

The Whistle In The Shower

Corresponding Author:

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

Author(s):

Writing on non-Existing Disasters:

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. Worst-case scenarios see 40 percent of the city hit by an earthquake with five million people affected. Best-case scenarios see “only” ten thousand houses collapsed and 1.5 million people affected.

I had been enrolled in the doctorate for almost a decade. I have been carrying the scientific, artistic, and private burden of struggling with the theme, the Istanbul earthquake" and a "potential" disaster.

How can a visual anthropologist grasp a hint of an event that has not occurred yet? What shall I shoot at all, where to shall I point my camera? What if no earthquake happens at all? What if an earthquake happens before I finish my PhD? What if the earthquake happens and yet does not happen as big as it was anticipated? What does that say about my research? About my ethnographic film? Will they be still relevant?

However, then again, I was struck with a photo I have made at my parental house in Istanbul; A whistle hanging in the shower...

I can not resist it and ask; What does a whistle have to do anything with the concept of "shower"? If one would for a moment stop and think, in all the showers, baths, toilets of the world, which cameraman, which photographer, which journalist could shoot such a normal, banal photo of an ordinary shower with such as a tiny detail hidden in the scope of that photo? What does the whistle have anything to do with the actions that are related to shower? What kind of imagination, an image of future, is behind such a photographic capture? Does the disaster not exist if the idea of the disaster already occupies the future imagination? What does it say about a disaster that does not exist (yet)?

The aim of this paper is to investigate the origins of "vulnerabilities" in a "potential" future disaster that is expected to take place in the megapole of Istanbul, Turkey. It is based on the ethnographic fieldwork and participant observation throughout the years 2011-2021 and discusses the so-called "Natural Disasters", using the evocative autoethnography as the method.

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