artistic activities constitute examples of "participatory art" in which the roles of artist and audience and the boundaries between private and public spaces disappear (Pasin *et al.*, 2020).

While the guest artists coming to the neighborhood produce works specifically designed for its public spaces, they focus on topics related to the daily relations, collective memory, physical characteristics, and political agenda of the neighborhood. The Immigrant Registration Update Center opened by the Izmir District Governor's Office in 2018 has

changed some of the dynamics in the neighborhood. The fact that sometimes as many as 400 immigrants a day wait in the narrow streets to obtain their IDs has created an unusual movement in the area. At the same time, stories about immigrants have become part of the daily dialogues between the residents of the neighborhood. Photojournalist Mert Çakır (see figure 8.2.4) created large prints of children's passport photos, found images stemming from photo albums left behind by refugees who tried to go to the Greek islands from Çeşme, and hung them on the facade of a house in the neighborhood. Then he photographed this installation for two years, documenting how it was destroyed by the weather. Another guest artist, Leman Sevda Daricioğlu, observed the presence of immigrants in the neighborhood, their waiting in the queue and their dialogues with each other and the residents of the neighborhood, leading her to do the performance *Waiting II: Darağaç* "Who waits for whom, when, and for how long?" in which she tied herself to a tree close to the immigration office and kept watch for 24 hours.



► Figure 8.2.4 Mert Çakır, GAP, digital print from found image  
 ► Source: Darağaç III, 2018

Similar to the examples given above, the activities of Darağaç provide a platform for reflexive and critical works that suit the understanding of art as a public space. At the same time, workshops that help establish a relationship with the neighborhood reinforce the experience of coproduction. Apart from the art workshops with children organized by the Darağaç Collective artists (see figure 8.2.5), designer Emre Yıldız's signboard design workshop for local shops is an example of participatory and collaborative production.



► Figure 8.2.5 - Emre Yıldız, Darağaç Signboard Workshop  
 ► Source: Darağaç IV, 2019

Integrated into urban transformation and social policies, public art can work to reduce both physical and social exclusion and thus strengthen the sense of identity and belonging. Alongside its contribution to creating a more beautiful environment, public art aims to improve environmental quality and enhance people's attachment to a place. As in the example of Darağaç, art is used as a communication tool, enabling collaboration with local producers and artisans to learn new skills and convey different forms of knowledge. This opens up new perspectives on the labor market and potential roles for both artists as the urban precariat and local shopkeepers. The joint productions and mutual knowledge sharing of the Darağaç Collective and the neighborhood's craftsmen and artisans seem to have affected the local government's approach to cultural economy. Although the local government, in its culture-based understanding of urban transformation, has not yet developed effective cultural policies to support local and grassroots organization, it considers the relationship and communication between the Darağaç Collective and the residents of the neighborhood as a model. It should be considered whether a civil form of urban transformation based on participation at the neighborhood level as it can be observed in Barcelona, whose approach is presented as a 'success model', because it is built around civic ideas/ideals and centers on neighborhood committees (Degen & Garcia, 2012), can also be a viable option for Izmir.

Within the framework of community-based urban transformation, local governments can achieve objectives such as increasing the responsiveness and quality of local services by informing local people and reintegrating them into local democratic processes and involving users in management processes. In addition, macro-scale approaches like continuing to invest in the infrastructure required for cultural

production or supporting cultural tourism through major events related to the city's local heritage and other high-profile art events, can be employed to develop a holistic branding strategy in city marketing (Kong, 2000, p. 387).

The most frequently mentioned issue in the interviews and surveys conducted with artists and neighborhood residents is the uncertainty as to whether urban transformation will imply the displacement of locals. Since the renewal of the social fabric took place as a process involving both the artists and the residents of the neighborhood, it did not have a negative impact in terms of displacement and exclusion. Meanwhile, even though we do not yet observe very high differences, initial increases in rents have led to fears about commercial gentrification. Although cooperation with the public and local governments does not yet pose any problem, neighborhood residents, artisans and artists are worried that public-private partnerships will take shape in line with the priorities of the private sector rather than the priorities of the public.

Although macro-scale cultural projects which emerge because of public-private collaborations play an important role in the city marketing strategy, they can create the problem of cultural injustice. The commodification and commercialization of the area targeted by urban marketing, and its handling as a marketed product may deprive that place of its unique characteristics. While marketing emphasizes the uniqueness and authenticity of places, once having become marketable, they tend to lose their uniqueness and authenticity, resulting in what Harvey describes as their Disneyization (Harvey, 2002, p. 397).

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### 3. Darağaç Art Events During the Covid-19 Pandemic

In 2020, the annual Darağaç exhibition took place in a hybrid format due to the pandemic. The efforts of artists as an urban precariat to sustain themselves despite the pandemic, as well as economic and social challenges determined the name of the 2020 exhibition. "Darağaç Exist" (see figure 8.2.6) includes production and exhibition strategies that simulate a life that, under pandemic conditions, has become superimposed by imperatives like hygiene, sterilization, control, security, and masks. As part of this fiction, security guards wearing masks and sterile clothes took the audience's temperature before they allowed them inside the exhibition.

The exhibition took place in public space, closed off by a curtain installed by the collective. For those who were not able to attend the exhibition physically, a virtual tour was prepared, which used a video game aesthetic. While the Darağaç Collective's direct relationship with the neighborhood and the participatory and collaborative production processes continued throughout the pandemic, the Collective's interaction with the audience remained mostly limited to online events. *Darağaç-İcra*, another performance event organized by Darağaç Collective in collaboration with invited artists in 2020, included interactive works. The performance *Walkthrough: Darağaç* by the artist collective 'tibia x fibula' was designed to resemble an interactive video game where the audience can participate online by casting. Due to the curfews during the lockdown, the artists walked the audience through the exhibition in interactive online tours where they followed the directions given by the audience. The artist collective Medyartiz found an interactive way of exhibiting the online dialogues in their performance *My liar valentine*, reflecting these dialogues on a screen set up in the neighborhood. This and similar online events that took place during the pandemic have had two interesting effects. While the artists did not lose their direct connection and physical contact with the neighborhood because their studios are located in the neighborhood, their physical ties with their audiences shifted to online platforms. Thus, their activities have become more decentralized and diffused. While the members of collectives that do not have a production space or whose production and living spaces are separate, express that they were experiencing difficulties in terms of their artistic production and interaction with their audiences (Yiğit, 2021), the members of the Darağaç Collective were able to continue their collective production as the neighborhood has become their production and living space.



► Figure 8.2.6 - Darağaç Exist, 2020  
► Source: Darağaç Collective Archive

## 4. Conclusion

The differences observed in urban transformation practices and experiences allow us to discuss the force of their respective interventions. Decisions taken on a range between the preservation of the status quo and reconstruction processes may lead to the deterioration of the social fabric of that region, commercial gentrification, and increasing pressures towards displacement. When creating urban transformation policies, approaches that prioritize participation and the neighborhood scale and put local communities at their center instead of a centralist approach, while simultaneously taking into account the issue of social



exclusion and programs to prevent social exclusion allow for urban interventions that are more compatible with the social fabric of the area and carried out through grassroots organization. Given that the majority of the world's lives in cities today, it has become more important to control growth and develop sustainable city models. Non-competitive urban entrepreneurship and city marketing policies, increasingly spreading inter-city networks, and local area agreements that can work together with culture-based urban transformation models support a sustainable form of the city. Social enterprises, participatory and collaborative approaches, enabling communities to participate in urban governance, and ultimately urban policies and rights that support approaches like decentralization on a local scale, can all help to solve the problems of gentrification and displacement. In this sense, culture-based urban interventions will have a greater impact if the state and local governments procure political and fundamental rights, provide resources such as economic funds, and support local policies with global inter-city networks when developing inter-neighborhood networks at the local level. Especially in cities where there is a high concentration of independent non-profit organizations, as in the case of Izmir, where the culture industry has not yet fully developed, the creative economy will have the opportunity to grow when these social enterprises are supported with planned and sustainable policies.

Unlike other art initiatives in İzmir, the Darağaç Collective has developed organic relations with the area and thus undertaken positive interventions to the social fabric. The approach of the Darağaç Collective has also added dynamism to the city's culture and art environment. Even though the true colors of the urban transformation process in the Umurbey district yet remain hidden, the participatory and collaborative process between artists and neighborhood residents is promising. As this example shows, to create a sustainable urban form, it is essential to consider the role and impact of art initiatives in culture-based urban transformation models and for local governments to create policies that support community-based models.

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