

Corresponding Author:

Mehmet Ercan
ex-FU Berlin PhD candidate Germany
ercan_mehmet@yahoo.com

Author(s):

Seismologists say the risk of a 7.6 magnitude earthquake striking Istanbul by 2030 is up to 70 percent high. Scientists think it is very likely that between 73,000 and 120,000 people will be injured if a major quake shakes Istanbul, home to sixteen million.

Even though I find "Disaster Anthropology" one of the most fascinating areas of the larger family of Anthropology, it is definitely not the easiest and the "chilliest" area. To talk, to think, to shoot, and to write about a topic like "disasters", feels like you remind people of a "pain". A pain of a previous disaster (in the case of Istanbul, the pain of the "1999 Izmit Earthquake"), a pain that people want to avoid. A pain that is maybe indeed "unnecessary".

My research question has been such an "unnecessary" question throughout all these years. I kept on asking people in forum, residents of my field site, colleagues, my family members and myself, this disturbing and smartass explanation and this follow-up question "In 1999 Earthquake, officially 19.000 people have died. The seismologists announce the next big earthquake will happen in Istanbul around 2030s", so "how come 16 million people living in Istanbul cope with such a big risk?"

The answer was and still is an obvious one. The ones that they could do anything about it have already done it. They left the city, they changed the city, they changed the district, the workplace, the school of their children, and the apartment building they are living in. However, the majority have not. They do not do anything because they can not. The majority have to cope with the risk by avoiding it because that is what they can do.

I have more questions than answers at the end of my ethnographic journey. I tried to elaborate on some of the questions that raised as a part of my research to the scope of this article and my knowledge.

The article concludes that disasters and risk mitigation are not a choice of free will but a result of a lack of power. And also argues that autoethnography and storytelling, in general, can contribute researchers to reconnect with the societies they are researching; a relationship, if built strongly, can help the mitigation of vulnerabilities in a long term.

De-colonizing disasters: Affect, race, and queer theory