



ISTANBUL
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Chamber Talks

9 February 2012 Thursday 18:30

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Hakan Kaynar

"Fragments of Modernity in the Istanbul of the Republican Era"



The fourth session of the Chamber Talks' 2011-2012 season is taking place on the 9th February Thursday with Yrd. Doç. Dr. Hakan Kaynar on the topic of *Fragments of Modernity in the Istanbul of the Republican Era*.

The historiography of the Republican era somehow attributes the transformation of the period to political power. Consequently, modernization in Turkey is perceived as a top-down project. This paper thus seeks to answer the following question: "Is it possible to speak of an alternative history of modernization outside this tendency and/or perception?" Conditions change us. Technological innovations and the environment we live in affect our relations with the people we live together. Just as much as the widespread use to cellular phones transforms and influences the urban experience of each individual, people and cities change through different period of history in line with similar technological innovations. This paper addresses the similar changes observed in the first fifteen years of the Turkish Republic. The tram, for example, not only rendered accessibility to certain parts of İstanbul, but it transformed social interaction by forcing men and women to travel in the same confined space. Similarly, houses, mansions, homes changed. Spaces became limited in direct proportion to the increase in population. As İstanbul's ways of using these spaces altered, privacy lost its meaning. A universal form of entertainment, cinema, on the other hand, introduced a vast word to the İstanbulites of the period. Accordingly, the relationships between men and women, wives and husbands, friends, siblings, neighbors, bosses and employees, Greeks and Turks, the rich and the poor underwent a process of transformation. Is it, therefore, not possible to consider this transformation a part of modernization? How can political power be the champion of modernity when it is not responsible for this change?

In answering these questions, this paper thus proposes changing the definition of modernization in Turkey as part of political power and revisiting the İstanbul of the early Republican era with a new definition.