The historical development of Istanbul's *gecekondu* areas (informally-originated neighborhoods) can be broadly interpreted as a progression toward the center and subsequent re-peripheralization, both in sociopolitical terms and in actual urban geography. While Istanbul emerged in recent decades as a magnet for transnational migrants and for capitals pouring into the debt-fueled real estate sector, many such neighborhoods have been targeted by speculative socio-spatial restructuring projects, while also absorbing much of the migratory influx. The recent economic crisis plunged these urban redevelopment sites into a deadlock, generating a fragmented urbanscape in which multiple layers of uncertainty, suspension, and informalization overlap and interact. This chapter explores the unfolding transformation in Fikirtepe, the largest ongoing redevelopment project in the city, which has seen its social and urban fabric torn apart by the redevelopment and is currently stuck in an unstable but protracted limbo. As Fikirtepe becomes "unlivable" for many of its long-time dwellers, a number of migrants are moving in, etching out a living: a collateral effect of redevelopment failure, creating a space of opportunity for new disenfranchised populations with varied backgrounds, legal statuses, and life trajectories. Within this setting, this chapter analyzes the periphery as a condition that is articulated, reproduced, and transformed through embodied practices. With their practices, narratives, and trajectories, those who inhabit such botched urban transformation embody different layers of the periphery, contributing to shape an understanding of it as a perspectival condition with a polyvalent spatiality and temporality.

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FIKIRTEPE IN LIMBO: URBAN TRANSFORMATION, CROSS-BORDER MIGRATION, AND RE-PERIPHERALIZATION IN ISTANBUL

Francesco Pasta

Introduction

Despite an established branch within urban studies interpreting "peripheral urbanization" as a concretization of "insurgent citizenship" (Caldeira, 2017; Holston & Caldeira, 2007), only recently have informally-originated settlements[1] been approached as sites of self-determination for migrant populations (Bastia, 2015; Fawaz, 2017). In parallel, although the socio-spatial effects of entrepreneurial governance and land commodification on informal neighborhoods in the "Global South" have been amply examined (see, for instance Roy, 2011a; Amin, 2013; Schindler, 2017), the spatial interactions between transit populations and the redevelopment of the informally-generated built environment remain largely unexplored—both in the case of Istanbul and globally. This chapter examines the interplay between inhabitants and their changing urban environment in Fikirtepe, an informally-originated neighborhood in Istanbul's Kadıköy district with a sizeable migrant population, and site of the largest ongoing urban transformation project in town.

With about half of its building stock—hosting up to 70% of its population—developed outside the realm of institutionalized planning (Karaman, 2013b; Aslan & Erman, 2014), Istanbul constitutes a "textbook example of peripheral urbanization" (Caldeira, 2017), while also increasingly presenting itself as "a laboratory of global trends [...] in the changing socio-spatial structure" of cities (Türkün, 2011). As a world city on the edge of the EU bloc, Istanbul is a crossroads on the global fault line that has been defined the "political equator" (Cruz & Forman, 2017): a node where migrants leaving the dysfunctional states and conflicts of so-called "non-integrated" countries transit and settle (Genç, 2015), but also a gate for capitals from the advanced capitalist "core" seeking investment outlets, externalization opportunities, and cheap labor in peripheral economies. In the past couple decades

[1] By this term, I refer to urban neighborhoods that initially developed outside state-sanctioned planning, mostly self-built by lower-income populations. They lacked official authorizations, did not comply with regulations, and were therefore extra-legal in various ways. Nowadays, these settlements could have been regularized and incorporated to some level into the formal city. Thus, they might not be entirely "informal," yet they present particular socio-spatial arrangements and a specific development trajectory compared to other neighborhoods in the city.

of neoliberal restructuring and sustained capitalist growth, in particular from the 2000s onward, the Turkish metropolis has thus emerged as a hub for transnational migrants (Marconi, 2009; Pusch, 2012) and attracted growing amounts of investment and credit, pouring in particular into the real estate and construction sectors (Sassen, 2009; Keyder, 2010b; Karaman, 2013).

In this context, Istanbul's informally-originated settlements are being targeted by speculative socio-spatial restructuring policies that are then implemented by a coalition of private and governmental actors. Interestingly, these neighborhoods have also absorbed a substantial share of the influx of foreign migrants—with various backgrounds and legal statuses—settling in the city as a (more or less temporary) stopover (Kılıçaslan, 2016; Karaman et al., 2020). With the recent economic downturn in the past five years bringing redevelopment projects to a standstill, some of these large-scale urban transformation sites have turned into hybrid urbanscapes, suspended in a transitory yet protracted condition, where different subjects carry out forms of adaptation and endurance. Such neighborhoods provide strategic standpoints for observation of the interaction in urban space between fluxes of capital and people triggered by global imbalances, particularly so in the extended temporality of disrupted redevelopment.

Acknowledging the common embeddedness of transnational migration and urban redevelopment in a global regime of structural inequalities and selective (im)mobilities, this chapter examines Fikirtepe as an "emerging space of socio-spatial difference" (Brenner, 2014), where capital flows, appropriating space, intersect with the human flows of disadvantaged populations working to establish a foothold and daily life in the metropolis (Holston, 2009). By approaching this site through a "peripheral" lens, the aim is both to deepen our understanding of the urban transformation dynamics unfolding on the ground, and to expand the conceptualization of the periphery as an analytical device.

The chapter builds upon an understanding of peripherality as a relational condition (Roy, 2019) that is articulated, navigated, and transformed through material practices and subjective narratives. From this standpoint, it investigates the practices and narratives of those who inhabit Fikirtepe during the current transformation, specifically by juxtaposing the intersecting trajectories of two groups—long-time local dwellers and newly arrived transit migrants[2]—who exemplify dissonant and complementary dimensions of the periphery. Exploring the different ways in which the condition of peripherality is approached and experienced, this comparative outlook contributes to the shaping of

[2] The approximate term "transit migrant" is employed here without delving into the problematic categorizations and differentiations between "refugees," "asylum seekers," and "forced/economic migrants" (see Crawley et al., 2016).

an understanding of peripherality as a deeply perspectival construct (Peeren et al., 2016) with a polyvalent spatiality and temporality.

The chapter presents qualitative analysis based on findings from field research that took place from 2017 to 2019, including semi-structured interviews and informal dialogues with both migrants and long-time dwellers, as well as observations and literature review. The first part of the chapter briefly charts Fikirtepe's historical development within the broader frame of informal urbanization in Istanbul, from the emergence of informal settlements in the 1950s up to the current restructuring of the city. In the second part, I delve into the ongoing transformation in the area, outlining the dynamics at play and the emerging socio-spatial landscape. Multiple dimensions of the periphery are briefly discussed here, and I examine Fikirtepe as a case of each of the following: an instance of re-peripheralization, an urban geopolitical fault line, a liminal space inhabited by disenfranchised populations, and an in-between temporality. Against this backdrop, the third section is conceived as an excursion through Fikirtepe's changing environment, relying upon observations, conversations, and interviews from fieldwork. It juxtaposes the diverging narratives of a local family that has been living in Fikirtepe since the 1950s with a group of Afghan migrants, temporarily residing in the area in transit to Western Europe. The concluding part succinctly recaps what can be learned from approaching Fikirtepe through a "peripheral" lens.

From *gecekondu* to *kentsel dönüşüm* (urban transformation): informal urbanization and the center-periphery dialectic in Fikirtepe, Istanbul

The historical trajectory of Istanbul's informally-originated neighborhoods can be broadly interpreted as a progression toward the center and, in some cases, subsequent re-peripheralization, both in sociopolitical terms and in actual urban geography. This section charts the evolution of one such neighborhood, Fikirtepe, from outer squatter settlement up through the current redevelopment, within the broader frame of informal urbanization in Istanbul and its unfolding.

Starting in the late 1940s, millions of people migrated from rural areas to Turkey's metropolitan centers as a consequence of rapid industrialization and agriculture mechanization (Aslan & Erman, 2014; Karaman et al., 2020). The main form of housing for them were simple structures, surreptitiously erected overnight by a family or group of people, for the most part on public land. This kind of structure is known as a *gecekondu*. The term, roughly meaning "built overnight," renders the conditions of briskness, inconspicuousness, and liminality in which these structures originated. Governments were "conveniently looking the other way," since such squatter settlements supplied cheap workforce to the nascent industrial

sector while relieving the state from its obligation to provide affordable housing (Keyder, 2005; Karaman, 2013a).

Fig. 1
New constructions, meant for mid-to-high class, loom over self-built houses mostly inhabited by a working-class population, Fikirtepe, Istanbul (photo: Francesco Pasta, May 2018).

This mass shift of people physically carried "peripheral" values and lifestyles into the city—the supposed "center" of irradiation of modernity—radically altering its space, aesthetics, and culture (Keyder, 1999; Şenyapılı, 2004; Bakiner, 2018). With their parlance, clothing styles, religious beliefs, and social customs, the *gecekondulus* (those materially producing and inhabiting *gecekondus*) embodied an "other" to the state's hegemonic positivist narrative.[3] Through their practices they unsettled the center-periphery framework undergirding entrenched interpretations of Turkish society (see Mardin, 1973). To the bewilderment of established city dwellers, gecekondus quickly proliferated across Istanbul's rugged topography, resembling rural villages sprouting up over steep slopes, on hill ridges, and alongside creeks on the city's very margins. Fikirtepe, one of the earliest gecekondu neighborhoods, was born in this way. In the late 1950s, migrants from inner Anatolia and the Black Sea region flocking to the city "whose stones and land are made of gold" (as a popular saying goes) began squatting on what were then hilly agricultural lands in the Kadıköy district, which is located in Istanbul's Asian side. The local main street's name, Mandıra Caddesi ("Dairy Farm Street"), still evokes its rural past, but within a decade the makeshift settlement had developed into a legally recognized urban neighborhood.[4] Around Fikirtepe it is still possible to spot early gecekondu houses, one-story structures with plastered brick walls and tiled roofs, abundant greenery, and open spaces for animals, orchards, and hanging out (Fig. 1).

In the following decades, between populist inertia, unspoken political agreements, and particular favors, most gecekondu areas went through an on-and-off process of formalization consisting of non-uniform provision of services and infrastructure and pre-electoral amnesties (Aslan & Erman, 2014). With the blurred limits of formality shifting, as soon as land tenure seemed de facto secured, incremental improvements were made and extra floors added to accommodate growing families and rent out units. The flexible

[3] The Kemalist project had a markedly paternalistic and top-down character: one slogan was "For the people, despite the people" (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008). In its official narrative, rural peasants—then the vast majority of the population—were idealized as bearers of the genuine national identity, but in need to be modernized in order for Turkey to reach "civilization." In a context in which the Republican state and the urban elite promoted values such as secularism, Westernization, modernization, and Turkishness, peasants were depicted as backward—religious, conservative, feudal. Their mass migration to cities thus "threatened the sanitized, controllable, and homogeneous urban vision of the republic's early leaders" (Baydar Nalbantoğlu, 1998). Many *gecekondu* dwellers furthermore belonged to religious and ethnic minorities, most notably the Alevis, a heterodox sect stigmatized by the Sunni majority, and, in particular since the 1980s, the Kurds, an ethnic group whose identity and culture have long been suppressed by the Turkish State.

[4] In 1975, due to the steady population increase, the original Fikirtepe neighborhood was split into three: besides the namesake neighborhood, Eğitim and Dumlupınar were created.

metabolism of the gecekondus (Honsa, 2014) thus allowed people to adapt to economic contingencies and gradually improve their situation.

Income from urban rent proved significant in the upward mobility of many long-time gecekondu dwellers, and was made possible due to a sustained inflow of migrants. Since urban land was by then increasingly saturated, and gecekondu construction more difficult, these more recent migrants mainly ended up as tenants, thus in a more disadvantaged position (Boratav, 1994, in Karaman, 2013a). Especially after the 1990s, as Istanbul turned into a strategic node in transnational migration routes (Marconi, 2009; Paçacı Elitok & Straubhaar, 2011; Pusch, 2012), gecekondu areas absorbed a heterogeneous influx of foreign migrants (Karaman et al., 2020).[5] They chose these neighborhoods for a variety of factors: flexible and affordable housing, favorable location, informal work opportunities, and social support networks, but also the invisibility provided by interstitial spaces (Kılıçaslan, 2014).

Following Turkey's 1980 military coup, gecekondu land ownership was officially recognized

[5] Among the various nationalities of migrants with differing legal status residing in Fikirtepe, for instance, there are people from post-Soviet countries such as Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Georgia, often undocumented Afghans and Pakistanis, and Syrians holding "temporary protection status."

Fig. 2
A *çöpçü* at work pulling his cart along Fikirtepe's upper ridge, between two construction sites (photo: Francesco Pasta, August 2019).

Fig. 3
A view from Fikirtepe, around the Pehlivan mosque, built in Inner-Anatolian rural style. On the left, the fenced-off Teknik Yapı development area, currently halted. On the right, a scrap dealing center (photo: Francesco Pasta, July 2019).

as part and parcel of free-market reforms.[6] By then, the majority of Istanbul's population was living in these dense urban settlements "off-the-books."[7] Transforming gecekondu neighborhoods into legally recognized parts of the city—as well as their potentially restive inhabitants into property owners—was part of an effort to reshape these spaces through market forces (Erman, 2001, in Karaman et al., 2020; Türkün, 2011). In doing so, the state thereby constituted a rent-based "populist urban growth machine" as a key mechanism for city development and consensus building (Öktem, 2019). Similar to many other squatter settlements, Fikirtepe morphed into a typical post-gecekondu neighborhood (Esen, 2015): a consolidated inner-city neighborhood that, at an intermediate stage in the regularization process, has been incorporated into the mechanisms of capitalist value reproduction. After the 1984 Illegal Buildings Amnesty (Law n.2981), individual title deeds were given to Fikirtepe residents in 1991 (Gökşin, 2009). In a striking materialization of the soaring exchange value of gecekondu areas, building regulations were revised allowing for higher densities, low-rise structures were swiftly replaced

[6] Registered dwellers were granted pre-property deeds, leading to full ownership once a cadastral map and upgrading plan were drafted (Türkün, 2011). There are, however, several cases in which the regularization process was never brought to a close, adding a further layer of legal ambiguity.
[7] Istanbul's official population was 4,741,890 in 1980, and increased to 5,842,985 by 1990 (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, 2001). In 2018, the city's population amounted to 15,067,724 (Istanbul Governorate, 2020). http://www.ibb.gov.tr/tr-TR/BilgiHizmetleri/Istatistikler/Documents/demografi/t211.pdf

by multi-story blocks, open green spaces largely disappeared, and most village-like alleys developed into narrow, packed streets (Figs. 2, 3). Before the redevelopment started, Fikirtepe's population was comprised of lower- and middle-class residents (Parmaksızoğlu, 2016), and a composite, thick texture of low and mid-rise structures, small-scale factories, gardens, and orchards adapting to the irregular territory. With Istanbul's fast-paced expansion and the exponential development of infrastructures, this hitherto remote settlement found itself on well-serviced prime real estate land,[8] thereby leading to growing market pressure on the neighborhood.

The increasing economic and political capital of established post-gecekondu residents may be read as an instance of peripheral agency destabilizing the center (Simone, 2010), a reshaping of urban space and the sociopolitical balance (Holston, 2009; Caldeira, 2017). It has been argued that it is the newly emerging urban class rooted in Istanbul's post-gecekondu neighborhoods that propelled Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to power (Saunders, 2010; Keyder,

[8] Fikirtepe is serviced by Istanbul's ring-road, the D100 highway, a metro line, the Marmaray rail, and the metrobus, beside countless bus and minibus lines. As one inhabitant puts it: "From Fikirtepe, you can now get anywhere in five minutes" (Interview, 2018).

2010b; Delibas, 2014), first as metropolitan mayor in 1994 and then in the 2002 national elections. With a blend of authoritarian democracy, liberal economics, and social conservatism (Tuğal, 2016), Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, or AKP) has succeeded in maintaining its grip on power at a national level ever since. The AKP (and its predecessor, the Refah Partisi) specifically targeted lower urban classes: by directing public resources to the urban poor, administering a complex system of in-kind aid, and granting cultural recognition in the public sphere, it acquired the image of the party of the marginalized and oppressed (Karaman, 2013b; Cabannes & Göral, 2020). Most gecekondu neighborhoods have steadily supported the AKP in local and national elections. Indeed, Fikirtepe constitutes the only pro-government area in the entire Kadıköy district, otherwise an opposition stronghold (Parmaksızoğlu, 2014).

As its power consolidated, however, the AKP veered from a welfarist-populist approach toward a stark neoliberal governance model (Karaman, 2013b; Cabannes & Göral, 2020). Under the government's market-oriented urban policies, an unprecedented volume of foreign investments poured into financialized real-estate development, land commodification reached an unprecedented dimension, and the debt-fueled construction sector cemented its position as one of the country's economic engines—with Istanbul, increasingly promoted as a "Global City," its epicenter (Keyder, 2010a). The country's legal and administrative framework was substantially reshaped, incentivizing municipal entrepreneurialism, centralizing decision making, encouraging integration between the financial and housing sectors, opening the property markets to foreign investment, and removing bureaucratic obstacles to urban transformation (Kuyucu & Ünsal, 2010; Türkün, 2011).

Given their sometimes unclear tenure and regularity, low-quality housing stock, and often favorable location, post-gecekondu areas in Istanbul presented a considerable rent gap, thus turning into the ultimate frontier for profit accumulation. With the increasing economic capital of post-gecekondu property owners throughout the '80s and '90s, the dominant narrative concomitantly shifted (Demirtaş & Şen, 2007; Aslan & Erman, 2014; Karaman et al., 2020), recasting them as "petty profiteers," and their irregular settlements as spaces of illegality "to be bulldozed" (Esen, 2015). This discursive stigmatization paved the way for the actual removal of gecekondus from valuable urban land. Furthermore, with their haphazard structures and precarious appearance, gecekondus came to exemplify the fragility of the metropolis, the perception of which painfully intensified after the 1999 Marmara earthquake. Their eventual destruction, carried out on a large scale under subsequent AKP governments, was justified by the state also on

grounds of public safety and planning rationality, and was done so chiefly through the contested Law n.6306 (Disaster Law), which allows expropriation in risk-prone areas and was instrumental in spreading redevelopment (Bozkurt & Malani, 2017).

Unfolding through mechanisms of co-optation, profit redistribution, and at times coercion, urban transformation (*kentsel dönüşüm*) was deployed throughout the city of Istanbul as a formidable device for socio-spatial restructuring and wealth transfer—albeit not always at the speed and scale desired by the ruling coalition (Karaman et al., 2020). Sustained by an opaque nexus between government, developers, speculators, and selected inhabitants, in what has been described as "state-sponsored accumulation by dispossession" (Altınok, 2015), many informally-originated neighborhoods (as well as "informalized" historical areas) have been targeted for demolition all across Istanbul to make way for office towers, luxury condos, shopping malls, gated communities, mass-housing blocks, and other typical manifestations of globalized urbanism.

Vast evidence shows how urban redevelopment in Turkey tends to drive away local residents and set in motion exclusionary dynamics (Kuyucu & Ünsal, 2010; Lovering & Türkmen, 2011; Türkün, 2011). Tenants, a majority of the population in many gecekondu neighborhoods, have no voice in the matter and are easily displaced. But the value gap between existing structures and new constructions may also negatively affect property owners. New flats are much smaller and therefore unfit for their families and lifestyles, or the compensation they receive for their property is not enough to afford a new property in the redevelopment. In many cases, mortgages have been forced onto residents to pay the difference, eliciting an interpretation of such schemes as "market-disciplinary tools" (Karaman, 2013). Furthermore, if they do move into the redeveloped properties, running expenditures generally increase—not to mention the hardly quantifiable hidden costs resulting from the dissolution of social bonds and community-based forms of mutual support. Often people are left with no other option than relocating to farther or less desirable areas, in a process that materially reproduces peripheral conditions in the city's new margins.

Following the Arab Spring (2011) and the Gezi uprising (2013), the AKP government became increasingly authoritarian, while the country's economic performance worsened. Turkey's much-praised neoliberal success gradually turned into "an increasingly dirigiste form of financialized, extractionist capitalism" (Madra & Yılmaz, 2019). Starting in 2016, housing demand and relative prices fell, inflation and loan interest rates skyrocketed, the indebtedness of the corporate sector and private households reached unprecedented levels, and the currency quickly depreciated. Many companies were forced to slow down or halt construction altogether, delay housing delivery and compensations, or declare bankruptcy.

Fig. 4
An emptied-out neighborhood, slated for demolition, stands beside a construction site in early 2017. Mosques and some schools are the only buildings spared from demolition in redevelopment areas–and not always (photo: Francesco Pasta, Fikirtepe, Istanbul, April 2017).

Currently, the construction sector (and, with it, Turkey's economy) is arguably on the brink of systemic collapse (Madra & Yılmaz, 2019). In the 2019 local elections, the AKP party suffered major electoral setbacks in many urban centers, losing Istanbul to the opposition after 24 years. The urban growth machine, with the dramatic leap in scale and scope concocted by the AKP governments in the past two decades, has turned into "a Leviathan that eventually devours everything, including itself" (Öktem, 2019).

Redevelopment, re-peripheralization, and repossession in Fikirtepe

Fikirtepe has been defined as "the face and the bleeding wound of urban redevelopment in Turkey" (Parmaksızoğlu, 2014), and arguably constitutes the most significant ongoing urban transformation project in Istanbul.[9, 10] With its trajectory, it exemplifies the continuing turn "from boomtown to dystopia" (Öktem, 2019) in Istanbul's urban

[9] As one of the most prominent examples of urban transformation in Turkey, Fikirtepe became the stage for some films focusing on the issue, such as *Saf* (2018) by Ali Vatansever and, more recently, *Hayaletler* (2020) by Azra Deniz Okyay.
[10] In this chapter, the toponym "Fikirtepe" refers to the whole redevelopment area, comprising parts of Fikirtepe, Eğitim, and Dumlupınar neighborhoods, as well as a sector of Merdivenköy. The scheme covers 131 hectares, with 4,794 plots and a population estimated between 80,000 and 130,000 people (Parmaksızoğlu, 2014; Uzunçarşılı Baysal, 2014; Turk et al., 2020).

redevelopment. The area was earmarked as a "Special Project Zone" by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in 2005, designated for demolition that was meant to precede a pioneering redevelopment model in which local property owners and small- to mid-size developers would participate as stakeholders, with minimal intervention from the state (Soytemel, 2017).[11] The plan, based on densification incentives for land assembly (Turk et al., 2020), entailed the merging of Fikirtepe's tight-knit fabric and highly fragmented property pattern into sixty-one megablocks, each one comprising dozens of plots and hundreds of housing units. With an unprecedented increase in allowed development rights,[12] the vision was that of a high-rise upper-class district, targeting the new affluent class and foreign investors—"quality people," as the janitor guarding one recently completed tower defined its residents (Interview, 2019). Between 52% to 60% of new construction would be given to property owners, who had to pick a developer after negotiations with construction companies (Parmaksızoğlu, 2014). "Choose your firm, put your signature down, in less than 4 to 5 years Fikirtepe will be Manhattan," the authorities declared: just like hitting the jackpot for several families (Uzunçarşılı Baysal, 2014). The local high street turned into a string of real estate agencies sporting garish renderings and block-letter slogans—such as IN FIKIRTEPE EVERYTHING IS STARTING ANEW.

In the following years, Fikirtepe's urban fabric was torn apart as projects by different firms moved on at differentiated speeds in random order alongside the unraveling of its social fabric (Fig. 4). The newly arising opportunities and uncertainties coalesced to deepen the cleavages within the community: between big and small owners, landlords and tenants, those eager to cash in and leave and those who tried to resist (if only to get a better deal). The real estate frenzy triggered new economic circuits. As many tenants departed, depriving their landlords of an important income source, shrewd profiteers purchasing title deeds one-by-one to resell them in block to construction firms and alleged "community representatives"—actually on the developers' payroll—became actors on Fikirtepe's stage (Parmaksızoğlu, 2014).

Despite strong government backing and a booming real estate sector, the transformation in Fikirtepe plodded along slowly, due to competition among developers, conflicts among neighbors, and mistrust between contractors and residents (Parmaksızoğlu, 2016). There were cases of strategic maneuvering and outright opposition by residents as well as civil society organizations (Soytemel, 2017), including court appeals. In 2014 a photograph acquired iconic status across the country: a two-story gecekondu house—one whose owners

[11] Unlike many gecekondu areas, in Fikirtepe all homeowners hold official land titles (though 90% of buildings are unlicensed). This ownership pattern induced the government to devise a project based "on consent rather than coercion" (Parmaksızoğlu, 2014).

[12] The floor area ratio was raised from 2.07 to 4.14, the highest in the country (Parmaksızoğlu, 2014; Soytemel, 2017).

had rejected the developer's offer—perched upon a pinnacle of soil, its side flanks damaged, the surrounding land entirely dug out. With its precarious position and unrefined looks, to the eyes of many it embodied the stubborn resistance of local inhabitants to dispossession and the sheer pressure directed at *gecekondu* settlements by the coalition between the state and private developers.[13] When the urban transformation plan had been declared invalid by a court verdict in 2013 on the grounds that it did not comply with regulatory planning principles (Turk et al., 2020), the state, initially presenting itself as impartial guarantor, deployed more coercive measures. It declared Fikirtepe as an earthquake-risk zone, brought the project under direct supervision of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, and threatened expropriation on the basis of the above-mentioned Disaster Law (Parmaksızoğlu, 2014), thus pressuring homeowners into signing the deals with the private developers.

Fig. 5
The real estate bubble crash forced companies to slow down construction, or halt building sites altogether (photo: Francesco Pasta, Fikirtepe, Istanbul, October 2018).

With the protracted economic downturn beginning in 2016, however, many developers, in the words of residents, "simply disappeared" (Interviews, 2018-2019). The contracts' legal ambiguities prevented many dwellers from asserting their rights as their properties were demolished but new units and cash compensations failed to materialize and the promised rent allowance was cut off. Thousands were rendered homeless (Bişkin, 2020), entire areas became no-man's land, and illegal activities reportedly increased (Parmaksızoğlu, 2014). When a developer vanished after demolishing their homes, residents from one block camped for months in the pit where their houses used to stand (Uzunçarşılı Baysal, 2014) in what became a broadly mediatized protest.

As the economic meltdown continued, Fikirtepe turned into a striking scene. Partly empty, fenced-off multi-story blocks loom, gleaming, over massive craters dug beside surviving neighborhoods (whose inhabitants haven't struck a deal with developers yet) and abandoned concrete skeletons. Thoroughly emptied houses, hollowed out in efforts to sell anything valuable, lie side by side with dwellings still inhabited by families who lost any hope of getting their due (Fig. 5). As their community falls apart, they plan their exit from this quagmire, often leaving their properties in disrepair. Some are eager to see redevelopment extend to their property, while others, living in sectors still relatively untouched, wish that it never materializes.

Fikirtepe's ravaged landscape transformed into a war scene—it was indeed used as a set for war films (Yılmaz, 2016)—and its vacated buildings soon started attracting homeless

[13] The owner of the house, Alaaddin Demirel, was even nicknamed "Fikirtepe's stubborn" (*Fikirtepe inatçısı*) by the media. However, it then turned out that he requested a higher compensation: allegedly, when the developer agreed to give him five flats (each of 90 sqm on average) he let the house be demolished (*T24*, 2014).

people as well as displaced Syrians in urgent need of shelter (Parmaksızoğlu, 2016).[14] Most did not settle permanently, but some still squat decaying buildings in the neighborhood's lower flank—in a neighbor's view, "because the president [Erdoğan] allows them" (Interview, 2019). Meanwhile, as moneyed newcomers moved into the completed high-rises, the abandonment and depreciation of properties in the not-yet-redeveloped sectors attracted migrants, including many irregular ones from Afghanistan,[15] working in demolitions, garbage collection, and the low-end service sector. As Fikirtepe becomes "unlivable" for some, others are indeed moving in, etching out a living. A collateral effect of redevelopment failure, a space of opportunity has been created for new incoming populations with varied backgrounds, legal statuses, and life trajectories.

As profit-driven redevelopment rips through Fikirtepe's fabric, but struggles to fully incorporate space and relocate the surplus it produces, an unintentional urban typology is taking shape. Here, where gleaming high-rises and stranded concrete skeletons coexist with abandoned buildings, squatted houses, disintegrating communities, and a thriving economy of waste, the interrupted "utopia of development" (Roy, 2011b) falls across its constitutive other. In this collision the periphery arises in multiple layers of meaning.

After a half-century journey from edge shantytown to legalized central neighborhood, Fikirtepe has turned again into a periphery: a frontline between the space of global capital and its leftovers, strained between the centripetal and centrifugal forces of redevelopment and exclusion. Its trajectory not only exemplifies a dynamic and incremental process of socio-spatial centralization, but also its subsequent reversion: a re-peripheralization in which informalization mechanisms stand out as a component of power territorialization (Roy, 2005), re-articulating discursive and physical borders through a dual process of incorporation and expulsion of space, people, and livelihoods into/from recognized circuits.

This gradually unfolding process needs to be interpreted as one local articulation of broader dynamics, stemming from the site's geographical collocation. As a border space caught between integration into the global economy and exclusionary territorial policies,

[14] There are currently 3,605,152 registered Syrians in Turkey, of which 506,301 officially reside in Istanbul (Ministry of Interior of Turkey, 2020). In total, considering those who transited on to Europe and those repatriated, approximately 5 to 6 million Syrians entered the country (Akdeniz, 2019).

[15] Turkey has been a transit and destination country for Afghans since the early 1980s, but their number skyrocketed in the 2010s: there were less than 3,000 irregular Afghan migrants apprehended in 2010; this number grew to 12,000 in 2014. In 2015 only, the number of Afghans registered with UNHCR as asylum seekers or refugees went from slightly more than 10,000 to over 94,000, and by August 2019, it was 170,000 (Karadağ, 2021). It is estimated that 25% of the 1 million people who crossed through Turkey into Europe in 2015 were Afghans (İçduygu & Karadağ, 2018). For an analysis of Afghan transit migration in comparison with other migrants' groups, see Danış, 2006; for a detailed and up-to-date account of Afghan migration in Turkey, see Karadağ, 2020.

Fikirtepe constitutes a geopolitical periphery, transected by flows of people and capital triggered by macro-scale imbalances. Looking at the practices of those who inhabit this contested site of "everyday urban geopolitics" (Fregonese, 2012), we can gain valuable insights into the "bordering" processes constructing an apparatus of illegalization and containment in the city (Newman, 2006), as well as into the urban negotiation of such borders by marginalized populations (Darling, 2016).

Indeed, looking at migrant and ethnically discriminated populations in the Israeli context, Yiftachel (2009) has analyzed the production of "gray spaces" as part and parcel of a system of selective incorporation of people, localities, and activities, forcefully suspended between "the 'whiteness' of legality/approval/safety, and the 'blackness' of eviction/destruction/death" (Yiftachel, 2009). In their exploration of African and Asian metropolises, Simone & Pieterse (2017) have examined the process of "resonance" through which residents navigate complex and unstable urban dynamics at the edges of formality. In their everyday life, they enact makeshift and informal practices which produce affordable and productive spaces, and are thus a key component of city-making in contemporary "southern" cities, though often overlooked. In a similar vein, studying the informal uses of open spaces in different Middle Eastern cities, Bayat (2012) describes how locally articulated, non-confrontational and fragmented informal practices may jointly make up non-movements—"collective actions of non-collective actors" engendering significant social change. Building upon these perspectives, we may consider Fikirtepe as a space where peripheral populations enact under-the-counter "survival by repossession" practices, resisting marginalization and contributing to the shifting urban texture (Bayat, 2012).[16] Settling in this "uninhabitable" space (Simone, 2016b), they construct "a terrain of habitation, livelihood and politics" (Roy, 2011a).

Lastly, as a "stuck" urban transformation site where "stranded" migrants reside with varying degrees of permanence, Fikirtepe displays a peripheral temporality: with the failure of urban redevelopment, a transitory condition slipped into an unstable but drawn-out limbo, suspended between a crumbling past and a vanishing future (Roy, 2011b). Long-time dwellers are awaiting a foretold future that is fading away, while populations "on the move" dwell in this in-between space as a temporary stopover in their journey. The next section explores the narratives of those who inhabit, negotiate, and adapt to the ongoing transformation in this multi-layered periphery.

[16] Trajectories of dispossession and appropriation by different people intersect in Fikirtepe. Some groups of people are taking possession—in practice, if not de jure—of spaces and buildings of which the previous inhabitants were dispossessed. At the same time, looking at forced migrants from a country at war—such as the Afghans inhabiting the neighborhood—we could think of many things they lost in the journey, both in terms of material and immaterial elements.

Inhabiting urban transformation in Fikirtepe: the periphery as a perspectival construct

This section, conceived as an excursion through Fikirtepe's changing environment, presents the findings of field research conducted in the area (2017–2019). It unpacks and juxtaposes material practices and narratives emerging from field observations and conversations, presenting in particular the findings from interviews with a long-time resident family planning to leave the neighborhood and an undocumented Afghan migrant living in an informal waste collection center.[17]

Nowadays, urban transformation frames most aspects of life and space in Fikirtepe. It is invoked and opposed, concretized and postponed, longed-for and dreaded. Just like the pervasive dust from excavation and construction sites, saturating the air in the dry season and turning into mud on rainy days, redevelopment is inescapable across the streets of the neighborhood. Right on Mandıra Street, a row of dusty, battered palms lining the failed MINA Towers project site testifies to the developers' unfulfilled vision for Fikirtepe's high street as a "new Baghdad Avenue" (referring to the popular well-to-do shopping street nearby). Instead, the bakery owner in front laments how the stalled construction site is killing his business. Around the neighborhood, the empty windows of busted real estate agencies signal that business is not going well. An idle salesman in a construction company's exhibition branch states that urban renewal is not going to happen anytime soon; it has been postponed "for five or six years." Just next door, an elderly man arranging his hardware store before closing time is not resigned: "With God's will, urban transformation will arrive." A woman in her 60s similarly deplores how urban transformation has not yet reached her block. She is sitting on her balcony, overlooking a huge concrete skeleton, stalled just as it reached its ninth floor.

Three middle-aged women, resting in front of a small Anatolian rural style mosque on their way home from shopping, unanimously dissent: "If only urban transformation had never arrived!" The trio of towers blinding us with the sun's glare, however, shows that redevelopment has indeed made its way into this corner, although their properties haven't been touched yet. One comments: "Living there—it would be like a prison!" A common acquaintance of theirs, who has moved into a new construction, allegedly feels "like a bird in a cage." Not to mention the unbearable running costs: in these upper-class condos the monthly apartment fee is said to amount to 700 Turkish liras—almost enough to

[17] These interviews were carried out in Summer 2019, in two sessions each, conducted in the residences of the interviewees.

rent a small gecekondu flat.[18] If their houses are ever redeveloped, they plan to sell their assets and find a more suitable solution, as many others in Fikirtepe do (Adanalı, 2017).

Up the road Mr. Mustafa, a pensioner, is sitting in front of a simple barber shop run by a long-time friend of his, as he habitually does. A board above the entrance informs that the barber shop will become part of Panaroma development (a development project that has never lifted off). Mr. Mustafa himself has moved into one of the new towers—he points at his flat on the 15th floor. Living up there is definitely weird for him, but he couldn't leave: his friends are all here, this is his neighborhood. Meanwhile the Turkish bath beside the ring-road, with its perforated domes, has shut. Serkan, a Kurdish man helping out in the neighboring car wash, explains that it is for good: the furnace was in need of repairs, but the looming redevelopment discouraged the owner from investing. People moving into the newly completed and expensive flats would not come anyway—they do not go to public baths. With regards to the car wash, it is doing good business; Kurds run it, but most workers are migrants from Turkmenistan.

"This place is unlivable. They rendered it so. We can't live here anymore: we are leaving, sooner or later" (Interviews, 2019). Thus Hatice, a housewife in her 50s, describes the situation over steamy cups of tea, sitting on the outer walkway leading to her three-story home, on the fringe of the urban renewal area. The developer ran away, explains her husband Mehmet—a common phrase among residents complaining about disappearing construction holdings. Their situation could well be worse: several families remained homeless when developers "ran away" after razing their blocks (Uzunçarşılı Baysal, 2014). He is washing his minivan—he is a shipper—when he notices me looking at their house, marked by a board stating that "This property has signed an agreement with Eminevim Project," just as many others in this alley, and invites me over.

He proudly shows me the wooden attic he added himself, where his parents lived until their passing last year. It is finely built in wood, with tiled roof and pentagonal windows, in the style of Çankırı, their province of origin. As many of Fikirtepe's long-time dwellers, the family arrived from northern-inner Anatolia two generations ago. The flat now lies empty and dusty, except for the guard-dog pup in the terrace, which they recently bought to protect their property once they are gone.

[18] The *aidat* is a monthly apartment fee covering maintenance costs (utilities are excluded). In a detached single-family gecekondu house there may be no aidat at all, whereas in a central middle-class apartment it can be around 30 to 50 Turkish liras (in 2018). I had no opportunity to verify the amount stated by the three women; but the owner of a flat in a similar development nearby stated that he pays 420 Turkish liras.

For now, indeed, Mehmet and Hatice are unsure about what to do with their house. Mehmet plans to rescind the contract and find another developer: despite the crisis, he is confident someone will invest in this strategic location. Urban transformation, the source of their grievances, seems the only possible solution. Meanwhile, however, they do not believe much gain can be earned out of their house: newcomers are paying piddling rents, it is just not worth it.[19] According to Hatice, all these people moving in don't pay rent at all: "They only say they do, actually they're just squatting." She points at a building across the road, which has been emptied out, only to be re-occupied by Roma people, who refit it with scrap materials[20]. "They have water and light, but of course they are not paying for it: we are paying also for them," argues Hatice pointing at the makeshift electricity connections.

Uncertainty about the future both fuels and hinders the urgency of leaving to start a new life elsewhere. Mehmet and Hatice evoke the good times when Fikirtepe was a lively community where everyone knew each other, visited friends for tea, and slept with doors unlocked. "Don't look at it now," they hasten to add, "we are just letting everything run down, since it has been years we know our houses will be demolished. They care about our property deeds, not the house itself." They point out the balcony's eroded concrete revealing the rusty reinforcement, the broken steps on their neighbor's staircase, and faded wall paint. They once had an orchard between their house and the street, with fruit trees and even a hammock. Now they have poured concrete over it and let the plants die, for they are planning to wash the minivan there every now and then. These days they lock themselves in at night, for with all these newcomers the neighborhood has just become full of foulness (*pislik* in Turkish)—a term which conflates material filth with moral wickedness and apparently finds fertile ground where the perceived "others" often engage in garbage and scrap dealing. Empty buildings are particularly dangerous, as they have allegedly been colonized by drunkards, glue-sniffers, and other dodgy people.

As we talk, an old friend who has already moved out passes by for a greeting. They converse about a suitable flat the couple has just visited, in an apartment block further out in the Asian side of the city. They evaluate the option, comparing it to other solutions found by their neighbors: it seems a reasonable choice. Sitting with us on the steps is their niece, living one floor down with her parents who are both away working, so she is staying with

[19] Others in the neighborhood disagree on this point, asserting that migrants pay even higher rents, but amortize the costs by sharing the space among several people.

[20] A Roma community, mainly concentrated around Bülbül sokak, has been living in Fikirtepe for decades. One important income source for them is the Tuesday market, attracting customers from the whole city, with a vast second-hand section.

her grandparents. Once Mehmet and Hatice move out, they will not join them. They are looking for another solution. This is what urban redevelopment does, they bemoan: "Splitting families, destroying communities. A real pity."

Hatice and Mehmet's story exemplifies what many long-time dwellers in Fikirtepe are experiencing after big capital with political backing wrecked the urban and social fabric, yet struggles to fulfill its vision and dispose of its leftovers. This abrupt failure generated a carved-out landscape with "no way forward, no way back" (Gill, in Roy, 2011b). Residents are left negotiating a way out from this urban limbo, dealing with uncertainty and insecurity on financial, legal, relational, and physical levels. After a decades-long advancement from the city fringes toward its center, they are being re-peripheralized. The narrative emerging from their words, alongside the accounts of many other residents, points to Fikirtepe's irreparable slippage into the perceived realm of the "uninhabitable" (Simone, 2016b), a world of precarity and disorder. Yet, as we witness with the repaired and re-occupied house of their neighbors, Fikirtepe is not just a quagmire that people wish to leave behind, but a space of opportunity.

As the media was announcing that "Arabs run away from Fikirtepe" (Yapı, 2017)—referring to the petrodollar-rich Gulf investors, not the Syrian refugees—the neighborhood turned into a magnet for various migrant groups (Parmaksızoğlu, 2016). Many arrived from post-soviet Turkic countries, notably Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan; due to linguistic affinity, they have managed to learn Turkish fast and find employment in the service sector, small factories, construction, and domestic works. On the high street one can now spot traditional Central Asian *tandır* ovens, as well as shipping companies displaying Turkmen and Uzbek flags. The busy owner of a crowded Uzbek eatery, a woman in her 40s, says that business is good, and the Uzbek community is growing—although now, in summertime, many women are away with the families from neighboring middle-class districts, where they work as housemaids and babysitters. Uzbek and Turkmens are eligible for a work permit in Turkey, or can manage to stay with a renewable tourist permit working under the counter (a rather typical arrangement). "We come and go by plane," as she puts it (Interview, 2019). Another sizeable migrant community in Fikirtepe, the Afghans, instead arrived mostly overland, and illegally (Seyhan, 2017). They are therefore much more vulnerable, and engage in more low-pay, labor-intensive work, like scrap dealing and garbage picking (Akdeniz, 2018; Karadağ, 2021).

"This is a good place," as Jehangir puts it from his room overlooking the relentless traffic of Istanbul's ring-road (Interviews, 2019). He shares the room with four friends, all in their 20s and 30s, from the same rural district in Afghanistan. They are cooking dinner together on a

gas stove, vegetables and bread from Fikirtepe's Tuesday market. The room, furnished with large carpets and decorated with Afghan and Turkish flags, religious images, and Christmas festoons, is tidy and kempt, in contrast with the common spaces of the abandoned five-story building.

They live in one of the many informal rubbish collection centers, inhabited by waste pickers, that sprouted around Fikirtepe in recent years: another example of a collateral effect of redevelopment that turned the area into a hub for the informal business of garbage collection, scrap dealing, and recycling.[21] The abandonment and destruction of thousands of buildings (Logie & Morvan, 2014) produced huge amounts of waste, materials, furniture, and unused space to process waste, store it, and shelter workers. A productive economy thrives at the margins of redevelopment and on its leftovers, where buildings constitute both the site of labor and the primary material source of value: demolishers (*çıkmacıs*) deflesh empty structures of all valuable elements; scrap dealers (*hurdacıs*), with their wooden carts, search streets and houses for scrap metal and second-hand house stuff, their cry—*Hurdaaacıııı!*—a familiar feature in the neighborhood's soundscape; waste pickers (*çöpçüs*) go through rubbish yards and rubbles, loading recyclable materials into their tarpaulin bags. In the 1950s, salvaged spare parts from Prime Minister Adnan Menderes' inner-city demolitions were collected and sold in the burgeoning gecekondu outskirts (Ceritoğlu, 2018). Nowadays, however, the periphery is re-emerging within the same carved-out ruins of the gecekondus, while the labor is largely carried out by a new population of irregularized migrants.

Like his fellows in the building, Jehangir is residing in Turkey illegally, having reached the country overland on his way to Europe (in his case, specifically to Germany). No one in the room intends to settle here: this is a stopover. Zilal, sharing dinner with us, will soon try to cross over to the EU; Shahmir just returned after being caught by the Bulgarian police. Their condition is transitory, but indefinite: Abdul, the eldest in the room, has been here for three years now. Jehangir arrived two years ago; after eight months as a waste picker, and after his Turkish improved, he was hired in a diner. Their goal is to save enough money to pay traffickers and attempt to enter the EU.[22] The Turkish lira's recent plunge affected their saving capacity, just as it hindered high-rise developments looming beyond the highway, framed by the cracked corridor window. They have, however, good

[21] The waste and recycling sector was an important source of income in Fikirtepe even before the redevelopment started, but in the past decade it saw a marked expansion, according to many accounts. In a survey carried out in 2022, I counted more than 60 scrap dealing businesses.

[22] In February 2020, as Turkey opened its western borders to outgoing migrants, Jehangir managed to cross over into Bulgaria, and from there, to Serbia.

reasons to hope: they phone a friend who, in fluent Italian, tells me how he made it to Turin, where he has been living for a few years now.

According to them, two hundred people live in the building, all Afghans. All utilities, including Wi-Fi, are covered by the boss. Their work consists in collecting recyclables with two-wheeled carts, sorting them out within the base, then loading them onto trucks toward factories or processing plants. They get a monthly lump-sum depending on the owner's fluctuating profit. Winter is low season, for instance, since people produce less plastic bottle waste in the colder months. Jahangir and his friends describe a particular organizational geography: from their base, they cover a vast perimeter extending to neighboring areas, with each waste picker combing a specific itinerary, competing with those working for other patrons. Logistics require collection centers to be located in low areas. A full cart weighs up to 250 kg: dragging it upward is impossible, but garbage collectors rolling downward, their feet off the ground while they balance the load with their weight, are not an uncommon view across Fikirtepe's slopes.

The waste collection center also represents the heart of their social life. They work from 8 a.m. to midday, and after lunch and rest, again from 4 p.m. to evening, though someone, in turns, always continues sorting out waste later. Several of them reached Istanbul heading directly here: they had contacts, which helps to explain why people are organically divided by floor according to their provenance, just as in the early gecekondu settlements of the 1950s and 1960s, where chain migration generated communities in which common origin provided a base for social relations and mutual support. They refer to each room as a "village" (*köy* in Turkish), each one hosting anywhere from 5 to 10 people, all of whom share responsibilities—cooking, sweeping the floor, washing the dishes, buying food—and use a common budget. They are pooling their savings to purchase a lamb for the upcoming Feast of the Sacrifice. Most of their social relations take place within the building or the broader Afghan community. On one of my visits, an Afghan *sheikh* (a religious leader), together with some other fellows, were visiting from the European district of Zeytinburnu (also known to be a center for Afghan migration in Istanbul). Jahangir and his roommates rarely go to the mosque: they do pray, but prefer to do so in the building.

All four agree that the people in the neighborhood are friendly and kind, revealing a gap in mutual perceptions (though I did meet locals who spoke of foreign garbage pickers in positive and empathic terms). Directly related to this is the fact that Fikirtepe is safe: safe from police raids, because neighbors do not complain so authorities do not intervene. There may, of course, be further reasoning behind this kind of safety: this particular kind of waste collection and recycling mechanism, flourishing in the interstitial space between legality and illegality,

Fig. 6
A completed development, a stalled construction site, and still inhabited sectors of Fikirtepe (photo: Francesco Pasta, Fikirtepe, Istanbul, August 2019).

belongs to a category of activities sustained by informal arrangements with businesses managed by Turkish citizens (arrangements that the authorities are clearly aware of). Without euphemizing the conditions of exploitation and precariousness that these young migrants live in—disqualified as they are from accessing basic services or opportunities and forced to conduct an off-the-radar existence—it is in such physical and temporal "pseudo-permanent margins" (Yiftachel, 2009) that they find opportunities for shelter, employment, and socialization. Through incremental and contingency-driven practic-es, these migrants are in effect challenging international mobility regimes and, in doing so, implicitly critiquing citizenship categorizations (Darling, 2016). Although lacking visibility, legitimacy, and political organization, such actions constitute a form of urban politics which is increasingly relevant at the global scale.

Conclusion

With its historical development and the transformation it has been undergoing since the restructuring started, Fikirtepe constitutes a plastic representation of the non-linear

dialectic between center and periphery and its unforeseen consequences, exposing peripherality as a relational condition, shifting over time, and laden with different subjective meanings. Mehmet and Hatice's close-knit community, created over the course of decades as their neighborhood consolidated, is now splintering, generating a sense of bitterness and nostalgia. But for the Afghan garbage pickers, the abandoned building they inhabit constitutes a node in a relational network extending from rural Afghanistan to Europe's metropolitan centers, providing support and some form of stability in their journey. Their transient condition chimes with Fikirtepe's peripheral temporality, the same limbo that is pushing long-time residents away; a disjunction reflected in the contrast between the neat arrangement of the garbage pickers' "village-room" and the Çankırı family's neglected garden and unkempt attic. Fikirtepe's evolution into a perceived no-man's land, out of the authority's gaze, fuels the sense of insecurity of many long-term residents. Yet this half-light enables undocumented migrants to find opportunities for livelihood while also minimizing the risk of confronting state regulations. Paradoxical as it may seem, the state-led regime of formality—eventually recognizing Mehmet and Hatice's property rights only to have them expelled—is the same apparatus underpinning Jehangir and his fellows' presence here.

Fikirtepe is currently a fragmented urbanscape in which multiple layers of uncertainty, suspension, and (in)formalization overlap and interact. On one hand, long-time dwellers are bearing the brunt of profit-driven urban transformation's abrupt failure. The stuck transformation has deprived them of many assets, greatly increased their socioeconomic vulnerability, and plunged their lives into an indefinite deadlock. At the same time, non-citizens, whose presence and mobility are disciplined and/or illegalized, inhabit the accidental built environment emerging from incomplete urban redevelopment and re-emerging informalization. They manage not only to deal with multiple forms of insecurity, but even to find occasions for socialization, shelter, and income generation in this peripheral space.

This comparative outlook suggests that against a backdrop of shattering "simulacra of development" (Roy, 2011b), where the periphery is experienced in its negative dimensions of exclusion and disempowerment, a way forward is materially being traced by subjects whose presence was not envisaged in the framing of development. This form of life-driven, non-confrontational politics constitutes a powerful embodiment of the periphery as a contingent, potential condition for self-determination.

In the years since this research was carried out, many things have changed in Fikirtepe. When in early 2020 the Turkish government unilaterally opened its Western borders to outgoing migrants, Jehangir and some of his fellows managed to cross over into Bulgaria. The

next year, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, Istanbul governorate cracked down on irregular waste collection, raiding several centers across the city, detaining hundreds of undocumented migrants and destroying or walling up the waste collection structures where they used to reside. In Fikirtepe, the building where Jehangir lived for almost three years has now been forcefully vacated and bricked over. Meanwhile, some of the sluggish construction sites were completed, although their street level retail spaces remain mostly vacant. Above all, between 2020 and 2021, the government took a firsthand role in pushing the redevelopment forward by implementing it itself instead of orchestrating the transformation through regulatory instruments. The Mass Housing Authority (TOKI) has taken over from the contractors where they have failed to complete the projects, and property deeds have been transferred to the Treasury. An updated masterplan will be realized between Mandıra Street and the E5 highway, covering only part of the initially envisioned redevelopment perimeter, while the not-yet-redeveloped sectors will be rebuilt in two further phases. This government-driven transformation, repackaged under the name of "New Fikirtepe," was at first slated for completion in 2023—in time for the Republic's 100th anniversary and the next presidential elections. In May 2021, remaining residents were given a 150-day notice to leave. In September, buildings were being emptied out, shipping trucks clogged the streets, and inhabitants voiced uncertainty about their relocation within the upcoming deadline. The house of Mehmet and Hatice, which lies beyond the limits of the ongoing redevelopment, was rented out to another family, as they managed to move out from the neighborhood.

This chapter thus captured a particular phase of Fikirtepe's transformation, a moment which seems to have already been surpassed by the unfolding events. All this speaks to the pace at which peripheralization, urban transformation, and "transit" migration unfold in a globalizing metropolis such as Istanbul. The unsettled temporality of these processes oscillates between protracted slowdowns and sudden accelerations, drawn-out intervals of waiting and hurried leaps forward.

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