

**Between Terkos and Pera: Plural Ruralities
and the Idea of Urbanity in late-Ottoman
Istanbul**Lecture by **Koca Mehmet Kentel** (University of Washington)

Pera, the 'modern' and 'European' district of Istanbul – then the Ottoman capital – has often been praised in the academic and popular literature as the quintessential example of late 19th and early 20th century Mediterranean cosmopolitanism. Its theater halls, gardens, cafés, restaurants, and department stores were hailed as ultimate cosmopolitan spaces, filled with authors, diplomats, artists, and merchants from all around the world. However, as a reflection of general problems with the literature on cosmopolitanism, the conventional historiography has not problematized the materiality through which the 'cosmopolitan' Pera emerged, or the environmental encounters that took place in the process. The modernization of its urban space was studied in isolation, without connecting it to the larger geography of Istanbul.

This lecture aims to disrupt these straightforward narratives by looking at a vital link of infrastructure that made the upper-class cosmopolitan sociability of Pera possible: water. Through tracing Pera's water connection to Terkos, a lake region at the northern edges of the city, this talk locates the environmental making of the urban space that has often been overlooked within the discussions with respect to the making of late 19th century Pera. It engages not only with the making of Pera, but also of Terkos, as the construction of water infrastructure enabled the flow of Pera's 'cosmopolitan' sociability to Terkos (through work and leisure) as much as the flow of clean water to Pera.

Koca Mehmet Kentel is a Doctoral Candidate in the Near and Middle Eastern Studies program at the University of Washington, and the Head Librarian of Koç University's Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations (ANAMED). He received his undergraduate degrees from Boğaziçi University, and his master's degree from the University of Oxford. In his doctoral dissertation "Assembling 'Cosmopolitanism': Making Modern Pera through Infrastructure in the Late Ottoman Istanbul" he explores the constitutive impact of infrastructure projects in the making of the late 19th century Pera, and the material and environmental connections unleashed by infrastructure. His research has been supported by the Foundation for Urban and Regional Studies, ANAMED, SALT, and the University of Washington.

**Twice a month,
Mondays 5 pm - 7 pm****Venue:**Conference Hall
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