

WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING URBAN EARTHQUAKE RISKS

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The high probability that Istanbul (12 million) is to experience an intensive earthquake in the near future has led every related profession and body to concentrate on the issue and prescribe measures for lowering the likely losses. The intellectual and administrative efforts have gone beyond the national boundaries to make the potential threat an international area of concern.

Unlike available analyses of EQ experiences, and sociological accounts of recovery periods, the case provides a unique context to clarify how the various groups in society, professions, media, and governing bodies act and try to shape decisions and the collective mind. Even though little achievement took place since 1999, immense resources have been spent and allocated for the development of methods of mitigation. Apart from the very devoted attempts to improve resilience, this is one basic reason why almost every one has a recommendation to make. This seems to have encouraged piecemeal attempts, and curbed the possibility of an integrated approach under the guidance of a 'legitimate' authority.

The paper is an attempt to explore this very rich area of social interactions in understanding, expressing and explaining the impending disaster, and processes of making propositions. Often under the pretext of scientific rationale, political concerns, individuals' personal aspirations for power, hidden antagonisms between professional communities seem to dominate the background. The size of the problem and multiplicity of prescriptions not only seems to veil struggles of great proportions, but also lead to a state of paralysis.