



# Community, Ideology and Space: The Role of Local Governments in the Building of Community through Architecture in Çankaya and Keçiören

## *Komünite, İdeoloji ve Mekân: Çankaya ve Keçiören'de Mimari Aracılığıyla Komünite İnşasında Yerel Yönetimlerin Rolü*

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### Abstract

The idea of community in sociospatial studies, which emerges from territorial explanations rooted in rural settlements, has become less well defined due to urbanization. In the complex structure of modern cities, while community can be generally considered in terms of the social networks of members, the territorial dimensions of living environments persist within the new generic city structure. This is because while the sense of community may be constructed socially through relations, the ideological territorial status remains instrumental, especially for local governments who define and control the physical boundaries of communities. This paper considers the tension between the ideological and social conceptions of community in an attempt to understand how the idea of community is spatially manifested by local governments. The paper also discusses how this manifestation leads to the instrumentalization of architecture by local governments in the construction of a particular sense of community and the enhancement of political influence. Accordingly, the spatial typologies for the construction of community proposed by the local governments of Çankaya and Keçiören – Çankaya Evi & Mahalle Konağı - are compared. In terms of socioeconomics and ideology, the two districts are historically two opposing poles in the capital of the Turkish Republic. This is clearly seen in the proposed symbolic, spatial, and programmatic community house typologies. The distinctive architectural symbols and namings by the two local governments of the community housing of both districts clearly exemplify the importance of the notion of community for local governments, as well as how the concept is utilized ideologically through spatial practices.

**Keywords:** Community, Ideology, Local government, Community buildings, Çankaya, Keçiören, Ankara

### Öz

Sosyomekânsal çalışmalarda komünite fikri, kökleri kırsal yerleşimlere dayanan bölgesel açıklamalardan ortaya çıkmıştır ve kentleşmeyle birlikte daha belirsiz ve muğlak bir hâl almıştır. Günümüzün karmaşık kent yapısında komünite, esas olarak üyelerin ilişki ağları üzerinden tanımlanmakla birlikte yaşam çevrelerinin alansal boyutu etkinliğini sürdürmektedir. Komünite duygusu ilişkiler aracılığıyla sosyal olarak inşa edilirken, özellikle toplulukların fiziksel sınırlarını tanımlayan ve kontrol eden yerel yönetimler için alansal niteliği araçsal hâle geldikçe ideolojik bir konum da kazanmaktadır. Kavramın ideolojik ve sosyal boyut arasındaki ilişkisinden yola çıkarak bu çalışma da komünitenin yerel yönetimler tarafından mekânsal olarak nasıl yansıtıldığını ve siyasi



*etkinliklerini arttırabilecekleri bir ortak toplum bilinci inşa etmek için mimariyi nasıl araçsallaştırdıklarını anlamayı hedeflemektedir. Bu doğrultuda, tarihsel olarak Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin başkentinde sosyoekonomik ve ideolojik konum açısından karşı kutuplar niteliğinde olan Çankaya ve Keçiören ilçelerinde yerel yönetimler tarafından komünite inşasında kullanılan mimari tipolojiler Çankaya Evi ve Mahalle Konağı karşılaştırmalı olarak tartışılmaktadır. İki ilçe arasındaki ayrışma sembolik, mekânsal ve pragmatik boyutlarda ilçe yönetimi tarafından uygulanan 'komünite evi' olarak nitelendirilen tipolojilerine de yansımaktadır. Farklı mimari niteliklere ve adlandırmalara sahip bu tipolojiler her iki ilçede de yerel yönetimler için komünite kavramının önemini ve bu kavramı mekânsal pratikler aracılığıyla ideolojik olarak nasıl kullandıklarını açıkça örneklemektedir.*

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Komünite, İdeoloji, Yerel yönetim, Komünite yapıları, Çankaya, Keçiören, Ankara

## Introduction

While the idea of community has been extensively discussed, it remains a vague concept, even though its general meaning seems sociologically obvious. Community can be defined as being a social system that binds people together and provides a sense of belonging (Day, 2006). Although this loose definition clearly applies to all societies, when one questions what the common bonds and their roots actually are, as well as how to sustain them, such a general definition clearly becomes inadequate.

The many different perspectives of community that exist in social theory are rooted in nineteenth-century discussions. The transitional period from rural to urban life is exemplified by Tonnies (1955) in his designation of a specific concept of community which emerges from this dichotomy. Tonnies discussion of community is in terms of the concepts of "Gemeinschaft" and "Gesellschaft." While the former relates to rural life and refers to a community genuinely living together for the common good; the latter refers to emerging urban life and society considering the increasing individualization and organization around an instrumental good or personal benefit (Day, 2006; Tekeli, 2019).

The debate over communities has been directed by a consideration of two notions of community: territorial and relational (Gusfield, 1975; Glynn, 1986; Day, 2006). Although not mutually exclusive, these two notions are still relevant in contemporary discussions. According to this debate, a sense of community is only produced by the relational construction of community through social and behavioral actions. This occurs when the members have a sense of belonging, value each other and the group as a whole, and believe that their well-being depends on their collectivity (MacMillan and Chavis, 1986). This sense of community in its earlier definition has been the transformation of contemporary cities. With the growing domi-

nance of urbanization worldwide, a much more generic, self-reproducing spatiality and, as an extension of this, a new social structure, has begun to form today. This has led to the shifting of territorial boundaries and the increasing network of relations among individuals becoming a determinant of communities (Hanson and Hillier, 1987; Tekeli, 2023.; Studdert, 2005). It is mental, rather than physical, proximity which enhances the emergence of a sense of community. Despite being place-based, these local communities are not only geographically bounded, but are also the concentration of multiple sets of social (family and acquaintance networks), functional (production and consumption), cultural (tradition, religion, or ethnicity) or circumstantial connections (Chaskin, 1997).

Although a new conception of community appears through networks of relations, definitions in terms of territorial and spatial definition are still relevant for cities. As highlighted by Hillier (2002), spatial form and social processes are strongly connected through the correspondence between space and community. In reference to Lefebvre's theory of the social production of space (1991), a community's intersubjective relations, experiences, common symbols, and values transform the perceived physical space into a lived reality. Being in a reflexive relationship, the territorial and spatial aspects of environments define social relations among community members, while the community produces space through experience. The defined set of experiences for local communities relates to their place-specific political reality, encapsulating spatial diversities and limitations, socio-economic structure, cultural values, and the corresponding policies of local governments (Şahin, 2019).

A consideration of the above shows that the representations of space conceived by local governments becomes an essential tool in the fostering of certain characteristics of communities. The political reality of communities has become highly important for politicians, especially at



the local level, as power relations and political legitimacy depend upon residents' choices. Today, the idea of community has become the 'rhetoric of politics and policy-making to harness the positive feelings and support of citizens' (Day, 2006, p.14). In this respect, the concept has gained an ideological position, in addition to its sociological dimension, and the possibility of benefitting from this concept for both the left- and right-wing discourses highlights its vague and changing quality.

Ideologies come from the belief and intellectual systems of societies and the common life values that unite them. Such beliefs, which are built upon social structures and relations, are political or social doctrines, or a system of thoughts, beliefs, and opinions, that direct political and social actions and reflect the social condition (Mardin, 1992). As Gurallar (1999) explains, ideologies have the functions of legitimizing, naturalizing, unifying, rationalizing, and universalizing. In this respect, they play a critical role for a sovereign power to maintain its influence over its subjects. Althusser (2014) states that ideologies are transferred to individuals through ideological state apparatuses. Accordingly, the architectural space can be considered one of the concrete apparatuses for exerting ideologies (Gurallar, 1999, p.19). For governments, space becomes important to spread and strengthen certain ideologies. Territorial definitions of communities ideologically suggest that the passive position of citizens in complex urban structures mean that governments today have a strong presence. The intrinsic and reciprocal existence of a social and ideological sense of a community building comes from the relational and territorial formation of communities, rather than from a contrasting dichotomy. Building a "particular" sense of community within the territorial boundaries of the governing bodies' power becomes extremely significant in sustaining this cycle. The role of local governments can be clearly seen in this respect from a consideration that the power of local governments in most cities is derived from the citizens legally within a defined territorial boundary. Moreover, governments aim to improve the quality of life of citizens by sustaining their ideological influence and benefitting from their social capital. In this respect, it is vital that links are established between the theory of community and the practices for redeveloping economic and social policies and political renewal (Little, 2002). In this way, spatial interventions and architecture become powerful apparatuses for local governments to build such a sense of community, both socially and ideologically.

### **Aim of the Study and Methodology**

The tension between social and ideological dimensions of community building is especially common in developing countries which have rapidly urbanizing cities with increasing populations. While cities are spatially reproduced or have expanded more generically, and as the network of relations between residents becomes more complex, living environments have simultaneously become more inclusive and exclusive, open, and closed. In consideration of this, this study aims to reveal the role of local governments, both socially and ideologically, in the building of a sense of community, as well as in how the knowledge of the community is conceptualized and transferred to architecture spatially, symbolically, and systematically. To demonstrate this role, a case-study has been performed on two very different districts of Ankara, the capital of the Turkish Republic: Çankaya and Keçiören.

As the capital of a developing country, Ankara has changed significantly in terms of many spatial segments during the last hundred years. Ankara's spatial transformation is generally discussed in three successive periods: 1923-1950, 1950-1980, and 1980-onwards based on the changing political ideologies, socioeconomic conditions, and influential agents (Şengül, 2001). This diverse and inconsistent spatial history can be seen in its most concrete form in the city's districts, especially in the differences between Çankaya and Keçiören. Between these two districts, Çankaya in the south and Keçiören in the north, the city is legally, politically, and socioeconomically divided at the local level. This division is represented in the changing definitions of a sense of community and how its spatial tools are developed by the local governments.

Two distinctive community-building typologies have emerged in these districts which are governed by two opposing political views that have maintained political stability over thirty years. In this regard, it is vital to identify the conceptual relation between the notion of community and the definition of referred typologies. Since the notion itself is highly ambiguous and has evolved significantly, there is no specific and widely acknowledged typological definition of these buildings; however, they are mostly referred to as community center or community house in literature. While community center denotes a more complex typology in terms of scale and architectural program, the typologies addressed within the scope of this research correspond to community houses in terms of scale, use, and relationship with the neighborhood.



The dictionary definition of a community house is “a center consisting often of a single building for a community’s social, cultural, recreational and civic activities (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)” Looking at the contextual specificity of Turkey, it is seen that these buildings are named differently in various urban areas due to the lack of a sociological concept that directly corresponds to the community concept in Turkish. Still, since these buildings are associated with ‘houses’ due to societal patterns historically observed in Turkish cities, they will be called ‘community houses.’ In this respect, the community houses of Çankaya and Keçiören are named specifically as Çankaya evi and *Mahalle konağı*. These buildings are considered typologies because of repeated qualities in formal and functional terms that are particular to each building. The municipalities’ approach to deriving a ‘generic’ name for their community-building practices also demonstrates the underlying typological aspect of their approach. Accordingly, this study provides a layered and comparative analysis of both municipalities’ community houses in terms both the underlying and exerted ideologies, as well as of their social influence:

- The study discusses the conceptualizations of community houses with reference to the selection of their names and their symbolic and spatial correspondence for the target communities.
- A formal typological analysis of community houses at two levels elaborates first on the relationship with the site at the neighborhood scale, followed by a critical evaluation of the building of mass articulation and the selection of architectural elements and underlying ideologies.
- The study presents a functional typological analysis unfolding the programmatic dimension of community houses concerning the form of activities, user profiles, and methods of building a sense of community among members.

### **The Historical Background of Çankaya and Keçiören**

As the capital of the newly established Republic, Ankara has been subject to continuous social, political, economic, and spatial interventions and transformations, and the current state of the city is due to the concrete accumulation of these diverse forces. Ankara was first the laboratory of the planning and urbanization principles of early Republican ideals (Şahin, 2019). Whereas Istanbul symbolized past traditions, Ankara was considered a

forward-looking city (Aydın et al., 2003). As Ankara lost its central position in planning to Istanbul, it was faced with unexpected, and often, hardly visible problems of urbanization that emerged with an uncontrollably increasing population (Şahin, 2019). Ankara has recently undergone a series of transformations due to the more exuding ideologies of neoliberal policies. It can therefore be said that Ankara’s complex, incremental, and inconsistent spatial development is due to highly polarized local environments within the city.

The socio-spatial and political polarization of Ankara is most clearly seen when one compares Çankaya and Keçiören. This polarization is the result of the continuous processes which involve the spatial and political agencies and expressions found in the social sphere that have existed since the city’s capital was declared. As one of Ankara’s largest and most significant districts, Çankaya was mainly developed following the 1929 master plan of Hermann Jansen for the new city region. This plan, named Yenışehir, represented in Ankara the Westernization drive of the new Republic: a desire to emulate a contemporary way of life. As explained by Bozdoğan (1997), the decision to designate Ankara as the capital of the new Turkish State is significant as it is part of this new ideology. The ideology was a move away from the concept that identity should be shaped by history to the desire to create a new culture. Spatial arrangements were made to correspond to this new way of life, which culminated in Yenışehir (Aydın et al., 2003). The region was developed around Atatürk Boulevard outside of the old fabric of the city into an urban area in which a western lifestyle was developed for the military and bureaucrat elite of the Republic through the administrative buildings and the housing areas allocated to them (Şahin et al., 2014). The early 1920s was therefore a time when Ankara witnessed its first concrete manifestation of the dualities which exist within lifestyles (Nalbantoğlu, 2000 as cited in Can-Mollaer, 2023, p.109). The railway crossing from the middle of the city through the west-east axis acted as a border dividing Ankara into two, both geographically and socioeconomically (Şenyapılı, 2005). The old town and its symbolic reference to the pre-Republican period were neglected, and this led to the creation of a segregated community.

The greenbelt around the bowl-shaped topography of Ankara, as identified in the Jansen’s plan, consisted of vineyards, a very specific ecological characteristic of the city. During the construction of a “new city” in Çankaya, Keçiören was designated a conservation area for vineyards by Jansen in his plan (Şenyapılı, 2005 as cited in





Can-Mollaer, 2023, p.69). This meant that the much of the character of Keçiören survived from the 1920s to the 1950s in terms of the vineyard mansions which served as summerhouses for important governmental and military figures. The 1930s, however, was a difficult time for Ankara due to the failure of the existing housing stock to accommodate the rapidly increasing migration from surrounding Anatolian cities. The inadequacy of planning and municipal bodies to this rapid need resulted in the construction of self-initiated illegal squatter settlements (*gecekondular* – literally, “perched overnight”) on the periphery of the city (Korkmaz Tirkeş, 2007). A significant number of these squatter settlements are constructed in the sociospatially neglected areas of the northern areas through community agencies which are based on kinship (*hemşehricilik*) and ethnicity. As Keçiören was legally part of the old and neglected district of Altındağ during that period, there was an uncontrolled increase in the number of squatters in the area.

The 1950s was a turning point in the development of the spatial disparities between Çankaya and Keçiören. The newly elected Democrat Party’s target demographic in their political discourse was the urban poor on the fringes, which meant that the party adopted a more pluralistic perspective (Öncü, 1998 as cited in Can-Mollaer, 2023, p.81). Meanwhile, the early Republican emphasis on the new city center and Çankaya shifted to the periphery, including Keçiören. Following the granting of title deeds to squatter inhabitants and several amnesty laws, new cadastral parcels, District Height Regulation Plans (*Bölge Kat Nizamı*) and a Condominium Law, were all approved in the early 50s. These developments accelerated the transition from low-density single ownership to high-density multi-owned apartments for low and middle-income residents of the vineyards of Keçiören during the 60s and 70s (Önge, 2023). The nature of the neighborhoods in the district were significantly influenced by the cities which the migrants and *hemşehricilik* had come from, and this led to increased social disparity and enclosedness in the area (S. Ayata and A. Ayata, 1996; Kurtoğlu, 2004 as cited in Can-Mollaer, 2023, p.83-84). It was during that period that the centrist approach in the Yücel-Uybadin plan resulted in the center of Çankaya becoming more densely populated, with many early Republican buildings being demolished for reconstruction or new floors being added (Çalışkan, 2009).

Housing development in the 70s in Ankara was directed towards the western corridor, which aligned with the envisioned controlled decentralization in the master plan of

the 1990s. The socioeconomic segregation in the north and south of the city which emerged in 1923 became more persistent and manifested itself through these axes of decentralization (Şenyapılı, 2005). This meant that the district of Çankaya grew to the west around the Eskişehir and Konya roads, and more suburban, enclosed, and socioeconomically higher status settlements, were created in the region. The 1980s was characterized by market-driven restructuring and a transition towards urban ‘entrepreneurialism’ in new local-central governance relations (Harvey, 1989), especially in Keçiören. 1984 was therefore a significant year as Keçiören became a district with local governance legislation. The spatial transformation of the district subsequently gained momentum in the 90s with the clearance of these squatter areas by strict municipal interventions, and a process of new urbanization began through the construction of poorly constructed and extremely dense apartments in a process of continuous construction and selling, or build-and-sell (*yap-sat*).

The ongoing disparities in terms of old vs. new, and historical vs. modern that existed between the north and south of Ankara became more socioeconomically and spatially evident in the 90s. The right-wing political discourse on social security and welfare for the residents, accompanied by strong grassroots organizations and sociodemographic support of immigrants, resulted in the apparent political dominance of Keçiören which has continued for more than thirty years. The new party’s ideology was to form a new ‘Keçiören’ and to coin the phrase ‘*Keçiörenli*’, namely a new resident identity specific to Keçiören (Aydın et al., 2003; Öz, 2014). The newly emerging conservative middle class, which gradually appeared in the accumulation channels of the capital, was supportive of this transformation process. Meanwhile, the ideological alienation of the district was created through a counter-spatial order manifested through architectural symbols. Aydın et al. (2003) argue that the new ideology represented in the urban space is an eclectic synthesis of Turkish-Islamic ideology. A symbolic event for the explicit expression of Çankaya-Keçiören opposition ideologically was the decision by the then prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, to live in Keçiören instead of the official residence in Çankaya. The district’s new municipality aimed to create a new image for the newly emerging Keçiören. This involved the construction of specific symbolic buildings, such as counter images like the Republican Tower and Estergon Castle, as well as stricter aestheticization and regulations for the architects and contractors to control the appearance of apartment blocks.

Ankara's inconsistent and incremental planning and transformation shows that ideological disparities have existed since it was declared the capital, and the ideological positioning of Çankaya clearly represents the concrete manifestation of new Republican ideals. Once celebrated for its modern and Western-oriented appearance, Çankaya became a hotbed of emerging Islamist-conservatist political discourse at the beginning of the twenty-first century. However, the fact that Keçiören is positioned at the direct opposite of Çankaya, rather than other northern districts of the city, necessitates further elaboration. The district's gradually increasing social and spatial character reached a suitable level in the late 90s for the construction of a new ideology. While districts such as Mamak and Altındağ were composed of many disparate spatial fragments, which made the formation of a shared resident identity difficult (Şahin, 2019), Keçiören was suitable for a more homogeneous spatial development, and the formation of a new resident profile, as it was inhabited by immigrant groups who already had established communal relationships.

When looking at the results of local government elections, it can be seen that opposing ideologies have remained constant for the last thirty years (Figure 1), and despite the changes in the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality, Keçiören and Çankaya have ideologically remained symbolic urban environments. The districts are firm political bases for their respective parties in relation to their highly contrasting political, demographic, social, and cultural profiles (Şahin et al., 2015). Although this might seemingly provide political stability in municipal governance, both governments face challenges in ensuring their local legitimacy and portrayal of their services as being successful. Therefore, as already suggested, both governments attempt to provide concrete manifestations of their ideologies through space, which simultaneously enhances the well-being of residents and assures their political loyalty. Ideologically, this corresponds to the practices of local governments to form a sense of community around a particular identity and shared values, as seen in Keçiören's attempt to create a distinctive profile of "Keçiörenli." As argued by Öz (2014), the dominant powers and agents -residents reproduce each other in the urban space, and this can be seen in the municipalities of both districts. The residents of Çankaya are generally of a higher socioeconomic status and tend to be supportive of the modernist, Republican ideals that are the basis of the construction of their environment. In other words, the residents of Çankaya tend to support left-wing political

parties. The residents of Keçiören, in contrast, are more likely to live in squats and have a lower level of socioeconomic power. The empowering and socially responsible municipal image created for these resident groups, which is enmeshed with explicit expressions of shared values and lifestyle, has resulted in persistent general support for right-wing political parties.

The environmental ideologies of the two governments manifest themselves primarily through symbolic values, such as signs, names and, in particular, architectural styles. Public buildings have become an operational field in this regard, as they are where local governments have complete autonomy to construct structures which exhibit such ideological indicators. Such buildings generally provide services for community well-being, and have similar purposes and spatial applications, such as cultural or sports centers, in both municipalities. However, in addition to generic spatial implementations, both municipalities have also developed unique typologies during the last ten years that aim to improve the sense of community and community well-being. Examples of such typologies, which can be called community houses in a

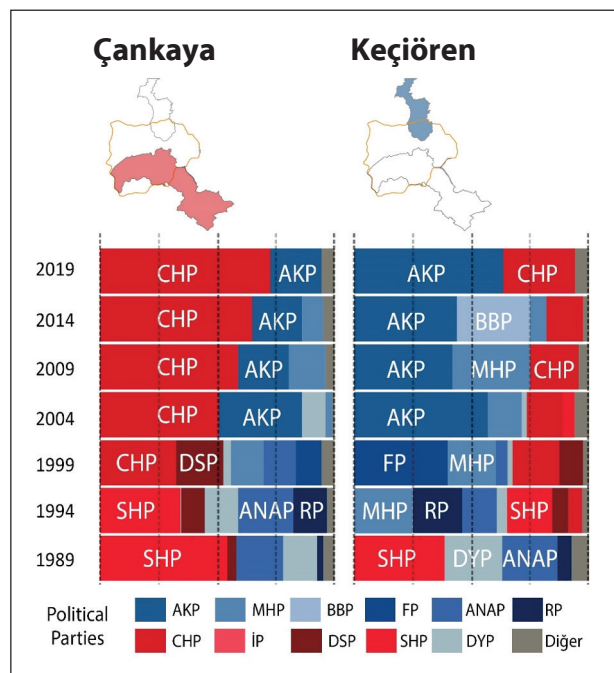


Figure 1. The voting patterns of residents in Çankaya and Keçiören districts.

Source: Prepared by the Author based on the data derived from YSK. (2024). Local authorities general elections archive (Mahalli idareler, 1989-2019).



general sense, are 'Çankaya Evi' (Çankaya House) in the Çankaya district and 'Mahalle Konağı' (Neighborhood Mansion) in the Keçiören district. As seen in Figure 2, there are currently 27 community houses in Çankaya and 12 in Keçiören. In both districts, these houses are located amongst diverse neighborhoods according to each neighborhood's population, socioeconomic status, and density. While exhibiting similar relationships with the existing urban tissue, the space becomes instrumental symbolically and ideologically in terms of the conceptualization of community and ways of constructing a sense of community through architectural and programmatic qualities.

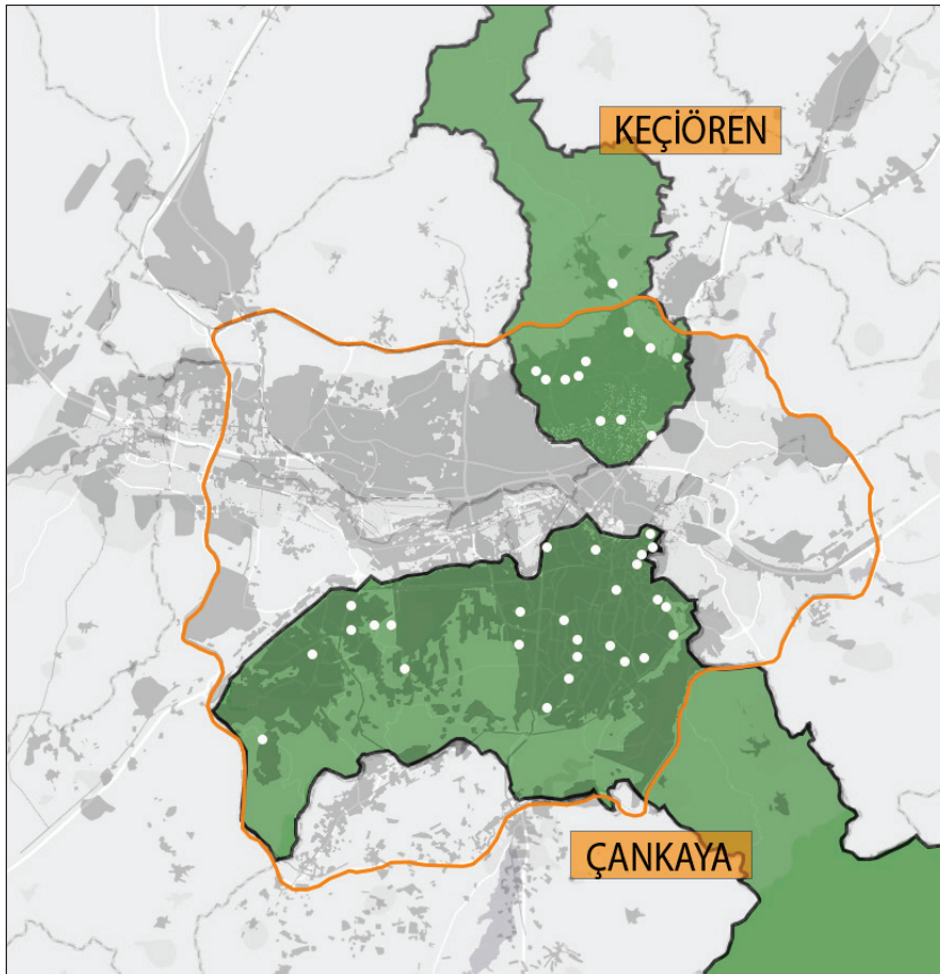
### The Spatial and Ideological Study of Community Houses in Çankaya and Keçiören

In order to compare spatial and ideological influences of community house typologies on community construc-

tion, four examples from each district have been selected. Figures 3 and 4 show these examples: their overall place in the urban environment, their positioning, orientation, and scale within the surrounding environment, and their architectural qualities. In the following section, the formation of the community houses of both districts will be discussed in terms of the symbolic, spatial, and programmatic dimensions of each community building.

### The Conceptualization and Naming of Community Houses

Many municipality initiations for community well-being revolve around the individuality of residents and the level of access available to a wide range of facilities in larger 'community centers' within the city scale. However, the mentioned community houses considered here are, in comparison, conceptualized and built according to the idea and scale of the neighborhood unit, thus providing



**Figure 2.** The distribution of community houses in Çankaya and Keçiören. Source: Prepared by the author based on the Google Earth (2024) satellite view.





**Figure 3.** Selected community houses (Çankaya Evi) in the Çankaya district. Source: Drawn by the author on Google Earth (2024) satellite view. Photographs from authors archive, 2024.



**Figure 4.** Selected Community Houses (Mahalle Konağı) in the Keçiören district. Source: Drawn by the author on Google Earth (2024) satellite view; photographs from authors archive, 2024.





more sensitivity to maintaining the identity of the relevant community. To emphasize the residents' sense of belonging and community, both typologies proposed by local municipalities directly refer to the notion of 'dwelling' symbolically. The use of the words 'dwelling' or 'house' in the naming of the community buildings creates a sense of privacy and intimacy that enhances a sense of belonging to the community. Although there are many terms which mean house in the Turkish language, the ones selected by these districts, which have two opposing ideologies, support their individual conceptualizations of community and spatial approach. As stated by Althusser (2014), naming is significant in ideologies as the names gain an ideological effect through frequent use. This leads to the object becoming a subject that contributes to, and conveys the messages and ideas of, the ideology (Özgen and Sarı, 2021).

The use of the word "ev" by Çankaya municipality refers to the "Halkevi" - People's House - a typology developed by the Republican People's Party (CHP) in the early Republican period. For the left-wing founder party of the Republic, these houses were spaces to understand, teach, and spread the ideals and principles of Kemalist ideology, as well as establish the reforms that are the products of this ideology (Gurallar, 1999). As explained by Gurallar, the aim is to ensure the cohesion and integration of the people and to keep the society as a whole, thus overcoming religious, ethnic, and class differences. The aim of *Halkevi* is therefore to provide education of modern and national ideals so that the habits and behaviors of the newly envisioned life can be developed (1999). Similarly, while Çankaya Houses today aim to educate and strengthen community bonds, they are politically separate from the party and ideally welcome all residents of the district, regardless of their ideological positions. That said, the programmatic dimension of early Republican Community Houses was extremely strict and elaborate. In contrast, the one adopted by Çankaya Houses relies mostly on residents' own preferences and socioeconomic backgrounds in diverse neighborhoods. Still, the use of the term "ev" for community houses in the Çankaya district shows that the ideological roots of the local government are directly represented in how a sense of community is constructed.

In the case of Keçiören district, the name *Mahalle Konağı* demonstrates the ideological conception of community of two separate levels. *Konak* is a housing type that emerged in the Ottoman period. It is mainly either a large-scale building or an integrated structure expanded

with additions, which is designed for wealthy and prestigious residents. The use of this term for a community house initially relates to the Ottoman heritage ideologically. Moreover, considering the lower socioeconomic profile of Keçiören and its homogenous housing, the use of such a term implies the provision for residents, distinct from the surroundings, of a sense of wealth and status in the gathering and strengthening of community bonds. At another level, *mahalle* (neighborhood) is emphasized to strengthen an ideological community concept, derived from the Ottomans, of greater locality and territoriality within a smaller area. As Tekeli (2019) mentions, the term *mahalle* is utilized for a nostalgic, territorially defined community, which appreciates the need to promote Ottoman heritage. In the Ottoman period, cities were formed around *mahalle* as the basic defining unit in which the basic communal needs are provided by residents (*mahalleli*) themselves (Bayartan, 2005). In those cities, social solidarity and participation were achieved mostly at the *mahalle* level since people's connections are defined only by those from their own locality, religion, sect, family, or ethnic group. Although the current condition of Keçiören's neighborhoods does not directly correspond with the Ottoman profile of *mahalle*, the local government places utmost importance for the continuation of such an impression among the residents through the frequent use of the term within community well-being-related spaces. Ideologically, this is also reflected in the approaches of the reigning parties since 1994 to form a closed community with shared values. Mardin (1981) points out that, colored by heavily religious ideas of morality, *mahalle* controls both the individual and the family. In contrast to secularization efforts in the early Republican period to liberate individuals from the collective constraints of community, *mahalle* emphasizes an imagined community and differentiation between "us" and them. Hence, it is a highly operational concept for the local government of Keçiören in its aims of creating a closed community.

Besides the generic naming of the community house typologies, the specific names denoting the buildings also have a lot to say about the ideological positions of the two local governments. While many community houses are named after the neighborhood, some are named after an important person, thinker, or artist, and the names selected demonstrate the values or ideologies emphasized by the municipalities. In a study of the naming of cultural centers in Ankara, Özgen and Sarı (2021) argue that for those who name the buildings, a choice of name that is



not dependent on the location positions the building in a specific place among various categories to represent a particular ideology. For the community, a name which represents their own ideology creates a socio-cultural sense of security and the continuity of shared values.

The table below presents the community house names of Keçiören and Çankaya (Table 1). As can be seen, the community houses in Keçiören are more often provided with a symbolic name than those in Çankaya. However, the particular names selected for both local governments refer to their ideologies. For example, while the right-wing government in Keçiören selected the name Hüseyin Nihal Atsız, a writer and a leading supporter of Turkism, the left-wing government of Çankaya selected names like Nazım Hikmet and Hasan Ali Yücel, important representatives of republican development through more contemporary attitudes. The spatial manifestation of community buildings also carries a symbolic meaning corresponding to the social and ideological values of both residents and local governments.

### Formal Analysis of Community Houses

Despite the ideological differences seen in the names of community buildings, there are many similarities in the overall spatial characteristics of community houses and their relationship with the surrounding environment. Figures 3 and 4 show that the spatial proportions of the community houses of both districts are generally similar and positioned in more public areas, either in parks or next to other public facilities. Compared to *Çankaya Evi*, the community houses of Keçiören have a more definitive positioning. Within the dense, gird-iron-formed urban fabric, *Mahalle Konağı* are often placed within small green areas. However, compared to the reference structures from which these houses gained their name, there is absolutely no transformation of the surrounding environment. While traditional houses spatially define new public and semi-private areas, these new community houses are generally positioned at the corner of a park and next to roads with little relationship to the surroundings. It should be remembered that the spatial history of

Table 1. Names of Current Community Houses in Çankaya and Keçiören

Mahalle Konağı		Çankaya Evi	
non-location-based	location based	non-location-based	location based
Hüseyin Nihal Atsız	Bademlik	Hasan Ali Yücel	Ayrancı
Atapark Aşık Veysel	Esertepe	İsmail Cem	Bademlidere
Çiçekli Haydar Melikoğlu	Osmangazi	Mürsel Uluç	Bayraktar
Aktepe Barbaros Hayrettin	Yayla	Öveçler Nazım Hikmet	Beysukent
Şeyh Şamil (altered later)	Anafartalar	Türkan Saylan	Bilkent
	Sancaktepe	Zübeyde Hanım	Birlik
	Bağlum		Cebeci
			Çayyolu
			Dilekler ve 50. Yıl
			Emek
			Esat
			Karapınar
			Kırkkonaklar
			Maltepe
			Mimar Sinan
			Mutlukent
			Sokullu
			Türkkonut
			Ümitköy
			Yıldız
			100. Yıl



the district towards more densely constructed apartment blocks is a major determinant in the decision to place community houses inside small parks. Having limited opportunities for public spaces, the choice to connect a community house for residents' well-being with an open public area is highly appropriate in the involvement of users in a purposefully built space in community activities that can enhance the production of lived spaces of experiences. A similar situation can be said to apply to Çankaya community houses, yet the primary approach of the municipality is not to transform the surroundings, but the building itself in the first place. As seen in the examples of Çiğdem and Emek community houses, such buildings can be inside a park or next to a bazaar or any public facility within a dense urban network. The choice of location is also related to a municipal decision: some of the community houses in the center of Ankara are reused buildings that were initially constructed for other purposes (for example Hasan Âli Yücel), whereas the newer ones are designed and constructed for use as community houses. This has led to the provision of uneven opportunities spatially among the neighborhoods of Çankaya, as compared to the consistent practice in Keçiören.

Although the positioning of both districts' community houses is, to a great extent, the same, their architectural qualities are significantly different. This denotes the ideological differences between both local governments and demonstrates how the architecture of the community buildings is instrumentalized to present a particular sense of community (Figure 5). The architectural language of Çankaya houses reflects the municipality's contemporary, pluralistic, and contextually sensitive approach in that they are generally composed of one mass. While earlier buildings exhibit no particular articulation of the façade and blend with the surrounding greenery, newer ones utilize contemporary elements. The architectural changes in the buildings do not refer to a particular change in the programmatic planning of community use, but the volumetric changes are reflected in the facilities provided. The architecture of community houses blends with the surrounding environment, which makes them symbolically less powerful in representing a definitive ideological image of a community. Many of the community houses, if they have not been previously used, are even difficult to distinguish from surrounding buildings at the pace of daily life.

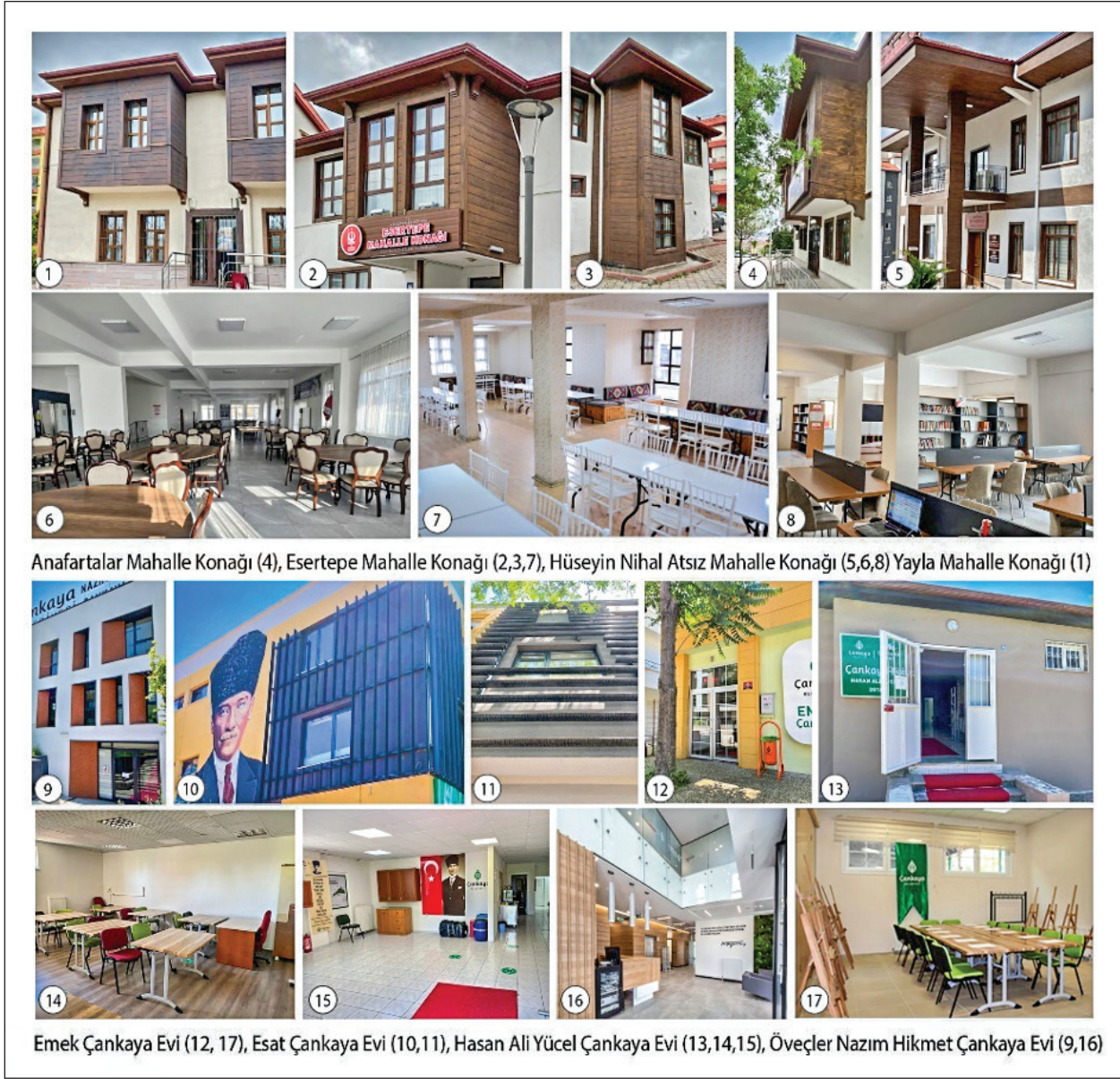
Compared to those in Çankaya, the community houses in Keçiören pose a particular architectural quality which is seen in each example. Keçiören community houses are

designed in line with generic Ottoman architectural characteristics, and the architectural image of these houses is directly emblematic of the ideological values of the local government and the relevant right-wing party. However, the characteristic Ottoman architectural elements do not respond to a programmatic change or the importance of the building for use in the community; they remain primarily symbolic elements. Considering the architectural approaches of both local governments, the changes in the spatial manifestation of community houses are open to discussion. The preserving an architectural identity, as seen in Keçiören, could be highly ideological and present a specific discourse on the sense of community. However, the proliferation of the same typology may enhance community use and residents' encounters without any differentiation within the neighborhood. In a way, the community members in the whole district are able to develop a distinct sense of community and a shared neighborhood image. The municipality's slogan, "*her mahalleye bir konak*" (a community mansion in each neighborhood), supports such spatial ideology. However, it should be noted that, as mentioned earlier, Keçiören has a more homogenous urban fabric and user profile. Thus, it might be socially and politically more feasible to pursue a shared architectural identity for the community. In Çankaya, the borders expand significantly, including central and suburban formations and changing socio-economic profiles, and this sociospatial heterogeneity is reflected in the changing architectural proposals. Although altering the community houses site specifically could enhance the involvement of local members, it should be questioned to what extent a community house typology can change in different neighborhoods of the same district. It is possible that a significant spatial difference in community houses can weaken the shared sense of community and create a more egalitarian local community approach.

### **A Functional and Programmatic Analysis of Community Houses**

The ideological and architectural similarities and differences between the community houses of both districts are also present in their programmatic approaches to a sense of community construction, in that both typologies aim to educate the community members and strengthen their bonds and overall well-being. Still, the change in spatial manifestation is also the key difference in how local governments conceptualize the essential dimensions of community construction. In Çankaya houses, the facilities provided to members vary regarding the spatial





**Figure 5.** Exterior and interior details of Keçiören and Çankaya community houses.

Source: Photographs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 from the author's archive (2024); 6,7 from (Mahalle konakları, t.y.); 16 from (Öveçler Çankaya Evi, n.d.) and 17 from (Çankaya evleri, n.d.).

opportunities and limitations of the space. For example, the Çiğdem community house has limited space for a variety of activities, whereas the newly built Öveçler community house is larger and so can accommodate a wider range of activities. Since the main reason behind the spatial change is the urban fabric, which also influences the socioeconomic profile, it is natural that each commu-

nity house provides a unique program for community members. Moreover, the scope of educational activities provided is determined according to the preferences of residents, as well as local needs. Therefore, in higher profile neighborhoods like Çiğdem, community houses respond to the needs of more elderly residents and their need to encounter each other more during activities such



as drawing, painting, and the playing of instruments. In neighborhoods at a socioeconomically lower-level, community houses prioritize the education and self-development of younger residents. It is of note that such community houses include a library and study areas which are especially aimed at students.

The primary approach of Çankaya municipality for the construction of community relations can be identified as the ‘encountering’ of members in small groups as part of daily routines. On the other hand, Keçiören municipality prioritizes large-scale gatherings in the formation of community relations. The use of the community houses within the district is similarly repeated in each neighborhood. While some of the spaces are provided for daily use, the leading spatial character of the houses is to provide a gathering place for community members for various activities such as weddings, celebrations, funerals, and commemorations. Seen in this way, the highly ideological identity of the architecture acts as a form of external skin for a specific programmatic use.

Compared with Çankaya, Keçiören has a relatively young resident profile who mostly work outside the district during the daytime and return at night. It is therefore seen that it is the women of the district who stay at home, and so have limited opportunities to access public spaces, who are the main beneficiaries of the daily activities and education provided by community houses. However, a more communal use of houses occurs during specific traditional occasions, such as “*düğün, kına, sünnet, mevlid.*”, which are highly related to residents’ national and religious living styles. For low and middle-income groups of the area, such traditional events can be prohibitively expensive. Hence, the municipality providing a free community space is often greatly appreciated by residents, and strengthens the ideological and social connections between the local government and the community.

The administrative approach of the community houses in both districts is similar, and this is in contrast to the diverse programmatic layers. *Çankaya Evi* and *Mahalle Konağı* are territorially defined typologies which strengthen a particular sense of community that is appropriate for the ideology of local governments. Community houses are governed by an administrative body which, while it does not determine the use of space, its presence does undermine community-initiated development or future formations. The construction of a sense of community remains highly controlled territorially, and the tension around the concept of community and its

social and ideological dimensions in relation to the role of local governments is apparent. Hence, the perceived physical space of community houses remains the same as it was conceived by the municipality, and residents have limited opportunities to appropriate and use the environment as required.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The concept of community is sociologically rooted and involves a consideration of politics, urban studies, and architecture in terms of territorial dimensions and spatial implications. Despite the move towards defining community through relational networks, the continuing territoriality of living environments within defined boundaries means that this dimension remains relevant. Under the influence of planetary urbanization, the current physical conditions of cities and living areas are defined mainly by other actors, as well as by central and local governments. In this respect, the territorial dimension of the notion of community also makes it highly political. This is particularly true when one considers that in some places the residents of a district select the local government and decide on the expected community services, thus creating both reciprocal and oscillating definitions of community with social and political objectives. The paper has considered these factors in its presentation of ideologically instrumentalizing architecture for community construction by local governments with two socio-politically opposing districts of Ankara, Çankaya, and Keçiören.

This comparative case study shows to what extent ideological disparities of local governments and communities determine the construction of a sense of community. Starting with the Republican ideal of the modern over the traditional, and then continuing with an emerging counter-ideological goal in the following century, the two districts have long been polarized spatial representations of local governments. Despite their conflicting political backgrounds, it is seen that local governments seek to utilize the notion of community and community construction to strengthen their ideologies and increase their political influence. Referring back to Althusser (2014), architecture is considered an ideological state apparatus at the local level for municipalities. Actors instrumentalizing this apparatus are the planners and architects who realize the projects. Both cases show that community houses are not derived from site-specific qualities, or certain characteristics of members of the community, but are mostly designed as generic buildings with a fixed role and





architectural quality. The vision assigned by the municipalities is the determining power for spatial realizations, and this is generally abstract, ideological, and top-down. Although the architecture of community house typologies varies in certain aspects, both formally and programmatically, the essential attributes of referencing a shared space and identity, relating to the neighborhood spatially, and providing activities for community well-being, are all seen as being common in both typologies. This shows that, beyond the conceived space of community houses by the municipalities and their selective manifestations architecturally, what shapes a typical community house is the lived experience of community members and how they construct meaning socially through this space.

Research shows that community is a fundamental concept for any ideological position or local government. Despite the mere territorial definition and ideological impetus, the spatial practices for constructing a community influence both municipalities and community members. While the ideological symbols and architectural elements are present, the engagement of community members in activities does show that ideologies resonate socially with them. In return, the community's well-being and forming of a shared identity and sense of belonging create social capital and potential political power for the local governments. It therefore seems unrealistic to demand that local governments remove ideological motives from community construction practices. That being said, if these communities' spatial and programmatic relations could be enhanced, and their administrative aspects became more community-driven and participatory, it would be greatly beneficial for both local government and residents.

## Epilogue

Shortly after the completion of the study, for the first time in 35 years since the Social Democratic Populist Party's (SHP) dominance in the 1989 elections as an opposing political view, the Republican People's Party (CHP) has won the municipal elections again in Keçiören by a margin of 48% to 38.5%. This study examined how the two districts developed spatially and how a sense of community was constructed in the 35 years when ideological differentiations were highly visible and influential. Following this dramatic change in the political sphere after such a long period, observing and evaluating the ideological approach of the new local governments to the district and its community members can be considered as a continuation of this research. In particular, examining

the new local government's approach to the existing architectural representation and programming of community houses in the district, which is significantly different from its instrumentalization of space, can serve as an example of how ideological tensions over community and space are resolved and forms of community construction transform.

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