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Between Transience and Permanence: Forced Migration Experience of Hatay Residents after the 6 and 20 February 2023 Earthquakes

Geçicilik ve Kalıcılık Arasında
6 ve 20 Şubat 2023 Depremleri Sonrasında Hataylıların
Zorunlu Göç Deneyimi

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Abstract

The 2023 earthquakes, referred as the disaster of the century, caused the deaths of thousands in Türkiye. Some of those who managed to survive the earthquake left their cities in the aftermath. My aim in this article is to make projections about whether people from Hatay who were forced to migrate suddenly after the earthquake are transient or permanent in the provinces where they currently reside. Moreover, I aim to identify whether the conditions could facilitate the return of the migrants back to their homelands. For this purpose, I conducted field research simultaneously in Eskişehir and Ankara between 23 June and 31 July. With regards to Hatay residents now dispersed across various provinces in Turkey, I conducted interviews via telephone. In Eskişehir and Ankara, I conducted participant observation and in-depth

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interviews. I interviewed a total of 20 people, 14 women and 6 men. I tried to learn about their experiences during and after the earthquake, their views on permanence and transience, and their expectations for the future by asking them semi-structured, open-ended questions. The findings reveal that almost all participants expressed a willingness to return if issues such as housing, unemployment, education, healthcare, employment, and transportation were resolved. The uncertain status of the displaced population-whether transient or permanent in their new locations-seems to depend largely on the progress of Hatay's reconstruction process. It is anticipated that prolonged delays in this process will worsen desperation and may turn migration from transient to permanent. Investments made despite economic constraints during the settlement process in the place of migration will make return increasingly difficult over time. Uncertainty about the future leads to feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, loneliness, and a sense of being caught in between, leaving individuals more vulnerable and fragile. It is anticipated that accelerating the city's reconstruction process will significantly reduce the feeling of uncertainty and, by increasing the sense of hope for the future, will reverse migration.

Keywords: *earthquake, disaster, migration, Hatay, disaster anthropology*

Öz

Asrın felaketi olarak nitelendirilen 2023 depremleri, Türkiye'de binlerce kişinin ölümüne neden olmuştur. Deprem sonrasında hayatta kalmayı başarabilenlerin bir kısmı can havliyle kenti terk etmiştir. Bu makalede amacım, deprem sonrasında aniden göç etmek zorunda kalan Hataylıların buldukları illerde geçicimi yoksa kalıcı mı olduklarına ilişkin öngörülerde bulunmaktır. Diğer amacım ise göç edenlerin geri dönüşünü sağlayacak koşulların neler olduğu yönünde ipuçları yakalamaktır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda alan araştırmasını 23 Haziran-31 Temmuz tarihleri arasında eş zamanlı olarak Eskişehir ve Ankara'da yürüttüm. Türkiye'nin birçok iline dağılmış Hataylılarla ise görüşmeleri telefonla gerçekleştirdim. Eskişehir ve Ankara'da katılımcı gözlem ve derinlemesine mülakatlar yaptım. 14 kadın, 6 erkek toplam 20 kişiyle görüştim. Yarı yapılandırılmış ve açık uçlu sorularla bireylerin deprem sırası ve sonrası süreçleri, kalıcılık ve geçicilik durumlarına ilişkin görüşleri, neler hissettikleri ve gelecek beklentilerini anlamaya çalıştım. Araştırma sonuçları, görüşmecilerin neredeyse tamamının barınma, işsizlik, eğitim, sağlık, istihdam, ulaşım vb. alanlardaki sorunların çözülmesi halinde geri dönme eğiliminde olduklarını göstermiştir. Göç ettikleri yerlerde geçici mi yoksa kalıcı mı oldukları belirsiz olan yerel halkın durumunu büyük ölçüde Hatay'ın yeniden inşa sürecinin belirleyeceği öngörülmektedir. Bu sürecin uzaması umutsuzluğu artacağı gibi göçün geçicilikten kalıcılığa dönüşmesine de neden olacaktır. Göç edilen yerde tutunma sürecinde ekonomik kısıtlılıklara rağmen yapılan yatırımlar, zaman geçtikçe geri dönüşü daha da zorlaştıracaktır. Geleceğe dair belirsizlikler umutsuzluk, çaresizlik, yalnızlık ve arada kalmışlık duygusuna sebep olmakta, bu durum ise bireyleri daha da savunmasız ve kırılğan hale getirmektedir. Bireylerde umudun artırılması, belirsizliklerin ortadan kaldırılmasına bağlıdır. Bu noktada kentin yeniden inşa sürecinin hızlandırılması, belirsizlik duygusunu büyük ölçüde azaltacağı gibi geleceğe yönelik umut duygusunu artırarak göçü tersine çevireceği ön görülmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: *deprem, afet, göç, Hatay, afet antropolojisi*

*You won't find a new country, won't find another shore.
This city will always pursue you.
You'll walk the same streets, grow old
in the same neighborhoods,
turn gray in these same houses.
You'll always end up in this city.*

Constantine P. Cavafy (1863-1933)¹

Introduction

A crucial factor in ensuring human survival lies in our ongoing quest to understand how nature operates and adapts to its environment. Central to this adaptation is human flexibility—the ability to respond to environmental challenges in diverse ways by developing effective strategies (Bates, 2013: 113). Thus, humanity's knowledge of ways in which nature functions, how it solves problems, and how it makes decisions are shaped under the pressure of the environment in which it lives. In response to the dynamic nature of the environment, humanity's ability to develop coping strategies, is largely attributed to the cultural frameworks it has established against the environmental problems it encounters. According to Oliver-Smith (2002: 45), environmental problems are the challenges encountered in the process of adapting to natural events.

The adaptation process is affected by the transformation of natural events into “disasters”, which clearly serve as indicators of a society's success or failure in adapting to specific features of its natural and socially constructed environment. Humans are the result of the successful strategies developed by our ancestors thousands of years ago to combat the environmental challenges they faced (Oliver-Smith, 2002: 45). There have been numerous disasters causing mass deaths throughout human history. In the human-nature relationship natural occurrences can turn into disasters if adaptation mechanisms are insufficient or ineffective. At this point, it is crucial to determine if the disaster was caused by external factors (such as human activity) or natural processes. Thus, multidimensional analysis of the internal and external causes of disasters through interdisciplinary studies is of vital importance before producing solutions. Duyar and Çeltikçi's (2024: 206) conceptualization of “social/cultural disaster” contributes to understanding the issue from a sociocultural perspective. Besides the physical and psychological traumas experienced, their approach discusses the socio-cultural rupture and the shocking effect it creates based on the term “social/cultural disaster”. For those who survive the major disasters, it is often not the buildings but the neighborhoods and cities that are destroyed. “People transform space into ‘place’ and place into ‘home’. In a way, ‘home’ is an important ‘place’ where people feel safe and surrender themselves in the adventure of ontological existence” (Eraslan, 2024: 60). The loss of this place creates psychological and sociocultural difficulties. This understanding shows that what happened after the earthquake was also a social/cultural disaster (Duyar & Çeltikçi, 2024: 206). Conditions that arise

during and after disasters affect many areas of life. Disasters can cause large-scale destruction, disruption of social order and changes in people's lives (Yılmaz & Turan, 2023:1249). It creates an environment of chaos and leads to a re-examination of the cultural systems that form the basis of the adaptation patterns of human communities.

Although the acute life-threatening consequences of an seismic event may have been subsided, those who survived continue to experience its socio-economic, psychological, and social repercussions throughout their lives. These and similar issues that emerge over time can be described as "cultural aftershocks" of the earthquake. Such cultural tremors manifest periodically in various ways. Sometimes, the news of the death of acquaintances, sometimes the reality that nothing will ever be the same again, the loss of the city, childhood, youth, in other words, the loss of memories and social networks continue to effect people like aftershocks of earthquakes.

In the framework of survival and adaptation, post-disaster mass migration is considered as forced migration. In fact, they are actually associated with the evacuation of groups or individuals to closer places for a short period of time or individuals fleeing to places they find safe. When people temporarily relocate after a sudden disaster, they are positioned as between permanence and transience. If any of the processes of escape, evacuation, displacement and resettlement, which we characterize as demographic mobility takes place over long time it may turn into forced migration (Oliver-Smith, 2006). In the light of the interviews conducted, I observed that the individuals who had to leave Hatay after the earthquake were caught between permanence and transience. Yet, I also observed that the speed of reconstruction process will change the course of the situation. With the prolongation of the reconstruction process, the tendency of individuals to return will decrease due to investments in their businesses and their children's education. As stated by Oliver-Smith (2006), the likelihood of this situation turning into forced migration will increase because of its involuntary nature. In the following pages, I will discuss the details about the reasons why the relocation that took place after the earthquake is considered within the scope of forced migration.

The 2023 earthquakes had a a great impact on the population and caused significant destruction in the region. After the disaster, many lives were lost. Especially in the Antakya district of Hatay, most of the survivors were forced to leave the city because of the scale of destruction. Antakya was called "ghost city" by the people who chose to stay in the area. As the surviving people in Hatay woke up on the morning of 6 February as "earthquake victims", people from Hatay were provided with free access to services provided by state institutions and municipalities all over Turkey. All state institutions, particularly AFAD and the Red Crescent, as well as numerous municipalities, non governmental organizations in Turkey and people from all over Turkey and internationally, provided clothing, food, shelter, psycho-social support to the earthquake victims in the disaster zone and to those evacuated by the state or migrated on their own (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, 2023; AFAD, 2024).

Subject and aim

The focus of this study is to explore the permanent and transient status of people from Hatay who migrated to other provinces of Turkey as a result of the 6 February 2023 Maraş

and 20 February 2023 Hatay earthquakes. The term transience here refers to the return of people to their cities that they had to leave for their lives after the improvement of conditions (education, health, job opportunities, etc.). If the improvement process is takes longer time than expected the transience turns into permanance. The reason behind this process can be explained with the investment made by earthquake survivors for their new life and their children's education in other cities.

In this study, I focus on how individuals managed this process, the emotions they felt, and their thoughts about the future, with the aim of understanding how people with different socio-economic situations, income and education levels, gender, etc. act in the face of sudden earthquakes that lead to large-scale loss of life, property and relocation. In addition, we aim to understand how they cope with this difficult process and whether they have plans returning to Hatay in the future.

Methodology

This study is based on qualitative research methods, particularly, participant observation and in-depth interviews. In the period between June 15 and July 15 2023, I conducted face-to-face interviews in Eskişehir and Ankara and interviews via telephone with individuals from Hatay who migrated to Mersin, İstanbul, Uşak and Antalya. Although Hatay residents migrated to several cities, there were several reasons why Eskişehir and Ankara were chosen. The first is that, after the earthquake, Hatay residents migrated mainly to Adana and Mersin, with Ankara and Eskişehir being the next most common destinations. Another reason is that after the earthquake, I moved to Eskişehir. In addition, due to my family's relocation to Ankara following the earthquake, I frequently traveled to Ankara. I had several interviewees, relatives and acquaintances in these two cities who had experienced the earthquake.

The fact that my family and relatives settled in Ankara after the earthquake had a great influence on the research I conducted in Ankara. In addition to solving my accommodation problem, I also had the chance to understand the recovery process after the earthquake through witnessing the reactions and experiences of my family and relatives, allowing me to see and feel the things deeper. This situation gave me the opportunity for an *experimental observation* in which I went through *shock, pain, loss, grief, sadness, hope* etc. I conducted face-to-face and telephone interviews with my interviewees from my previous field research and with many people from Hatay I had just met. The interviewees consisted of 20 people, 14 women and 6 men. The reason for the higher number of female interviewees compared to male interviewees was that the number of women who migrated with their children or elderly family members (mother, father, mother-in-law and father-in-law) was considerably higher. While men went back to their jobs in Hatay to provide for the family, women often migrated to a safer city for education, psycho-social support, elderly care, and treatment of chronic diseases.

The interviewees mostly migrated from Antakya, Altınözü, İskenderun and other districts of Hatay. 6 of the interviewees were university graduates, 7 were high school graduates and 8 were primary school graduates. The interviewees included individuals who lost their jobs after the earthquake, worked in daily jobs, retired, as well as individuals from different professional groups of the society such as religious officials and teachers who continued their professions

after the earthquake. I completed the in-depth interviews after we reached the saturation level. In other words when the answers given to the questions asked in the interviews repeated themselves I terminated the data collection process. Due to the sensitivity of the subject, it was reminded that the interviews could be terminated in moments of emotional intensity.

Nevertheless, nearly all of the interviewees characterised the interviews as “*therapy*,” “*an opportunity to express their emotions*,” “*beneficial because they wanted a platform to communicate*” their feelings and thoughts. They stated that it was beneficial for them to discuss their earthquake experience with an individual who had also experienced it, helping me to develop a deeper level of rapport with my informants. Since the reactions of individuals to the earthquake differ due to categories of gender, language, religion, ethnicity, income level, livelihood, class, age, etc., I tried to take into account different individual experiences (Duyar & Çeltikçi, 2024: 207; Varol & Gültekin, 2016: 1435). Within the framework of ethical requirements, I coded the names of the interviewees with their initials.

Hatay is known worldwide as the city of civilizations where refugees, migrants and different people from different religions and ethnic backgrounds live. In order to understand the ways in which different demographic groups experienced the effects of the earthquake, I ensured that interviewees were selected from different religious groups. Furthermore, I conducted interviews with Uzbeks and Syrian asylum-seekers who settled in Hatay. My aim was to comprehend how different ethno-religious groups living in Hatay were affected by the earthquake, their emotions and thoughts, their response and the coping strategies they developed. With the same purpose, I preferred to interview women (mothers who have gone through divorce), old and young people, retired people, women who work from home, students, individuals with different income levels.

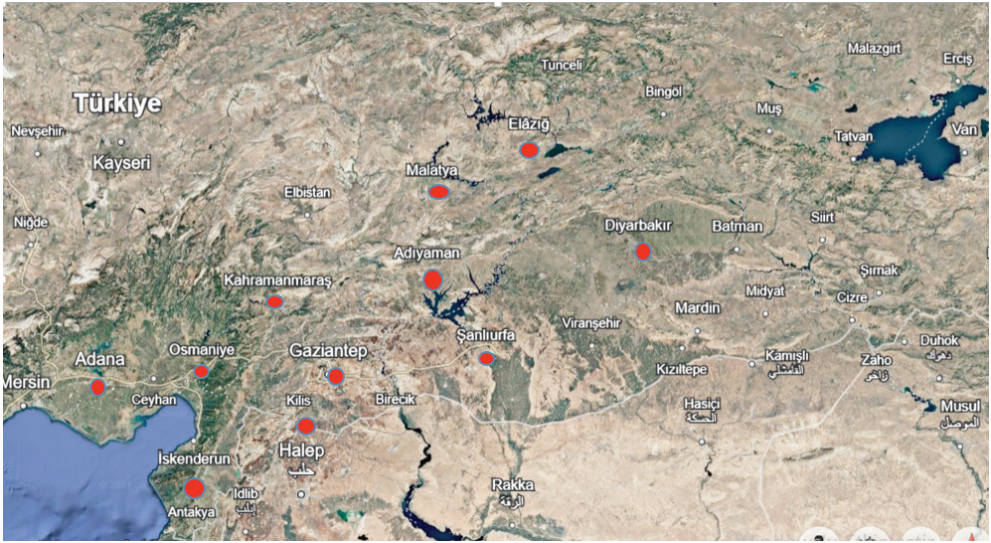
With the help of the semi-structured and open-ended questions, I tried to understand the processes people went through during and after the earthquake, the opinions of the individuals about their permanence and transience, how they felt and their future expectations. The fact that I am from Hatay and that I have experienced the earthquake and migration myself, contributed to a great extent to navigate through the problem of hierarchy between the researcher and the researched. Furthermore, since I had to migrate to Eskişehir like my interviewees, and this made me an “earthquake survivor” the interviews were more interactive and increased the sense of trust as we went through similar phases because of the disaster. In addition, I answered the personal questions directed to me during the interviews. In the interviews, we remembered the moment of the earthquake together, became silent, cried and continued. I observed that the willingness of the interviewees to tell their own stories increased significantly.

6 February 2024 Maraş Earthquakes and their effects

Major earthquakes have occurred in Turkey throughout history due to its geographic and geological location and. On the seismically active Anatolian plate, 20 earthquakes above 7 magnitude have occurred since 1900 causing loss of life and property. 2023 Kahramanmaraş,

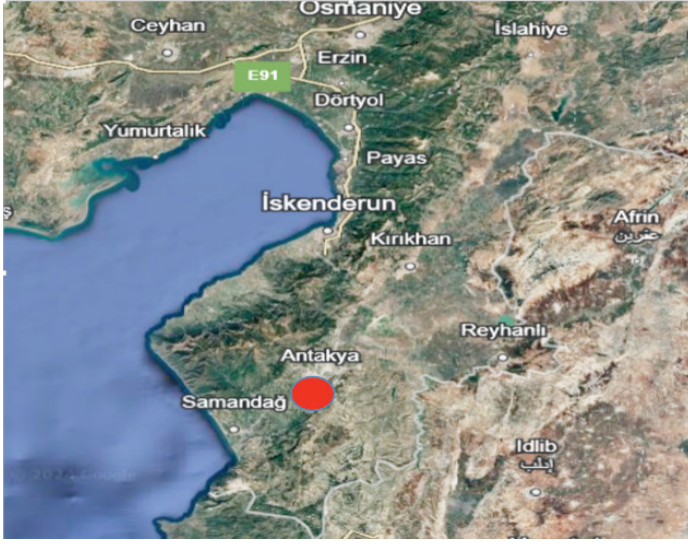
1939 Erzincan, and 1999 Gölcük-centred Marmara, 1946 and 1966 Varto Earthquakes were the most severe earthquakes in terms of deaths and extensive damage (Presidency of Strategy and Budget, 2023; Dinç, 2023: 203; Zengin, 2020: 793).

On 6 February 2023 , at 04:17 a.m. and 13:24 p.m., two of the largest earthquakes in the last century, with magnitudes of 7.7 and 7.6 occurred at the epicentres in Pazarcık and Elbistan districts of Kahramanmaraş. Fourteen days later, on 20 February 2023, two more earthquakes of magnitude 6.4 and 5.8 occurred at 20:04, with the epicentre in Yayladağı, Hatay. These earthquakes killed approximately 50,000 people and injured tens of thousands (Mineral Research and Exploration Report, 2023). Eleven provinces were affected by the massive earthquakes, which left Hatay with the most damage (See map 1).



Map 1: 6 February 2023 11 provinces affected by the earthquakes in Kahramanmaraş (Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Osmaniye, Kilis, Elazığ, Adana, Diyarbakır, Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep, Adıyaman, Malatya) (<https://earth.google.com/web>)

Among these provinces, Antakya, the central district of Hatay had the highest number of deaths and “turned into ruins” (Map 2). Places of worship, historical sites and many buildings in the centre of Antakya collapsed and the buildings that remained standing became unusable. Thousands of people perished under the rubbles. A nationwide mourning period was declared due to the heavy loss of life and a state of emergency was put in effect for three months in order to urgently carry out rescue operations in the provinces affected by the earthquake.



Map 2: Hatay/Antakya damaged by the 6 and 20 February 2023 Maras and Hatay earthquakes
(www.goog <https://earth.google.com/web>)

Earthquakes and forced migration

In terms of displacement, coercive and repulsive factors, migration following a natural disaster can be categorised as forced migration, which often occur in an unplanned and involuntary manner. The term “forced migration” is generally used in the literature for displacement that occurs as a consequence of natural disasters such as wars, civil unrest, political issues, poverty, famine, drought, floods and earthquakes (Peker & Şanlı, 2022: 125).

Disasters can change the course of people’s lives and impact the region where they live. After the disasters individuals may have to leave the city where they reside due to challenges in housing and infrastructure (Gökalp & Turan, 2023: 1256). Migration, whether permanent or temporary, has always been a traditional response or survival strategy of people facing the possibility or consequences of disasters (Oliver-Smith, 2006). Mass migration is often forced by disasters and this is a natural consequence. Throughout history, the world has witnessed hundreds of mass migrations displaced by natural disasters. The Chernobyl nuclear accident, the tsunami in South Asia, Hurricane Katrina are just a few examples. The 2008 Wenchuan earthquake killed approximately 96,000 people and injured 288,000 in China’s Sichuan Province (Huang, 2022: 2). The explosion and radiation leakage at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in Ukraine in 1986 caused many people to be forced to migrate (Deniz et al., 2017 cited in Gökalp & Turan, 2023: 1257). The 1985 Mexico City earthquake, approximately 9,500 individuals died and population decreased from 8.8 million to 8.2 million (Alscher, 2010: 175 cited in Deniz et al. 2017: 1427).

In Türkiye, the population declined as a result of the 1999 Gölcük earthquake (Peker & Şanlı, 2022: 141). After the 2011 Van earthquake, although the population and the migration

received by the region were the same as the previous year, the rate of earthquake-induced migration increased significantly. The total population decreased from 591,098 people in 2019 to 588,088 people following the earthquake in Elazığ. In the 2020 Izmir earthquake, there was an increase in the population and migration rate (Peker & Şanlı, 2022: 141). Similarly, in Hatay, which was severely damaged after the 6 February 2023 and 20, 2023 earthquakes, thousands of people lost their lives and many people were forced to migrate, meaning that Hatay's population was 1 million 686,043 in 2022, and it dropped to 1 million 544,640 in 2023. Hatay's population decreased by 141,403 people after the earthquake (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2023; Sarıoğlu, 2023: 3).

The above-mentioned disaster-related displacement took place as people wanted to meet their basic needs. In other words, after the initial shock the movement to the nearest settlements with the means offered by the state or by individuals themselves can be considered as evacuation or temporary relocation. The prolonged recovery process of the earthquake region and the socio-economic needs of individuals such as health, education, shelter, job opportunities, psychological support, etc. affects the likelihood of these evacuation or relocation movements becoming permanent over time. These movements of people will be temporary if the basic needs of individuals are met and the sociocultural life in the city is resumed. If these endeavours are prolonged, the likelihood of these migrations becoming permanent will increase day by day as individuals make material and moral investments.

In the initial days of the earthquake, migrations were prompted by fundamental requirements such as shelter, security, hygiene, and nutrition. However, in the subsequent days, they were compelled by external factors such as unemployment, education, health, and psychological support. A significant number of residents of Hatay were compelled to evacuate the city as a result of these challenges. The Kahramanmaraş and Hatay earthquakes had an impact on a vast territory, resulting in significant number of fatalities and mass migration. These earthquakes are among the most destructive earthquakes Turkey has ever experienced.

Factors affecting decisions to migrate

Following the high-magnitude earthquakes on 6 and 20 February, which impacted a vast area, numerous residents of Hatay relocated to various districts in Turkey. In order to understand the nature of this sudden and forced migration, this section focuses on the interviewees' earthquake experiences and how they made the decision to migrate.

T.Y.'s narrative below shows how severe the destructive and shocking impact of the earthquake was and why they had to migrate. Like T.Y., the majority of interviewees compared the experience of the earthquake to "apocalypse".

It was an apocalypse. I was helpless in that moment. I fell into the void. Where were we going to go? There is no home, nowhere to stay. Everything was destroyed. Then AFAD came, soldiers came, they took the bodies out. Everyone was already shouting around, looking for their mothers and fathers. People were climbing on the collapsed buildings and calling out for their mothers and fathers. It all happened in front of our eyes. A

family disappeared just like that. Everyone was waiting to see if they could get them out alive. Unfortunately the building collapsed instantly. They all died instantly. No psychologist, no psychiatrist can erase what we went through. But despite this, you try to survive. After a while, I couldn't bear what I was witnessing. At the end, my daughter screamed and said, "Mom, let's get out of here". Seeing dead bodies everywhere, right next to us. There were bodies two steps away. How can you forget this? My daughter screamed, she said enough is enough, let's go. I wasn't going to leave Antakya. But for my daughter's sake we came to Eskişehir. (T.Y., female, 58 years old, primary school graduate, not working, Eskişehir)

T.Y.'s narrative is particularly similar to the narratives of interviewees residing in Antakya. Many interviewees residing in the city centre stated that they encountered similar situations when they ran on the streets for their lives after surviving the shock of the earthquake. Interviewees who had witnessed the tragic deaths of their neighbors, relatives and close relatives stated that they were traumatized.

As was the case with the 1939 Erzincan and 2004 Aşkale earthquakes, the Kahramanmaraş earthquake on 6 February occurred during the early morning hours. The individuals were awoken in the middle of the night. The fact that the earthquake coincided with a severe winter days, which was rare in Hatay's climate history, made the situation for people more difficult (Gök et al., 2007: 176; Peker & Şanlı 2022: 133). People tried running outside to survive but many of them were killed by falling tiles or water tanks, etc. Those who survived went to relatively safer spaces in fear and panic. Those who had cars spent the night in their cars, while those without built shelters with the materials they found around.

T.Y.'s words are remarkable in terms of reflecting the traumatic effects of the earthquake. It seems that they had to migrate due to the psychological effects of being homeless, not being able to respond to calls for help, witnessing the deaths of their neighbors and relatives.

Our life, childhood, youth, everything was destroyed. First of all, our homeland was destroyed. Most people left for their children. Out of necessity. There were people around that we couldn't save. Our loved ones died, our relatives and neighbors were bleeding in front of your eyes. We were frightened by the earthquake. But we live that earthquake every moment, every second, every minute, with the death of our friends around us, the screams of the people and babies we heard that day. Even if we try to sleep at night, we cannot sleep. But we will return to our hometown no matter what. (C.D., female, 45 years old, not working, high school graduate, Mersin)

In C.D.'s narrative, we can understand that addition to being homeless, she had to leave the city due to her child's education. Similarly, C.D. experienced the psychological pressure of not being able to respond to cries for help. It can be seen that almost all of the interviewees who managed to survive under the rubble, have psychological issues arising from the helplessness they experienced upon the requests for help from people under the rubble.

My father came out of the rubble. He's been having nightmares ever since. If there's a small shake, he immediately asks if it's an earthquake. Many people died. Some of them were buried in Syria after we pulled them out of the rubble. Many people left. One of our neighbors lost his whole family. He was the only one who survived. He

said “what should I do here now?” He said he came there for his children. He said he had nothing left and returned to Syria. (F.Ş., female 25 years old, university graduate, providing educational support to foreign students, Uşak)

F.Ş. stated that her father, who came out of the rubble, could not get over the fear of the earthquake. As a result, they decided to move to Uşak, which they thought was safer in terms of earthquakes. This is also because their daughter was going to university in this city. Their daughter was studying at university. Another interviewee, H.K., described the difficulties experienced by the people who lost everything after the earthquake and the migration strategy they adopted in this direction.

After the earthquake was over, my wife and I left the building. We reached the barracks and they gave us soup and bread. We ate because we were hungry and cold. Then my daughter and son-in-law took us to Çekmece. I didn't want to stay there. There was no electricity, no water. There was no food. I went to my daughter who lives in Mersin. There, AFAD gave us coats and clothes. God bless them. (H. K. male, retired, 70 years old, high school graduate, Mersin)

In his narrative, H.K. stated that they received help from the military barracks and AFAD. His statements show that they migrated to access basic needs in cold winter conditions in the following days.

When we look at the interviews in general, we can see that people were forced to leave the cities due to psychological issues, housing problems, clothing and nutrition problems. High rent prices, unemployment risks, access to health facilities, pollution and the negative environment were also among the reasons why people chose to leave. I also observed that especially people who were under the rubble suffer from emotional breakdown due to the psychological pressure of not being able to respond to calls for help of babies, children. The number of interviewees expressing their concerns about the calls for help after the earthquake were quite high. At this point, I can say that the experiences of those who managed to survive today have led to traumas. These narratives show that this demographic movement is temporary in the form of evacuation and relocation rather than migration. However, I should note that due to the reconstruction of the city takes time, individuals make material and moral investments in the places where they are relocated, such as the education of children and the formation of friendship ties. At this point, measures should be taken before the migration in question turns into permanent migration, and reconstructions should be accelerated to ensure the return of the local population.

Choosing a new place for relocation

Of the 11 provinces where the effects of the 2023 earthquakes were felt, Hatay and Antakya were the most damaged. Due to the shocking impact of the earthquake, the cold and rainy weather, and the need for shelter and nutrition, thousands of people had to leave their homes. The earthquake survivors, who had housing problems—as the centre of Antakya was heavily damaged—moved in with their relatives living in the districts and villages of Hatay. We can say that reverse migration from city to the village took place. When we look at the places preferred for migration we can say that the first migrations were

towards the rural areas of Hatay where people could easily reach. For example, districts such as Altınözü, İskenderun, especially Arsuz, Yayladağı, etc. were the places where people preferred to migrate. Arsuz is almost called “little Antakya”. Similarly, İskenderun became one of the districts where a large number of people from Antakya settled.

The population forced to migrate due to the limited number of relatively undamaged houses or high rental prices in these areas preferred to go to other provinces in Türkiye such as Mersin, Adana, Tarsus, Ankara, Istanbul, Eskişehir, etc. Relatively low-income families, those who had the financial means but did not want to leave the land they cultivated, those who could still maintain their jobs, and individuals who did not want to migrate preferred to stay in containers. It can be seen that provinces close to Hatay, safe in terms of earthquake and low rent prices are preferred for migration. Mersin is at the top of these provinces due to its geographical proximity and the relationship with relatives. At the same time, we understood that Mersin, like Ankara, is preferred because they are safe in terms of earthquakes. Another criterion for choosing the place of migration is rent prices. For this reason, a large number of people from Hatay migrated to Eskişehir, which is considered to have relatively lower rent prices compared to Ankara and Mersin.

The daughter of the family we stayed with in Mersin was studying in Eskişehir. She said you can find a job and rents are more affordable there than in Mersin. That's why we came to Eskişehir. The house rents in the nearby provinces became expensive and Eskişehir was cheaper. Mersin and Adana were very expensive. We were scammed in Mersin. Rents increased everywhere. We made a deposit of 1.700 TL. It turned out that there was no such house. That's why we chose Eskişehir. When I arrived, the house rent was 2.000-2.500 TL. In Mersin it was 10.000 and 12.000. It felt like a blessing. That's why we chose Eskişehir. People got angry with us because rents increased when the earthquake victims came. (R.H. female, 30 years old, university graduate, executive assistant at a daycare centre, Eskişehir)

From R.H.'s narrative, we understood that rent prices are effective in determining where to migrate. As the number of houses in Hatay were lower than the demand, and some people took advantage of the situation, the average annual rent of a house in Hatay increased from 5,000-6,000 TL to 8,000-10,000TL. In addition, the post-earthquake migration to nearby provinces increased the demand for housing in these cities, resulting in an increase in rents. For example, in cities such as Ankara, Eskişehir and Mersin, which received migration after the earthquake, rent prices increased despite restrictions. This was a very difficult situation to overcome for the earthquake survivors. This situation made it difficult for people to find houses and caused many of them to return to Hatay. Those who returned stated that they could not find a house in Hatay, and that the rental prices of houses in rural areas were higher than before. F.G.'s narrative explains the situation as follows:

You almost lost your life but people don't understand you. They raise the rents as they please. They can't raise as they want. We can make a complaint. In our own hometown, they raised the rent to 8.000 TL-9.000 TL. How can we not get mad? My husband's monthly salary is 7.000 TL. I used to get angry when they increased the rent in other

cities. In my hometown, they rent the houses which weren't damaged for this price. (F.G. female, 35 years old, high school, not working, Eskişehir)

In her narrative, F.G. explains that some landlords, taking advantage of the increased need for housing after the earthquake, rent out their houses at a higher price than normal.

Altınözü, Reyhanlı, Yayladağı were not damaged. The population of Altınözü increased. Rents have increased. It is a pity if people in my hometown are doing this now. It was 2.000 TL-3.000 TL before the earthquake, now they want 15.000 TL. They want 10.000 TL. 300 euros the man had to accept. His wife works in Altınözü. We are in a very strange situation. (Z.L., female, 38 years old, teacher, Antalya)

The narratives of Z.L. express resentment towards the increase in the rental prices of relatively intact houses in rural areas in and around Antakya. It can be stated that this situation was effective in people's decision to migrate. In response to these cases, the Provincial Trade Directorates and the Tax Office compared the prices of rented houses before and after the earthquake and tried to take measures against price increases. The state has announced that people will be fined between TL 33,000 and TL 331,000 if an unfair price increase is detected. They also announced that in case of market distorting actions, fines ranging from 100 thousand TL to 2 million TL can be imposed (Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye, 2023). Although sanctions against disproportionate rent increases have relatively restricted increases, the scarcity of undamaged houses in Hatay has made it necessary for returnees to reside in tents or container cities.

Post-earthquake migration and adaptation problems

We understand that individuals who migrated after the earthquake generally had a desire to get away from the disaster they experienced. It was also understood that they were reluctant to adapt to where they were. During the interviews, it was observed that elderly people had adaptation problems compared to young individuals between the ages of 20-30. As we know, "various groups such as elderly people, individuals with physical or mental disabilities, children, women, migrant communities, asylum seekers are groups with a much higher potential for vulnerability in disasters" (Çakır & Atalay, 2020: 170).

I took my mom's and dad's medicines and went home. They have heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure. They were already stressed. They are over 75 years old. My parents and mother-in-law lost their house, so we rented a house for them in Ankara. My father-in-law suddenly became ill...He has a severe blood disease. We came to Ankara so that I would not leave them alone and because of the asbestos incident, bad weather. We also came because of education, health, housing problems...I decided to stay here so that the children would continue their education and so that they would not breathe bad air. I also stayed to take care of my elders. Sometimes you need to find medicine but you can't. These are very important medicines. Sometimes they don't give them because they want to sell them with the increased price. You have to struggle with all these things. (D.H. female, university graduate, teacher, 38 years old, Ankara)

D.H.'s narrative describes a woman's migration journey with her children and elderly parents with chronic illness. We understood that elderly people with chronic diseases such as diabetes, blood pressure, heart disease etc. migrate in order to continue their treatment.

Our house was at the centre. The demolitions were mostly at the centre. The air was full of dust. There were insects. The smell of dead bodies was so bad for my mother that her lung was inflamed. She did not use a mask. She has asthma. She had shortness of breath when she smelled it. There was no electricity. I couldn't take the her medical device, but even if I could, there was no electricity. Believe me, people lived there because they had no other choice. We also did not have any other options, but I wanted to create an opportunity. We are looking for a house in Antakya. If we find a house, we will move. There are no job oppotunities, the rents are high. We took shelter in a relative's garage for a while. Then they were disturbed by the noise. I brought my belongings and put them in a corner of the garage. After that they told me to remove them from there. I can't bring those things here either. I don't have 30.000 - 40.000TL. I can't stay here for my life anyway. If you sell them, to whom will you sell them? If I sell them, how will I get them back? I don't have any money. I am in a strange stage of emptiness. We have no financial and moral security. (R.H. female, 30 years old, college graduate, executive assistant at a daycare centre, Eskişehir)

R.H.'s narrative tells the story of a young girl's efforts to save her mother, who suffers from asthma, from the unfavorable conditions of the city. We understood that they feel "emptiness" due to negative reasons such as their issue with their relatives and the increase in rent prices.

Sometimes I tell to myself. Will they take my dead body to Antakya? Will they bury me there? If you are born there that means you will die there. My sister-in-law's father is in Antalya. My brother, my sister-in-law, her father-in-law are also there. My sister-in-law's father-in-law couldn't take it anymore. He said take me to my house in Antakya and even if it is destroyed I'll set up a tent there. If I die, I'll die there. He died within a week. He came to Antakya and died in that tent. He was 60 years old. He didn't have a chronic disease. He had a heart attack. He said, "I can't live anywhere else. Why did you take me to Antalya? Take me home". He missed his hometown. He was in the same situation as me. (D.K., female, 58 years old, not working, primary school graduate, Eskişehir)

D.K. explains her longing for the city where she was born and raised and her wish to be buried in her hometown. We can understand that people who have developed sense of belonging to their cities wish to return to their hometowns, even if the living conditions are not good enough.

My mom doesn't feel psychologically well. She had a breakdown. She started having unbelievable things. She said if I die, don't bury me here. It was really stressed psychologically. It is very strange to witness these at this age. Is it always going to be like this from now on? I worked all these years, got retired and owned a house. My house is gone. Now I am stuck in the middle all alone. (D.H. female, teacher, 38 years old, Ankara)

The narratives of D.K. and D.H. revealed that there were concerns of elders, including the sudden disappearance of their lifelong savings and the expectation of being buried in Hatay in the event of death. In both narratives, it is possible to understand the feelings and thoughts of individuals who want to be buried in their hometown. Furthermore, I encountered similar adaptation problems in children. Some children were reluctant to return to Hatay due to fear of the earthquake.

My daughter can't get over the earthquake. She cried a lot during the earthquake drill conducted at school. She was very scared. She lost her friends. She saw their pictures on the school website. She wrote letters to them and told her teacher. My daughter never wants to go back. My son is young too. He needs his father. For example, my son's speech skills has also deteriorated. For example, he says phrases like "the house is broken". He is confused. Memories of his grandmother's house is fading from his memory. (D.H. female, teacher, 38 years old, Ankara)

D.H. reveals how the earthquake affected children. Therefore, it is important that both older individuals and children benefit from psycho-social support. An example is provided through an interviewee who shared the experiences of her son, who was preparing for the university entrance exam. She expressed her concerns regarding her son's hopelessness for the future and pervasive feelings of emptiness. She mentioned that her son had difficulty in perceiving exam questions after the earthquake. Similarly, another interviewee, the mother of a student also preparing for the university entrance exam, articulated that while her child was very successful before the earthquake, after the earthquake, he had difficulty focusing. She stated that he was not as successful as before and he was devastated.

Women are the most affected group in the aftermath of the earthquake. The narratives show that most of the time, women took care of the children and elderly parents as men returned to Hatay and work. Thus, we can say that the women struggled with more than one problem.

Most of the men stayed in Hatay. But women moved to other cities with their children for their education and mental health. Mothers made more sacrifices. Most of the men said take the children and leave, I will work and send you money. (D.F., female, 23 years old, high school graduate, not working, Eskişehir)

D.F.'s word shows why women's responsibilities increased significantly after the earthquake. Another interviewee stated that they decided to leave the city as they gave importance to the education of their children and wanted to create better conditions for them.

If we stayed in a container in Hatay it wouldn't be good for children's education. We did not want that. Then we had to choose a city. My son's house in Istanbul was nice, but there is a danger of earthquake there too. We came to Eskişehir. Believe me, my mental health was so bad and my husband went to Saudi Arabia to work. One day I went to enroll my son in a tutoring centre and the tutor told me that they felt very sorry for us. I couldn't hold my tears and I cried. My children also feel sorry for me. We went through such a tough time. Do you know what we used to say to each other in Hatay, "Were you able to find the dead body and bury?" (A.H. 44 years old, high school graduate, not working, Eskişehir)

A.H.'a words reveal that she has not yet overcome the psychological effects of the earthquake. Her situation was accompanied by a series of problems such as her husband going abroad. She also had to take the responsibility of her children, while adapting to a new place.

I saw that there were many woman who built a new life with their children because their husbands had to work in Hatay or in a different area. One interviewee stated that her husband left to earn money but they have not heard from him since then. Another interviewee said that her friend's husband did not call her or send her money after he went abroad, so she had to return to Hatay alone.

I also observed that some women, who had no work experience or qualifications, had to take care of their children and make a living by working in cleaning jobs or making local dishes at home. We understood that divorces also took place after the earthquake due to economic difficulties and conflicts between spouses.

This earthquake tore many families apart. Many men left their families. Women did not want to stay in an unhealthy environment because of their children. Men wanted to return because their jobs were there. Then the woman said you can stay here, I can take my children and go. Some men just told the women to take care of themselves. Men are used to their women struggling to earn their own living. They make meatballs, cakes, jams and sell them. But there is no network here. You need network. After hearing that men say, "You should have stayed in the tent". (D.K. female, 58 years old, primary education, not working, Eskişehir)

D.K.'s narrative reveals that due to uncertainties about the future after the earthquake, there were differences of opinion between spouses. Women's demand to leave the earthquake zone for their children's education and treatment and men's decision to stay in the city to work or cultivate their fields, resulted in breakups. Many women moved with their children to safer locations, while most men remained in the earthquake zone for their jobs to support their families.

Believe me, three out of five families divorced after the earthquake. Women started to make requests. They should thank God that we survived and did not lose our children. They should not ask for anything. Everything is about patience. No one has anything left. We are crying our hearts out. Now should we ask for a house? I only cry for the children. Such situations happened in Mersin, Tarsus, Antakya after the earthquake. A friend called me four days ago. He said he wanted to come to stay with me. He had an argument with his wife. This earthquake tore many families apart. May God protect us from the worst, give us patience and wisdom. This earthquake has ruined everything. People's mental health is not good. They don't know what to do, how to speak. If they say hello to me, it is as if they swear at me. (E.L. male, 65 years old, retired, primary school graduate, Eskişehir)

When we analyze the narratives of D.K. and E.L., we understand that in the process of coping with the difficulties encountered after the earthquake, disagreements between the spouses were experienced and these disagreements often resulted in divorces.

During the interviews, I encountered people who had to relocate their spouses and children to different cities for education and health and had to return to work or to cultivate their yards.

Similarly, some public officials have relocated their families to a safer city and returned to their jobs. It has been observed that some members of certain professions, for whom it takes a long time to establish a network, have developed strategies such as leaving their children to their grandmothers and reopening their workplaces in İskenderun. Looking at the narratives in general, the earthquake profoundly affected all areas of society and reshaped family structures. At the same time, there was an increase in divorces due to incompatibility and financial difficulties, as well as a creation of single-parent family structures as a result of death.

Furthermore, I can say that the responsibilities imposed on women due to gender roles have increased. The number of people women are obliged to care for (children, elderly, disabled, etc.) increased. At this point women's educational level, income level, and work experience became important. In other words, their social capital is efficient in facilitating the process. It has been observed that women with middle and upper economic status have the opportunity to live in relatively better conditions and have job opportunities, while women with low income and no access to education generally work in unskilled jobs such as house cleaning, elderly care, etc. without insurance. Based on the analysis conducted on narratives, we observed that women in general and women with no access to education and no work experience in particular were significantly affected by the earthquake and this situation made them even more vulnerable. Vulnerability is the social, economic, psychological and environmental sensitivity of individuals, society or system to dangers. "Resilience" often taken as flexibility or durability. It is defined as a community's and system's ability to withstand social, psychological, and physical challenges during disasters and emergencies. It involves coping with these issues and recovering with minimal damage. The greater the resilience of an individual or a society against disasters and the lower its vulnerability. In order to mitigate the consequences of disasters such as earthquakes, it is necessary to enhance the resilience of society to disasters (Varol & Kırıkkaya, 2017: 1-2).

Despite all the problems about housing, health and education people of Hatay today are trying to adapt to their new life. Although there is a general conviction that "nothing will ever be the same again", the locals seem to have high hopes and motivation for Hatay. In the interviews, those who had to migrate due to reasons such as children's education, unemployment, health problems of the elderly, housing, transportation, socialization, etc. stated that they would like to return to Hatay as soon as possible if the problems were solved.

Between transience and permanence

I understood that almost all of the interviewees from Hatay have not made a clear decision as to whether they are temporary or permanent in their provinces, but they are highly motivated to return. However, we understood that the complexity of the process they are going through leads to feelings of uncertainty and helplessness.

There is definitely uncertainty and uncertainty is a really bad thing. You don't know what to do. You don't know what is going to happen. (R.H. female, 30 years old, university graduate, executive assistant at a daycare centre, Eskişehir)

R.H.'s narrative reflect the situation of the most interviewees. R.H. stated that she lives with her elderly mother as her father left them. After the earthquake, they decided to migrate to Eskişehir for the treatment of her mother, who suffers from asthma and to solve the housing. For this reason, they stated that the uncertainty about returning continues and that they cannot plan for the future.

I regret that I came here. I told my daughter. It's my hometown. Even if it's destroyed it is my hometown. No matter what happens, for me it is my hometown. We will return. I wish I had stayed from the beginning. I wish I had never come. I would have settled somewhere in the villages. I came here so as not to leave my daughter alone. When I went to Serinyol during the elections, it gave me a sense of peace. Even those demolished buildings feel like something. After all, it's your hometown, you know. I feel like I belong there. We are in Eskişehir now. My family stayed there. They set up a tent next to their destroyed house and they still live there in a tent. My brother is there too. They live with my mother. My mother is 82 years old. She says she can't live anywhere else. I follow the news about Hatay every day on social media. I look at the old and new state of Antakya. I cry. I hope it will return to its old state. That's why I want to return to Antakya so much. Antakya is different for me. Even the soil is very different for me. I bring vegetables from there. I bring coffee, especially the spices of Antakya. Even the vegetables there smell different. I miss it a lot. I miss my neighborhood the most. There is no one there now. Even though everything is destroyed when I go back to my doorstep it gives me a sense of peace.. It is a very strange feeling. (D.K., female, not working, 58 years old, primary school graduate, Eskişehir)

D.K.'s narrative presents the forced migration journey of a mother who had to follow her daughter as she was searching work. The narrative helps us understand her longing for her relatives, hometown, which she refers to as "my land". On the other hand, the migration of her daughter is vital for generating income and living in healthier conditions. These two different approaches actually contain significant data in terms of showing why migration is experienced differently between different generations within the same household.

These testimonies show that older individuals are more likely to return than younger ones. The main reason for young people's willingness to stay in the new settlement is the concern for the future. In addition, the views that it will take time for the city to get back to its old state seems effective in the decision making process. According to young people, there is a strong belief that the way to cope with problems such economic inadequacy, unemployment, etc. can be possible by seizing opportunities in the new living space. For this reason, the willingness of young people to adapt is significantly higher than older people.

We will never leave Antakya. Hatay is where we were born. There is no place like Hatay. Hatay is like a paradise. I thank God but he's turned everything upside down now. I hope it will get better. This city is very different from Antakya. We miss Antakya. Of course we will go. We'll go with the help of God. We will go back after we recover. Many people go back because it is our hometown. People went to Tarsus, in Mersin and if eighty percent left, fifty percent returned. What will people do? They cannot work. They have to live. They have their lands there. They will plant crops. They will harvest, eat, make a living. We will definitely return. But we will be here for up to a year. We can't leave until the rubble is cleared. Is there any place more beautiful than one's own hometown? (E.L. male, 65 years old, retired, primary school graduate, Eskişehir)

In E.L.'s narrative, we saw that most of those who migrated were unable to stay where they were and that they made efforts to return for these reasons. In addition to feelings of longing, hope, belonging we understood that the decision to return is taken due to reasons such as unemployment.

Eventually we will return. I came to Ankara with my daughter because our house was destroyed. My grandson is studying at university in Ankara. We came to his house. We will be together until he finishes school. My other son came with his family. His daughter is preparing for the university exam. My other son's daughter won the fine arts high school in Antalya. They went to Antalya after her. One of my daughters is in Arsuz. She went back to Hatay. Unfortunately we are torn apart, but we will all return. But now we have to live outside. We don't have a house. If we go back, where will we go? It is hard to find a house there too. Rents are also high. (G.Ö., female, 75 years old, primary school, not working, Ankara)

G.Ö.'s words underline that many families went to live with their children who settled in different cities for work and education. The high rents in Hatay and the scarcity of safe houses to live in are factors that affect their decisions.

We did not leave Hatay. People started to get sick due to lack of water and electricity. They didn't migrate, they just wanted shelter. But sooner or later everyone will return to their hometowns and many of them already returned. I think ninety percent will return. Most of those who migrated are worried about their children. They are worried about school and exams. When the school closes, people will return to their hometowns. I am here for my child. I was born in Hatay. I will die in Hatay. (K.T., female, 42 years old, primary school graduate, not working, Mersin)

K.T. helps us to understand why they decided to migrate, as she underlined the basic needs and their children's education as the main reason for their migration, although they would return when conditions improve in Hatay.

If I had come to Mersin on vacation before the disaster, of course it is a very beautiful city. But no, I cry every day. I tell my husband that I want to go. I can't fit in anywhere. I can't do it. We will return. If I am going to die, I want to die in my own city. I will not wait for things to settle to return. Most of my friends and loved ones are dead. We will save Hatay. We will make it flourish again. Once we take a step, the rest will follow. (G.D., female, 40 years old, high school graduate, not working, Mersin)

G.D. stated that she had difficulties in adapting to the place they migrated to and that she would not wait for conditions to improve to return to Hatay. This shows that people's belonging and love for their hometown also effected their decision to return.

As an earthquake survivor from Hatay, I won't give up on Hatay. I am temporary here, that's how I console myself. I will return as soon as possible. Thank God my sisters and brothers are there (referring to Antakya). They live in tents. Some of their houses are moderately damaged. They are trying to strengthen it. Life is somehow going on there. In one way or another. The reason for my emergency is my children's education. I think the local people from Antakya who have very deep-rooted family ties there will never give up. For example, I will never give up. I will go back. (D.F., female, high school graduate, 45 years old, former business owner, currently not working, Eskişehir)

D.F. stated that they migrated to Eskişehir for the education of their children. She also stated that they are willing to return to Hatay if the conditions are improved. This narrative is similar to the narratives of many interviewees.

We can't live elsewhere. Our roots are there. If I explain this elsewhere, it will sound very strange to people. We live together. We are very different. I believe we will return as soon as the conditions are good. I came to Antalya but I cannot live here. I am 800 km away but I am happy when I see license number 31. (Z.L. female, university graduate, 38 years old, teacher, Antalya)

Z.L.'s emphasis on roots expresses her belief that Antakya is her ancestral land. She expressed the difficulties of living in another city and not being able to adapt.

I wish I could invite my neighbors over for morning coffee, but there's no such culture here. You are alone all the time. No one knocks on the door. In Antakya everybody visits each other. They invite each other for tea and coffee. We miss our hometown a lot. I share everything I cook with my neighbors. They look surprised because they are not used to it. One day we met an old woman in the market and I invited her to my house for coffee. The woman was surprised. She said, "Where are you from?" (D.K., female, not working, 58 years old, primary school graduate, Eskişehir)

In the interviews we conducted on the possible adaptation problems faced by middle-aged and older women who spend most of their days at home, relationship with neighbors was the main issue. The situation is not different for men. In particular, retired or unemployed individuals reported that they no longer had the habit of getting together frequently with their peers and that they longed for old friendships. When the interviews are examined, we understood that the deprivation of friendship and the longing for these relationships were effective in individuals' decision to return.

With these stories, the paths that need to be followed for rebuilding the "well-being" of the society after the earthquake become clearer. Based on these narratives it can be said that both social structure and the physical structure of the areas should be taken into consideration in the reconstruction process. The morning coffee tradition, a space for women to connect, has also been seen as a special moment for sharing worries and finding comfort for centuries. A similar issue is also present among men. Many of the male interviewees stated that they struggle with the feeling of "loneliness" caused by being separated from old friends, relatives, acquaintances, and that they would like to return as soon as conditions in their hometowns improve. Although it is not physically possible to reconstruct the city, some efforts can be made to create neighborhoods where survivors can live together. The oral history study conducted 35 years after the 1970 Gediz earthquake, revealed that social structure as well as physical structure is among the factors that need to be taken into consideration in the reconstruction process and that the earthquake victims demanded preservation of the social structure in Eskigediz (Erkan et al. 2007: 145).

We have 2 projects. I will try to finish them. Prefabricated houses and container projects. There is a land which belongs to our foundation in Altınözü. We are thinking of making one there and we requested a land from the municipality. I think we will build on that land. All of these require huge financial resources. With the help of God, we will try to

do it. Both of our churches in Sarılar and Tokaçlı collapsed. Nine of our 13 churches in the region collapsed. The Church of the Virgin Mary in Tokaçlı also collapsed. I lost 41 of my children from our community in Antakya. But we are scattered in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Antalya. Our children are there. We are working to bring them all back. At the moment, I have resettled 15 families from Antakya in Altınözü. (P.A. male, master's degree, 31 years old, priest, theologian, patriarchal deputy, Antakya Altınözü)

From P.A's words show that several members of the Christian community lost their lives and many churches were destroyed. However, despite this, they stated that they were making efforts to return. G.H. expressed his desire to return to the ancient city where his ancestors have lived for centuries with the following words:

One of our Protestant brothers died. We couldn't even find his body. Five Catholics died. The Orthodox community suffered the greatest loss. Out of 1,350 people in the Orthodox community of Antakya, 52 people died. As the Protestant community, we came to Mersin for our lives. As time passed, we realized that we could not live away from Antakya, so 6 families returned to Antakya. They are staying in a container. I also prepared a project. I wanted to bring all Protestant families in Antakya and Mersin together. I made an appointment with the governor. I said Antakya is a very colorful place with its Muslims, Christians and Jews. We should stay together. The governor's Office and local authority responded positively to our request. Now the three communities, Protestant, Catholic and Assyrian, will build prefabricated houses and live together. We will establish a Christian village. The Orthodox gathered the entire Orthodox community after the earthquake and brought them all to Mersin. They will build a prefabricated house on the land belonging to the church in Altınözü and bring those from Mersin there. The rest of the people contacted the municipality and thanks to them they allocated land to build prefabricated houses. (G.H., 58 years old, male, retired, primary school graduate, Mersin)

G.H. makes it clear that the state administration and local administrators made efforts to reunite the religious communities living together in Hatay before the earthquake. It is also understood that the Christian community's desire to live together and the land they requested for this purpose were positively received by the state and the local authority.

When will we be back? It's like winning the national lottery, but not knowing the date you get the money. We'll be back, but the date is uncertain. All my friends are in different cities. One is in Bursa, another in Eskişehir, another in Konya. We all scattered around different places like a bunch of chickens. We lost the head of the congregation and his wife in the rubble. We lost so many of our friends. My wife also says that this was not an earthquake, it was an apocalypse. (H.F., male, 70 years old, retired, high school graduate, Istanbul)

Additionally, H.F. noted that the Jewish community in Hatay, which has been declining in number, was affected by the earthquake; the synagogue was destroyed, and the community leader and his wife lost their lives. He stated that the number of Jews, which was 17 before the earthquake, decreased to 15 afterwards. He noted that they temporarily relocated to safer provinces with lower earthquake risk and plan to return once the city has recovered.

Most of the Uzbeks have left. They went to other provinces. If we have a population of 6,000 now, 4,000 have left. But they are coming back. Their children can't get used to those cities. They come back. They always settle in tents. People from Antakya are

forced to leave. There is no place to live. But now people from Hatay have started to return. There are 480 containers. They are slowly coming to live in the container city. We built 422 tents. Our hearts ache when we see Antakya. Our brothers and sisters died in Antakya. These things cannot be forgotten. (G.L. male, primary school graduate, civil servant, 59 years old, Antakya)

In 1982, Uzbeks were settled as immigrants in various provinces of Turkey, including Hatay. It appears that many Uzbeks migrated in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake to escape its negative effects. I understood that most Uzbeks who faced adaptation difficulties in different cities returned and are now living in container cities.

When the effects of 2023 earthquakes are considered from the perspective of cross-border migrants, it can be said that the difficulties experienced are doubled. In addition to the small-scale social/cultural disaster caused by leaving their country and being separated from the physical and cultural environment they live in, the earthquake after the earthquake makes the situation even more difficult (Duyar & Çeltikci, 2024: 206) For example, many Syrians who migrated to Turkey after 2011 experienced significant feelings of anxiety, hopelessness, and concern. They expressed the material and emotional challenges of building a new life in a foreign country (Erdoğan & Kaya, 2015, p.326) Syrians had to migrate for the second time due to the earthquake. This situation shows that Syrians have experienced double victimization. Interviews with Syrians indicate that the earthquake caused many socio-economic and psychological problems.

In addition, people who survived the earthquake will also have to struggle with the problems of being apart from their family and adapting to the new situation as immigrants (Duruel, 2023: 234).

Deep down I want to leave. It won't be the old Hatay anymore. But I still want to go. I want to relive my old days and feel the peace. Because I grew up there, I had memories, friends. That's why I feel like I belong to Kırkhan. I am from Hatay, I am a dual citizen. I became a Turkish citizen. I wish the situation would improve and everyone would return. It does not seem possible for us to return before a year. Many Syrians died. But those who are alive want to return. (L.G., female, 19 years old, not working, Istanbul)

L.G. left his country 12 years ago due to the civil unrest in Syria and migrated to Türkiye. While they thought they had found peace in Kırkhan, they had to migrate again because of the earthquake. I understood that this situation made the adaptation process of Syrians twice as difficult.

Conclusion

The 6 February 2024 Maraş and 20 February 2023 Hatay earthquakes killed thousands of people and displaced many more. According to the May 2023 report of the Directorate of Mining Technical Research, the most important reasons for the loss of life and property after the 2023 earthquakes are the magnitude, duration, depth of the earthquake, liquefaction due to the ground. In addition to these reasons, deficiencies and/or inadequacies in construction practices, concrete quality, corrosion, age of the building, unauthorized renovations in the buildings were evaluated as factors that increased the damage. The social consequences of the series of

earthquakes, which are considered to be the catastrophic events of the century, are quite high.

The devastating impact of the earthquake deeply affected especially women, children, the disabled, the elderly, asylum seekers and individuals with chronic diseases. The findings from the interviews indicate that the earthquake disrupted life in many areas. The earthquake altered the course of daily life and made living more challenging in terms of economic, health, education, housing, and psychological factors. In the first days of the earthquake, it was experienced that all socio-cultural, economic, gender, status, etc. structures were turned upside down. The rich became poor in a minute and people felt they were going through a phase of newfound equality. Unprepared for the earthquake, people living in Hatay threw themselves outside, leaving most of their possessions under the rubble. Most of those who survived the earthquake lost their savings and jobs less than a minute. Thousands of people lost their lives and many were buried in cemeteries as unidentified.

More than one year after the earthquake, hundreds of people are still hopefully searching for people who are missing. The earthquake created an unforgettable trauma for people living in Hatay in general and Antakya in particular. In the first days of the earthquake, a large number of people embarked on a journey full of uncertainty to many provinces of Türkiye in order to get away from the traumatic environment and to access basic needs.

In order to protect the multicultural structure of Hatay, the Christian community's request for land from the state was welcomed positively and efforts had begun in this regard. The community also stated that the Jewish community would return. On the other hand, for asylum-seekers, the earthquake created a double victimization. Syrians, who migrated due to civil unrest in their country and tried to establish a new home, were forced to migrate again, which made them even more vulnerable.

The earthquake also brought several concerns among older generations about not being buried in their ancestral land. People kept worried to have lost their jobs. This was accelerated with future worries about education of children, which also meant to have increased responsibility for women. We observed that most of the men whose houses were destroyed in the earthquake and who had to continue working, returned to Hatay or went abroad after relocating their families to safer provinces. At this point, we understood that women are trying to survive alone in their new living spaces. Women had to take on more responsibilities in caring for their parents, dealing with health issues, and managing their children's education and social activities. There has been a noticeable shift from smaller family units to extended families, largely due to rising rent prices and the need to support elderly parents. As a result, women's responsibilities continued to grow in the larger family environments.

Uncertainty, helplessness, struggle for survival, material and moral losses have been observed to create a sense of in-betweenness in individuals who migrated. Starting a new life, adapting to the changing living conditions financially and morally, and coping with the problems that have developed made the situation even more difficult, especially for older individuals, women and mothers who have gone through divorce. It was seen that almost all interviewees lost their homes and jobs.

Furthermore, we understand that people from Hatay migrated due to compulsory reasons and nearly every interviewee is in favor of going back. The clarification of the decision to return is in parallel with the process of solving problems such as housing, unemployment, etc. in Hatay. At this point, Hatay's reconstruction efforts should be accelerated, and necessary efforts should be made to redevelop the society. It is possible to entice investors to make investments in the area. Migration can be avoided and returns can be expedited by improving local employment.

In the interviews, "hopelessness" and "uncertainty" were the most prominent feelings that came to the fore in conversations about future plans. "Uncertainty" causes a decrease in hope for the future and leads to psychological depression, helplessness, in-betweenness, loneliness, among other issues. Uncertainties need to be eliminated in order to increase hope of the individuals. At this point, publicizing the services planned for the reconstruction of the city and accelerating the process will greatly reduce the feeling of "uncertainty".

When we analyze the statements of the interviewees, we see that almost all of the people from Hatay who participated in the interview have a tendency to return. At this point, ensuring return will be possible by solving problems such as housing and unemployment. The material and moral investments made by migrants, such as their children's education and the formation of friendships, will make it increasingly difficult to return as time goes on. Therefore, expediting Hatay's restoration and including the local population will reduce uncertainty, increase optimism for the future, and ultimately support the return plans of those who have gone.

Endnotes

- 1 Constantine P. Cavafy's poem The City seems to shed light on the feelings of people from Hatay, including myself (as an "earthquake survivor from Hatay/Antakya"), who had to leave Hatay due to the earthquake. Wherever we go, temporarily or permanently, we continue to live in the streets of Antakya, where we were born and raised. In a way, we continue to live in Antakya with the conversations we have and the meals we cook. I am grateful to the people from Hatay who, despite their losses and the intense emotional difficulties, were humble enough to participate in my interviews and generously shared their deepest feelings with me. I dedicate this work to the thousands of people who lost their lives in the earthquake, people who lost their loved ones, their homes, their memories, their neighbors, their hometowns, who left the dead bodies of their loved ones behind, who had to leave their hometowns either for a short time or permanently.

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