

Wednesday Seminars

LECTURE SERIES IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

06.05.2026 | 5 p.m. | @ Übungsraum IKSA | NIG, 4th floor

Ebru Kayaalp (Yeditepe University)
Buildings-as-Risk, Buildings-at-Risk
The Multiple Enactments of Seismic Risk in Istanbul



Ebru Kayaalp is Professor and Chair of the Department of Anthropology at Yeditepe University, Istanbul. Her research focuses on the anthropology of science, technology, risk, and uncertainty. She examines how technical expertise and legal frameworks shape urban life in disaster-prone environments.

Istanbul faces an imminent earthquake of magnitude 7 or greater on the North Anatolian Fault, potentially rendering 200,000 buildings uninhabitable. As part of preparedness efforts, residents are invited to have their buildings assessed for seismic risk. Drawing on cultural anthropology and Science and Technology Studies, this research ethnographically examines how earthquake risk is determined through two distinct assessment networks in Istanbul. The first network, organized under Law 6306, produces risk assessments where legal action precedes technical calculation, creating entrepreneurial opportunities in a new disaster market. The second network, involving private engineering firms and the Earthquake Code, enacts risk through detailed technical measurements. The same building can be classified as risky in one network and structurally sound in the other. This multiplicity reveals a troubling paradox: buildings labeled as risky may in fact be more at risk of demolition than they pose a risk to inhabitants.



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