Reflections on Oral History: Four Cities on the Social History of Telephone Technology in Turkey

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Abstract:

Throughout the history of the Turkish Republic, the telephone has collectively been perceived as a technology of modernity, progress, wealth and cultural capital. Yet due to a deteriorated infrastructure, which has hindered penetration of the telephone to the entire country, only a small segment of society was able to install a telephone in their private dwellings as well as in their place of business. This article discusses the results of an oral history research, based on in-depth interviews with telephone users (and non-users) in Istanbul, Ankara, Kayseri and Diyarbakir, conducted during 2011–2012. Essentially, this article argues, that technology transfer does not necessarily translate itself into modes of social life as modernity, at least not uniformly so. On the contrary, our oral history study displays a variety of "modernities", which existed side by side.

Keywords:

public sphere, Turkey, Kurds, information and communication technology, communication studies, identity, mobile phones

Introduction

Throughout the history of the Turkish Republic, the telephone has collectively been perceived as a technology of modernity, progress, wealth and cultural capital. Yet due to a deteriorated infrastructure, which has hindered penetration of the telephone to the entire country, only a small segment of society was able to install a telephone in their private dwellings as well as in their place of business. Particularly throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the social practice of the telephone was marked by the resentment, frustration and envy of those who could not possess a telephone line due to various factors such as location, lack of social relations with the relevant authorities, or lack of financial capital to purchase a line and a telephone. While a small segment of society enjoyed the ownership and use of the telephone in their

daily lives and businesses, many people remained on the waiting lists of the related state department for long periods to acquire a telephone line (5-20 years), even in the major cities of Istanbul and Ankara.

Our two-year project funded by TUBITAK in 2011 is entitled: "Telephony and Turkish Modernizatıon: The Social History of the Telephone since the Ottoman Era (1881-2010)." As researchers, we were interested in the ways in which the telephone has been represented in popular media, how it has become part of the state-run modernization process, and how Turkish people have experienced this technology in their everyday lives. To investigate these issues, we analyzed primary sources (archives of the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic, science and technology journals, popular newspapers and magazines, and lobby cards and film posters where the telephone is represented), and compared and contrasted the statistical data of telephone ownership from different periods. We also looked at the oral history by interviewing telephone users, collecting their memories of using and owning a telephone, as well as their recollections of how it felt not owning a telephone line, and of waiting for years to get a telephone, especially during the 1960s and 1970s.

Our approach is interdisciplinary, bringing the project in line with the general tendency in cultural studies and communications research. In this context, historical documents were analyzed, quantitative and qualitative data, which display changes in the social structure were studied together with our findings from in-depth oral interviews of individuals. The project incorporated history-based research by utilizing concrete data for analyzing past events in their concrete settings, as well as using a sociological approach by gathering general data, which could display the characteristics of social structure. Our approach could also be called anthropological, as we gathered and analyzed specific data in order to understand the world of the individual as well as that of the collective. Our project made use of the research methodologies of these three disciplines.

Our findings compiled from the oral history of the telephone presents the telephone variously as a status symbol, a necessity, and sometimes as a nuisance. Some of the interviewees said that there was no need for a telephone

before the technology was introduced - the lifestyles they were leading easily accommodated communication without a telephone. Some argued that even when it was introduced, they did not feel the need to use it. Migration to the big cities crops up as a general stimulus to purchase a telephone. In big cities like Istanbul or Ankara, the need to communicate with family who remained back home in the village or provincial town forced some of our interviewees to purchase or use telephone technology. However, another problem was that there was no telephone at home in the village. Furthermore, the introduction of the telephone did not immediately excite the general population, as for many it was an alien technology and time was needed to appropriate it into the everyday lives of people in Turkey.

In this article, we will discuss the outcome of the oral history research, based on in-depth interviews with users/non-users in Istanbul, Ankara, Kayseri and Diyarbakir, conducted during 2011-2012. In each section, the reasons for our choice of these particular cities will be presented. However, our main aim was to follow the rule of representativeness criteria, which changed according to each city.

Oral history requires an approach that recognizes technology as a social experience. Answers to questions posed during interviews, or in a conversation, is limited to the individuals' own perception of history. Therefore, the social structure of the respondents plays an important role in constructing the narrative of the past, which is dominant today. The people who were interviewed have a political stance, an opinion of the telephone services provided by the state, and a narrative of how they perceive their relationship with this technology.

Indeed, the narratives of people from different classes can be completely at odds with each other. In the context of experienced cultural values, a study conducted by Wilma Esmer, called the *Cultural Values Survey* (2012), illustrates quantitative divisions, and provides a basis for the population geography of Turkey which emphasizes the fragmented nature of such an axis made up of secular versus conservative (religious) lifestyles, and others who find it difficult to describe themselves as "Turkish." It was important for our research that we chose cities and respondents who reflected this diversity.

Oral history study consists of a compilation of data based on verbal narratives about people's lives. The researchers, members of a particular situation or event, in order to understand what they experienced as individuals attribute meaning to the particular situation or event and help to save these experiences and meanings (Starr 1973, Grille 2003, Popular Memory Group 2003). In other words, oral history is built around the people, incorporating life into history, so researchers delve into new areas of reality, which expand the scope of the research history (Thompson 1999). The historical study of human social experience recognizes technology for its own historical narrative, and this narrative is also obliged to examine the relationship between social conditions (Fischer 1994).

The oral history interviews we conducted provide historical information that is retold today (i.e interviewees are here with us today and they recall their memories of their experiences with the telephone in Turkey). While such recollection is always the basis of oral history, it is the job of the historian to extract information about past times and values with a measured dose of scepticism. This is not to say that oral history cannot provide relevant clues about telephone usage in Turkey, but it often comes bathed in a nostalgia about the past; at least in our case, it certainly did. Our interviewees talked about sharing a telephone, about a telephone as something shared among other things like the television.

Oral history research is effective when open-ended questions are asked rather than conducted through semi-structured surveys because people have their own world which they relate with as little prejudice as possible (Ritchie 2003, Yow 2005). Therefore, we interviewed the people in the cities in which they live, at a location and time they themselves chose. In-depth interviews were conducted using a voice recorder. In the four cities we selected (Istanbul, Ankara, Diyarbakir and Kayseri), 127 people were interviewed who were at least thirty years of age. We met with them at locations they themselves selected in these cities.

Of the cities surveyed, several factors played a role in the selection of Istanbul. Istanbul is Turkey's most populous city, the most diverse in terms of socio-economic values, and recognized as an international center of commerce

and culture. Over the years, Istanbul has been immersed in social, economic, political and cultural change, becoming both a passage for immigration and a stable residence. The first telephone exchanges and lines in the country were established in Istanbul. Furthermore, the most important of the relevant factors are social class, gender and ethnic differences which provide a stratification of phone use with regard to ownership, and these factors can clearly be seen in Istanbul.

Our reasons for choosing the city of Kayseri were the following: as well as being geographically located in the center of Turkey, its social, political and especially economic life which helped to transform it into a city were key factors. Kayseri is also perceived as a culturally and religiously conservative city, another factor in our selection.

Diyarbakir is Turkey's largest city in terms of population in the east as well as one of the largest. Throughout the history of the Republic, the city has been scene of migration to and from upper and lower income groups of the regional population, which has created a city of deep socio-economic differences. The identity politics that were established in Turkey after 1980 and the discourse on ethnicity, which developed around the actors that make up the city were other reasons to choose Diyarbakir.

Ankara was chosen for this project in accordance with the recommendations made by the panel of TUBITAK, considering its importance as the capital of the Republic.

The extent of phone use in these four cities was examined in accordance with prevalence, meaning and value given, and a total of 127 people were interviewed using the snowball technique. The distribution of the 127 individuals was: 41 in Istanbul, 26 in Kayseri, 34 in Diyarbakir and 26 in Ankara. The number of people interviewed in Istanbul was more than those interviewed in the other cities partly due to its population size, as well as demographic characteristics (age, gender, socio-economic class), and in terms of its diversity factor. At least forty percent of the respondents were sixty years of age. In terms of gender distribution we aimed for an equal

distribution (half of the people interviewed were women, half were men). We designed and carried out our sampling, keeping the key issue of religious and ethnic diversity in mind in order to allow for income group and world view (religiously or culturally conservative, secular, liberal, nationalist, or leftist) as variables.

Istanbul

Istanbul was the subject of our most comprehensive oral history research project. The reason for this is that as well as being Turkey's largest metropolis, it is the center of gravity for internal and external migration. Out of the people we interviewed, at least a portion of them spent their childhood outside Istanbul. Thus, Turkey's largest city can be perceived as a city of migration, a notion which helps us not only to understand an Istanbuli's relationship to the phone, but also that of people from different regions of Turkey. Several points should be made about the choice of Istanbul as a location for oral history. Istanbul provides demographic variety which no other city in Turkey can provide. The interviewees that we chose came from a range of ethnic, financial and social backgrounds. The rich demographic structure of Istanbul enabled us to reach to a variety of users of telephone technology as well as those who were deprived of it.

On the other hand, life experiences related to telephones show a diversity of cases in Istanbul due to this migration. As we discovered when we researched the archives, the phone was not evenly distributed throughout the various districts of Istanbul, and the prevalence ratio was not the same. We listened to the oral history interviews, which capture a spirit of population diversity inherited from the Ottoman Empire to the Republican era. One could say, for example, that in 1970s Istanbul one would experience neighborhoods living in close quarters, but dissimilar in practical terms, that is in different levels of material wealth. In the best examples, Sisli and Beyoglu districts, electricity and telephone services had reached a certain saturation point, but in some parts of neighboring Mecidiyeköy, telephone, electricity and water infrastructure was not yet provided. As part of our interviews, we talked to two people who were roughly the same age (over sixty), one

woman and one man, and their telephone stories are quite different from each other. Here is L.V's story (a businessman born and raised in Istanbul):

> L.V.: "I was born in Tepebasi. The name of the street in Tepebasi where I was born was Minare Street. But there was no minaret. It was just the street of the U.S. consulate. At that time not many people had a telephone in the house as you know. Certain houses had a phone. [The number of] our first house phone was 495 746."

> A: "Can you remember the year?"

> L.V.: "It probably was 55 or something. Was 55."

A lady who moved from the village of Sivas to Mecidiyeköy in the early 1960s and preferred to wear the hijab is K.C.:

> K.C.: "What phone in houses! Was there a telephone in every house in Istanbul?"

> A: "No, wasn't there?"

> K.C.: "Of course not."

> A: "When did you come here?"

> K.C.: "We do not know - has it been 45 years? It is also history. It was 45 years ago. In 1963, 62 we arrived here. I suppose salt was five cents. We moved to Mecideyeköy. There was no electricity, we were carrying water. If you are not in need of others that is enough [...] From then on, we think about this. The world's goods, how to get by, what we will do as such in shortage and stress."

> A: "When did you have your first phone then?"

> K.C.: "We had it when it first arrived, we got it immediately. Infidels have made it, but God blesses. Nevertheless, I say God bless."

> A: "What was the year you received the phone?"

> K.C.: "How do I know, I do not know how many years it has been. It arrived early. I know that. Bedriye got it and then we got it. That was 1980 or 85, I suppose. We were in Ümraniye, the connection was established there."

The absence of the telephone was felt, as can be seen in the following interview, but felt as long as the people were in their own environment. In

other words, if a person's social and physical surroundings did not have a phone facility, if popular culture products are not generally followed such as periodicals, newspapers, movies and so on, the absence of phone technology was not felt acutely. On the other hand, if a home in the neighborhood has a phone, the absence of a phone can produce a sense of deprivation. Most of those interviewed in this city provide an enthusiastic narrative of the existence of the phone; the absence of the phone was described with sadness and longing.

In our study we interviewed many people who have come to Istanbul as part of a process of internal migration which emerged as a factor determining their relationship with the phone. People living on the periphery of the city did not view their location as an urban district. Rather, they saw their neighborhood as a town in its own right; hence, they did not feel the absence of the phone. Putting aside the feeling of deprivation, people who migrated to the city did not put phone ownership on their priority list simply because of the economic difficulties they experienced. Even an attempt to inquire into the place of the phone in their personal histories seems ridiculous to these people. Born in 1960, a mobile *kokorec* vendor (S.S.) who has lived in Istanbul for twenty-five years, explains:

S.S.: "I do not remember in my childhood a phone or something. I saw the TV through the windows of the coffee place, I thought how did people get into it? I was working in a coffee place in Izmir the first time I spoke by telephone. 'The devil's work,' I thought. How did the sound come from the cable? My story is unlike any other [...] My dad used to spread straw beneath us, we used to sleep in the barn with donkeys [...] I do not know about childhood. I did not know what money was useful for, let alone the phone. If you have someone on the inside, we used to wait outside. Nylon shoes until the age of 14, I could not ask my father to get me shoes. Our childhood was to work endlessly carrying goods with five donkeys. When we played in front of the door, we were afraid that my father would see us play. I went to school for a few days. That is why the questions you are asking seem so strange. Forget it, brother, what phone? Some would say."

People who lived in the city's periphery and were born and raised in one neighborhood for life or in the business environment locally did not necessarily feel the need for a phone. In one of the interviews, Y.K. started to work in 1976 as a laborer, organized in unions, and lived in the neighborhood of Paşabahçe. Y.K. talks about neighborhood relations and communications:

> Y.K.: "We talked to people when there were people we needed to get in contact with, or in case of emergency, or we sent messengers. We met at the Union outside certain hours, moreover in this region, people of certain local identity live together, which is also the case for the factory. For example, 3 thousand people in the factory, for example 800 people from Giresun, 500 people from Kastamonu, and there were 300 people from Thrace. And the neighborhoods where people lived were also congregated, and this was evident; so for example, Giresun a collective neighborhood, Kastamonu bulk unit. These people lived so, for example there were certain coffeehouses, everybody knew who went to which coffeehouse, and news was sent to those coffeehouses or people congregated there, this is how we did it."

The spirit of the past came across in our interviews, and which was admittedly not always remembered with happiness and solidarity. In this respect, the presence of non-Muslims in the early phone stories is very interesting. For example E.A., a 63-year-old retired soldier told us about his childhood in the district of:

> E.A.: "Now my daughter, let me give my earliest memories of the phone to you, I was born in Balat. Do you know Balat?"

> A: "I know."

> E.A.: "It was a neighborhood with the Greeks of old Istanbul, Jews, Armenians being the majority. In fact, on our one street, eighty percent of the Greeks, Armenians and Jews were citizens, twenty percent were Albanians. We were also Albanians. Aunt Ester in our street had one. There was one phone in the house of Aunt Ester."

> A: "What year is this?"

> E.A.: "What I've said was 1962-63. The whole neighborhood would go to Aunt Ester's home, in case of an emergency or if there was a need to

call someone. Her phone was just a phone like that burgundy color. You turn the keys as follows, a sound, then turn it again blah blah blah."

Kayseri

As stated above, we included the city of Kayseri in our study largely due to the economic development of this city in Turkey, and its central role in the representation of conservative culture. In Kayseri during the 1920s and 1930s, public investment was made in the Sumer Textile Factory, and the Kayseri Aircraft Factory was founded as a trading center. Many rich business-oriented families are from Kayseri including the first representatives of the national *bourgeoisie* (i.e. the Koc family). Kayseri industrialists and traders emerged after 1980 as the city managed to keep pace with the liberalization policies of the 1990s, when neo-liberalization policies were adapted.

We interviewed M.O. in this city, who is one of the city's oldest industrialists:

> M.O.: "[...] so, Kayseri businessmen. Why businessman? As if Allah does not have any other occupation, here in the heart of Anatolian province of Kayseri and gave people business intelligence [...] There's no such thing. There are two kinds of places in this world: one where bird goose grass becomes reeds, one for the herb thyme, where birds are partridges [...] Now what is Kayseri? There are no earnings that come from nature. Now let's look at the environment. Black Sea has honey and nuts, even now they grow citrus. State of Cukurova is known. What does Kayseri have? Nothing. Barley is sown once a year. If Almighty Allah gives you a bit of rain it will grow. Ah, then we did not have the technology, when we set up our Union Textile, three and a half meters below water came flowing rivers such as we listened to the sound that I remember. That water has flowed there for years, for centuries, and on most of the time in a field of barley, dry, burned, gone. It's a matter of opportunity."

Kayseri was one of the city's commercial centers throughout the history of the Republic. In terms of the telephone, Kayseri was also one of the places where the first expansion took place. M.O., the industrialist quoted above, commented on this subject:

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M.O.: "I think ... now it's a matter of opinion. So we just said the communication and transportation. I put it down to the awareness of Kayseri people on the importance of communication in commercial life. Because even the most affluent wealthy families had a shop phone, but later, probably five years, eight years, ten years later, it came [into the home]. Why they are not at home but in the shop? They were aware of the pros that it will bring business to life. So at home, I suppose it arrived twenty or something years later than our shop phone."

The rapid development of the phone in between 1970s up to the early 2000s in Kayseri was explained by a retiring employee (R.T.) who worked at Kayseri and Telecom PTT, who was also involved in management, explained:

R.T.: "Look, we've considered strategies in Kayseri. Istanbul for instance, has from time to time cables the size of the human body [...] We could not do it in Kayseri [...] we've kept a lot of the number of plants. Thirteen to twenty-three units in the Kayseri plant made by charitable people. Building, because it was having building work [...] building was done. So when I did not make it to Kayseri, the building was handed over all underground [...] You were forced to allocate a place to underground stations when you were building plants. Less network, keeping it brought relief from plant to service both economically because the most expensive items are cables, cable rates have attracted less people, we accelerate the flow of business. Look, let us say that one of the provinces was a precedent: Izmit. Turkey's industrial sector has two in the province which are feeding stations where we nourish our twenty-three plants."

Another significant characteristic of Kayseri as far as social studies research is concerned is the fact that it is a hub of conservative culture. Starting from 1990, Kayseri has been seen as one of the centers of conservatism in the area of economics as well as in the political sphere. In this regard, one of the city's few female industrialists (G.Z.) gave her insight into the city which was quite enlightening:

A: "What's it like to be a woman working in Kayseri?"

G.Z.: "A native of Kayseri would not like a working woman. I first came here in 1975 or something, women' place was for going to the market

or the shop, there were not many women working, but now there is im-migration. The local population of Kayseri is reduced. Migration much from the outside."

A: "How did you start your business, did you meet with a reaction?"

G.Z.: "They [women] cannot do it, men already thought, what can she understand about work? I give the sheet order, the materials we use, I phone the company that sold sheet, 'ma'am did you call the wrong place? This is not a hairdresser,' he tells me. So the simplest example of this [...]"

We also gained information about the then-existing non-Muslim minorities of Kayseri through our interviews, C.M. explained:

A: "Talas, if I learned right, was inhabited by non-Muslim minorities. Were they there during your childhood?"

Ç.M.: "Top of our neighborhood the Armenians had families. They were occupied with tailoring or something. They were poor people, some of them also raised livestock. Within the city there was a group of Armenians in our neighborhood. All in all fifteen to twenty or thirty to forty families or so."

A: "Were there Greeks?"

Ç.M.: "No, there were none. In the fight, completely gone."

Diyarbakir

One of the four provinces in which we conducted our research was Diyarbakir. We chose Diyarbakir because of the major role it plays in the context of identity politics in Turkey, especially over the last thirty years. Furthermore, we wanted to understand the relationship of the Kurds as an ethnic minority with the telephone. Throughout the history of Diyarbakir, it has been multicultural and multi-lingual, and for our research, this was one of the features most frequently encountered. In particular, until the end of the 1970s the city was a hub of ethnic diversity, hosting extensive Syriac, Armenian, and Jewish populations, Kurdish and Turkish population living intertwined. A business man (H.B.) living in Diyarbakir, explained:

H.B.: "Urfa, Diyarbakir has a culture very different from the culture of Elazig."

A: "What is it that makes Diyarbakir different in this sense?"

H.B.: "That is, so I remember. For example, people from Diyarbakır are more democratic, more social as a people. Behold, when we look at it, like I'm giving my own opinion. We are in the same neighborhood, Muslims and Christians, Assyrian, Armenian, with these families and their children who grew up together. Also from our Syrians, Armenians also, the fact that all of them were our masters."

In one of the interviews with an engineer from the NET-AS factory about the difference of distribution of telephone technology in Turkey, N.K. explained

A: "Diyarbakir?"

N.K.: "Diyarbakır obviated or too."

A: "How obviated?"

N.K.: "For example, let's just say I had a lot of labor in the application of first of these village-type plants in Turkey, the village power plants [...] it began in 1987 already, I was there with my very serious effort [...] I've worked hard to make their communications. Unfortunately, Ankara has done such a thing. Did something negative. I know that. For example, in the district of Diyarbakir, which in one place, there was a large village. There were villages. Isik village they say. I forget the Kurdish name. One plant would be set up in the village, it did not come."

What is especially important in Diyarbakir, is the problem of language which relates to phone usage. Particularly following the 1980 coup (in 1983), a prohibition on the Kurdish spoken language was introduced, ongoing for decades in the area of Emergency applications. This issue highlighted the problem of which language would be used in phone conversations.

In our interviews with cleaning worker women in Diyarbakir (K.İ.), we

learned that their village was burned down in 1995-1996 so they moved to Diyarbakir:

> K.İ.: "My brother had gone out (to the mountains) [...] so [...] my father got the line. He said that so maybe I hear his voice."

Ankara

Ankara, the capital of Turkey has also been the capital of modernization programs. While Ankara is demographically more homogenous, it has one advantage that no other city has: it is the city of public servants. The civil servants of the city can and did provide information about the governmental projects on telephone technology, which helped us analyze the modernization paradigm in relationship to the state.

The nature of our oral history interviews in Ankara in particular was slightly different from the other cities, as the city is and was a hub of governmental workers, and we had our fair share of interviews. In these interviews, several aspects about the state's attitude towards the telephone are revealed. One interviewee who worked in the communications and transportation ministry at one time argued that "[c]ommunication services of a nation's overall structure are manifested as a major force in the basic structure. Progress in terms of developing the country in terms of communication is gaining weight."

This quotation has some points to discuss, for one it vividly displays the states assumed role as the implementer of modernization in Turkey. This view has shown itself in practice starting with the 1960s in Turkey and it is well documented. The implementation of telephone technology all over Turkey fits in perfectly with this paradigm. What we found during our interviews in Istanbul and Ankara was the fact that some of our interviewees who owned a telephone felt like they were providing some sort of service to the rest of the neighborhood by letting others use it every now and then. It felt as though they thought of themselves as agents of modernization. However, cultural and religious differences (i.e. chasms in society) prevented this being a more involving service or experience. One Alawite interviewee said

that when they did not own a phone, they never went to other peoples houses for fear of 'otherization,' but when they owned one, they let the non-Alawites in the neighborhood use their phone. One can also read this as a reverse attempt at cultural otherization rather than a modernization effect. That is why it would be wrong to assume that all layers of society were united around a goal of modernization - it was not as straightforward as it is often assumed to be.

Another example is that of an academic who was involved with the student movements of his day. He mentions that they frequently used the telephone to organize their demonstrations. This also runs against the state's intention to control its citizens with the help of telephone technology, i.e. assimilation in the form of modernization. Telephone technology can be and indeed was used for reasons that the state did not anticipate, which ran counter to its own projects. Practices of telephone use do not display the picture-perfect modernity that was anticipated or presented as such. Rather, it was a fragmented, multi layered and sometimes non-existent modernity. One should perhaps raise the issue that cultural identities more often than not showed some resentment towards modernizing projects, and time was needed to normalize what was introduced as new and modern in the shape of this new technology.

In other words, regarding the capital Ankara, Turkey's economic difficulties such as poverty, lack and deprivation should be taken into account. In Ankara, paying attention to these features, and to reflect the diversity of class and identity, we mainly talked with people who have worked in the state bureaucracy. Our respondents in the Ministry of Transport, General Directorate of PTT and in institutions such as the upper or mid-level management included individuals who have come to our attention. However, as Ankara's bureaucracy is central to our study, it is important to take the profession of journalism into account, which our sample from Ankara contained. But we also interviewed education and health sector workers, who in the past have been involved in active politics, some becoming MPs or party administrators, as well as those working in state security institutions and intelligence, as directors and officers and workers, housewives and

the unemployed.

Conclusion

When the government took the initiative in the 1950s to generally develop Turkey, the telephone became a vehicle for the modernization projects for the state. Even then, our research has shown that the telephone has been perceived less as a technological device and more like a piece of expensive furniture. The first reaction to the telephone was hesitance towards something unfamiliar. When we asked about where the telephone was located, the answer was invariably: in the living room, covered with lace doilies. People who had a telephone said that they did not use it very often, and even if they did, they kept the conversations short. Instead, letter writing was an important element in communication, and people suggested to each other to keep the phone conversations short and put important information in a letter instead.

One of our interviewees said that when she was away for her studies, whenever she phoned the house, her parents kept the conversations short and told her to write everything down instead. This also shows some kind of resentment towards "excessive" use of the telephone in the past, and whatever this excess meant, it should be analyzed. But what is clear about this example is that people did not perceive the telephone as a conversational tool, rather, it was still alien to them, something they had to get used to over time. The question to ask here is: did the practice of everyday life telephone usage go hand in hand or in sync with the project of modernization? Technology transfer does not necessarily translate itself into modes of social life as modernity, as our project illustrates, at least not uniformly so. Hence we put the mainstream discourse to one side, and dealt with experiences. So far, this method revealed to us a picture of modernity that is beyond the theoretical framework that has been provided to date. Our oral history study displays a variety of modernities, which existed side by side.

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