



**UNIVERSITY OF SASSARI**

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**Doctoral Study Program in Culture, Literature, Tourism, and Territory**

XXVIII cycle

CULTURAL MEMORY AND IDENTITY IN CONFLICTUAL SPACES:

A COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

ON THE 1923 POPULATION EXCHANGE

BETWEEN IZMIR AND THESSALONIKI

Tutor:

Prof. ANDREA VARGIU

Co-Tutor:

Prof.ssa MARIANTONIETTA COCCO

The doctoral thesis of:

Dott.ssa ULKER BASAK

Academic Year 2024/2025

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes the process of shaping, negotiating, and reinterpreting the cultural memories and identities of exchangee communities in the context of the aftermath of the 1923 Greek Turkish Population Exchange. It will mainly look into the cities of Izmir and Thessaloniki and how the heirs of both Muslim and Orthodox Christian exchangees reconstruct belonging and collective memory through the daily cultural practices, oral stories, music, and dance traditions of their respective communities. This research employs a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach that gives importance to collaboration, co-production of knowledge, and mutual learning between the researcher and the community members. As a result of oral testimonies, participatory fieldwork, and joint reflection activities in both cities, the study uncovers the way community members deal with memories of displacement, loss, and home, besides forming new avenues of intercultural dialogue and reconciliation. This study combines Pierre Bourdieu's "theory of practice" with ideas from memory studies to examine how cultural practices serve as dynamic locations of memory and identity transmission across generations. The argument is made that the exchange of populations is not a bygone historical event but rather a process that constantly influences the social relations and self-identity of the descendants of the displaced families. Ultimately, this study aims at contributing to the broader fields of memory studies, migration studies, and participatory research by developing an innovative, collaborative framework that examines the Population Exchange *with* exchangee communities rather than *about* them, redefining how post-conflict memories are researched, represented, and understood.

**Keywords:** 1923 Population Exchange; Cultural Memory; Identity; Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR); Post-Conflict Communities; Generations; Forced Migration

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is the result of a long and transformative journey. Throughout my PhD, I have been surrounded by love, support, and inspiration that have made this path both meaningful and fulfilling.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Andrea Vargiu, for his continuous guidance, trust, and inspiration. I have learned immensely from him, and his calm confidence has made this journey both challenging and joyful.

I am also profoundly grateful to my co-supervisor, Prof. Mariantonietta Cocco, whose dedication and sensitivity went far beyond academic supervision. Her warmth, attention, and belief in my research often arrived at moments when I most needed reassurance. She has been a constant source of motivation and kindness, and I am deeply thankful for her presence throughout this journey.

My heartfelt thanks go to all the community members and descendants of the 1923 Population Exchange whom I met in Izmir and Thessaloniki. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the Foundation of Lausanne Treaty Emigrants, the Izmir Bornova Association of Cretans and Exchangees, the Katirliton Association (ΣΥΛΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΤΙΡΛΙΩΤΩΝ “ΑΓΙΟΣ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΠΡΟΔΡΟΜΟΣ”), the Association of Alatsatians in Heraklion (Σύλλογος Αλατσατιανών Ν. Ηρακλείου), and the Brotherhood of Asia Minor Refugees of Chania (Αδελφότητα Μικρασιατών Ν. Χανίων). Without your generosity, openness, and hospitality, this research would not have been possible. I am deeply thankful for the trust you placed in me, and I promise to continue sharing your stories so that your voices can be heard beyond borders.

My sincere gratitude also goes to Prof. Leonidas Karakatsanis for his mentorship, invaluable guidance, and kind support during my research period in Thessaloniki. I am equally thankful to my family, colleagues and friends for their constant encouragement. To my mother, who has always believed in me even when I doubted myself, I am endlessly grateful. Her strength in life, patience, and unwavering faith in me have been my greatest source of courage, and I am so proud to be her daughter. To my husband, my biggest supporter and my dearest companion, thank you for your love

and constant encouragement. I am so lucky to live this life with you and to share every step of this journey.

Finally, my deepest and most personal gratitude goes to my beloved father, whose life as an immigrant inspired my academic journey. Even though he is no longer with me, his strength, humility, and enduring hope have shaped the very foundation of who I am. I dedicate this thesis to him, with boundless love and pride, for everything he was, and for everything he continues to be within me. For this achievement, and for every success in my life, you will always be with me.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>ABSTRACT .....</b>   | <b>2</b>   |
| <b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>  | <b>3</b>   |
| <b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>  | <b>5</b>   |
| <b>LIST OF TABLES.....</b>  | <b>8</b>   |
| <b>LIST OF FIGURES.....</b>   | <b>9</b>   |
| <b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>   | <b>10</b>  |
| <b>1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .....</b>   | <b>27</b>  |
| 1.1 Pre-Lausanne Context: The Decline of Empire and Nationalism.....                                      | 28         |
| 1.2 Reviving Byzantium: Greek Independence and the Megali Idea .....                                      | 34         |
| 1.3 The Lausanne Treaty: Redefining Borders and Communities in Greece and Turkey.....                     | 37         |
| 1.4 Importance of Izmir in the Population Exchange .....  | 41         |
| 1.5 Importance of Thessaloniki in the Population Exchange .....   | 45         |
| 1.6 Post-Lausanne Treaty and Initial Problems .....   | 51         |
| <b>2. MIGRATION AND IDENTITY.....</b>   | <b>56</b>  |
| 2.1 Understanding Migration: A Concise Overview.....  | 58         |
| 2.2 Forced Migration .....  | 68         |
| 2.3 Exploring Identity: Sociological and Psychological Perspectives .....                                 | 82         |
| 2.4 Identity and Status: On Migrants, Refugees, and Exchangees .....                                      | 91         |
| <b>3. METHODOLOGY AND THEORY.....</b>   | <b>95</b>  |
| 3.1 Introduction to Community-Based Participatory Research.....   | 95         |
| 3.2 Origins and Influences of Community-Based Participatory Research...                                   | 100        |
| 3.3 Orientation and Objectives of the Research.....   | 116        |
| 3.4 Analytical Framework.....   | 119        |
| <b>4. COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH WITH IZMIR AND THESSALONIKI EXCHANGEES COMMUNITIES .....</b> | <b>138</b> |
| 4.1 CBPR Research Design and Implementation .....   | 138        |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| 4.2 First Steps.....  | 142        |
| 4.3 Application and Analysis .....  | 155        |
| 4.4 Ethical Reflections and Engaging an Ongoing Dialogue.....   | 164        |
| <b>5. TRADITIONS AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION IN IZMIR AND<br/>THESSALONIKI EXCHANGEES COMMUNITIES .....</b> | <b>165</b> |
| 5.1 Music as a Memory Carrier in Exchangee Communities .....  | 169        |
| 5.2 Dance Traditions and Embodied Memory in Izmir and Thessaloniki.....                                   | 174        |
| 5.3 Culinary Heritage and the Taste of Memory.....  | 178        |
| 5.4 The Role of Cultural Institutions and Associations in Preserving Traditions<br>.....                  | 185        |
| 5.5 Memory Spaces and Key Locations in Izmir and Thessaloniki .....                                       | 190        |
| 5.6 Literary and Cinematic Representations of the Population Exchange...                                  | 198        |
| <b>6. ECHOES OF THE FORCED MIGRATION IN THE IDENTITY<br/>TRANSFORMATION .....</b>                         | <b>205</b> |
| 6.1 First Generation Migrants .....   | 206        |
| 6.2 The Consequences of Lost Property .....   | 212        |
| 6.3 Memory’s Rebirth After Resettlement .....   | 219        |
| 6.4 How “the Other” Becomes “the Local” .....   | 222        |
| 6.5 From Homeland to Memory land: Transnational Connections .....   | 225        |
| <b>7. A DISTINCT EXCHANGEES COMMUNITY: CRETAN EXCHANGEES .....</b>  | <b>234</b> |
| 7.1 Brief Historical Overview of Crete .....  | 240        |
| 7.2 The Effects of Population Exchange in Crete .....   | 244        |
| 7.3 Identity Formation Among Cretan Exchangees.....   | 247        |
| 7.4 Preservation of Cretan Language .....   | 251        |
| 7.5 Religious Identity of Cretan Exchangees: The Role of Bektashism.....                                  | 252        |
| 7.6 A Taste of Heritage: Cretan Cuisine .....   | 255        |
| 7.7 Cultural Preservation in Cretan Exchangee Communities .....   | 256        |

**CONCLUSION.....261**  
**REFERENCES.....280**

## LIST OF TABLES

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Table 1: Typology of Migration by Henry Pratt Fairchild (1925) .....   | 62  |
| Table 2: Participatory and Conventional Research: A Comparison of Process (A. Cornwall, 1995) .....                | 111 |
| Table 3: Comparison between Traditional Academic Research and the Community Based Research (Strand K., 2003) ..... | 114 |
| Table 4: The abandonment of property by Cretan emigrants. (Adiyeye A. N., 2017) .....                              | 245 |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Figure 1:Smryna's multi-cultural quarters in 1922. (Milton, 2008).....   | 43  |
| Figure 2 and 3: The Great Fire of Smryna (Sauvageot, 1922-1923) .....  | 44  |
| Figure 3:The logos of the most active exchangee organizations in Izmir .....   | 144 |
| Figure 4:Demonstration from Community Mapping Workshops on 27/12/2023<br>with LMV Aegean Representation community members.....   | 162 |
| Figure 5:Demonstration from our storytelling workshops. On left: A third-<br>generation descendant Zozo Oikoinomou is holding a tablecloth from her<br>grandmother. On right: A third-generation descendent Mehmet Özcan is holding a<br>Lute from his grandfather ..... | 163 |
| Figure 6:A photo with the members of the Katirliton Association on 13.06.2024<br>during the dance festival.....  | 176 |
| Figure 7:Kapama Bread (Örnek, 2023) .....  | 180 |
| Figure 8:Photos from The Migration and Exchange Memory House (photo taken<br>by the author in November 2023).....  | 192 |
| Figure 9: An Abandoned Greek House and a Tombstone in Buca, Izmir.....   | 195 |
| Figure 10:Photos from our community walks in Seydiköy (Ercan Çokbankır in the<br>middle, third- generation exchangee Nilgün Tepeli on right).....  | 196 |
| Figure 11:Current state of Manoli Axiotis's home in Şirince, Izmir. Photo is taken<br>by the author on August 2025. ....   | 201 |
| Figure 12: Identity card of the Kemal Kurul (uncle of Mine Vatansver).....   | 218 |
| Figure 13:One left: Ioannis Gaisiris shows where the bones were buried. On right:<br>The burial ceremony in Panagitsa with Imam and Priest together .....  | 229 |
| Figure 14: Photos from our participatory mapping workshops with Bornova<br>Girtliler Derneği in December 2023 .....  | 238 |
| Figure 15:Mikraasia, homeland of our hearts-A visual representation from within<br>the Brotherhood of Asia Minor Refugees of Chania (Αδελφότητα Μικρασιατών<br>Ν. Χανίων).....   | 249 |
| Figure 16:At the Tekke with Giorgos Tsoumpas .....   | 254 |
| Figure 17: A Traditional Cretan table featuring fava (yellow split pea puree),<br>avrone (wild bitter greens), grilled cheese with balsamic vinegar, artichokes in<br>olive oil and split pea, russian salad, tzatziki, and a lamb cooked with local herbs<br>.....      | 255 |
| Figure 18: A photo with Elektra Mariakis on the left and Stella Gozani Charitaki<br>on the right and Litsa Choudalaki on the far right in Chania, Crete April 2025..   | 257 |
| Figure 19:Lace Workshop in Tekke by Cretan women.....  | 258 |

## INTRODUCTION

Imagine being told that your home no longer belongs to you; that your birthplace has suddenly become a foreign land and begin anew in a place you have never seen. For more than one and a half million people in 1923, this was not a hypothetical scenario but an irrevocable reality. The population exchange between Greece and Turkey uprooted lives, reshaped identities, and redrew emotional as well as physical boundaries. Now, as we mark the 102nd year since this massive population transfer, the voices of those who lived through it are almost gone. Very few survivors remain who can recall those experiences firsthand. For this reason, it becomes even more important today to turn our attention to the memory of the population exchange, to study how it is remembered, retold, and carried forward across generations.

After the Second World War, up to 12 million German civilians were deported from their homes in Eastern Europe to the reduced territory of Allied-occupied Germany. This was not an isolated act but one consciously shaped by Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt, who drew inspiration from the removal of Orthodox Christians from Anatolia in 1923. Not long after, the end of British rule in India and Palestine set in motion further de facto population exchanges, carried out across newly drawn borders on an unprecedented scale. These examples remind us that the Lausanne Convention was never simply an event sealed in the past but a model that kept resurfacing, influencing the way states responded to crises across the twentieth century and beyond.

In his remarkable book on the population exchange, Bruce Clark reminds us that those of us living in Europe or in places shaped by European ideas remain, in a sense, the children of the Lausanne Convention (Clark, 2006). Its influence continues to echo in political choices and social realities long after the treaty was signed. Reflecting on the unrest in Kosovo in 2004, Clark cautions against reviving the Lausanne principle as a way of handling conflict. He warns that governments should not take the seemingly straightforward path of dividing contested land and

uprooting people, forcing them to move so that borders and ethnic identities appear to coincide neatly.

It remains a troubling shadow over the way conflicts are handled, ever since it first took shape in the early twentieth century. The Lausanne Convention is therefore not just a past experiment but a framework that still shapes how we think about disputes today. The term "Lausanne" turned into a synonym for world administration and became the landmark for several treaties, close to a dozen, that dealt with and controlled the migration of people on a large scale (Ther, 2019, s. 66-67). Clark (2006) warned that if international supervision were weakened, nationalist leaders and warlords who feed on ethnic hatred and violence could quickly return to power. If this warning is accurate, it shows just how hard it is to get rid of this ghost of Lausanne. And its persistence is not limited to the Balkans or Europe. We can see its echoes in the ongoing violence now against Palestinians, where forced displacement, territorial division, and the attempt to align populations with political boundaries are carried out in systematic and destructive ways. The very idea that once aimed to create stability by moving people, instead of addressing the real causes of conflict, resurfaces here. This is strong evidence that the legacy of Lausanne still haunts global politics, often with devastating human consequences.

With this thesis, I aim to explore the legacy of Lausanne by focusing on the second and third generation communities that still live on in both Turkey and Greece. Their knowledge, memories, and interest in migration processes are invaluable, yet often overlooked in scholarly work. For this reason, I chose to center their voices, learning from them how they continue to safeguard their identities and pass them down through generations. Recognizing their uniqueness and values is not just an ethical choice but an essential part of the research itself.

To grasp the sociological implications of the population exchange, it is necessary to approach it dynamically, considering both internal and external actors as well as the structures shaping these communities. With this in mind, I suggest

that the knowledge and identities of these generations can be better understood through in-depth interviews. Not only the interviews, but also direct observation, and participation are also essential to understand the complex issues like the 1923 population exchange. It can be analyzed using Pierre Bourdieu's (1997) "theory of practice" alongside Karl Mannheim's (1936) reflections on "generations." Most importantly, studying these communities requires working with them, not for them. As emphasized in *Writing Culture*, ethnography does not merely describe reality but actively constructs it through narrative choices and representational strategies (Clifford & Marcus, 1986, p. 166-170). This is why community-based participatory research becomes vital: it not only allows for a more authentic engagement with exchangee communities but also opens a fresh perspective within population exchange studies, offering a methodology that is still rare in this field.

It would not be wrong to say that the Balkan Wars of 1912 opened the way for some of the most significant migratory movements toward Turkey. Yet the 1923 population exchange stands apart from other migrations in both character and impact. Its uniqueness lies in its vast scale and, above all, in its forced nature. Nearly two million people were uprooted, and the consequences reached far beyond individual lives. The very construction of the Greek and Turkish nation-states was significantly influenced by the exchange. The violence and coercive mechanisms that enabled the exchange, which were the actual factors giving the exchange its foundational nature, could not be fully hidden in the public space. As Stroebel and Gedgaudaite emphasize, "a widespread regime of unseeing, which evacuates from public space and public scrutiny the traces not only of displaceable bodies and their material cultures but of the border mechanisms themselves and, crucially, their histories", is one of the essential tools supporting such border regimes (2022). Hence, the population exchange not only moved populations but also assisted the slow removal of the material, spatial, and historical traces that could have made the violence of the exchange open to public contestation.

Migration is never easy, but it was especially painful for the exchangees. There is a phrase among the oral testimonies of the exchangees that is reiterated

very often: the initial reaction of disbelief at the news of the population exchange was exclaimed by them. “What is this now? Donkeys are exchanged; oxen are traded- how can it be that human beings are exchanged?”. These people were forced to leave behind the lands where they were born and raised, the language they spoke, and the lives they had built. Homes, belongings, properties, graves, and friendships were all left behind as they embarked on these uncertain journeys. Many walked for the shores; there they waited for months-long embarkations by rail and sea. Traveling only came with harsh conditions: disease flew with the winds; some died on the way; some gave birth on the way. Families got separated, never able to reunite again or lay that trace over the loved ones they lost. Those stories ever remind us of those civilizations beyond the sheer figure of two million affected paint innumerable landscapes of suffering, resilience, and an irreparable rift.

Interestingly, the topic of the population exchange remained largely silent in Turkey until recent decades. This silence is not difficult to understand when we consider the strong nationalist climate that shaped public discourse, along with the ongoing adaptation struggles faced by the exchangee communities themselves. As Iğsız (Iğsız, 2008, p. 456) argues, “the exchanged Muslims were expected to melt into the Turkish national identification pot, constructed and consolidated through official history. For a long time, research in Turkey concentrated mainly on the historical aspects, such as settlement policies and the liquidation of properties, while the personal and cultural dimensions of the exchange were left in the background<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> see: Ari, K. (2003). *The Great Population Exchange: Forced Migration to Turkey (1923–1925)* (3rd ed.). Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları. Yıldırım, O. (2006a). *Diplomacy and Displacement: Reconsidering the Turco-Greek Exchange of Populations, 1922–1934*. New York: Routledge. Yıldırım, O. (2006b). *Diplomacy and Migration: The Other Side of the Turco-Greek Population Exchange* (1st ed.). Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University Press. Hirschon, R. (Ed.). (2004). *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange Between Greece and Turkey*. New York: Berghahn Books. Erdal, İ. (2006). *The Issue of Population Exchange Between Turkey and Greece (1923–1930)* (Unpublished master’s thesis). Ankara University, Institute of Social Sciences, Ankara. Alpan, A. S. (2012). But the memory remains: History, memory, and the 1923 Greco-Turkish population exchange. *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique*, 9, p. 199–232.

Most studies have failed to capture firsthand accounts, the real stories, and the long-term outcomes of the population exchange, especially how its practices were carried forward by later generations. As Yıldırım points out in his remarkable book *Diplomacy and Displacement*, the early phase of the Turkish migrants' plight remains largely a mystery. This is not only due to the lack of documentation but also because the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ankara remain closed to researchers, limiting access to vital sources (Yıldırım, 2006). Pioneering macro-analyses, which notably included the seminal contributions of Çağlar Keyder (1987), set the exchange within the large-scale changes of the late Ottoman and early Republican eras, emphasizing such matters as the reformation of the economy, the manipulation of population, and the establishment of national sovereignty.

In the late 20th century, especially during the 1990s, a shift towards ethnographic, participatory, and memory-oriented scholarship occurred in Turkey regarding the exchange communities. Thus, the new literature has been very influential in shifting the focus of studies and debates on the 1923 population exchange from the state-centered narratives to the domains of lived experience, daily practices, and intergenerational memory. In this context, Aytek Soner Alpan's PhD thesis can be considered as a very significant contribution. The research that is based on the tracing of displacement movements in various local and national contexts, reveals that the exchangees were not merely the passive receivers of the policy but were also the active social actors whose actions were determined by the specificities of region, ethnicity, and culture (Alpan, 2022).

A strand of the literature has shifted the analytical focus toward localized contexts, examining the experiences of exchangees through region-specific social, economic, and cultural dynamics. On his study of exchangees in Bursa region Kaplanoğlu (1999) examined collective memory and local narratives. Likewise, Morack's (2017) detailed study of the exchange in the city of Izmir involved extensive archival research. Dayar's (2017) studies on Antalya and Çomu's (2005) research on the impact of the exchange in Adana contribute to a broader understanding of how exchange reverberated through urban life. On the

other hand, Emgili (2009) combines the study of documents with oral testimonies in the case of exchangees from Thessaloniki and Crete now living in Mersin. Kolluoğlu (2013) looks at the city's social and economic changes through the lives of exchangees in İzmir; while Tekelioğlu (2014) concentrates on the resettlement patterns of those coming from Crete and Thessaloniki in Izmir by comparatively emphasizing varied paths of adaptation. Bayındır-Gouralas (2012) focuses on Marmara villages and the people who were exchanged, while Karakılıç Dağdelen (2015) studies exchangee lives in the Black Sea region, specifically in Samsun.

Over the past two decades, scholarship on the exchange has grown significantly, with studies on Cretan Muslims occupying a particularly prominent role. Among the research on Cretan communities, scholars examining daily life, endogamy, sociocultural boundaries, and differences in identities have received notable attention. Even though some references have cited above, chapter seven will thoroughly review this literature, clearly outlining the current research on existing studies of Cretan exchange communities, while also expanding the discussion to include the experiences of second and third generations, memory practices, and community-based knowledge production.

Along with ethnographic and locally grounded studies, a number of researchers have done in-depth analyses of the historiography of the population exchange itself, thus shedding light on the political and epistemological frameworks through which the exchange has been narrated in Turkey and Greece. The work of Lamprou (2023) examines the national historiography on both sides of the Aegean, presenting that historical writing has been influenced by changes in political priorities.

Greek historiography about the 1923 population exchange between Greece and Turkey has long been under the influence of the state-centered and nationalist views which depicted the matter mainly as a Greek “catastrophe”, thus highlighting the loss and the burdens placed on the Greek state. The first studies conducted during the interwar years and early Cold War period have consolidated this

interpretive sequence, giving priority to the narratives of national suffering and administrative rupture, and sidelining the social textures of life before the exchange. The works of Stephen Ladas, through his *The Exchange of Minorities* (1932), and Aristocles Aegidis, with his *Η Ελλάδα χωρίς τους πρόσφυγες* (1934), were examples of presenting refugees mainly as a structural problem in the sense of nation-building and economic stabilization (Lamprou, 2023, p. 3). This was also the case with Pentzopoulos (1962), who dealt with Balkan minority exchanges. Mavrogordatos' (Mavrogordatos, 1983) analysis of interwar party politics pointed out how important refugee groups were when it came to forming alliances and planning party moves. Some researchers paid closer attention to regional differences such as Kontogiorgi's (Kontogiorgi, 2006) work on the refugee settlement in rural Greek Macedonia with a specific focus on the land allocation.

The academic research done recently on the societies of the late Ottoman and post-Ottoman eras has tried to go beyond these retrospective nationalist interpretations by bringing to light the forms of intercommunality and everyday coexistence that existed before the hardening of national categories. Doumanis (2012) describes intercommunality as a form of everyday life rooted in shared work, neighborhood relations, and emotional closeness across ethno-religious boundaries. This approach is essential because it challenges narratives that treat coexistence as either a rare exception or merely a temporary stage before conflict, instead presenting it as a normal and lasting feature of social life.

René Hirschon's pioneering ethnographic work, especially *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe* (1989) and her edited volume *Crossing the Aegean* (2003), has been and continues to be a main reference in this field. Hirschon's research underscored the significance of social structures and cultural habits among refugees, thus disputing the previous views that the exchange was a historical incident that had been resolved or settled. The analysis of Hirschon's *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe* (1989) redirected the focus from the exchange as a diplomatic or demographic event to the social life that developed in its aftermath. According to Hirschon, refugee identity is not simply a temporary situation or a mere symbolic

legacy but a relational social status that is constantly being redefined in the particular urban contexts. Relying on long-term ethnographic research in a Piraeus refugee neighborhood, the study touches how individuals and communities adapted to the resettlement conditions through daily practices, neighborhood solidarity, kinship ties, and moral economies.

Hirschon's subsequent work further elaborates this perspective by questioning the relationship between identity and the Greek state. In her contribution to *Contested Identities* (1991), she explores how state categories of citizenship and national belonging intersect with local forms of identification, producing tensions between homogenizing national narratives and the persistence of difference within refugee communities. Her analysis of interior space and material culture (1996) presupposes not only the public but also the private sphere, showing that the things, their placements, and the ideas of the holy acted as the factors of refugee places' continuity and meaning. These works emphasize the togetherness of the state and the refugees as an active and creative process, and not merely as an imposition and resistance.

*Crossing the Aegean* (2003) also further consolidated this shift by explicitly challenging nationally bounded historiographies of the exchange. By bringing together scholars working on Greece and Turkey, the volume reframes the population exchange as a shared yet unevenly remembered historical process, shaped by asymmetries in power. This intervention is predominantly significant given earlier historiographical tendencies to reproduce national silences and selective emphases concerning agency, responsibility, and loss.

Arcel (2014) portrays the Asia Minor Catastrophe as a shared cultural trauma, emphasizing that its emotional and psychological effects are passed down through generations via family stories and lived experiences, rather than just official historical accounts. Sjöberg (2017) expands on this by looking into how memories of violence and displacement are shaped within a global culture of remembrance, pointing out how these stories of loss and genocide travel across borders. Similarly,

Gedgaudaitė (2021) explores how the legacy of forced migration continues to echo in Greek culture by influencing how modern Greeks think about identity, belonging, and their historical roots. Taking a generational view, Anastasopoulou (2022) in her doctoral dissertation, examines how the memories of refugees are reshaped over time and how these inherited stories affect current attitudes toward second and third generation of migrants and refugees in Greece, uncovering both empathy and exclusion linked to past displacements.

Halstead (2018) sheds more light on the diasporic aspects of memory and belonging by focusing on Greeks who were displaced from Turkey. His work highlights how emotional ties to the homeland endure even after losing physical territory, with memory playing a key role in keeping community identities alive. From a different perspective, Tsimouris (2003) takes a spatial approach, examining how once inhabited places are transformed into distant memories or imagined spaces, emphasizing how place, loss, and memory are deeply interconnected in the experience of forced migration.

Yet, with this thesis, I aim to go beyond previous work on generations by applying participatory methodologies. Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) becomes a vital tool here, as it enables the descendants of exchangees to actively shape the study of their own histories. Instead of being observed only from a distance by the academic world, they are given the space to participate, to voice their perspectives, and to influence how their community will be remembered. Between November 2023 and July 2024, I carried out six months of fieldwork, spending three months in Thessaloniki and another three months in Izmir. Later, from March to June 2025, I continued this research in Crete, working closely with exchangee communities. The main sources of this thesis are the outcomes of participatory activities conducted with fifty participants across both countries. Through this engagement, I was also given the rare opportunity to meet and learn from a first-generation migrant, a 102-year-old man from Thessaloniki, which was an exceptional and deeply moving experience.

In exploring the memories and identities of second and third-generation exchangee descendants, this thesis enters into conversation with a body of existing work on exchangee communities. Many of these earlier studies have focused on how memory is passed down and how these inherited narratives shape a sense of self and belonging. What sets this study apart is its methodology and timing. With new social dynamics and engaging with the inherited narratives, the aim here is to listen to what has changed and how knowledge is co-produced at a different historical moment.

As Nora (2002) points out, memory and remembrance are topics of increasing global attention. Nations and social, ethnic, and familial groups have witnessed a gradual change in their view of the past over the last two decades. These changes manifest themselves through either the interrogation of official versions of history, the retrieval of histories that were once silenced, the reclamation of memories that were suppressed or ignored, an increasing interest in ethnological research and genealogic pursuits, the rise of commemorations and the establishment of new museums, the demand for the opening of archives, or a renewed attachment to culture. This wider transformation is one that is also intimately linked to the case of the population exchange.

For Halbwachs (1992), though, memory is not simply influenced by change, but it is also brought into existence, molded, and structured through it. He maintains that individuals acquire, recall, and locate memory within the social groups to which they belong, and hence, such groups frame and provide the boundaries for one's remembrance. Memory, then, arises from the constant interaction and communication among people.

While migrant organizations are often concentrated in central areas, I chose instead to situate myself within exchangee neighborhoods, becoming part of their daily practices and rhythms of life, much like Renée Hirschon did in her well-

known study of population exchange communities in Kokkinia<sup>2</sup>. I am strongly opposed to producing one-sided or biased knowledge about the 1923 population exchange. For this reason, this thesis emphasizes migrant experiences and brings together multiple sources in order to create a coherent and balanced narrative.

In the second chapter, the historical trajectory leading to the population exchange is analyzed, with particular focus on the Lausanne Convention. Beginning with a brief historical background is essential for understanding the grounded historical context and the extent of Ottoman influence in the Balkans during the late nineteenth century. At this stage, the aim is to emphasize that migrations from the Balkans had distinct characteristics and historical trajectories. Therefore, the chapter first addresses the conjuncture of the early eighteenth century, followed by the Balkan Wars of 1912–1914 and World War I from 1914 to 1918. These significant and tumultuous events collectively shaped the character of the newly founded Turkish Republic. The shifting balances of power began to affect daily life and social relations among the ethnic groups that had lived under Ottoman rule for centuries.

It was in this context that various ethnic and religious groups sought independence from the Ottoman Empire. These efforts occurred during a period of decline and structural weaknesses within the Empire. Consequently, this led first to the disintegration of the Ottoman state and second to the emergence of new nation-states in the Balkan and Anatolian regions.

Yıldırım describes this period by stating,

"This period, which also witnessed the transformation of the regimes to a republican form of government, tested the abilities of Turkish and Greek governments in carrying out the reconstruction of their respective countries while incorporating, in the form of rehabilitation and assimilation, the large masses of

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<sup>2</sup>See: Hirschon, R. (1998). *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe: The social life of Asia Minor refugees in Piraeus* (2nd ed.). New York: Berghahn Books. (Original work published 1989).

displaced, disoriented and, perhaps more importantly, unemployed individuals into their evolving political systems (Yıldırım, 2006, p. 103)".

In Chapter Three, my focus is on the methodology that this thesis adopts, as well as the theoretical frameworks that support the analysis. The primary inspiration for writing this thesis comes from my experience as a second-generation migrant and the environment in which I grew up in my beloved city, Izmir. My intention with this research was never to alter existing social dynamics; it began purely as an academic curiosity. Over time, my interest deepened, and discovering a methodology that places the community at its core proved to be a perfect fit. This approach motivated me to analyse in depth the knowledge and interactions between generations, and the ways communities relate to one another. This thesis represents a way of giving back what I have learned from the communities involved in the research, who generously opened not only their homes and shared their culture but also their hearts, extending to me immense hospitality. Here, I also aim to demonstrate the evolution of my initial research goals and how they have shifted over the course of this study.

While discussing the origins and influences of what is known as CBPR, I draw on my experiences with communities in Izmir and Thessaloniki. A particularly striking aspect is learning about their lives as descendants of first-generation exchangee parents and understanding how these experiences continue to shape their feelings today. I explore their relationships with local populations and other migrants, as well as their connections with communities “on the other side of the Aegean.” I also examine how they identify themselves, what they hope their children will know and do as exchangees, and how their habitus and collective experiences have evolved. All of this is achieved through their active participation and willingness to engage, despite years of silence. They are never forced or obliged to speak, yet these individuals genuinely want their voices to be heard and to avoid experiences of discrimination.

To get a better understanding of the conjuncture of the period, it is to be noted that the whole foundation of the emergent Turkish Republic was laid on the creation of a homogeneous society. Upon their arrival, exchangees saw a sharply different political and cultural modality from what they had known. Meanwhile, under such circumstances, the new state, in Aydın's (2009) terminology, expropriated what he calls "subordinated citizens." Aydın's terminology suggests that the establishment of an international order abolished those whom he sees as his "subordinated individuals," him meaning or constructing them through an enormous period of socialization and acculturation, who are therefore incapable of relating with any form of authority.

Bourdieu's definition of *habitus* contends for a system of dispositions that are durable and transposable which, by integrating past experiences, act at any given moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions. The dispersedness of dispositions, supported by the analogical transfer of schemes, allows individuals to perform all sorts of tasks by providing solutions to problems similarly structured (Bourdieu, 1997). Upon the entry into a new environment by the exchangees, their habitus was bound to change; this very definition given by Bourdieu closely mirrors the experience of the exchangees so all these topics will be pointed together with the examples given by the exchangees during my fieldwork.

Thessaloniki and Izmir are often called the "twin cities," a title that pays tribute to their striking similarities. Being port cities on each side of the Aegean Sea, they share a Mediterranean rhythm of life formed by a geophysical setting, climate, and an interwoven history of several centuries. Even in their neighborhoods, they somehow reflect one another: a blur of bazaars, promontories, and an intricate urban fabric that bears the marks of Ottoman, Balkan, and Levantine influences. These two cities turned into living sites of the population exchange itself, where even now the neighborhoods are still shaped by the traces of the memories, traditions, and the struggle to rebuild from nothing. It is precisely this layered history that made Izmir and Thessaloniki a place for my fieldwork.

Studying these places not only allows us to trace material traces of the exchange but also still experience the practices and the voices that continue to shape the story.

Chapter Four takes a look at my CBPR work with groups in both Thessaloniki and Izmir. Starting from the perspective of what community means there and how in theory an exchangee community can be formed across borders, I then go on to explain how I first tried to engage with the groups, reflecting on the steps that worked but also on those that failed and, in hindsight, proved just as instructive. The chapter goes on to examine the design of the research and how it unfolds by paying attention to the issues of actually entering those spaces and then building trust in a gradual fashion. Perhaps most valuable of all was the establishment of the ongoing dialogue, which continued to develop after the initial fieldwork and became part of the research itself.

Chapter Five opens with an in-depth glance into how exchangee communities preserve their traditions, with music being perhaps the most vivid and enduring form of memory. Songs are threaded with identity and continuity, going through generations. What strikes me most during my fieldwork, however, is that in many cases the melodies remain intact despite the change in lyrics over time. As I sat in the company of some community members, listening to their voices while I joined in, memory is transmitted through music, for the attaching of history continues to reverberate into the present.

It is not only through music that the echoes of the past live on. They are also present in the dances, in the culinary traditions, and in the everyday practices that exchangee communities continue to carry forward. In this chapter, I present the results of the participatory activities, stories, and practices I learn directly from exchangees. My aim is to understand and compare how they classify their knowledge and the stories of the past today, while also discovering the new practices they create in response to the environments they are born into. I explore whether these patterns show similarities or differences between the two communities, revealing both shared continuities and unique adaptations.

After this, the concentration was on analyzing the role of cultural institutions and their place in both public and private life. I examine how they interact with individuals, especially in moments of radical transformation, and how this interaction shapes the habitus while still allowing traditions to be preserved. These dynamics reveal the crucial role cultural institutions play not only in safeguarding heritage but also in creating spaces of dialogue within and between communities. Encouraging such institutions and strengthening their ties with the people becomes essential, as it opens paths toward mutual understanding and, ultimately, the fostering of peace.

Being forced to leave one place and move into another requires a complex process of creating belonging and redefining what “home” means. Home is never just a building; it is a neighborhood where life unfolds, an abandoned house that still carries the weight of memory, or even a tombstone that anchors identity to the past. What I find especially striking is that, whether people hear directly from their parents about the migration process or not, the significance of “home” remains central for all of them. In this chapter, I focus on identifying the key locations that continue to hold symbolic importance for exchangee communities in both Izmir and Thessaloniki, and I explore why these places carry such enduring meaning. Then I turn to the literary and cinematic representations of the population exchange. Novels, poems, and films not only recount the historical event but also shape how it is remembered. Works such as Dido Sotiriou’s *Farewell Anatolia* (1962) bring the trauma of uprooting and the longing for homeland into vivid language so not only to understand the legacy of the population exchange but also in collective cultural expression.

Another important element that stands out throughout my fieldwork is the constant presence of change. When working directly with different communities and generations, this becomes evident in almost every aspect of their lives. Chapter Six therefore turns to an analysis of community dynamics, beginning with the first generation of migrants. I look at how cultural, social, economic, and emotional

transformations shape their lives and experiences. Here I draw on what Karl Mannheim describes as the interplay of the biological with the social, the relationship between personal and collective change, and the intersection of biography and history.

I pay close attention to how exchangees reflect on their identities, the consequences of losing property, and the process of what I call a “memory rebirth” that emerges among the second and third generations. Their relationships with other exchange migrants, as well as with local populations, also reveal how bonds are formed and contested. At the same time, I compare these dynamics across generations to see how identities continue to evolve. For the following generations, I explore how the “other” gradually becomes local within shifting community dynamics, and how a sense of belonging continues to persist, often expressed through a yearning from their ancestral homelands to now “memorylands.”

Lastly, Chapter Seven takes a closer look at the Cretan exchangee community and its particular place within the broader story of the population exchange. The focus on the Cretan exchangee community brings to light the different aspects of the population exchange and points out the very different post-exchange experiences of belonging, integration, and memory that were produced by the existing linguistic, cultural, and historical conditions. Hence, the Cretan case serves as a very vital lens through which one can assess the limitations and exclusions that are ingrained in the unifying national narratives concerning the Lausanne Convention. Their experience is distinctive not only because they come from an island setting, but also because of the ways in which they preserve both knowledge and religious identity. Cretans stand out for the resilience with which they maintain their cultural markers. What makes their case even more significant is the survival of Bektashism, a spiritual identity that endures as both a marker of difference and a resource of continuity. By working with the Cretan exchangee community, I reveal that Crete holds a special significance in the population exchange because it embodies the complexity of belonging: a place both deeply local and rooted in the shared memory of exchange and yet central to larger

Mediterranean connection with a process of negotiation between memory and change.

All in all, this thesis aims to uncover whether exchange migrant identities remain protected within the second and third generations, and whether these generations continue to be shaped by the outcomes of the 1923 population exchange between Greece and Turkey. I inquire into how the events, and their aftermath influence the identities, emotions, and knowledge of these descendants. I examine whether their sense of self and understanding of the exchange shifts across generations, and how memories are carried, reshaped, or reinterpreted in the present.

In the broader picture, this research contributes to the wider field of migration and generational studies, which seek to understand the long-term consequences of forced displacement by engaging directly with communities themselves. This thesis emphasizes repetitively that to generate meaningful knowledge about exchangee communities, it is essential not only to study them but also to learn with them. Historical accounts provide invaluable insights into the events of the time, but they need to be complemented with studies of memory transmission, which bring to light the lived experiences and ongoing legacies of these communities. By centering Community-Based Participatory Research and giving voice to exchangee descendants, this work offers a fresh perspective to population exchange studies and opens new pathways for future research.

While being a historical event that neatly draws the line between epochs in both impressions and reality, the population exchange is a full-fledged living legacy. Its echoes continue to shape communities across borders, and in hearing these echoes resonate, we have not just a narration of the past, but also its present embodiments with regard to memory, identity, and belonging.

## CHAPTER 1

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

To understand the social fabric of a specific region, it is necessary to situate it within its historical trajectory and to pay close attention to the processes that have shaped patterns of population over time. The 1923 population exchange, which took place between Turkey and Greece, was not a sudden event but rather a culmination of a mix of factors that had been influencing the eastern Mediterranean region for a long time. Consequently, this chapter looks back at the events prior to the exchange and follows the path of incidents that slowly led to the idea of large-scale and forced migrations as an option for a political solution.

The emphasis is placed on the last years of the Ottoman Empire and the simultaneous emergence of nationalist movements in the Balkans and Anatolia, which were the developments that considerably changed the intercommunal relations and the demographics of the area. The processes lasted until the Lausanne Treaty was signed in 1923, an international agreement that signified a clear turning point in the lives of almost two million people. The treaty, by officially allowing the mandatory displacement of Greek Orthodox Christians (the Rums)<sup>3</sup> from Anatolia and Muslims from Greece, not only changed the demography but also granted international approval to population exchange as a solution to minority-related tensions. Therefore, studying the pre-Lausanne period is necessary for grasping not only the exchange itself but also the wider sociopolitical and economic

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<sup>3</sup> The terms "Rum" or "Rum Ortodoks" go back to the medieval word for the Byzantine Empire, which simply was Rum – (Eastern) Rome. I shall use "Rum" throughout this study in order to refer to the Ottoman Greeks. The terms "Rum," "Greek," and "Yunan" have historically been used to describe those who claim descent from the ancient Hellenic lineage. The term "Rum" derives from "Romeos" or "Romyos" and was traditionally used to refer to Greeks residing within the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires. Today, however, Greeks rarely use this term. "Greek" or "Grekos" originates from the word "Greek" and was assigned by Europeans, who also named the homeland of these people "Greece" (Grekya). The word "Ellinas" is rooted in "Hellen" and refers to the ancient Hellenes. Modern Greeks prefer "Ellinas" in place of "Rum," "Greek," or "Yunan," identifying themselves as Ellines (Hellenes) in a historical context (Kitromilides 1989; Herzfeld 1982; Hirschon 2003).

tensions that made such a radical intervention both possible and, at the time, politically acceptable.

In this chapter, I will also address the conditions following the Lausanne Treaty, focusing on the immediate challenges faced by the exchangees. The implementation of the exchange produced intense disruption in both Turkey and Greece, reshaping demographic structures, destabilizing their economies, and restructuring social and cultural relations. Uprooted from their homeland, the exchangees were compelled to restructure their lives in unfamiliar environments, where processes of social and cultural integration proved uneven and often fraught. Issues such as housing, employment insecurity, and challenging social environment emerged as persistent challenges, leaving long-lasting traces on both societies. These post-exchange dynamics constitute a central analytical focus of this chapter.

The particular emphasis of this thesis is placed on the cities of Izmir and Thessaloniki, two major urban centers profoundly shaped by the population exchange. Before 1923, Izmir, a key port city in western Anatolia, was characterised by its cosmopolitan social fabric and a significant Greek Orthodox and Jewish presence. Thessaloniki, in northern Greece, likewise portrayed a diverse demographic composition, including a substantial Muslim population, alongside its well-documented Jewish and Christian communities. By outlining the historical trajectories of these cities, the chapter expresses how the population exchange transformed their cultural landscapes, urban memory, and modes of coexistence.

### **1.1 Pre-Lausanne Context: The Decline of Empire and Nationalism**

The 1920s constituted a transformative decade marked by profound political, economic, and social reconfigurations on a global scale. The end of the First World War acted as a decisive rupture, accelerating processes that reshaped state structures. The Treaty of Versailles and its companions not only disbanded the

empires of Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, German, and Russian but also gave life to new countries while fomenting disputes over borders and ethnic identities. During this period, the nation-state formation itself as the dominant political model heightened the role of nationalism as an organizing principle and a cause of conflict. Nationalist movements, on the one hand, took the promise of political self-determination and territorial sovereignty, but on the other hand, they created new and very serious difficulties for minority populations whose existence was more and more seen as conflicting with the unification of national projects (Mazower M., 1999).

The ideological conflicts between the emerging governing systems were a global phenomenon during the decade. Following the Russian Revolution of 1917, the consolidation of Bolshevik power led to the establishment of a revolutionary state that offered an alternative political and social model to liberal capitalism (Fitzpatrick, 2008). The end of the Great War caused a series of forced migrations. Millions were uprooted during the Russian Revolution (1917) and ensuing civil war, while the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire resulted in the formation of new states that often-disregarded certain ethnic groups (Marrus, 1985). Alongside these changes, the democratic systems in different nations underwent increasing pressure as the movements towards authoritarianism gained strength. The rise of fascism in Italy under Mussolini illustrated the broader crisis of liberal democracy during the interwar period (Paxton, 2004).

The global economy in the 1920s was characterized by a dichotomy of recovery and instability. Europe, mainly affected by the wars, was financially ruined, which led to rampant inflation, huge debts and high unemployment. In contrast, the United States of America experienced rapid industrial expansion and technological innovation during the period commonly referred to as the “Roaring Twenties” (Tooze, 2014). However, this economic rise was not experienced in the same manner by all nations and Germany was a perfect example of this, as it went

through hyperinflation and extreme hardships (Hobsbawm, 1994). Ultimately, this economic instability in the world had a big part in the triggering of the Great depression towards the end of the decade.

Simultaneously, Turkey was undergoing its metamorphosis amidst the economic and political turmoil. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of the Turkish Republic in 1923 were in tandem with the modifications in the economic scenario around the world, but Turkey had to cope with certain difficulties. The new government strived to secure its national identity and develop its economy during the interwar period, which was even more uncertain than today, economically speaking. Migration has always influenced and determined the history of Turkey, especially the Anatolian region, which has been the scene of migrations for centuries. One of the numerous migration movements that have differently affected the territory is the 1923 population exchange, which is regarded as the most significant and historically connected among all. This time, unlike the previous migrations, the swapping of the population had a decisive impact on the Ottoman territories, shedding their old identity and becoming the new republic's cradle. It was the moment when the fire was finally able to reach the wood that the glass had turned, and the demographic, cultural, and political aspects of the region were altered forever.

The Ottoman Empire categorized its subjects into two broad categories: muslims and non-muslims. This arrangement, which was termed the "millet" system, permitted the peaceful coexistence of different religions or sect-based communities in the empire (Oran, 2011). Eventually, some of the non-Muslim communities became quite powerful and well-off, mainly due to their participation in trade and their success in this area, which also improved their standing in Ottoman society. The Ottoman Empire started a slow decline during the 18th century, which was a period in which it lost considerably in the military, political, and economical fronts.

While European countries were rapidly growing due to the Industrial Revolution, which not only enabled them to expand their industries but also their imperial reach, the Ottoman Empire was struggling to adapt to the new realities (Clark, 2006, p. 7). The Industrial Revolution brought about changes not only in economic fields but also in the power relations between countries as they began to develop industries and look for lands for economic expansion. Furthermore, the opening up of new geographical areas had reduced the empire's dominance in the global market even more, since these new areas were used for trade. So, the Ottoman Empire continued to use its old military and administrative systems, which turned out to be less and less effective in controlling the once enormous empire (Lewis, 1968). The emergence of nationalism among the people of the Ottoman Empire worsened the social division and caused an increase in the conflicts among the different communities. These movements were driven by the desire for independence and self-determination, and they further destabilized the Ottoman empire. The 1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War was a significant turning point, with its large-scale migrations from the Balkan territories starting (Tevfik, 2017).

The idea of population exchange was first proposed by Foreign Minister Safvet Pasha during the peace negotiations held in Berlin in 1878. He suggested that the Balkan Mountains be considered the boundary, with Muslims living north of the mountains and non-Muslims residing in the south exchanging places (Alpan, 2023). Although this plan wasn't realized, the period that followed was marked by large-scale population movements, which reshaped the demographic structure of both the Balkan and Anatolian regions. However, due to the chaotic nature of these displacements and the lack of comprehensive records, it is difficult to determine the exact number of people who were forced to migrate during this period.

The subsequent events ended in the outburst of the Balkan Wars between 1912 and 1913 (Aktar, 2003). These conflicts resulted in substantial territorial losses for the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, the empire was losing territory,

the displacement of people became a serious issue, and this, in turn, contributed to the existing tensions in the region. These territorial losses for the Ottoman state corresponded to processes of national consolidation and territorial expansion for emerging Balkan nation-states.

According to Ayhan Aktar, the Balkan Wars and subsequent migrations of the Muslim inhabitants from Rumelia to Anatolia led to the consideration of the idea of a population exchange between the Ottomans and Greeks as a way to cool down the intercommunal conflicts that were getting out of control (Aktar, 2003). In this context, the Ottoman deputy undersecretary at the Athens Embassy, Galip Kemali Bey (Söylemezoğlu), was the first one to define the term “population exchange” (mübadele) to express the idea. He suggested the population transfer as a means to peace after witnessing the rising violence. In a telegram he sent on 12 May 1914 to Grand Vizier Said Halim Pasha, he mentioned that he had discussed the issue with Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos, who was positively inclined towards the proposal. With the preliminary consent of the Ottoman government, the discussions opened up regarding a voluntary exchange of the Muslims in Macedonia and the Christians in Aydın that would not be enforced (Canlı Tarihler, 1946). Nevertheless, the First World War put an end to these negotiations before any official agreement was reached (Aktar, 2003, p. 27).

These were the primitive efforts to manage the cohabitation and strife that had already been experienced in the region; The Istanbul Treaty of 1913, signed between the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria, established a precedent by formalizing a compulsory exchange of populations following the Balkan Wars (Ağanoğlu, 2001). This was followed by the population exchange treaty signed between Greece and Bulgaria in 1919, further normalizing population transfer as a mechanism of conflict management in the region (Zürcher, 2003). From this perspective the population exchange was already presented as a diplomatic tool before the Treaty of Lausanne (Özsu, 2011).

By the outbreak of the First World War, over 200,000 Ottoman Turks were already displaced from Balkan countries and migrated to the residual Ottoman territories (Yıldırım, 2006). Ladas (1932) notes that 115,000 Greeks were sent from the East Thrace to Greece, and 85,000 to the interior of Anatolia. In addition, an estimated 150,000 Greeks from the western Anatolian coast migrated to Greek territory. On the other hand, the old statesman Celal Bayar, drawing on his experience as a contemporary statesman, places the number of Greeks who moved to Greece at approximately 130,000 (Bayar, 1966–1969).

The migrations of populations were not one-way. The major reason for the settling of Muslim refugees in Anatolia was the military defeats of the Ottoman Empire and the loss of territories in the Balkans, but among the reasons for the outflow of Christians, especially from Eastern Thrace after 1913, was the policy of the Committee of Union and Progress (Güneş, 2013). Economic nationalization, demographic engineering, and security measures, involving the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* and other institutions, were some of the causes that considerably affected to the displacement of the Greek Orthodox communities during this time (Zürcher, 2017). Hence, the population throughout Anatolia and in other Ottoman territories experienced great changes, which already impacted the social structure before the official population exchange of 1923.

With the continuing disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the demographic and cultural landscape transformed as the empire's diverse, multiethnic society started to give way to a new, more homogenous social structure, setting the stage for the eventual creation of the Turkish Republic. In 1920, civil unrest spread throughout Anatolia as Turkish nationalist forces, under the command of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, rejected the Treaty of Sèvres, which had been signed on August 10, 1920 (Jelavich, 2013). The nationalist movement also split ties with the Ottoman government, marking a decisive break in the struggle for Turkish sovereignty.

## 1.2 Reviving Byzantium: Greek Independence and the *Megali Idea*

The concept of the “*Megali Idea*” emerged after 1798 as a set of ideas that sought to create a sense of unity between all Greeks regardless of where they lived (Kitromilides, 1989). The early iterations of the *Megali Idea* focused less on a fixed geographic entity and much more on the idea of creating an empire based on shared cultural identities between Greece's classical past and Byzantium. The term “*Megali Idea*” was first publicly expressed by Ioannis Kolettis, who stated that the Greek nation included both Athens (the kingdom's capital) and Constantinople (“the City”), which he described as “the dream and hope of all Greeks” (Clogg, 2013). In doing so, Kolettis illustrated the *Megali Idea* as a vision of a single nation that would incorporate historical areas of the Eastern Roman Empire into an expanded conception of Greece.

In Turkish historical interpretation, the “*Megali Idea*” is seen as a movement to restore the Byzantine Empire to its greatest territorial extent. In Greek history, however, the “*Megali Idea*” is viewed as a unifying vision that provided Greeks with a shared national identity, thereby strengthening national consciousness. Advocates of this idea claimed that Greeks could be self-sufficient and presented it as a national mission, specifically, the mission of “civilizing and simultaneously Hellenizing (or Greekifying) the East.” (Erdem, 2013).

Following the Greek War of Independence, establishing the Greek state in 1830, which included Thessaly, led to increasingly strained relations between Muslim Turks and Greeks (Mccarthy, 1995). By 1913, following the Treaty of Bucharest, the proportion of ethnic Greeks within the population of the Greek state had declined from roughly nine-tenths to the low eighties, as a result of the incorporation of territories with substantial non-Greek populations, including Muslims, Slavs, and Jews (Clogg, 2013, p. 79-83). With the Allied victory in World War I, Greek President Eleftherios Venizelos (Ελευθέριος Κυριάκου Βενιζέλος) was born in 1864 to a wealthy family in Crete. Christened as “Eleftherios/

Liberator” promoted the idea of uniting all Greek-speaking people under one flag, drawing on the principle of "self-determination." He also proposed a solution for the Turkish population remaining in Western Anatolia by suggesting a population exchange with the Greek community in Anatolia (Pentzopoulos, 1962, p. 41-47).

In Greece, a constitutional crisis escalated into a major interference by the Great Powers, giving rise to what became known as the “National Schism” (*Εθνικός Διχασμός*). This schism deepened when, in August 1916, anti-royalist officers staged a coup in Thessaloniki, dividing Greek society into two opposing factions. The royalists advocated for neutrality, while the “Venizelists” supported joining the Entente in the First World War. (Pitsoulis, 2019, p. 460). In June 1917, Eleftherios Venizelos assumed government control and committed Greece to war against Bulgaria.

Between 1917 and 1930, Venizelos navigated a complex political path, initially focused on realizing a "Greater Greece" through the *Megali Idea*, signing the population exchange agreement, and later initiating a rapprochement with Turkey by signing friendship treaties (Mavrogordatos, 1983). The *Megali Idea* was influential from the mid-19th century to the first thirty years of the 20th century. Venizelos entered Greek politics following the 1909 Goudi coup, which was a turning point that facilitated the modernization of the Greek state and military. By aligning Greece with the Allied Powers during the First World War, Venizelos sought to capitalize on the country’s strategic importance, positioning Greece as a key partner within the postwar international order (Kitromilides, 1989, p. 245-252).

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Venizelos pushed forward Greek territorial entitlements, particularly in Asia Minor, a region with ancient Greek roots, notably centered around Smyrna. The Mudros Armistice Agreement, signed on October 30, 1918, aboard the British battleship “HMS Agamemnon”, granted the Allies the authority to occupy any Ottoman territory in unrest, creating

a legal basis for intervention (Bloxham, 2005). Allied troops entered Constantinople in November 1918. At the Paris Peace Conference, a series of treaties was crafted between the victorious Allies and the defeated Central Powers. In May 1919, Greece received a mandate from France, Great Britain, and the United States to occupy Smyrna. Venizelos anticipated that Greek populations from other areas of Anatolia would transfer to the city, ultimately leading to greater ethnic homogeneity in the region. Nevertheless, Greece was permitted to land in Izmir under British influence, eventually sparking the Greco-Turkish War (Akgün, 1986).

By late August 1922, the Greek military position had entirely collapsed. In a decisive turn, Turkish forces entered Izmir in September 1922. To this day, in Turkish historiography, the 9th of September celebrates the victory of the Turkish army over Greece, and with this victory, the three thousand years of Greek presence in Anatolia terminated. This incident is known as “The Asia Minor Catastrophe” in Greece. The Turkish army's entry into Izmir marked the nearing end of the military campaign, leading to tens of thousands of refugees crowding at the port of Izmir (Anastasopoulou, 2022, p. 58). By October 1922, following the Mudanya Armistice, many Greeks from Eastern Thrace, Anatolia, and Istanbul had migrated to Greece. According to Akgün, British and American ships had withdrawn, and by October 8, Greek ships had evacuated 300,000 Greeks from Izmir and an additional 6,000 from Edirne (Akgün, 1986, p. 93).

In the election of November 1, 1920, a faction advocating for a modest but respected Greece won, leading to Venizelos's defeat. Declaring his retirement from active politics, Venizelos left Greece (Mavrogordatos, 1983, p. 30). After his departure, King Constantine returned, but the new government did not withdraw the Greek army from Anatolia, eventually leading to the disaster in Asia Minor in 1922, that is a crisis that Venizelos was not in office to witness. In some ways, the 1920 elections spared Venizelos, though some opponents accused him of deliberately losing as part of a conspiracy. After 1922, Venizelos became the leader

of the refugees, who widely held King Constantine and his party responsible for the catastrophe. Venizelos actively supported the refugees' issues, and they, in turn, offered him their political support through their votes (Pentzopoulos, 1962, p. 63-70).

### **1.3 The Lausanne Treaty: Redefining Borders and Communities in Greece and Turkey**

The Lausanne negotiations commenced on 21 November 1922, involving key powers such as Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Greece, Romania, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, and Turkey. Central figures in the Greek Turkish discussions included British Foreign Minister Lord Curzon, former Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos, and Turkish General Mustafa Ismet (later known as Ismet İnönü), who had previously led successful campaigns against Greek forces in Asia Minor (Belli, 2006). The conference endured for several months, facing numerous challenges and delays, eventually reaching a standstill and breaking up temporarily in February 1923 (Turkey, 2008).

At Lausanne, discussions were conducted by three commissions: the Territorial and Military Issues Commission, the Foreigners and Minorities in Turkey Commission, and the Finance and Economic Issues Commission. The topic of population exchange was initially addressed within the Territorial and Military Issues Commission (Akgün, 1986, p. 121). The first dialogues on the population exchange were held at the eighth summit of the Territorial and Military Commission, chaired by Lord Curzon, on 1 December 1922. The Greek delegation proposed that the Greeks who had left Turkey should be allowed to return, but the Turkish representatives firmly rejected this suggestion. In response, Greece requested the compulsory migration of the 400,000 Muslims residing within its borders to Turkey. Turkey accepted this proposal, viewing it as a way to fill the economic gap left by the departure of the Greeks (Ari, 2003).

During the Lausanne Treaty negotiations, the minority issue was a priority that both sides sought to resolve quickly. Yıldırım states, "The Lausanne Treaty, in a way, both confirmed that immigrants and minorities were perceived as a problem and officially recognized this issue on the international stage" (Yıldırım, 2006, p. 35). While an exchange on this scale had never been implemented before, the League of Nations appointed Norwegian scientist, statesman and explorer Dr. Fridtjof Nansen (1861-1930) to oversee the process. Although Nansen was initially opposed to the idea of population exchange, he later came to see it as a pragmatic solution to prevent future minority-related conflicts (Meray, 2001).

Both countries aimed to implement the population exchange efficiently and swiftly to avert an impending economic crisis. The summer harvests of the following year were crucial for both nations, making it essential to complete the exchange within three months. Delays beyond this period would make it impossible to align with the agricultural season, especially as a large portion of the existing population had already begun planting. Therefore, it was planned that the vacated homes would be given to those arriving through the exchange (Arı, 2003, p. 37).

It was stipulated that Greeks who had settled in Istanbul before the signing of the Armistice of Mudros in 1918 would be classified as "established" (*etabli*) and thus exempt from the exchange. In return, the same option was granted to Muslims residing in Western Thrace. After eight months of negotiations, the Treaty of Lausanne was signed on July 24, 1923. According to the main provisions of the treaty, the Maritsa River was designated as the border of Thrace, with *Karaagac* being ceded to Turkey. Additionally, islands located more than three miles off the Asian coast were removed from Turkish control. The capitulations regime was abolished, and cabotage rights, allowing only Turkish citizens to engage in maritime transport between Turkish ports, were granted. Regarding the Straits, it was decided

that both commercial and military ships, as well as aircraft, would have free passage through the Straits region during both peace and wartime (Oran, 2014).

Although the Convention and Protocol on the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations was signed on January 30, 1923, it included a clause stating that it would be implemented on May 1, 1923, to allow time for local preparations. However, the financial and legal review of the treaty caused some delays. The exchange eventually began at the end of 1923 and was completed within a year, by December 1924 (Pentzopoulos, 1962).

In the execution of population exchange, the property rights of individuals were to remain protected, and no obstacles were to prevent any member of exchangees, regardless of reason. Suspects or convicted individuals would be handed over to authorities in the receiving country by the judicial officials of the departing country. Migrants would relinquish the citizenship of the country they left and automatically acquire citizenship of the country upon arrival. They could freely bring their movable belongings or arrange for their transport without being charged exit or entry duties. Furthermore, institutions such as mosques, tekkes, madrasas, churches, monasteries, schools, hospitals, associations, and unions were allowed to transport their staff and movable assets freely. Both countries, based on recommendations from the mixed commission, were to provide the utmost facilitation for these transport operations (Lausanne Peace Treaty, 2024).

A record detailing the inventory and value of each exchangees movable property would be prepared in four copies: one for the local authorities, one for the mixed commission, a third for the receiving country's government, and the fourth for the exchangee. Within one month of the agreement's implementation, a mixed commission was to be established, composed of four members from each of the two contracting high parties and three members selected by the League of Nations Council from among nationals of countries that had not participated in World War

I. This commission would convene either in Turkey or Greece, with its chairmanship rotating among the three neutral members.

The articles feature some notable characteristics; first, the primary criterion is to be based not on nationality but on religion. No distinctions were made regarding language or ethnic origin; only religious affiliation was considered (Hirschon, 2003, p. 8). The second noteworthy feature is that the agreement was retroactive, covering not only the period at the time but also those who had migrated since 1912, particularly due to war-related displacements. Lastly, this process was mandatory, not voluntary, marking the first instance in history where forced migration was legitimized by international law. While this exchange marked a closing chapter and disaster for Greece, it was seen as a new beginning for the newly established Republic of Turkey (Ari, 2003).

These developments occurred amidst the broader historical environment of the disintegration of multiethnic and multireligious empires and simultaneous rise of ethnic political goals within the nation-states. While widely deemed the first instance of an institutionalized mass population transfer, the forced deportations of Armenians must have constituted a qualitative shift in the practice of something akin to coercive displacement. Such events unfolded within the larger historical setting of the collapse of the multiethnic and multireligious empires and the affiliated ascent of the nation-state, wherein aggressiveness toward ethnic homogenization came to be a political aspiration.

In the early years of the population exchange, numerous exemption requests were made, but only those who needed care, orphans, and the destitute were granted permission to remain. Additionally, many people sought to be exempted by converting to a religion or through marriage. However, a decree issued on August 26, 1924, required that marriages had to have occurred before the population exchange to qualify, effectively closing this pathway for exemption through

marriage. Many unresolved and lingering issues related to the exchange were addressed with the signing of the Ankara Agreement on October 30, 1930. Following this, on December 9, 1933, an agreement between Turkey and Greece abolished the Mixed (Joint) Commission, and on October 19, 1934, the population exchange was officially concluded (Yıldırım, 2006).

#### **1.4 Importance of Izmir in the Population Exchange**

*“Smyrna had no earthly right to the title of a Turkish city, except the accident of it happening to be in Turkey”* (Kirli, 2007).

Blackwood’s Magazine, 1847

Renowned as “İzmir” among authors writing and speaking in Turkish, the city was usually cited as “Smyrni” in Greek, English, French, and German writings. When Izmir was known as Smyrna, it stood in stark contrast to the Anatolian hinterlands, embodying a rich tapestry of multicultural communities. The city's population included 55,000 Greeks (comprising 40,000 Greek citizens and 15,000 Turkish subjects), 165,000 Turks, 35,000 Jews, 25,000 Armenians, and 20,000 foreigners, which further broke down to 10,000 Italians, 3,000 French, 2,000 English, 200 Americans, and individuals from other nationalities (Bali, 2009). As a vital hub for trade between European and Asian markets, Smyrna symbolized a unique fusion of Western and Eastern cultures. Sixty percent of its economic revenue was generated from the export of essential goods, such as figs, hazelnuts, sultanas, cotton, and tobacco; cementing its role as a key economic center in the region (Aktar, 2003).

The city of Smyrna dates back to about 2700 BCE, founded by the Pelasgians, during the Hellenic Age in Asia Minor in 1130 years or more before the

Christian era (Smyrnelis, 2008). Initially established on Mt. Sypilus by Tantalus, it was originally called Navlochon, reflecting its strategic importance as a port on the bay. The city's name, Smyrna, is linked to an Amazonian figure of the same name (known as Myrha in Aeolian), who, according to legend, married Theseus (Şimşir, 2017). Over the following centuries, Smyrna experienced repeated shifts of control until 328 CE, when it became a Byzantine city. Later, as the Ottoman Empire expanded its reach across Anatolia between 1344 and 1402 CE, Smyrna was eventually incorporated into its domains (Beyru, 1991).

Geographically, Smyrna was a mosaic of distinct cultural quarters, with Greek, Jewish, American, Armenian, and Turkish sections, each fostering its own unique community life. The “Levantine” that were the foreign nationals primarily of Italian, French, and Euro-Mediterranean descent, many of whom traced their lineage to crusaders or maritime republics lived in the suburban areas (Çokona, 2017). This group held significant wealth, largely due to their control over the city's lucrative shipping companies, insurance agencies, mines, banks, and other profitable import-export businesses. Their economic influence made them one of the most affluent communities in Smyrna, shaping the city's commercial landscape (Baran, 2003).



Figure 1: Smyrna's multi-cultural quarters in 1922. (Milton, 2008)

Owing to its sizable Christian and Jewish population, the city of İzmir earned the nickname “gâvur” (Infidel) İzmir among the Muslim communities during the late Ottoman period (Kırlı, 2005). Economically, İzmir stood as Anatolia’s most crucial and globally integrated city, deeply embedded in the international capitalist market. Fertile valleys in the Kaystros and Meander regions provided rich, alluvial soil, enabling high agricultural yields, and two major railroads facilitated the efficient transport of these products from the countryside to the port (Kasaba, 1988).

In the late Ottoman era, İzmir handled the region's exports, with high-demand goods such as dried fruits, nuts, olive oil, and carpets. The agricultural prosperity of the surrounding areas directly contributed to urban wealth for İzmir’s

traders and bankers, fostering one of the few mature markets for land and real estate in all of Anatolia. This flourishing commercial agriculture made İzmir unique in its economic vitality and its role as a hub of Ottoman trade with the global market (Pamuk, 1987).

Before World War I, İzmir was one of the most important cities of the Mediterranean, featuring a multilingual and cosmopolitan population (Eldem, 1999). Kirli (2007) states that in the last quarter of the 19th century, the city had the same number of mosques and churches (22) and 11 synagogues. In Doumanis’s examination of Muslim-Christian coexistence within the Ottoman Empire, he refers to this period of intercommunal life as the “*belle époque*” meaning a prolonged era marked by peace, where both communities engaged together in recreational activities and celebrated religious occasions in harmony (Doumanis N. , 2013). İzmir is a fascinating but unusual example for Anatolia: It was very significant in the imagination of modern Turkish nationalists because military capture of the city and its subsequent military recapture was seen as both the beginning and end of the Greco-Turkish War (1919–22).



Figure 2 and 3: The Great Fire of Smyrna (Sauvageot, 1922-1923)

On 9 September 1922, İzmir was taken over by the Turkish nationalists and thus the Greek administration that had been ruling over the city since 1919 came to an end. A catastrophic fire erupted on 13 September 1922, which led to the burning down of a large section of the city and a countless number of people being displaced (Milton, 2008). As a result, İzmir became one of the few urban centers in the early Republic of Turkey to face land and housing crisis and through these crises the rents and property values also augmented rapidly during the first years of the Republic. These urban burdens were directly related to the fact that İzmir was one of the major cities where the Muslim refugees and migrants settled (Dobkin, 1988).

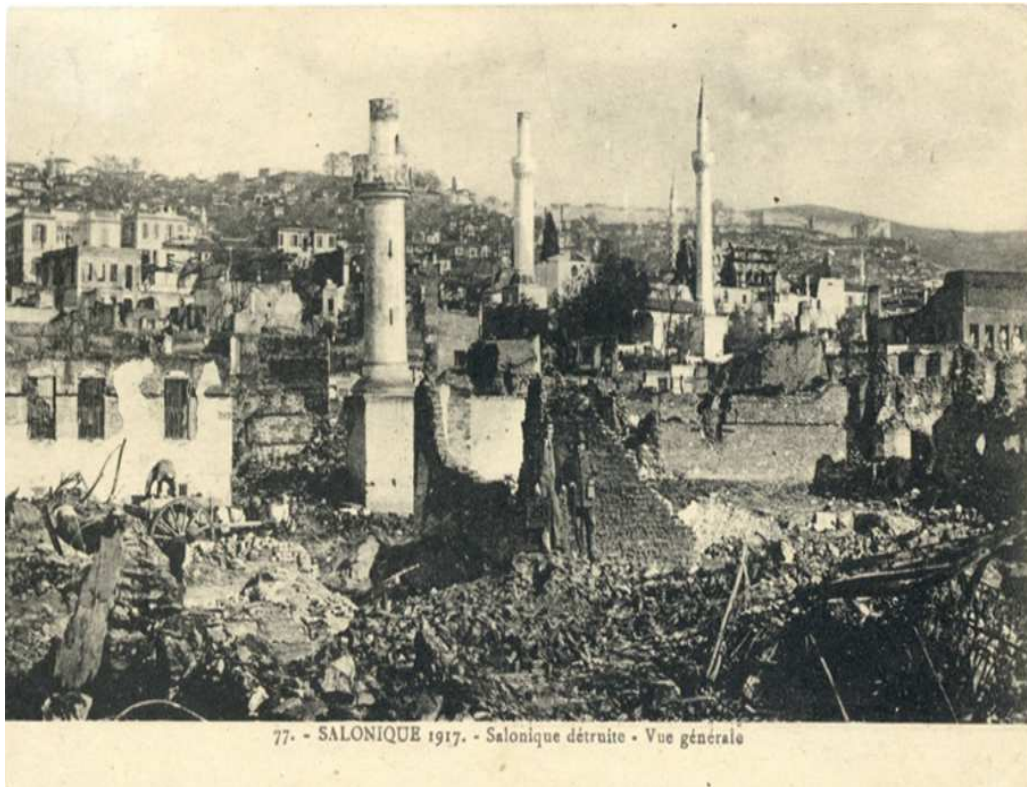
After the Asia Minor Catastrophe and the compulsory population exchange, which was formalized in 1923, İzmir received a great number of Muslim refugees from Greece and the Balkans. Many of them chose to stay in or around the city rather than be sent to the underpopulated rural areas (Naimark, 2001). The combined impacts of war, the influx of people, and the already limited housing stock managed to change the face of the city and its social make-up. Over the years, these forces played their part in the evolution of İzmir as the western part of Turkey's most significant economic, cultural, and demographic center. Currently, İzmir is the third-largest city in Turkey and still preserves its historical characteristics of being open, having strong urban identity. As a memoryscape, Smyrna, or Izmir, has a unique place in the Greek national memory. The public and national narratives that were told through Smyrna were not only limited to the communities of exchangees but also included larger parts of the Greek society, which made Smyrna a vital and permanent part of the Greek collective memory (Gedgoudaitė, 2021, p. 78).

### **1.5 Importance of Thessaloniki in the Population Exchange**

Thessaloniki was established in 315-316 BCE by King Cassander of Macedonia who named it after his wife, Thessalonike, who was the daughter of

King Philip II of Macedonia. Over time, the city's name evolved to "*Salonik*," and after being captured by the Ottomans, it became known as *Selanik* (Kiel, 2009). Following the decline of the Macedonian Empire after Alexander the Great's death, the kingdom weakened, and in 168 BCE, Thessaloniki fell under Roman rule after the Macedonians were defeated at the Battle of Pydna. The harbor and the Via Egnatia transformed Thessaloniki, which was then referred to as "Illyria," into one of the major centers of the Macedonian region during the Roman Empire (Yücel, 2014).

When the Roman Empire split, Thessaloniki came under the rule of the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire. Before the Ottoman conquest, the city suffered invasions from Avars, Slavic Bulgarians, and other tribes. During the Fourth Crusade, Thessaloniki fell to the Latins, only for the Byzantines to retake it in 1349 (Bayram, 2009). On March 2, 1430, Sultan Murad II captured Thessaloniki, beginning nearly five centuries of Ottoman rule, which lasted until 1912 (Balcı, 2010). The 1908 Young Turk movement elevated Thessaloniki as a political and intellectual hub of the empire. After 1912, however, the city gradually adopted a Greek identity, leaving behind its Ottoman heritage (Clogg, 2013).



77. - SALONIQUE 1917. - Salonique détruite - Vue générale

*Figure 4: The 1917 Great Fire in Thessaloniki (Halaçoğlu, 2019)*

On August 18, 1917, a major fire struck Thessaloniki, drastically altering the city's ethnic and architectural landscape. Due to a delayed response and inadequate firefighting resources from the local administration, the flames spread rapidly. Strong winds intensified the blaze, engulfing nearly the entire city (Hekimoglou, 2010). Two-thirds of Thessaloniki was destroyed, the devastating 1917 fire altered its traditional architecture and character, and between 1922 and 1928, Thessaloniki lost its multi-ethnic composition, transforming into a homogeneously Greek, or "Hellenic," city (Gerolimbu, 2008, p. 22).

In spite of the transformations, the Jewish community in Thessaloniki endured large in number during the interwar period and Jews were always among the main contributors in the economic, cultural, and social life of the city. This ancient Jewish character was not completely exhausted by the interwar changes but was rather disastrously interrupted in the Holocaust period (Apostolou, 2007).

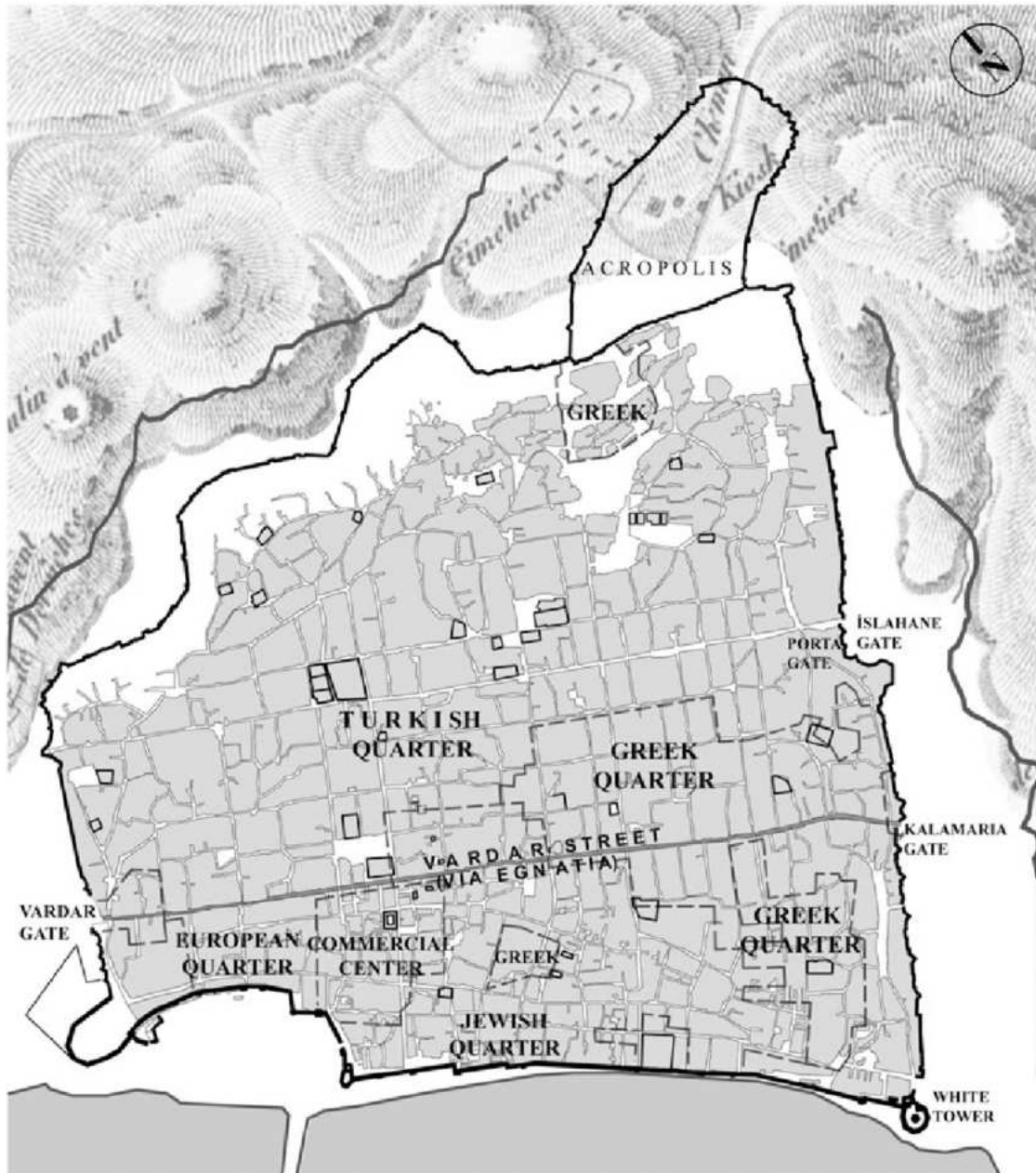


Figure 5: The Quarters of Thessaloniki in the 19th Century (Gençer, 2016)

The main ethno-religious groups living in Salonica was consisting of Turks, Jews, and Greeks, together with Europeans. The Muslim population in Thessaloniki was ethnically diverse, consisting of Turks, Bosnians', Albanians, and other groups (Çolaker, 2022). Additionally, a small group of Jews, known as the "dönme," had

converted to Islam at the end of the 17th century. Although scarcely explored in the literature, this community is notably examined in Marc David Baer's work. According to Baer (1997), the acceptance of Islam by the "*Maminim*" (the *Dönme*) created a unique social and religious identity that went beyond pre-existing categories.

They spoke a dialect of Spanish known as Ladino, preserved Jewish mystical practices, and maintained Jewish rituals and names. Outside their homes, they spoke Turkish, endowed mosques, prayed privately within their community, and used Muslim names (Apostolou, 2007, p. 194). Viewed neither as fully Jewish nor fully Muslim, they were buried in their own cemeteries upon death. The *Dönme*'s retention of certain Jewish traditions led to exclusion by Muslims, while their adoption of Muslim attire and customs distanced them from the Jewish community within the city. This situation persisted until World War I. In later centuries, the city began to be referred to by the Jewish community as "*Madre de Israel*" (Mother of Israel), a testament to its importance as a thriving center for Jewish life and culture (Lewkowicz, 1999).

In modern Turkish history, Thessaloniki holds particular significance as the birthplace of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, and is recognized as a center of Turkish nationalism. With the *Tanzimat* reforms (1839–1876), the city modernized and developed, becoming one of the intellectual and political hubs of the Ottoman Empire during the Second Constitutional Era (1908–1920), with a population of 120,000. However, following the Balkan Wars (1912–1913), Thessaloniki came under Greek rule, prompting the exodus of Bulgarians, Muslims, and Jews from the city (Mazower M. , 2004). Additionally, the division of Macedonia among the Balkan states severed Thessaloniki's ties to its inland regions, diminishing its political, cultural, and economic strength over time and causing it to lose its standing as a major trade and industrial center (Anastassiadou, 2001).

From 1883 to 1912, Thessaloniki experienced a new wave of Muslim migration. The intensifying nationalist movements in the Balkans were the primary drivers of this migration. Until the Second Constitutional Era, there was a growing influx of Muslims from regions like the Danube and Bosnia, with an increase in the Muslim population from 1884 onwards. During the Balkan Wars and up to the end of World War I, a significant portion of Muslims from Thessaloniki emigrated as muhajirs (migrants) to Ottoman lands (Özdemir, 2019).

By January 1923, Thessaloniki had temporarily hosted around 130,000 Greek exchangees from Anatolia. These individuals were later transported on Greek ships to various regions across Greece. The influx of Greek exchangees fundamentally and permanently changed Thessaloniki's demographic structure and urban organization. Upon arrival at the Kalamaria Gulf and the port, the exchangees were held in quarantine under poor conditions for a period to mitigate the risk of infectious diseases (Çolaker, 2022, p. 202).

With the Treaty of Lausanne, Greece had no other option than to completely give up the *Megali Idea* and face the fallout from its final downfall. The forced population later caused around 1.2 million Greek Orthodox refugees to come to Greece, which was almost one-quarter of the country's population then. Such a large number of newcomers severely hardened the Greek state in terms of social, economic, and political areas. Even before the exchange, Thessaloniki had become a central gathering point for Greek refugees and exchangees from the time the Turkish army entered Izmir until 1928. The International Refugee Settlement Commission managed the settlement, temporary housing, and relocation of Greek exchangees, which continued its work until 1930. The commission, emphasizing both the relocation of Muslims from Greece and economic considerations, decided to settle most of the Greek exchangees in Northern Macedonia, with Thessaloniki as the primary urban center (Gerolimbu, 2008).

Today, Thessaloniki is Greece's second-largest city after Athens and serves as the administrative center of Greek Macedonia.

### **1.6 Post-Lausanne Treaty and Initial Problems**

The negotiations between the two nations in the wake of the Lausanne Treaty were difficult. The first one was the identification of the individuals that would partake in the population transfer. Since the exchange was done according to religions, there were also situations in which Turkish Jews and Armenians, Greek Gypsies and Albanians were affected and regarded as part of the population transfer at least in the beginning. Such a simplistic classification on the grounds of religion only created problems and sometimes disputes over which ethnic and cultural groups would be accepted.

In both countries where the population exchange took place, society experienced a considerable turmoil. Emgili claims that in those days, Greeks of Anatolia were looking for different means of not getting displaced from their homes and lands, and some were even willing to marry a Muslim, convert to Islam, marry a member of the non-Muslim groups exempted from the exchange, or being adopted as a Muslim child by a non-Muslim family (Emgili, 2009). In addition, issues of identity and belonging emerged that would persist across years and generations, leading to exclusion and othering. The bigger part of society, including these groups labeled as minorities, encountered a tougher sense of detachment and were frequently interpreted as the ones who kept the lines of social separation drawn to avoid being perceived as a danger.

Observing the arrival of refugees at the port of Piraeus, Morgenthau described the scene as follows:

“The conditions of these people upon their arrival in Greece were pitiable beyond description. They had been herded

upon every kind of craft that could oat, crowded so densely on board that in many cases they had only room to stand on deck ... In one case, which I myself beheld, seven thousand people were packed into a vessel that would have been crowded with a load of two thousand. In this and many other cases, there was neither food to eat nor water to drink, and in numerous instances the ships were busted about for several days at sea before their wretched human cargo could be brought to land. Typhoid and smallpox swept through the ships. Lice infested everyone. Babies were born on board. Men and women went insane. Some leaped overboard to end their miseries in the sea. Those who survived were landed without shelter upon the open beach, loaded with lth, racked by fever, without blankets or even warm clothing, without food and without money.” (Morgenthau, 1929)

Many exchangees have also faced additional outbreaks of infectious diseases upon arrival. Food, medicine, and clothing were distributed to address these immediate needs, and temporary shelters and tents were set up. Nonetheless, the population was heavily affected by influenza, tuberculosis, malaria, and trachoma. Many, suffering from these contagious diseases, did not survive beyond the ships or the port quarantines. A census conducted in Greece on May 15, 1928, recorded 1,162,742 migrants from Anatolia and Thrace which this figure indicates significant losses from an initial 1.4 million due to typhoid, cholera, malnutrition, and severe living conditions. (Pavlidis, 1997)

Beyond the resettlement of exchangees, reintegrating them into daily life brought additional challenges, including provisions for nutrition, clothing, housing, and health monitoring, which became a heavy burden for both countries. Economically strained, each nation adopted different approaches to these problems. The Greek government resorted to foreign loans to stabilize its economy and

accelerate recovery, rendering it susceptible to external influence, while the Turkish government chose not to follow this path. Aktar notes that the Greek government had to secure loans and credits to accommodate the exchangees from Anatolia. Conversely, in Turkey, no foreign assistance or loans were sought for resettlement, and exchangees were left to arrange their own housing. (Aktar, 2000).

Additionally, the exchangees differed significantly in social backgrounds. Those migrating to Anatolia generally came from large cities, while those departing were predominantly from rural areas. This was largely due to a lack of understanding between the two countries regarding each other's exchangee communities, leaving little research on their lifestyles. For example, some exchangees engaged in tobacco farming or animal husbandry were settled in villages and towns along the coast, where they were unable to continue their economic activities.

Many exchangees involved in agriculture were placed in urban areas, while those from urban backgrounds were settled in rural regions. Due to the limited capacity of the villages where they were resettled, some families were split, and their members were sent to different places. However, those who chose to migrate elsewhere instead of accepting state resettlement assistance did not benefit from settlement aid or the support that would help them become self-sufficient. Consequently, many exchangees faced a renewed migration experience as they sought employment opportunities that matched their skills and backgrounds, leading them to search for new job prospects (Kaplanoğlu, 1999).

According to data published by the Turkish State Statistical Institute (*Devlet İstatistik Umum Müdürlüğü*), as a result of the population exchange decision, 456,720 Muslims migrated from Greece to Turkey between 1923 and 1927. Most were settled in villages and cities predesignated by the Ministry of Exchange,

Settlement, and Reconstruction, which was established in October 1923. Examining the results of settlement activities, it becomes evident that the areas in Turkey with the highest concentration of exchangee settlements were predominantly former Greek settlements. From a village settlement perspective, most exchangees were resettled in empty villages previously inhabited by Greeks who had left either before or during the exchange.

The Turkish State Institute of Statistics data on exchangees settled from 1923 to 1927 recorded the following numbers: Edirne: 49,441; Balıkesir: 37,174; Istanbul: 36,487; Tekirdağ: 33,728; Kırklareli: 33,119; Izmir: 31,502 thus defining these cities as the most inundated with exchangee migration (Behar, 1996). Izmir and Edirne are two significant cities during the population exchange with Greece. They were the opening gates for the newcomers in Turkey, their geographical position and means of transport being such that they attracted a large influx of refugees. Izmir, in particular, was important as it had witnessed Greek revolts and minority issues, and its geography, landscape, and climate, which resembled that of Thessaloniki, made it a popular choice for many Turkish migrants from Greece seeking resettlement. Istanbul also played a crucial role in the population exchange, as it served as either the first or last stop for many migrants, many of whom were eventually relocated to other cities in Anatolia and with its minority Greek exchangee population still residing there.

Settlement was directly linked to the social integration of exchangees. On the other hand, the settlement locations were crucial for the preservation of the exchangees' traditions, customs, clothing, music, dance, cuisine, language, dialects, and, in essence, their collective memory, cultural heritage, and identity in Turkey.

Following the population exchange, Turkey faced a labor shortage in both agriculture and industry. Although there are no comprehensive statistics on the

occupational backgrounds of the incoming refugees, it is assumed that the agricultural labor force was significantly impacted by the overall population decline resulting from the devastating effects of war and by the forced removal of Greek Orthodox and Armenian communities from Anatolia. For the Armenian community, the demographic decline was not the result of emigration only. The issue of “genocide” remains a conflictual subject, yet the international academic community has come to a broad agreement that the displacement of the Armenians during the First World War was violent, organized, and coercive (Akçam, 2011; Suny, 2015). The scale, coordination, and intent underlying these policies fundamentally reshaped the social and economic fabric of Anatolia, with long-lasting consequences for its population structure and labor relations. Unlike Greece, Turkey had not experienced land scarcity, which became a pressing issue for Greece as it absorbed nearly 1.5 million new citizens. Greece, heavily reliant on agricultural imports to sustain its population, saw the arrival of Asia Minor refugees as a critical agricultural shift. Pentzopoulos said these refugees introduced and spread new crop varieties, adaptable to the Macedonian and Thracian regions (Pentzopoulos, 1962).

In Turkey, despite the availability of unused lands across Anatolia, a lack of adequate settlements posed a significant barrier to integrating the incoming population as productive members of society. This issue was raised in the National Assembly in 1924. Additionally, many estates and houses designated for the refugees had already been looted before their arrival, further complicating resettlement. The absence of Greek peasants and merchants in Anatolia disrupted agricultural modernization. Consequently, the Population Exchange interrupted these modernization efforts in Anatolian agriculture. (Keyder, 1987, p. 146)

## CHAPTER 2

### MIGRATION AND IDENTITY

*A strong memory is a severe penalty.*

*Orhan Kemal<sup>4</sup>*

In this chapter, I explore the 1923 population exchange through the perspective of migration and identity studies. I begin with a brief overview of migration research before moving into the theories that have shaped the understanding of international migration. From there, I turn to the concept of forced migration, reflecting on how it affects emotions and behaviors and how these experiences shape both personal and collective identities.

Migration undoubtedly is a complex process that requires examination from various perspectives. Migration is defined as the movement of a population segment, driven by different factors, to a new location. It involves a shift in physical space that individuals, groups, or communities undertake, either voluntarily or involuntarily, on a temporary or permanent basis (Başol, 1995). The concepts of “who” and “where” are closely tied to notions of possession and belonging. People when we feel a sense of loyalty and safety in a particular place, our identity begins to take shape, with the place itself playing a significant role in this formation.

But migration can be voluntary, driven by socio-economic factors, or forced, as in war, natural disasters, political oppression, or historical events like the 1923 Population Exchange. Coming from an academic background in International Relations and Human Rights; I approach migration from an interdisciplinary

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<sup>4</sup> Orhan Kemal (1914–1970) was a renowned Turkish novelist and short-story writer celebrated for his realistic depictions of social issues and the struggles of ordinary people in Turkey.

perspective. Each of these fields provides different theoretical accounts and conceptual tools to study migration. I do not intend to provide an exhaustive account of all migration theories but rather draw from these composite disciplines to approach the problem from multiple layers so as neither to isolate the phenomenon in a purely conceptual domain nor dismiss the socio-political and human concerns that migration embodies. It is through such pluralism that a deeper account may be offered on how acts of forced migration, like the 1923 population exchange, extend and press upon identity formation and belonging along time, space, and generational lines.

People often migrate seeking improved living conditions in response to crises. Here, it is important to understand that social mobility and the concepts of migration intersect, but they are not synonyms. When we talk about social mobility, we refer to the movement of individuals, families, or social groups across different socioeconomic statuses within a society, encompassing the benefits or drawbacks accompanying these shifts, such as changes in income, class, or occupational group, job security, and opportunities for advancement. Social mobility involves a status change within a society's hierarchy, but migration involves a location change temporarily or permanently.

Our identities both shape and create our spaces. Space serves as a canvas for human activity, shaped by social realities. With the 1923 Population Exchange, exchangees brought their own cultures to the places they settled, and a distinct identity emerged through ethnocultural and socio-economic bonds. They tend to settle in areas with people from similar backgrounds to ease adaptation and preserve familiar practices. Their desire to recreate aspects of their former lives in urban settings influenced their integration process.

We cannot imagine a place existing independently of identity, nor can it be considered devoid of one. Individuals develop their identities through their

environment, connecting to spaces where they can assign meaning. To understand the relation of identity with its space in the context of population exchange, we must look at the theories to better understand migration and its perspectives on identity.

## **2.1 Understanding Migration: A Concise Overview**

Migration has always been an integral part of human history. It is undeniable that the history of humankind is also the history of migration. People have moved for various reasons, including the search for food, survival, territorial expansion, colonization, or better opportunities. As Goran Rystad explains (Rystad, 1992):

“Seasonal and temporary migration as well as migration with the intent of permanent residence all figure in this phenomenon, as do forced migration of various kinds, the expulsion of entire ethnic groups, and the deportation of certain individuals. Flight triggered by political persecution, civil war, famine, environmental disasters, etc. also falls under the general category of migration”.

The most common definition of an immigrant today is provided by the United Nations: "a person who has moved to a country other than that of his or her usual residence, and who has been living in that country for more than one year." (United Nations, 1998). Although there are numerous definitions of migration, a classification can be made based on number, cause, location, time, and legal status. When migration is initiated by a single individual, it is individual migration. If it involves a group of people, it is classified as collective or mass migration. The cause of migration depends on whether the individuals or groups move voluntarily or under duress. Voluntary migration occurs when migrants choose to relocate by their own will, while forced migration refers to displacement due to factors beyond their control.

According to Castles, no single discipline is sufficient to explain migration fully. Various fields contribute to understanding different dimensions of migration: history, anthropology, demography, geography, and political economy examine the causes of migration; political science and law study migration policies and institutional structures; psychology explores individual and group experiences in the formation of identity and feelings of belonging; and law and political science play a role in analyzing settlement and community relations (Castles S. , 2003).

Migration, in fact, constitutes what Marcel Mauss would describe as a “total social fact.” To say that migrations are total social facts means recognizing that they have far-reaching implications for all parties involved: from the societies of departure to those of arrival, and most profoundly, for the migrants themselves (Wendling, 2010). Migrants inhabit a unique existential condition- what Sayad describes as being perpetually “out of place” (Sayad, 1999). They rarely belong entirely to the receiving country, yet they no longer fully belong to their place of origin either. Their lives are often marked by a continuous sense of impermanence, as if suspended between two worlds (Ragone, 2025).

Drawing on Western sociological concepts while critically distancing himself from ethnocentric interpretations, Sayad invites us to rethink migration through a different lens. He urges us to question assumptions we often take for granted, such as the “naturalness” of the nation-state, the solidity of national identity, and the seeming objectivity of rules that are, in reality, socially constructed and often arbitrary (Saada, 2000).

From a geographical perspective, foundational studies like Ernst Georg Ravenstein’s (1889) “Laws of Migration” and theories by scholars such as Wilbur Zelinsky and Andrei Rogers in the 1970s have been instrumental in shaping migration theory. Seeking to parallel demographic transition theories, Zelinsky (1971) proposed the theory of “mobility transition,” which outlines five stages of

mobility associated with levels of development. A key insight from Zelinsky's theory is the link he identified between technological change and different forms or types of migration and mobility (Liang, 2007).

Microeconomic theory has also significantly influenced migration studies. Economists like Larry Sjaastad explored how individuals use cost-benefit analyses to decide on settling in places where they can be most productive. From a macroeconomic perspective, the neoclassical tradition emphasizes wage differentials in migrant destinations as key drivers. Charles Tilly (1978) further highlights factors such as shifts in the geographic distribution of employment, demographic imbalances, and the actions and policies of nation-states as critical in shaping long-distance migration.

Sociology, meanwhile, examines different societal types and the impact of migration on social change, seeking to understand its role in societal transformations. Over the past 30 years, researchers have employed various approaches to explain social changes by examining the interactions between migrants and host societies. These studies have not only highlighted the dynamics of integration and adaptation but have also delved into critical issues such as identity and belonging, exploring how migration shapes and reshapes personal and collective identities in new contexts.

Herbert George Blumer (1900–1987), an influential American sociologist, made significant contributions to the field of symbolic interactionism. He developed a conceptual framework for understanding society that incorporates both human interpretative processes and social structures. Blumer's work emphasized the dynamic and reflexive nature of social life, highlighting how individuals interact with and interpret their social environments in an ongoing process of meaning-making (Blumer, 1969).

On the other hand, Robert Park and Ernest Burgess introduced the concept of assimilation, defining it as “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life” (Burgess, 1969). Another point worthy of mention is that although this viewpoint, leaving the implied inevitability and desirability of assimilation in place, has been subjected to criticism, it would, nonetheless, form a very good point of departure for looking into generational dynamics and the intergenerational transmission of cultural identity when considered with critical thought and alongside more modern approaches.

Henry Pratt Fairchild, an early 20th-century sociologist, contributed significantly to migration studies. In his seminal work, he proposed a typology of migration that categorizes migratory movements based on the reasons behind migration, the level of compulsion involved, and the impact on individuals and societies. This typology remains a foundational concept for understanding migration patterns. Furthermore, these ideas often depend on a hierarchical division between “developed” and “less developed” societies. This reinforces a linear and Eurocentric view of social progress. While Blumer’s framework remains useful for examining identity and meaning, this study distances itself from these simplistic and hierarchical views. Instead, it supports a more detailed understanding of cultural interaction that recognizes complexity, power dynamics, and the agency of individuals and communities.

| <b>Criteria</b>               | <b>High Cultural Level<br/>(Developed societies)</b>  | <b>Low Cultural Level (Less<br/>developed societies)</b>   |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Peaceful<br/>Migration</b> | <b>Voluntary migration</b> from more developed societies to other developed societies (e.g., European migration to the United States, skilled labor migration). | <b>Voluntary migration</b> from less developed societies to more developed societies (e.g., rural-urban migration, migration from the Global South to the Global North). |
| <b>Forced<br/>Migration</b>   | <b>Migration due to compulsion</b> or external factors like political upheaval or conflict (e.g., forced migration of ethnic minorities in Europe).             | <b>Displacement due to external coercion</b> like war, persecution, or environmental disaster (e.g., refugees fleeing war, displacement from colonial rule).             |

*Table 1: Typology of Migration by Henry Pratt Fairchild (1925)*

The table above explains the two main criteria in migration, the levels of culture and the movement's nature. Fairchild categorized migrants according to their cultural adaptation or socio-cultural characteristics. The level of culture refers to the socio-cultural distance between the origin and destination societies, which influences the ease of adaptation and integration for migrants. This distinction helps assess the challenges that migrants face in assimilating into new environments, particularly in terms of cultural integration and identity formation.

On the other hand, the nature of the movement differentiates between voluntary and forced migration, emphasizing the varying degrees of compulsion or agency involved in migration decisions. By using these criteria, Fairchild's typology contributes to the humanitarian implications of migration, emphasizing

the social, cultural, and political dynamics that shape both the migrant experience and the host society's response.

Migration can also be distinguished by its geographical scope. Internal migration refers to the movement of individuals or groups within the same country, while external migration involves crossing national borders. Furthermore, migration may be categorized by its duration. Permanent migration occurs when individuals settle long-term at their destination, whereas temporary migration is short-term. Lastly, migration is classified according to its legal status. Legal migration occurs when individuals relocate in compliance with the legal requirements of the destination country. In contrast, illegal or undocumented migration refers to the movement of individuals who enter the destination country without following its legal processes.

In the context of initial migration theories, 19th-century migration movements were often explained through a broad, peculiar theoretical framework. Nevertheless, 20th-century theorists sought to develop several theoretical models by engaging diverse concepts and assumptions. The consequent theories from these efforts were based on myriad factors such as individuals, national and international markets, and households. Therefore, modern migration theories exhibit distinct research goals and focal points, reflecting the multifaceted nature of migration phenomena.

Neoclassical migration theories analyze migration within both micro and macro frameworks. According to Borjas:

"Neoclassical theory assumes that individuals aim to maximize utility: individuals seek a country where they can maximize their welfare... This search is constrained by the individual's financial

resources, immigration regulations imposed by competing destination countries, and domestic migration policies of the source country. Within the migration market, various pieces of information are exchanged, and different options are compared. In this sense, individuals evaluate and compare countries competing to offer a 'migration proposal' and ultimately choose one. The information gathered in this market often leads many individuals to conclude that staying in their home country is more advantageous... However, some individuals conclude that migrating to another country would be a better option" (Borjas, 1989).

Understanding the causes of migration requires looking at multiple factors. However, combining the neoclassical economic model with Network Theory poses a challenge, as their basic ideas and levels of analysis differ. Although the 1923 population exchange was a state-mandated and compulsory process, it can still be interpreted through the lens of the neoclassical economic paradigm by focusing on the post-migration phase, specifically the economic and social adaptation strategies of the displaced populations. Originating in the 1950s and becoming dominant in early economic and demographic studies on international migration, the neoclassical model views migration as an individual decision based on rational cost-benefit calculations aimed at maximizing personal welfare.

While now considered outdated even within economics, this model can nonetheless offer some insights when applied to the micro-level experiences of the exchangees, highlighting how individuals and families navigated their new environments to improve their economic conditions after resettlement. These adaptive strategies prove how individuals tailored economic survival and sought opportunities to enrich their occupations.

Although the construct of “cultural distance” has gained prominence in current studies and policy discourse on migration and commonly forms the basis for many selective approaches in western immigration systems, it is possible to track back and observe how cultural, linguistic, and religious differences pitched in contrast at other occasions during state determinations in forced migrations. The 1923 population exchange had yet another simple strategic conception of populations along religious lines, irrespective of the linguistic or cultural closeness, which overlaid more intricate social realities.

From a macroeconomic perspective, the population exchange can be understood as a restructuring of labor between Greece and Turkey, which had noteworthy consequences for labor markets. Exchangees contributed to filling gaps in rural and urban economies, particularly in agriculture, craftsmanship, and trade. Despite the forced nature of the migration, the long-term economic integration of exchangees into their new environments aligns with neoclassical ideas of labor market dynamics. While the population exchange was primarily political and demographic, its economic and social implications can be analyzed through neoclassical theory, providing insights into individual compliance, labor market integration, and the broader nation-building process.

Network theory also played a meaningful role in the exchangees. The neoclassical economic perspective views migration as a rational choice made by individuals looking for better wages and job opportunities. But this approach often simplifies the migration process to a straightforward evaluation of benefits and drawbacks, overlooking important social, cultural, and political factors. On the other hand, Network Theory takes a middle-ground approach. It looks at how personal connections and social ties help initiate and sustain migration. This theory shows that established migrant networks reduce costs and risks for newcomers, resulting in ongoing migration patterns. Network Theory is useful for understanding how migration persists, rather than why it starts in the first place.

The main disagreement between these theories is their focus. Neoclassical economics centers on individual decisions, while Network Theory stresses the role of social structures and relationships. Critics suggest that neoclassical economics, by focusing on rational individuals, may miss the complex nature of migration choices, which often arise from social contexts, as shown by Network Theory. Additionally, neoclassical models often assume that perfect information is available, which is seldom the case in real migration scenarios where networks play a crucial role in sharing information.

Network Theory, while effective in explaining migration patterns, does not entirely account for the original reasons for migration or the initial conditions that lead to the formation of networks. It can also be more descriptive than predictive. Still, valid concerns about merging neoclassical economics and Network Theory exist. However, a combined approach offers a broader understanding of migration. The neoclassical framework can highlight the initial motivations, while Network Theory clarifies the mechanisms that sustain and influence migration flows. A truly complete view requires integrating other theoretical frameworks and recognizing the limitations of each individual approach.

The first wave of migrants of the population exchangees established connections that facilitated the settlement process and enabled faster resolution of problems for the further exchangee groups. Additionally, during the adaptation period, which spanned the first decade of migration, these networks significantly subsidized the exchangees' ability to cultivate their own social and economic infrastructures. The supportive relationships within these networks formed a foundation for exchangees to reestablish their lives, offering access to resources, information, and mutual assistance. This also highlights how networks not only eased immediate challenges but also played a crucial role in the long-term integration and sustainability of the exchangees in their new environments.

De Haas emphasizes that migration decisions are not just economic. They arise from the interaction between what individuals want and what they can realistically achieve. Aspirations, which are influenced by cultural norms, personal goals, and perceived opportunities, meet capabilities like access to resources, social networks, and legal status. His aspirations-capabilities framework offers a detailed view of migration. It highlights the relationship between individuals' desire to migrate and their ability to make it happen. In this view, migration is neither fully voluntary nor completely forced. Instead, it comes from a range of options influenced by structural factors, including legal status, economic conditions, and social networks, as well as personal aspirations like future hopes, cultural norms, and family expectations (Haas H. D., 2010).

De Haas (Haas H. D., 2011) challenges the binary thinking of traditional migration theories, including the push-pull model. He rejects the notion that individuals simply react to external forces. Instead, he highlights the importance of agency within structure. He sees migration as a dynamic process influenced by changing relationships between the places of origin and destination. His critique of methodological nationalism shows the need to view migration as a transnational process. This process is shaped by destination societies and global systems, as well as by conditions in the sending communities.

These dynamics were especially relevant in the case of population exchange. Individuals were given ethnic labels and national identities against their will to create demographic and political uniformity. De Haas's work reminds us that even in extreme situations, agency exists, though it can be limited. Migratory journeys are influenced not just by government policies, but also by individual and group efforts to adapt, resist, and find belonging. In the case of the 1923 population exchange, these dynamics are especially relevant. Individuals were given ethnic labels and national identities against their will to create demographic and political uniformity.

## 2.2 Forced Migration

Forced migration is the movement of internally displaced people who are forced to leave their homes due to conditions beyond their control, such as conflict, persecution, natural disasters, or other crises. Contrasting voluntary migration, forced migration lacks the element of prior intention or motivation, as individuals are often left with no viable choice but to flee.

Alan James categorizes forced migration into three distinct types:

1. “Derivative Forced Migration” (DFM): Often referred to as “static migration,” results from geopolitical and cartographic changes, where people are compelled to move due to shifts in territorial boundaries or the redefinition of state jurisdictions.
2. “Responsive Forced Migration (RFM)”: This type occurs voluntarily as a reaction to external pressures such as warfare, political oppression, or natural disasters. While the migration is forced by circumstances, the decision to move is a response to these challenges.
3. “Purposive Forced Migration (PFM)”: This describes situations where individuals are forcibly relocated without any agency or choice in the matter. It involves deliberate actions to resettle populations, often driven by policies or plans imposed by governing bodies or other actors. (Alan, 2004).

In cases of forced migration, the primary activating agents are typically the state or equivalent social institutions that wield significant authority. To understand

the 1923 population exchange, it is crucial to examine its characteristics within the broader context of state security and nation-building efforts. At the time, the ethnic and political homogeneity of the emerging nation-state was deemed essential for its stability and cohesion. Consequently, the 1923 exchange represents a “conflict-induced purposive forced migration”, orchestrated to align with these national priorities. This event underscores the interplay between state-driven policies and forced displacement as tools to achieve strategic goals.

When discussing the “Push and Pull” theory, push factors are typically associated with necessities and obligations that compel migration. In the context of the 1923 population exchange, the primary motivation was to flee oppression and the fear for their lives, leaving no opportunity to deliberate or reconsider the act of migration. Conversely, the pull factor was the shared religion, which fostered a sense of belonging and the hope of building a new life. Additionally, the Lausanne Convention facilitated this process by preemptively granting rights and citizenship without complications.

Over the subsequent 25 years, sociological theory significantly contributed to studies of forced migration by offering frameworks for understanding both macro-level or global social transformations and meso- and micro-level or local social dynamics. Stephen Castles emphasizes that sociology has been proposed as a meta-discipline capable of synthesizing diverse disciplinary perspectives, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the social dynamics underpinning forced migration (Castles S. , 2003).

In his seminal article, *Towards a Sociology of Forced Migration*, Stephen Castles argued that forced migration should be a central focus for sociological inquiry because it has become an intrinsic feature of globalization. He described globalization as a system of selective inclusion and exclusion, deepening

inequalities and reinforcing the North-South divide, not only geographically but also socially.

The notion of a North-South divide began after World War II, but its roots go back to the colonial period. The division is a main source for explaining global inequality, specifically in terms of migration trends. Overall, such a divide replicates political and economic gaps between rich, so-called developed countries located in the Northern part of the world, including the United States, Canada, Western European nations, and Japan, and less industrialized countries in the Southern part, including most of Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia, with low incomes. Historically, in concert with imperialistic and colonialist behavior, such a divide has developed and remains to shape modern-day economic frameworks, operating relations, and migration practices worldwide. Furthermore, the period of globalization hasn't produced uniform integration but increased inequality through wealth creation, technological development, and political authority in the North, and, at the same time, continued economic dependency and unpredictability in the South.<sup>5</sup>

The North-South divide began when European nations oppressed their colonies. European nations exploited a lot of resources, generating economies with a lot of raw materials but no industries and technology developed. When nations gained independence in the 20th century, many in the South experienced serious financial issues. Some of these are integrated poor governments, poor

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<sup>5</sup> Its enduring shadow stains international economic imbalances, perpetuating the extraction of wealth from the Global South for the benefit of the Global North. Colonialism in the past had established the rules of plunder and structural racialized segmentation, which persist today as economic dependency and structural imbalances. The gap in income between the top 10% and bottom 50% has increased by over twice the amount since 1820, from an 18 times gap to 38 times in 2020. Moreover, the legacies of past exploitation manifest in inequalities in life expectancy, where Africans live 15 years less than Europeans. Notably, nearly all the countries listed by the World Bank as having the highest inequality in the world today are found in the Global South, where the wealthiest 1% possess much more wealth in proportion to their counterparts in Europe. (*Oxfam, "Takers Not Makers: The Fruit from the Poisoned Tree – How Historical Colonialism Impacts Present-Day Inequality," 2023, pp. 15-16*).

organizations, and overreliance on transnational companies and Northern nations' support. All these stubborn inequalities impacted a lot in terms of migration. Economic, political, and environmental factors forced many out of the South. Meanwhile, the North developed stricter laws to restrict migration and who could enter, even when Northern economies benefited from workers and commodities produced in the South. Castles identifies a paradox: Northern economies benefit from workers and goods produced in the South, yet at the same time, develop laws to restrict migration, preventing many from moving to build a new life for themselves.

Castles emphasized that: "It is clear that there can be no compartmentalized theory of forced migration. Theory, in this area, means analyzing forced migration as a pivotal aspect of global social relations and linking it to an emerging new political economy in the context of US political and military domination, economic globalization, North–South inequality and transnationalism" (Castles, 2003, p. 27).

This perspective underscores the interconnectedness of forced migration with broader global political, economic, and social structures. Castles highlights that globalization is not characterized by fair participation within a fairly structured global economy, society, and polity. Instead, it functions as a system of selective inclusion and exclusion, targeting specific regions and groups, thereby perpetuating and intensifying inequality. This dynamic has contributed to a blurring of the distinction between forced migration and economic migration.

Failed economies often correlate with weak states, exploitative ruling elites, and widespread human rights abuses. These conditions give rise to the concept of the "asylum-migration nexus," where many migrants and asylum seekers possess overlapping and multifaceted reasons for mobility. Consequently, economic and human rights motivations are frequently intertwined, posing a significant challenge to the rigid categorizations traditionally imposed by bureaucratic systems.

Castles highlights the contradictions inherent in the efforts of the so-called "international community" which primarily the powerful Northern states and intergovernmental agencies to address forced migration. Their strategies often focus on preventing migration through restrictive entry policies in the North and "containment" measures in the South. These containment efforts include the provision of humanitarian aid, peacekeeping missions, and, at times, military interventions.

However, Castles points out that the North plays a significant role in perpetuating forced migration rather than curbing it. By enforcing an international economic and political order that fosters underdevelopment and exacerbates conflicts in the Global South, these actions contribute directly to the conditions driving forced migration. This paradox exposes the limitations and inequities of the current global approach to migration management.

Migration, which occurs in a voluntary or forced nature, is the transformation in identity, not merely of movement across borders. Dislocation for political persecution, economic hardships, and even war and conflict configure how individuals and communities understand themselves and position themselves in the world. Migration, in effect, disrupts the established cultural and social framework that the migrants are accustomed to, often in such a manner that they negotiate their past versus their present, homeland versus host country, and the identity imposed on them by outside structures.

In this light, identity is fluid and contested, comprised by compound historical narratives, political discourses, and social interactions. The challenges of assimilation, integration, or maintenance of cultural heritage that migrants and refugees face generate multifaceted processes of identity negotiation. These

tensions are expressed not only at the individual level but also within broader community dynamics as diasporic groups seek to redefine their sense of belonging in different socio-political contexts.

The loss of a homeland through forced migration political persecution, or economic displacement unsettles stable categories through which individuals define themselves. Migrants more often have what Avtar Brah (1996) precisely calls the "diasporic condition," where the home is suddenly a place of origin and an imagined space shaped by memory and longing. In this regard the identity is not fixed; rather, it is continuously reassembled through interactions with the host society, the homeland left behind, and the transnational connections that migrants conserve.

The issue of identity concerning migration must be studied from both a structural and an individual point of view. States and institutions identify migrants through legal and bureaucratic categories, such as "refugees," "asylum seekers," or "economic migrants"; these assigned identities, nevertheless, from the outside differ from how migrants think about themselves. Social exclusion, discrimination, and racism tend to more complicate this process by emphasizing asymmetries in power that emerge to shape migrant identities in ways that are often beyond their control.

At the same time, migration can be an enabling process that allows individuals to develop hybrid identities from multiple cultural, linguistic, and social influences. Stuart Hall (1990) argued that identity is not a vital essence but a constantly progressing construct shaped by historical and cultural forces. For many migrants, navigating between different identity markers- ethnic, national, linguistic, and religious form new and dynamic self-conceptions.

Before delving into the notion of identity within the context of forced migration, it is useful to reflect on the figure of the "foreigner," which offers a

conceptual entry point for understanding how individuals displaced against their will are often positioned in relation to host societies. In many historical and contemporary contexts, the "foreigner" is not merely someone from another country but becomes a symbolic figure that unsettles established narratives of belonging, revealing the contradictions and tensions that shape collective identity, especially in situations marked by displacement and loss.

As described by Simmel in his book *Sociology* (1908), all types of social interaction are defined by their placement on a continuum of proximity and distance. In the context of human existence, individuals have an inherent ability to "move from place to place" (Simmel, 1908). The element of mobility is central in determining the spatial and temporal complexities inherent in modernity, where movement is both a cause and an effect of social change. The ideas of modernity and mobility are inherently connected; however, modernity accentuates the opposing forces of intimacy and alienation that characterize contact with the "other." This double movement reinforces a pervasive sense of alienation, thus creating an ambivalent structure within social interactions.

It creates, as Simmel describes, "a tension that can be channeled, but not dissolved, between forces that bring together and unify, and forces that distance and divide." The unique feature of this tension lies in the paradox that the very factors that create human contact, such as love, kinship, shared cultural heritage, common interests, and physical proximity, also promote social cohesion while emphasizing boundaries and distinctions.

Within the context of this vast and dynamic interconnectedness, it is crucial to recognize that past social, cultural, and economic connections are shaped not just by direct interpersonal contact but also by the underlying structures that determine these relations. Within this dialectical process which defined by contradictory forces that constantly refer to and demarcate each other, the notion of *Fremdsein*

(being-foreign) emerges as a unique category within the social sphere. The foreign person embodies the structural ambivalence that pervades social relations, holding a position that is both central and peripheral, inclusive and exclusive, familiar and strange. This duplicity is a constitutive feature of modern social relations, where the potential for inclusion and estrangement is constantly negotiated. Simmel's analysis of the sociological figure of the stranger (*die soziologische Form des Fremden*), specifically his seminal Excursus on the Stranger in Sociology (1908), offers a thorough critique of this topic.

In this brief but influential review, Simmel explores the peculiar status of the foreign person not only in the context of physical geography but also in terms of social and symbolic spaces. His analysis highlights the paradoxical status of the foreign person in the host society, describing how the foreigner exists in a double position as both insider and outsider, present and absent. This paradox, at the heart of Simmel's sociological thought, remains an essential framework through which to understand the complexities of migration, identity, and belonging in contemporary societies.

In Simmel's sociological context, the figure of the foreigner is a concept that extends beyond that of a transient guest in a cultural context subject to the vicissitudes of cultural settings; it is an intrinsic social construct. Besides being an effective analytical tool for examining the variables, methods, and conditions of marginalization and cultural assimilation in a range of socio-historical settings, Simmel's emphasis on the foreigner highlights the underlying and persistent aspects of social relationships. He describes the “sociological form of the foreigner” as a unique “constellation” a complex dynamic of closeness and distance inherent in all human relationships. The significance of this constellation can be explained by the distinction between two types of distance: whereas “distance (*Distanz*)” in a relationship signifies that a physically close person may nevertheless remain socially distant, “foreignness (*das Fremdsein*)” describes a paradoxical condition

where a person who is physically distant may, in turn, be socially proximate (Tabboni, 1986, p. 25).

Simmel explains that the foreigner must not be equated with the temporary visitor who comes for a day and leaves the next day. Instead, the foreigner is someone “who comes today and stays tomorrow” someone who, even though no longer in transit, constantly remains in a state of rootlessness that defined his first coming. This person holds a definite or symbolic place within a specific social order; however, his status is highlighted by the fact that he was not originally included in that order. As such, the foreigner brings qualities and perspectives that are foreign to the host society, and which cannot be fully absorbed by it. Here, Simmel theorizes the foreigner as a reflexive self, a being whose status indicates the potential situation of any person in different situations. The foreigner must not be viewed as a completely separate person; rather, they have a relative and situational position in the social structure. This perspective calls for a deeper examination of the concepts of identity and belonging, emphasizing the permeability of social boundaries and the constant tension between assimilation and alienation.

In Simmel, social form of the foreigner results from the coming together of antagonistic polarities: mobility and immobility in space, distance and nearness in relationship between humans, and generality and specificity of the creation of knowledge. Foreigner is a peculiar kind of social entity whose manner of its association with other beings is invariably coupled with the condition of not being associated. They are not simply outside of the group but instead occupy a contradictory position as being part of the group through a sociological position that at the same time marginalizes them. This double aspect is fundamental to the foreigner's social function: their exclusion in part makes up the very essence of their belonging.

From this Simmelian typification, one can see that historically, the foreigner has played a fixed role within social organizations, especially in economic commerce. Simmel argues that the foreigner has long served the role of a merchant, facilitating the trade of goods and ideas across social and territorial boundaries. Societies, despite grounding themselves on their prescribed tradition, have come to rely on foreign commerce to obtain commodities beyond their own productive resources. Hence, when people settled into specific territories and steadied their social order, as a rule, it was so that the foreigner managed foreign economic affairs, travelling, and commerce tasks which positioned them at once both inside and outside society.

Thus, the foreigner presence reveals visible the latent conflict between inclusion and exclusion at the basis of every social relation. In contrast to other social figures in whom the dialectic of negation and exclusion may be less apparent, the foreigner embodies this dialectic concretely. As Simmel indicates, all human relationship, even the most intimate, is established by an act of affirmation but also entail a certain level of denial, which establishes certain distances and forms of exclusion. The foreigner, in virtue of their liminality, becomes a reflection of this hidden sociological paradox that one that still shapes the manner in which societies approach identity, belonging, and otherness.

Migrants, as Zolberg (1981) argues, are iconic characters in both domestic and foreign considerations of host societies, particularly in issues of citizenship, migration chains, and refugee management. Similarly, Bauman (2000) in writing on modern "liquid" society, contends that identities have become more vulnerable and fluid, so also are the borders that distinguish between "*us*" and "*them*." In a globalized society characterized by relentless change, the increasing mobility of people and ideas challenges fixed and static notions of identity. In this perspective, therefore, the "foreigner" is not merely an "alien" presence but a transformative

force as one that destabilizes and, simultaneously, revitalizes social and cultural formations.

In order to examine the character of the "foreigner," it is necessary to start with a close study of the etymology of the term, since a proper reflection necessitates a common understanding of the concepts employed. As Rorty (1989) stresses, world knowledge is necessarily mediated by language, which structures its representation and places constraints on its objectivity. This preliminary clarification allows for a more grounded engagement with the figure of the foreigner as it has been elaborated in sociological thought, most notably in Georg Simmel's foundational work. Etymologically, the term "foreigner" derives from Latin *extraneus* ("external, strange") and the Old French *estrangier*, from *estranger* ("foreign"). According to the Treccani online dictionary, the term is defined as:

- "1. a. Of foreign nations, of foreign populations: [.] Literally designating a person, by virtue of citizenship, to whom a foreign state is united, but who has the privilege to avail himself of civil rights retained for the domestic inhabitants of the host country on conditions of reciprocation and in accordance with special conventions. [.] b. In an estranged tone, as of enemy nationals or otherwise against and reviled.
2. adj., literary. Foreign: stranger-like in one's own land, in one's own home."

This etymological origin expresses a feeling of abstract and spatial distance which is a factor that has accrued varied meanings over the course of time (Malagnini, 2022). In ancient Greece, for instance, *hostis* was not always an enemy but a person who was put into reciprocal obligations. This perception, which

contrasts with the predominantly negative connotations the word bears in the modern world, is used to illustrate how the "foreigner" has evolved to have its meaning over time. Rather than admitting possible contributions, today's public discourse too often has the emphasis on how the foreigner is different from everyone else. In our contemporary imagination, the "foreigner" has most been equated with some sort of threatening otherness, as if to justify notions of cultural and social distance.

The view is really only one among a myriad of details to a far larger state of affairs. The marginalization of the "foreigner" has a direct connection to their standing in relation to the host community. As noted by De Simone (2016), aggression toward the "other" is used as a method of establishing social boundaries, positioning the foreigner in a state of liminality, neither fully within nor completely outside of the community. Therefore, the "foreigner" is not so much being excluded as paradoxically included, in a role that renders them an indispensable aspect of identity formation.

In an increasingly global and interconnected world, the tension between exclusion and inclusion, proximity and distance, is key to addressing the issues that immigration and cultural diversity pose. The "stranger," far from being a marginal figure, is a structural presence with the potential to transform the social and cultural order. Why not, therefore, bring under critical scrutiny the lexicon through which the "other" is articulated?

A "foreigner" was determined by the Glossary on Asylum and Migration (2016) as:

“Someone who does not have the citizenship (by birth or acquisition) of a particular state (p. 150). While still

prevalent, this terminology has been increasingly replaced—at least in European institutional language—by terms such as "person with a migratory background," since 'a person who has: (a) migrated into their current country of residence; and/or (b) had a different nationality than their current country of residence previously; and/or (c) at least one parent who entered their current country of residence as a migrant before (European Commission, 2016)

According to Tabboni (1986) individuals more strongly identify with their own culture, group, or tradition, whether ethnic, national, class, or linked to a specific social community. The author says:

“Human beings identify weakly with humanity as a whole but identify strongly with a culture, group, or tradition, be it ethnic, national, class, or whatever. [...] Beyond their own culture are the others, whose encounter provokes intense emotions, and whose development concludes in a mixture of contempt and admiration" (Tabboni, 2006, p. 16).

This emphasizes the complexity and delicacy of intercultural relations that far exceed the mere meeting of differences and entail profound emotional and cognitive processes, calling for fascination and fear of the other. To acknowledge the other in their differences is essential in a plural society like ours. Reciprocity in social relations necessarily involves conflict but also leaves open the possibilities for enrichment and exchange between them. The dynamic and relational understanding of personhood demands a re-visioning of our relation to the other, the "foreigner", not as a stranger or minor player, but as constitutive of our shared human community.

In this context, the presence of difference, embodied by the figure of the "foreigner," assumes a central role. As Burgazzoli (1998) notes, the "foreigner" is "the one who forces society to redefine itself incessantly" (p. 70). The very existence of the "foreigner" disrupts the status quo, prompting a reevaluation of cultural, political, and social norms. This destabilization, rather than being inherently negative, serves as a catalyst for self-reflection, compelling societies to reassess their identity and adapt their practices in response to evolving realities. The introduction of difference thus becomes a driving force for change, urging a reconsideration of how the boundaries between "us" and "them" are drawn and what coexistence among diverse cultures truly entails. This phenomenon is no longer merely the outcome of reception policies but constitutes an inherent feature of contemporary social structures (Hall, 1997; Zoletto, 2024).

However, in a society increasingly characterized as a heterogeneous and multicultural mosaic, one must ask whether the concept of the "foreigner" remains relevant. The real challenge lies not in integrating the "other," but in transforming societal frameworks so that distinctions between "native" and "migrant" no longer define belonging. As Colombo (1999) observes, individuals with a migratory background "have gained spaces for expression, opportunities for intervention, places of power that allow them to advance alternative discourses, to tell the story differently, or to tell other stories" (p. 195). The evolution of societies depends on their willingness to dismantle the barriers that divide them and to construct a new model of citizenship one in which diversity is not an obstacle but a resource (Banks, 2015).

Only through the recognition and valorization of differences, supported by inclusive language that affirms the presence and agency of all individuals, regardless of their migratory background, can the challenges of globalization be met. In this vision, community ceases to be a rigid monolith and instead emerges as

a dynamic interplay of voices and experiences that collectively shape an ever more pluralistic, interconnected, and humane reality. This shift is deeply tied to the very concept of identity, as it challenges essentialist definitions and underscores the fluid, relational, and constructed nature of how individuals and groups define themselves within the broader social fabric.

### **2.3 Exploring Identity: Sociological and Psychological Perspectives**

The concept of identity has become a subject of increasing academic interest, particularly since the 1980s and 1990s. Although the concept's roots go back further, its modern usage can be traced to Erik Erikson's work in the 1950s, where he used it to define individual identity (Erikson E. H., 1968). However, the concept gained new dimensions in the 1980s when various minority groups within nation-states began to assert their differences and demand rights. This period saw a surge in academic work focusing on identity, explored across various disciplines and contexts.

Identity studies have explored a wide range of topics, from threatened identities and the phenomenon of genocide to social isolation, housing and environmental problems, and ethnic conflicts. This broad scope demonstrates that identity is not just an individual phenomenon but is also closely intertwined with social, political, and cultural dynamics. In essence, the concept of identity has become a crucial tool for understanding how individuals define themselves and their groups, how they position themselves in society, and how they interact with other groups (Göka, 2006)

To truly grasp the essence of a concept, we must delve into the origins and evolution of its defining terms. For instance, the term "identity" finds its roots in the Latin word "*idem*," which signifies similarity and belonging. This etymological connection illuminates the core idea of identity as a sense of connection and shared

characteristics (Özensel, 2021). The Turkish word for identity, "*kimlik*," stems from the interrogative pronoun "*kim*" meaning "who." This linguistic link emphasizes the notion of belonging and association inherent in the concept of identity. In essence, "*kimlik*" seeks to answer the question of "to whom one belongs." Likewise, the Greek term for identity, "*ταυτότητα*" (taftótita), encapsulates the essence of sameness, selfhood, and individuality. Derived from the Greek word "*ταυτός*" (taftós), meaning "the same," it underscores the idea of a unified and distinct self.

Examining these linguistic nuances across different languages reveals a common thread: identity is intrinsically linked to the idea of sameness, belonging, and the definition of self within a broader context. Connolly (1995) presents a compelling perspective on the concept of identity. He argues that identity is fundamentally relational, depending on the existence of difference for its very being. To define itself and establish its boundaries, an identity requires an external entity perceived as the "other."

Connolly suggests that identity secures itself through this process of "othering." By differentiating itself from the "other," an identity emphasizes its uniqueness and distinctiveness. This process serves to legitimize and strengthen the existence of that identity. Connolly's notion that identity is constructed through othering bears directly on the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey in 1923. In other words, Greek and Turkish national identities were themselves actively renegotiated through the exclusion and expulsion of populations labeled as the ethnic or religious "other." During the founding of the Turkish Republic, the exit of Orthodox Christians, whom despite centuries of cohabitation were viewed as essentially anti-Turk, permitted the redefinition of national identity on the basis of the homogenized Muslim-Turkish ideal. Conversely, Greece, in an attempt to unify Hellenic identity, had framed the immigration of Anatolian Orthodox Christians as an entry of rightful Greek subjects and had regarded Muslims as being alien to the Greek national body.

This operation of othering was institutionalized beyond mere rhetoric through the very instrument of the compulsory exchange. It reinforced a binary view of self and other: Greek versus Turk, Christian versus Muslim. Furthermore, identity not only defines the "self" but also defines the "other." This essentially turned identities that were once fluid and plural into rigid national categories. Connolly's approach emphasizes that identity is not a static construct but rather a dynamic process. Identity is constantly interacting with the "other," and this interaction leads to the continuous redefinition and transformation of identity. Therefore, understanding the concept of identity also requires understanding the concept of the "other" and the processes of othering.

Connolly argues that identity creation is achieved through othering, while simultaneously being in opposition to an offstage other. However, it is not the case that Bayart adds a new perspective by highlighting the social and cultural connections of identity. From Bayart's perspective, identity is not suddenly created within the community but rather formed through the various interactions that result from shared history, memory, and cultural practices (Bayart, 2005). This is a continuous process of negotiation, sometimes going to the individual side and sometimes to the collective side, but always depending on "the other" as the point of reference for discrimination.

Bayart's (2005) conceptualization of identity emphasizes its connection to community and culture. He argues that identity is shaped by the communities and cultures with which an individual interacts. For the Muslim populations identity formation involved a complex negotiation between their inherited cultural practices and the social expectations. These communities often found themselves culturally and linguistically distinct from the local Anatolian populations, which challenged the state's homogenizing vision of a unified Turkish-Muslim identity. In this way, the *other* was not only the Greek Christian population left behind but also the

unfamiliar Turkish Muslim communities into which they were resettled. Identity was thus reconstructed relationally through interaction, comparison, and sometimes friction between old and new cultural reference points. Thus, the process of identification involves both the individual and society actively constructing the self by utilizing the other as a point of reference and differentiation.

Sarup (1996) outlines two contrasting perspectives on identity. The traditional approach views identity as a fixed and inherent entity, characterized by a unified and stable structure. Conversely, the dynamic approach posits that identity is a fluid and evolving construct, shaped by conflict and continuous transformation. Bauman, conversely, proposes that identity arises from a need to resolve uncertainty. In line with the traditional approach, the population exchange was predicated on the assumption that national, ethnic, and religious identities were fixed, and mutually exclusive Turks were Muslim, Greeks were Christian. This essentialist logic underpinned the legal and bureaucratic mechanisms of the exchange, which aimed to sort populations into supposedly homogenous national containers.

Here, Sarup's dynamic model becomes more relevant. The trauma of forced migration, the loss of homeland, and the need to rebuild life in unfamiliar environments led to the constant redefinition of self, both individually and collectively. As Bayart emphasizes, identity is constructed through interactions with culture and community and for the exchangees, these interactions were fundamentally disrupted, generating new processes of identification in exile. When individuals question their sense of belonging, they engage in the process of identity construction. This involves projecting desired attributes onto their existing reality, while also actively resisting those same desires.

This dynamic and often conflictual process of identity formation grows only more complicated with community structures brought into perspective. Sarup

admits that under rupture, identity keeps changing, and Bayart affirms that the evolution takes place through some form of cultural and communal interaction. Bauman (2000), on the other hand; takes the discussion further by differentiating two types of communities: one, grounded on the strong ties of shared or inherited fate; and the other, made up of diverse choices and principles. He argues that identity concerns emerge primarily in the latter. Individuals eventually recognize that belonging and identity are not predetermined, but rather fluid, negotiable, and even dispensable. The notion of alternative identities only arises when belonging is not taken for granted. Significantly, experiences of exclusion and othering are as crucial in shaping identity as feelings of inclusion.

The 1923 Population Exchange was predicated on the creation of a stark "us vs. them" dichotomy, where religious affiliation became the primary marker of identity. This process of othering served to solidify national identities in both Greece and Turkey but also led to the dehumanization and exclusion of those deemed "different." In this context, the construction of identity became a means of coping with this uncertainty, of seeking a sense of belonging and stability in a new and unfamiliar world. This often involved a re-evaluation of existing identities and the adoption of new narratives and practices.

Defining identity solely on an individual basis remains incomplete. Identity's dynamic nature stems from both personal and societal factors. Individual identity evolves through encounters with other identities, ultimately shaping social identity. Habermas (1996) argues that personal identity is acquired by emulating or internalizing aspects of collective identity, essentially reflecting it. Since individual identity is inherently social, separating the two is impossible. Fearon (1999) defines individual identity as the collection of qualities, beliefs, principles, and desires that differentiate and guide a person. Physical identity is susceptible to societal influences and even subject to occupation.

Social identity holds a prominent position within sociological theory. Concepts like Marx's "class consciousness," Durkheim's "collective consciousness," Halbwachs' "collective memory," and Weber's "*verstehen*" all underscore the significance of collective or social identity. Hobsbawm (1997) argues that the notion of "us" is constructed in opposition to "them," implying that without "them," the concept of "us" becomes unnecessary. Essentially, the existence of "outsiders" defines the "insiders."

Our memory functions as an archive that preserves our stories. Our past, present, and future are continually reinterpreted through the traces of our experiences. These interpretations are not independent of the time and space in which we exist; on the contrary, they are fundamentally shaped by them. McAdams and Pals (2006) propose that personality consists of three essential components: the first is individual traits, the second is goals and coping strategies, and the third comprises life-story experiences.

The first component, our personal traits, corresponds to the concept of individual identity. The second element, our goals and strategies, aligns with social identity. Distinctively, the third component, the life story, reflects the subjective experiences that define each person. A life story encompasses narratives that describe an individual's past, future, and present, and these narratives are unique to each person. McAdams describes this phenomenon as: "*Each of us is a storyteller; we are the very stories we tell.*" (D. P. McAdams R. J., 2007)

This highlights the deeply personal and narrative-driven nature of identity, emphasizing how our life stories not only recount what has happened to us but also shape who we are and how we see the world. Our narratives stand as evidence of the dynamic nature of our identities. Over time, the way experiences are interpreted evolves as well. This is particularly evident in field studies of this thesis, where stories transmitted across generations are often reinterpreted in various ways. In

such cases, our priority is not necessarily to uncover the “origins of the truth” of the information but rather to understand the reasons behind the shifts in interpretation. These evolving narratives reflect how identity and memory are shaped by the context, needs, and perspectives of each generation, offering valuable insights into the broader social and cultural dynamics at play.

According to Bruner (1990), individuals exist within their narrative structures, thinking, dreaming, interacting, and living in ways that mirror their stories. Narrative identities are not always constructed consciously. As McAdams (2001) suggests, these identities often reflect not only our own experiences but also the influence of others' testimonies. This is particularly evident in societies where the concept of family plays a dominant role. In such contexts, family narratives significantly shape and influence the construction of individual identities, highlighting the interconnectedness of personal and collective storytelling in defining who we are.

Erikson (1968) emphasizes that identity development is a generational matter. In the context of the population exchange, the transmission, or, conversely, the withholding, of first-generation experiences to younger generations significantly influenced the formation of the "exchangee identity." This process of reflection and questioning is, of course, inseparable from the socio-political realities, cultural influences, and societal pressures of the time. The narratives formed through our testimonies, experiences, and interactions, those small and large traces imprinted on our sense of self, highlight the profound impact of memory on identity. Narrative identity, in essence, can be understood as a mnemonic identity because narratives themselves are the embodiment of memory.

In the 19th century, the idea that humans were not biologically equal was a widely accepted belief. Although such ideas lost their scientific legitimacy in the 20th century, their remnants persist within ideologies, as can be observed when we

examine social divisions. Racist ideologies have managed to endure by anchoring themselves in notions of ethnicity. The imagined construct of a nation often relies on the premise of a shared lineage, a language unique to that lineage, and the belief in the unbroken continuity of that lineage from the past to the present. In this framework, ethnicity is perceived as a natural, immutable phenomenon that inherently forms the core of nations, serving as their foundation and essence (Kaya, 2024).

The term *ethnicity*, derived from the root *ethnie*, originates from the Greek word *ethnos*, which historically referred to a specific form of human collectivity rather than a political entity. In everyday language, the concept of ethnicity often represents issues of minority status and/or intergroup relations rooted in crude definitions of race. Although ethnicity appears to be a term primarily associated with "folk" groups by definition, its political dimension and collectivist attributes emerged predominantly with the rise of nation-states.

Since nation-states are constructed on the foundation of ethnicity, the culture of any ethnic group that attains nationhood continues to persist around an ethnic identity. Essential and sanctified elements like flags, language, and religion are reinforced in this context. Every nation builds an imagined identity around such myths and defends its perceived superiority. For instance, in Turkey, the concept of *being a Türk* manifests as a supra-ideological commonality. However, since *Türk* is constructed through Islam, it ideologically excludes non-Muslims, preventing their identification with this construct and often subjecting them to assimilation efforts.

Yet, the notion of *ethnie* is inherently dynamic and begins where it diverges from "the other." Suavi Aydın defines this concept through a threefold framework: the *emic* perspective, reflecting how individuals perceive their own group and identify themselves within a cultural context; the *etic* perspective, encompassing the opinions, perceptions, and entrenched attitudes of outsiders regarding the

existence of the group; and the areas of convergence between these two dimensions, which create a balanced space of alignment (Aydın, 1998).

Identity strategies are the conscious and unconscious techniques individuals and groups employ to construct, maintain, and project their social identities. These strategies evolve in response to societal norms, expectations, and pressures, enabling individuals to align themselves with specific identities or affiliations. Often aimed at balancing internal and external identity construction, these strategies help individuals navigate the interplay between their inner sense of self and their social roles. These strategies vary across cultural, social, ethnic, and political contexts and can be applied at personal, group, or societal levels. Assimilation involves striving to resemble the dominant identity, potentially leading to a loss of one's original identity. This was often imposed on immigrants to sever ties with their communities of origin. Conversely, "evaluating difference" focuses on preserving and even idealizing one's original identity, as seen in the newer generations of Muslimized Greek exchangee families. Lastly, "intermediate strategies" seek a balance between these two extremes, acknowledging both similarities and differences.

Benedict Anderson's concept of "Imagined Communities" holds a significant place in understanding the formation of identity and community. According to Anderson, nations are imagined constructs where individuals, despite not knowing each other personally, feel a sense of shared connection and perceive themselves as part of the same collective. These imagined communities are built upon heroic stories of the past and idealized visions of the future (Megill, 1998).

Contemporary Turkish and Greek identities are also shaped within the framework of these imagined communities. These identities rest on a memory-based foundation, claiming deep roots in the past but often relying on superficial recollections supported by specific ideological narratives. In this context, memory

becomes a cornerstone of identity construction, and through the continual reinterpretation of the past, a sense of communal consciousness is established.

In this way, both individual and group identities are shaped and perpetuated through historical narratives and national myths. Examples of this phenomenon can be observed in the Greek *Megali Idea* and the Turkish War of Independence, which will be defined in the following chapters, both of which illustrate how imagined communities are anchored in collective memory and historical reinterpretation.

#### **2.4 Identity and Status: On Migrants, Refugees, and Exchangees**

The term "refugee" is defined as someone who has left their homeland due to political events occurring in the country of citizenship, either voluntarily or forcibly, and has acquired the citizenship of a new state, while not being under the diplomatic protection of any state (Sönmezoğlu, 2010). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines a refugee as a person who is outside their country of nationality due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, and who does not seek the protection of their country of origin due to this fear ((IOM), 2011).

The Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP), which became effective in 2013, was a noteworthy step in the formation of the migration and asylum-taking mechanism in Turkey. The law not only bent an international protection legal framework that was more systematic but also sustained to apply Turkey's traditional geographical limitation to the 1951 Geneva Convention, which recognizes only those fleeing events in Europe as full refugees. Consequently, a refugee is understood as "a foreigner who, because of events in European countries, has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for one of the following reasons: race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion"

(Gazete, 2013) .This definition signifies Turkey's historically restrained position in granting asylum and its selective orientation with international refugee standards, which have been influenced by a complex interplay of security concerns, regional dynamics, and its changing involvement with global institutions."

When we examine the definitions, we see that the terms “asylum seeker” and “refugee” are sometimes used interchangeably, but they carry different meanings. Kıratlı explains that an asylum seeker is someone who could potentially gain refugee status legally but has not been recognized as a refugee in the country they are currently in, or their application for refugee status is still pending. On the other hand, a refugee refers to someone who has left their country and has gained special legal protection through international agreements. Asylum seekers, however, are individuals who seek international protection as refugees, but whose status has not yet been recognized (Kıratlı, 2011).

When we look at international regulations, one of the most important is the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Legal Status of Refugees, which was signed in Geneva and came into effect in 1954. According to Article 12 of this convention, "The individual status of every refugee is subject to the laws of the country of permanent residence, or, if there is no permanent residence, the laws of the country in which they reside." Furthermore, Article 3 of the same convention states that the contracting states must apply the provisions of this convention to refugees without any discrimination. Another international regulation concerning refugees is the 1967 Additional Protocol to the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Legal Status of Refugees, which removed the temporal limitations in the 1951 convention. The fundamental asylum and refugee law regulations are also addressed within this convention and protocol (UNHCR, 1951).

The terms “*mübadele*” and “*mübadil*” are derived from the Arabic root "بدل." The verb “*badala*” originating from this root carries meanings such as to exchange

one thing for another, to give or take in place of something, or to trade. (Bolcan, 2018). The first example of “*mübadele*” was with Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire in 1913 but eventually couldn’t be implemented. The *mübadele* in the existing Turkish literature refers to the 1923 population exchange which is a systematic and regulated form of compulsory population movement, implemented under a protocol signed between two or more states.

This population exchange was characterized by predefined criteria regarding geography, time limitations, legal dimensions, migration routes and means, as well as the status of immovable properties. These processes are managed and monitored by an international commission. The individuals subjected to migration are identified based on specific attributes such as race, religion, and language, and the destinations are determined in advance. Additionally, special institutions are established to address the needs of migrants, such as food, water, and healthcare, ensuring the execution of the population exchange within an organized framework (Sepetçioğlu, 2014).

The term “*mübadil*” poses a challenge in translation. It is frequently translated as "emigrant," "immigrant," or occasionally "refugee." In Turkish, the term *muhacir*, meaning "immigrant," is of Arabic origin. It differs from other individuals or groups referred to as migrants based on the place of origin, number, characteristics, and the intent to settle permanently without returning. In the Ottoman context, *muhacir* specifically referred to Muslim migrants who emigrated from the Balkans and the Caucasus and did not return to their places of origin.

However, since these terms are also used to describe migrants from the Balkans, they can lead to confusion and separate their identity; second and third generations of 1923 descendants in Turkish literature prefer to use “*mübadil*” instead of “immigrant”. To ensure clarity, this thesis will use the term “exchangees”

exclusively to refer to individuals who were relocated as part of population exchange agreements.

In Greece, aside from official usage and a few short-lived exceptions, the term “*mübadil* (ανταλλάξιμος or ανταλλαγέντας)” doesn’t attribute to a meaningful social or political character. However, in Turkey, the term was embraced by individuals subjected to the population exchange and became central to constructing a distinct identity shaped around this concept. On the other hand, the term “refugee” (*prosfyges*) is used to describe the populations who arrived in the country during the population exchange. The term “*prosfyges*” is derived from the Greek verb “*fevgo*” (φεύγω), meaning “to flee.” By adding the prefix “pros-” (denoting direction or purpose) to “-fygas,” the word takes on the meaning of someone who flees toward a specific goal or destination. From both Greece's official perspective and within international scholarly circles, these groups are recognized as refugees.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY AND THEORY

#### 3.1 Introduction to Community-Based Participatory Research

The previous chapters have focused on the intricate relationship between cultural memory and identity in the context of the 1923 Population Exchange between Izmir and Thessaloniki. By drawing on historical accounts, oral testimonies, and the collective memories of exchangee communities, I have sought to create a basis for understanding how transgenerational narratives contribute to the shaping and preservation of communal identities. In this process, memoryscape and intergenerational dialogue appear as key elements that not only sustain shared identities but also open pathways for reconciliation.

Up to this point, my emphasis was on how a participatory approach can bring marginalized voices into focus, creating more inclusive forms of narration. Such an approach also allows for a deeper exploration of the lived experiences of exchangee descendants, offering insights that extend beyond conventional historical accounts. Within this framework, the CBPR methodology emerges as especially fitting for the broader aims of the thesis, as it values collaboration, mutual learning, and the sharing of ownership throughout the research process.

This chapter aims to position CBPR as both a methodological and theoretical lens for exploring cultural memory and identity in conflictual spaces. The chapter now seeks to reveal through a combination of theory and practice how CBPR acts as a transformative tool in bridging the gap between academic inquiry and community engagement.

Today, we face entrenched inequities and global problems that resist straightforward solutions. CBR, or community-based research, offers a meaningful way to address such problems by drawing on collective knowledge and resources. These approaches emphasize not only knowing or studying a problem but also doing something about it.

The term “community-based research” encompasses all those research methodologies that have a variety of different backgrounds. These methodologies have emerged from fields like health, education, activism, social work, community development, human psychology, and many others. Various commonly referenced terms include action research, community-based participatory research, community-engaged research, participatory action research, teacher research, and action science.

What brings them together, however, is their twin commitments: not only to study or understand a problem but also to produce viable solutions. They focus on questions that matter to particular communities and involve both professional academics and community members as co-experts. With shared authority and collective work, partners collaboratively design and carry out the research.

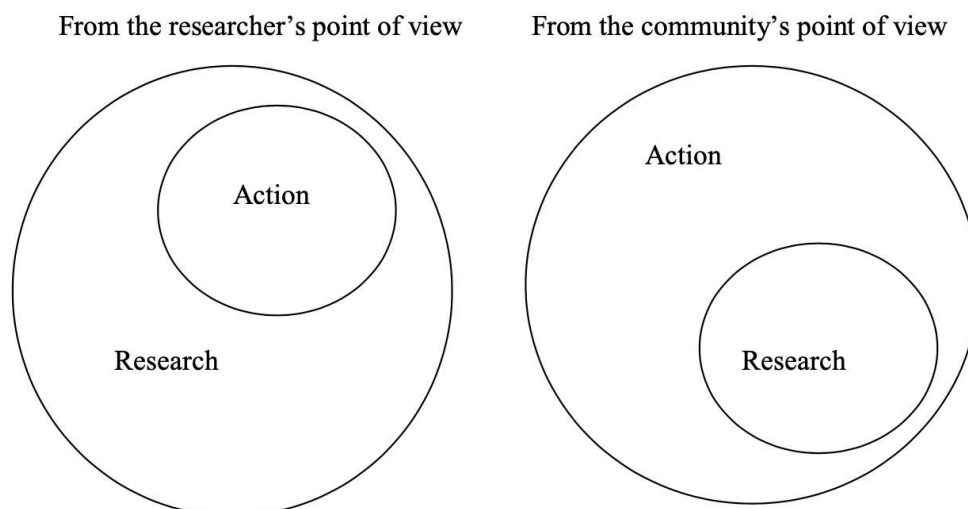
My approach to community-based research (CBR) starts with the clear understanding of the communities I am working with. Communities are groups of individuals who share common identities or experiences. These can be defined by aspects such as geography, ethnicity, organizational affiliation, sexuality, profession, indigenous heritage, and many other features. For me, research is the process of systematically exploring a subject, but I also recognize that every community engages in its own forms of inquiry. Yet, the focus in CBR is on research that encompasses proper academic and scientific methodologies, while also appreciating other knowledge-building practices rooted in the community. The

structure and approach of research within CBR vary depending on the questions posed, the objectives, and the disciplines and communities engaged.

Partners are the individuals actively involved in designing and implementing CBR. Campus-based partners usually include faculty and may also involve students, staff, or even whole departments. Community-based partners are those who characterize or connect the research project with the broader community. These individuals might include members of community organizations, formal or informal leaders, or community members who assume leadership roles as part of the research process.

We often express "the community" and "the university" as if they were wholly separate things. This is hardly the case. Universities are part of the cities and regions in which they reside and are question to many of the same forces that shape the larger community. Residents are students, staff, faculty, and collaborators of the university and are affected by the university's decisions. Indeed, we are all in this together. Community-based research (CBR) is based on explicit equal partners who share goals and values.

*Figure 6: Different perspectives of research (K. Strand, 2003)*



These partners describe a shared agreement on the purpose of the project, which most often includes two simultaneous purposes: to help solve a priority concern or problem of the community to benefit humanity and to contribute to knowledge for the academy. Further, partners agree on shared values. Although these may differ from project to project, some major principles seem intrinsic to CBR. For example, CBR embraces heterogeneity in knowledge and skill and recognizes the strengths, wisdom, and culture that various communities bring to a collaboration.

CBR acknowledges that academics and communities have something unique to offer in knowledge, expertise, and resources in a research process. An application should be designed, building on community strengths while including diverse cultures. That itself means the active recognition of partners of the cultural diversity within the group and being sensitive to their own cultural assumptions and biases. In CBR, power is shared equitably between partners who collaborate in the design and conduct. In research carried out with, and not on, people, no one is excluded from the indispensable decision-making processes. Collaboration entails open and regular communication; this also involves addressing linguistic and cultural understandings. That calls for power dynamics to be recognized and balanced intentionally.

CBR seeks to confirm that all the partners benefit from its processes and outcomes. As much as each partner contributes, they also gain benefits either as an individual, organization, community, society, or environment. The partners mutually determine the benefits they want to gather and the risks they are willing to take. This methodology, however, contrasts with the usual unequal benefit sharing between academics and the community.

Trusting, ongoing relationships are at the heart of CBR. These relationships must be grounded in honesty, trust, and mutual learning. Without them, the other

principles of CBR cannot be achieved. Though some persons can facilitate the process of relationship-building, it does take time, effort, and accountability. Relationship-building must be considerably integrated into the research timeline and plan. CBR results must be available and meaningful to all partners. The research findings should be used by the community and add to the academic knowledge as well. Community-based deliverables can aid in advocacy, practice, program development, and education, among other aspects (Israel, 1998).

Within this framework, participatory research has emerged as a significant approach, though not without debate. While some view it as a necessary corrective to the limitations of traditional research methods, others criticize it as incomplete, subjective, or unreliable. Nevertheless, the participatory research has produced a fair amount of controversy. All too often, participatory research is sucked into the usually unhelpful rhetoric surrounding the qualitative-quantitative debate, where the methods are decried as unacceptably "soft." The term "participatory research" in fact covers an extensive range of approaches and usages. Some methodologies, such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), do provide structures for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. What is different in participatory research is not the specific methods that are used but rather the methodological and et contexts in which these methods are employed (Minkler, 2008).

The theoretical overlap among the terms "participatory," "participation," and "participant" inspires a wide variety of interpretations, maybe does confusing. In contrast, some conventional research projects involve little more than contact with individuals, others involve deep and significant participation at a particular point in the process but are not considered participatory. Participatory methodologies have conventionally been characterized as reflexive, adaptable, and iterative and, as such, quite diverse from the rigid, linear structures often seen as typical of conventional science.

As Rifkin underlines, participation is not just involvement but includes activity, choice, and the ability of that choice to result in some material consequences (B.Rifkin, 1990). In the past two decades, participatory mapping has been applied in many fields. The output is very detailed, but this process is a source of deep change because it legitimizes local people as knowledgeable contributors. Researchers become learners and facilitators, who act only as facilitators in a process that takes on its own momentum when communities come together to interpret and debate. Participatory mapping, on the one hand, most clearly brings out the main difference between participatory and conventional approaches, having nothing to do with other theoretical bases nor even with the methodologies used per se, but with "who" defines the research problems and "who" makes, interprets, portrays, owns, and utilizes the information obtained. The "who" question draws attention to the pivotal matters of power and control.

### **3.2 Origins and Influences of Community-Based Participatory Research**

Community-Based Participatory Research is a collaborative pursuit of knowledge that tries to break down the barriers imposed by academic research and community practice. CBPR did not suddenly materialize; rather, it was born and continues to evolve at the crossroads of multiple, diverse intellectual, political, and cultural traditions. Hence, as these systems evolved, so did distinctions in terms of focus, methodologies, codes of conduct, and operative frameworks. In short, the intellectual and methodological traditions making up CBPR are pluralistic and transnational, shaped by various traditions around the world.

Those would include Northern traditions founded in approaches such as participatory action research and democratic engagements; Southern epistemologies of decolonization, critical pedagogy, and resistance to imperial knowledge systems; as well as Western institutional efforts for socially engaged scholarship. A noteworthy mention goes to African traditions, especially with respect to Indigenous knowledge systems, communitarian ways of addressing problems, and liberation-oriented pedagogies focused on self-determination, oral

histories, and restorative justice. These African contributions highlight the relational, spiritual, and collective dimensions of knowledge, often marginalized in Eurocentric frameworks.

By tracing the different but interconnected influences behind CBPR, it was possible to better appreciate its richness and adaptability as a methodology. Recognizing these varied origins also allows me to see how CBPR is situated within broader struggles for epistemic justice, community empowerment, and more inclusive approaches to research.

### *Southern Influences*

Community-based research, especially its alternate Community-Based Participatory Research, hailed back to the pioneering work of Orlando Fals Borda in Colombia in the late 1960s. Educated in quantitative social science methodologies in the United States, Orlando Fals Borda became progressively dissatisfied with their limitations, particularly in addressing the most persistent issues of rural reform throughout Latin America. During this period, social justice became a crucial worry for many social researchers. Drawing from critical works such as Barrington Moore's 1966 comparative historical analysis, Orlando Fals Borda renounced positivist approaches stemming from Cold War political dictates in search of methods that more suitably affiliated with the lives and struggles of grassroots communities (Borda, 1998).

Orlando Fals Borda's work on Participatory Action Research (PAR) laid the foundations for what CBPR is today. Within this paradigm, the world is envisioned not as a fragmented entity, but as a complex network of interconnected, interactive, cohesive, and creative relationships among various agents. Researchers are encouraged to engage research participants as co-researchers or active contributors. Among the fundamental axioms of action research is the fact that the foundation of change lies in the questions initially asked. The processes of inquiry and change are concurrent rather than sequential phases. In the context of action research, there

exists a wide range of methodologies, each of which has its own significance. Most importantly, action research is participatory in nature.

Orlando Fals Borda insisted on cooperation and egalitarianism in research so that researchers would not monopolize knowledge or force technical expertise on the communities. Instead, he called for the incorporation of grassroots communities' knowledge and experiences, considering them as equal partners and co-researchers. The approach was to get rid of the hierarchical divide between researcher and participant, with everybody becoming a partner in the research.

Further, he urged scientists to challenge the history and science-interpretive biases of the elites, serving key interests by giving voice to counter-narratives characterizing poor majorities. To this end, Orlando Fals Borda firmly believed that at the level of understanding social realities, he urged engagement with indigenous values, traditions, beliefs, and cultural expressions rather than imported cultural schemata. Consequently, it can be assured that research will be directly based on the community where needs regarding service delivery are seriously considered.

Moreover, Fals Borda highlighted the need for accessible communication. He felt that scientific findings must not be presented in incomprehensible terminology and be the preserve of intellectuals. The presentation of results had to be clear, understandable, and even pleasant, placing scientific knowledge at the service of everybody and not as a mysterious area belonging to experts. This framework not only redefined the relationship between researchers and communities but also gave great emphasis to the transformative potential of research as a tool for empowerment and social change (Rahman & Borda, 1991).

The origins of Participatory Action Research are thus linked with the product of the dynamic and politically transformative character of the post-1968

period. The student movement's radicalism, general opposition to the Vietnam War, events of May in France in 1968, and the Cordobazo in Argentina in 1969 set the tone for intellectual debates among social scientists during this period. As a peculiarly Latin American "school", PAR was heavily influenced by the general wave of critical thought that marked the era, including the emergence of dependency theory. Yet its roots were also clearly connected to the innovative work of Paulo Freire and his concept of "*conscientização*" (consciousness-raising) as a key factor in popular education. Education for Freire was a practice of de-socialization in ambiguity of authority, which has two components: the struggle for meaning and power relations (E. Martin, 2013)

The seminal work of Freire, "The Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (1970), had gained echo beyond Latin America and deeply influenced the world discourses on education and research. Freire's humanistic approach also centered on subjective experiences and the agency of common people in ways that contested hierarchical and oppressive structures of knowledge production. This reflective-critical approach, which is aimed at the empowerment of communities by way of dialogue and collective understanding becomes a mark of both PAR and the related participatory methodologies.

What Freire did was mainly converted, with time, into what is the so-called "bottom-up" approach. This methodology has trickled down from grassroots levels to more mainstream thinking in many disciplines and involves the collaboration, reflexivity, and democratization of knowledge. The bottom-up approach keeps leading in reshaping participatory research methods while contributing to social transformation; it emphasizes those voices that generally do not come from within circles of academia and policy discourse.

## *African Influences*

Another strong momentum toward the evolution of CBR has been the Participatory Rural Appraisal approach, as advanced by Robert Chambers, mainly within African contexts. The term "participatory research" was first articulated in Tanzania in the early 1970s, emerging within a vibrant context of dialogue and debate among researchers from civil society, the government, and the University of Dar es Salaam. What these researchers all shared was a common concern with the need to align their work with the aspirations of a nation in great transition toward socialism, especially an African form of socialism in which local values and collective identity are at the root.

It was both an intellectual and practical attempt to break loose from traditional, externally induced research paradigms in search of a methodology that emphasizes active collaboration with communities and links them to their needs and purposes. Truly, the Tanzanian context was that of political and social transformation, and thus it provided rich ground for participatory research to develop as a means of connecting academic examination with grassroots participation.

This methodology gained its initial ground among radical NGOs engaged in international development. However, in the 1990s, this method was institutionalized and accepted by more established institutions such as the World Bank, and it reached an increased practice level in development studies. Chambers emphasized "the primacy of the personal," focusing on local communities' lived experiences and knowledge as central to understanding and addressing development challenges. Other critical approaches, grounded in political economy analyses of underdevelopment, were avoided by Chambers. In their place, his method was one of facilitating participatory processes that enabled local people to express their views and priorities, often through tools such as mapping, ranking, and participatory workshops (Chambers, 1983).

The central debate within participatory research has been around the bottom-up approach rather than the top-down approach, emphasizing participatory methodologies that amplify the voices of the poor and the marginalized as described above. The various methods in participatory research have never been fixed but kept changing through the critical reflexivity of participants in participatory processes. Thus, there was a proliferation of different approaches from the early 1980s. These include the following:

*Participatory Appraisal* is the method of research and consultation that overtly integrates the participation of local people in every process, starting with the identification of priorities to action, which forms an integral part of the approach. In its essence, it involves advocacy for education and collective action, which emphasizes the process itself as being part of the community empowerment process and not just research or information collection.

*Participatory Rural Appraisal* is a methodology that has emerged from within PA and is more appropriate for use in development contexts. PRA challenges top-down research and practices in development and advocates for approaches that emphasize the voice and agency of local communities over agendas driven from outside.

*Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)* build on participatory methods but moves beyond extractive research processes. PLA focuses on growing sustainable and mutual learning between equal partners in the research process. It puts particular emphasis on using participatory insights to impel program and policy improvements, embedding learning within an ongoing and transformational process of action-oriented research (Mayoux, 2001).

Today, participatory research in the global South is very much identifiable with international development agencies, from the World Bank to hundreds of NGOs. Community-based research deriving from such diverse utilization is characterized by several models and practices, each rooted in different epistemological underpinnings. Nonetheless, confounding critical questions arise because of the establishment of participatory paradigms endowed with power by a powerful agency such as the World Bank. I often find myself questioning whether participation is truly embraced as a tool for creating bottom-up social change, or if it sometimes serves mainly to legitimize top-down development agendas. While many initiatives highlight the language of community engagement, they often leave existing power structures intact. In my view, there are many cases where such mechanisms end up reinforcing hierarchies, giving communities a sense of involvement without granting them real decision-making power or challenging the authority of development institutions.

### *Northern Influences*

For CBR practitioners in Northern academia, asymmetries defining North/South relations in knowledge production and dissemination need critical consideration. From this perspective, Community-Based Research, truly global in practice, benefits from moving outside monocultural paradigms of knowledge. Rajesh Tandon underlined participatory and emancipatory aspects of CBR, while Budd Hall developed knowledge democracy and the need for contesting epistemic hierarchies. In conjunction, these ideas point to the way CBR can benefit from the richness of a diversity of interconnected knowledge systems in different contexts. This approach is not only relevant to issues of equity and inclusion but may also enhance the potential to address complex global challenges in more meaningful and context-sensitive ways through CBR.

While action research and the CBR approaches are united in their interest in unifying inquiry with practice, the concept of CBR later widened to focus more on

equity, sharing power, and co-producing knowledge with communities. CBR in both community and organizational contexts has a long history in the United States. A central figure in its development was Kurt Lewin (1890–1947), a German American psychologist, who is often said to have coined the term “action research” in 1944. For Lewin, action research was comparative research into the conditions and forms of social action with a view to practical social intervention. His work provided the basis for an approach that has remained closely tied to tackling immediate social problems, mirroring the pragmatic emphasis that still informs a great deal of the social sciences in the United States.

He contested positivist approaches for which knowledge was unbiased and quantifiable, arguing that these methods disconnected knowledge makers from reality (Lewin, 1946). At the core of Lewin's schema lay the theme that social change could not be effectively brought about without developing the motivational impetus toward such change; he combined with that a tight linkage to action, where real change could be affected only through participative processes in which persons were involved in solving the problems of their living. This approach, with its two-sided orientation toward knowing and acting concerning social phenomena, has inspired a host of methodologies within community-based and organizational research, respectively, and it has ensured that action research is seen as an instrument of investigation and change.

Instead of being defined as one theory or collection of theories, action research can be conceived of as a "family of approaches" (Reason 1994) whose primary aim is to benefit the community by implementing participatory practices to effect social change. Action research distinguishes itself from other methods of social research not so much in the techniques of intervention as in the purpose; while conventional research is directed towards description and explanation, action research is characterized by the aspiration to bring about change. Beginning with

analysis, it strives to renew reality to induce change (Delruelle-Vosswinkel [1980] 2006: 83).

Vargiu (2008) states that a fundamental methodological characteristic of action research resides in the delicate relationship between action and observation, more specifically in the kind of relationship created between the researcher and the reality researched. The interaction between observer and observed in action research differs in its very nature from what typically takes place in "classic" research paradigms.

### ***Western Europe Influences and Science Shops***

Western Europe in the 1970s offered a very different social and political climate. Nonetheless, a parallel community-based research movement emerged at universities, with students and younger academic staff reaching out to marginalized and activist groups, including workers, squatters, environmentalists, mental health patients, and women's organizations. The interests of these communities were meant to be matched with a set of research questions. This movement was one of the democratizations of knowledge and academic practice.

Loet Leydesdorff and Janelle Ward (2005) note that this movement was framed by the science policy debate on "democratization," in particular concerning access to higher education and university research as basic knowledge infrastructures for society. This wave of community-based research was not driven primarily by social scientists; rather, the driving force came from engineers and natural scientists. It was they who developed the typical European "science shop" model, which would become the hallmark of the region's approach to bridging the gap between academia and society.

Science shops are not "shops" in the proper sense; they are groups, often at universities, in which students conduct research as part of their study programs. Generally, small organizations and science shops provide scientific research within a wide range of disciplines, frequently free of charge, to help the general community and local civil society groups. This would provide independent, participatory research assistance by involving academia with a broad range of concerned groups in society.

Therefore, the primary objective of science shops is to address the needs and challenges of society by providing access to research that strengthens communities and promotes evidence-based problem-solving. The first science shops were established in the Netherlands and quickly became key players in community-based research, accumulating noteworthy experience and expertise to help tackle some of society's most pressing issues. These pioneering models inspired a second wave of science shop development in the 1980s in Germany, France, and Denmark, among other places, including the formation of two in Belgium (Andersen I.E, 1999).

This broader shift of discourse on science and society regained interest in science shops during the 1990s. There was an increased concern for more democratic and inclusive manners of performing scientific research, where science shops could act as an intermediary level mediating between academic knowledge and the concerns of civil society. The new "Science with and for Society" funding scheme in the EU Horizon 2020 program underlines the responsibility of civil society and its organizations in upcoming research developments (A. Gnaiger, 2001).

The science shop model works to break down barriers between universities and communities. Partnering would provide greater social relevance for academic disciplines or departments that had become alienated from society. This was a very

different understanding of the relationship between science and society than that held in the US pragmatist problem-solving tradition.

In the larger context, CBR has developed from various ideological and methodological traditions in Western Europe and North America, such as radical approaches that support fundamental change through reformist models, which, in turn, are said to make existing systems more inclusive and instrumental practices utilizing university expertise for community benefits. These diverse routes illuminate ways universities and academics have tried to be useful to and relevant for communities; regional differences in philosophies and practices of community-based research are brought into relief (R. Sclove, 1998).

Knowledge is not simply a result of academic surroundings but emerges out of shared purpose between a range of stakeholders, in which theoretical and empirical knowledge confront and co-emerge (Marshall, 1989). What is new in such a view is the potential for change in participatory research methodologies, with an accent placed on shared endeavor and mutual respect between all concerned parties.

Under such an arrangement, specific programmes represent academic and social collaboration, underpinned through civic and community orientation. Community-centered programmes promote community, democracy, and empowerment as directional values (Sclove, 1998, p. 332). Community working involves collaborations between universities and extended communities, be national, state, region, or locality, engendering two-way flows of both assets and knowledge.

The collaboration in such terms is multi-faceted, comprising a range of activity and a re-conceptualizing of university role in society. It locates universities

in a position of active social transformation, creating partnerships underpinned by equity and reciprocity. As GUNI (Global University Network for Innovation) describes, community-university collaboration is an umbrella, a name for a range of practices embodying the university's role in taking its role in society through academic and participatory processes including and involving everyone. This view underlies a re-emphasis on transcending academic endeavor and its translation into real life, generating intellectual and social development.

*Table 2: Participatory and Conventional Research: A Comparison of Process (A. Cornwall, 1995)*

| <b>Aspect</b>  | <b>Participatory Research (PR)</b> | <b>Conventional Research</b>                                      |
|--|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>What is the research for?</b>                             | Action                             | Understanding, with potential action later                        |
| <b>Who is the research for?</b>                              | Local people                       | Institutional, personal, and professional interests               |
| <b>Whose knowledge counts?</b>                               | Local people's knowledge           | Scientists' knowledge   |
| <b>Topic choice influenced by?</b>                           | Local priorities                   | Funding priorities, institutional agendas, professional interests |
| <b>Methodology chosen for?</b>                               | Empowerment and mutual learning    | Disciplinary conventions, 'objectivity,' and 'truth'              |
| <b>Who takes part in the stages of the research process?</b> |                                    |   |

|                                 |  |  |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Problem identification</b>   | Local people                                   | Researcher   |
| <b>Data collection</b>          | Local people                                   | Researcher or enumerator                           |
| <b>Interpretation</b>           | Local concepts and frameworks                  | Disciplinary concepts and frameworks               |
| <b>Analysis</b>                 | Local people                                   | Researcher   |
| <b>Presentation of findings</b> | Locally accessible and useful                  | By researcher to other academics or funding bodies |
| <b>Action on findings?</b>      | Integral to the process                        | Separate and may not happen                        |
| <b>Who acts?</b>                | Local people, with or without external support | External agencies                                  |
| <b>Who owns the results?</b>    | Shared   | Researcher   |
| <b>What is emphasized?</b>      | Process  | Outcome or findings                                |

In the positivist school of thought, researchers actively endeavor to stand apart in a detached manner so as not to "pollute" the research and to ensure a level of objectivity. Action Research, in contrast, works with and alongside the people involved, and works with an orientation in and out of a position of responsibility and self-autonomy.

As analyzed by Sen (1999, 2007, 1997) and Nussbaum (2007, 2002), developing capabilities occupies a key position in people's lives in that it puts an accent on individual dignity in terms of one's singularity and having the capability to convert these capabilities into functioning. As argued by Sen (1999), functioning can be considered "states of being and doing [...] relevant functioning's may range from simple ones such as being well-fed, being healthy, avoiding preventable

morbidity and early death, etc., to complex ones such as being happy, having self-respect, participating in social life, and so on" (Sen, 1999: 63).

Functioning forms the basis for the principle of self-determination and, according to Sen, allows a person to "be the author of her (his) own fate" regarding one's singularity. Everyone's life consists of a variety of factors that differ according to one's environment. These factors shape judgments about what functioning one considers valuable. Very closely intertwined with functioning is the "capability to function," understood here as a bundle of functioning expressing one's liberty in terms of being free to choose a kind of life one wishes to have.

The evaluation of well-being must pay regard to these factors in that a person's liberty hinges on one's state, that is, one's kind of functioning one attains. For this reason, according to Sen (1999), having freedom of choice constitutes an imperative factor that influences factors in terms of well-being. In this school of thought, knowledge develops individual and collective capacities (Sen, 1999, 2003, 1997; Nussbaum, 2007, 2002).

It is achieved through working together (Reason and Bradbury, 2006; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2006):

"The role of participatory action research is to enable people through the creation of their knowledge, in action and reflection" (J. Gaventa, 2006). Participation, in this case, connotes a dualism: both "to take part" in an activity and "to form part" of a whole. It is conceived as both including and belonging. Participation is not simply an operational tool for educational and training purposes but also social cohesion and empowerment. It is designed not only for

creating change but also for creating transforming, revolutionary processes (Merton, 1949)

*Table 3: Comparison between Traditional Academic Research and the Community Based Research (Strand K., 2003)*

|  | <b>Traditional Academic Research</b>                             | <b>Community-Based Research</b>   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Primary goal of research</b>                                    | Advance knowledge within a discipline                            | Contribute to betterment of a particular community; social change, social justice |
| <b>Source of research question</b>                                 | Extant theoretical or empirical work in a discipline             | Community-identified problem or need for information                              |
| <b>Who design and conduct the research?</b>                        | Trained researcher, perhaps with the help of paid assistants     | Trained researchers, students, community members in collaboration                 |
| <b>Role of Researcher</b>  | Outside expert   | Collaborator, partner and learners  |
| <b>Relationship of the researcher and participants-respondents</b> | Object to be studied (community as laboratory) or no role at all | Collaborator, partner and learners  |
| <b>Measure of value of Research</b>                                | Acceptance by academic's peers (publication for example)         | Usefulness for community partners and contribution to social change               |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <p><b>Criteria for Selecting Data Collection Methods</b></p> | <p>Conformity of standards of rigor, objectivity, research control; preference for quantitative and positivist approaches</p> | <p>The potential for rowing out useful information, sensitivity to experiential knowledge, conformity to standards of rigor and accessibility; open to a variety and combination of approaches</p> |
| <p><b>Beneficiaries of Research</b></p>                      | <p>Academic Researcher</p>  | <p>Academic researcher, students, community</p>  |
| <p><b>Ownership of the data</b></p>                          | <p>Academic Researcher</p>  | <p>Community</p>   |
| <p><b>Mode of Presentation</b></p>                           | <p>Written Report</p>   | <p>Varies widely and may take multiple and creative forms (for example, video, theatre, written narrative)</p>   |
| <p><b>Means of Dissemination</b></p>                         | <p>Presentation of Academic conference, submission to journal</p>   | <p>Any and all forums were results might have an impact: media, public meetings, informal community settings, legislative bodies, and others</p>   |

### **3.3 Orientation and Objectives of the Research**

So far, this thesis has discussed CBPR as the central methodology, with outlining its key concepts, aims, and influences. In this section, I turn to the theoretical framework and the additional methodologies that support my approach. At the heart of this study is an interest in the intergenerational identities of the communities shaped by the population exchange in Greece and Turkey. My aim is to understand how these communities remember and interpret their migration experiences, and how such memories are passed on, reworked, and kept alive across generations.

In this thesis, I draw on a range of participatory activities carried out in both İzmir and Thessaloniki, together with biographical literature, to engage with the children of survivors of the population exchange. Not only this but also considering examples from earlier research in other disciplines that have used interviews and life histories as central methods. Since the 1980s, social anthropology has developed approaches closely aligned with contemporary community-based research, particularly through advocacy-oriented ethnography and participatory forms of knowledge production. Within this tradition, researchers have moved beyond detached observation, emphasizing instead the ethical and political dimensions of documenting lived experiences and engaging with communities whose histories have often remained peripheral within dominant narratives. This approach is evident in Hirschon's (Hirschon, 2003) work on Asia Minor refugees but similarly a notable example is Tsimouris's (2003) ethnographic work on Imvros, which adopts an advocacy-oriented approach that centers oral narratives. The insights offered by these studies are important for situating my own findings, as they provide a wider perspective on the topic through interview-based approaches and diverse viewpoints.

My aim is to explore community dynamics between İzmir and Thessaloniki populations of exchangees, with specific focus placed on the development of

migrant identity in the following generations, namely, the second and third ones. In its investigation, the study will evaluate whether communities have preserved over time an exchange migrant identity and will, in addition, discern factors contributing to shifts in their self-conception, epistemologies, and affiliation with ancestors' narratives. Through an analysis of the processes that shape transformations across generations, I aim to shed light on how identities and emotions have been constructed and carried forward in the century since the 1923 population exchange.

The inspiration for this research stems from a deeply personal narrative. In the 1950s, my father and his family migrated from what was then Yugoslavia, now North Macedonia, and settled in İzmir. They were part of a broader wave of Balkan refugees who found a new home in Turkey. Our neighborhood became a mosaic of migrant histories, where I grew up surrounded by people with different experiences of displacement. Among them were Greek exchangees, women I affectionately called "my *yiayias*." Their stories of loss, longing, and adaptation profoundly shaped my understanding of migration and the concept of belonging. As a child, I was unaware of the historical context of the 1923 population exchange, yet I was deeply moved by their nostalgia for their "lost homelands".

These personal experiences, intertwined with narratives of displacement and resilience, ignited my academic curiosity. The memories of those childhood encounters have remained with me, shaping both my worldview and my research trajectory.

To understand the consequences of such a significant historical event, one must imagine oneself being displaced from a residence that one's family valued for centuries and resettled in a new country. Around two million people underwent such a kind of displacement through the 1923 Population Exchange between Greeks and Turks. As seen in the previous chapters, the Lausanne Convention, signed and effective as of January 30, 1923, vastly changed demographics, redefined cultural

affiliations, and left a lasting mark on the collective mind of both countries. Despite its significant value, little academic consideration has been focused on studies of lived experiences and changing identities of these exchanged communities through a community-focused epistemology.

This thesis aims to contribute through an examination of shared heritage generated through the population exchange, with a specific focus placed on successive reconstituted national and local identities. Employing a participatory stance in a CBPR platform, such a study privileges the voice and narrative of exchanged communities and places strong value in İzmir and Thessaloniki's contextual settings. By adopting this epistemological position and working through participatory inquiry, I seek to develop a community-centered understanding of the long-term consequences of forced migration, particularly in relation to identity and the sense of belonging.

The foundational basis for this work comes through oral testimony, biographical writings, and participatory work conducted in collaboration with İzmir and Thessaloniki's civil society groups. In the past decade, descendants in their third generation, whose families have been impacted by the exchange, have played a key role in protecting and spreading information about their forefathers' experiences. As a result, many texts have documented first- and second-generation migration experiences, providing rich information regarding migration processes and processes of changing identity and identity negotiations over time.

Some sources utilized in this work include collections of biographical interviews conducted and printed out in 2015 by The Foundation of Lausanne Treaty Emigrants. The original collection, titled *Onlar İki Kere Yabancıydılar (They Were Twice Strangers)*, grew out of an exercise in which 21 Turkish and 21 Greek emigrants of the exchange were revisited to countries of origin. What happened through and following these trips and feelings about them, and with whom, have

been painstakingly documented through both precursion and post-return interviews, allowing for an in-depth consideration of affective relations, memories, and identity negotiations. The following book, titled *Hasretin İki Yakasından Mübadele Öyküleri (Migration Stories from Two Sides of Longing)*, consists of 82 family stories collected in both countries, describing migration processes and renovation processes following them.

Such biographic sources pertain principally to migration stories of second and third-generation persons and, therefore, are an irreplaceable source for analysis and interpretation in comparative studies. For that reason, in a theoretical manner, such sources allow for an examination of transition processes regarding memories, identity, a sense of belonging, and transmission involvements in family structures.

Alongside the written sources already mentioned, I also draw on insights gathered through Community Advisory Boards. Boards consisting of persons with a variety of affiliations with communities involved in the exchange present a variety of observations regarding the processes of migration, identity creation, and group memory. When I bring these observations together with first-person testimonies, the analysis gains greater depth, helping me to explore how the 1923 population exchange continues to shape identities and community connections today.

### **3.4 Analytical Framework**

In this study, I work within a broader methodological framework to carry out an in-depth analysis of the descendants of exchangees and to reflect on the material gathered during the research process. To make sense of the findings, I draw on a range of theoretical perspectives on migration, culture, and identity. These perspectives serve as important tools for understanding how the exchangee

communities of İzmir and Thessaloniki have engaged with their past and reshaped their identities over time.

Max Scheler's concept of the "relatively natural worldview" (*relativ natürliche Weltanschauung*) provides a phenomenological framework for understanding the ways in which individuals and societies engage with the world in an implicit, taken-for-granted manner. This is central in explaining how the human perception and knowledge are formulated by historical, social, and cultural conditions before they are encountered by scientific or philosophical scrutiny. Scheler calls the quite natural conception of the world the pre-reflective, everyday understanding of reality inherited from one's cultural and historical world (Scheler, 1926). It is not critically reflective or consciously constructed but an intuitive system people apply in living.

Compared to scientific or philosophical worldviews, which are deliberate and systematic, the comparatively natural worldview remains spontaneous, habitual, and tradition conditioned. The relatively natural worldview is the foundation upon which human beings comprehend their world without systematic reflection or formalized knowledge. It consists of taken-for-granted facts about existence, causality, and meaning, which are scarcely questioned unless stimulated by outside powers. What is considered "natural" or "self-evident" in one society may be incomprehensible in another, illustrating the relativity of human experience and knowledge.

Migrants carry their relatively natural worldview with them, but when placed in a different societal structure, they encounter an alternative set of implicit assumptions, norms, and ways of perceiving the world. This is particularly evident in the case of the 1923 Greek Turkish population exchange, where displaced communities were forcibly removed from familiar social structures and transplanted into new cultural and political frameworks. The host society's

relatively natural worldview categorized them based on preconceived notions of identity, ethnicity, and social hierarchy, making the integration process highly complex. Scheler's framework intersects with Karl Mannheim's ideology on the difference in reality perceptions likewise Scheler's claim that knowledge is embedded in pre-existing worldviews that structure perception.

The theoretical basis of this dissertation, nevertheless, is located in Karl Mannheim's theory of generations, exclusively in his key essay, "The Problem of Generations" (Mannheim, 1952). Notwithstanding widespread acknowledgment of Mannheim's work in ideology and utopian studies, his work about generational identity has often been overlooked. To expand and develop his theory of generations, this work seeks to explore through its investigation, in detail, how collective memory, the consciousness of history, and identity develop and redefine through successive generations of descendants of exchangees.

According to Bryan Turner and Alex Dumas, "[u]nlike analytic categories of social class, gender, and ethnicity, the study of generations and intergenerational conflict has been underdeveloped in sociology (Hendricks & Powell, 2009)". What is significant in stating such a claim is its reflection of an imperative for future studies into how participating in a certain generation affects processes of identity construction and memories' transmission. In utilizing Mannheim's theory of generations, this thesis aims to explore in detail how İzmir and Thessaloniki's descendants of exchangees in the second and third generations use received histories, navigate identity, and develop a sense of belonging.

Mannheim's Theory of Generations is seen to represent "the most developed and most systematic treatment of generation in a sociological analysis," universally acknowledged for its theoretical contribution towards dealing with important sociological concerns, including "the relation between society and biology; character of time; the relation between individual and social change, and between

biography and history; social processes of change; and social-psychological relations between language and knowledge (Pilcher, 1994)”. All these factors, together, present rich information regarding the inter-generational improvement of identity and memory transmission.

The development of this work progressively showed that these factors have a significant role in explaining descendants of exchanged persons living in İzmir and Thessaloniki. Individual and group memories, awareness regarding events in history, and social transformation have a profound impact on the development and expression of identity for immigrants in the subsequent generations. By focusing its inquiry on transformations over several generations, this work studies immigrant identity development over a period, intending to highlight the role played by narratives about the past, memories handed down, and political-social environments in developing an individual’s view about himself in exchanged communities.

Mannheim’s theory forms the basis for analysis, offering a basis for contrasting and comparing exchanged immigrants' positions. In “The Problem of Generations”, Mannheim developed a schema that departed from the more common demographic definitions, in which generations are understood as fixed age cohorts. Instead, he argued that generational groups are formed through significant socio-political events, stating that “each new generation generates a renewal effect which serves as a fundamental factor of historical change” (Hendricks & Powell, 2009). This method is of particular relevance to our study, insofar as it allows us to trace how exchangee identities evolve, shaped by changing societal contexts and historical perception. This research aligns with Mannheim's proclamation: it views generational experiences as embedded in and mutually influential with the broader societal structures and historical moments within which they emerge.

The concept of the “generation units”, agents of social change according to Mannheim, is particularly insightful in discerning the differences between the second and third generations of exchangee descendants (Kertzer, 1983). One of the most striking changes compared to the second generation is how the third generation revives the interest in their ancestral past after a period of relative disconnection. This generational divergence underlines how identity is constantly transformed by the crossing of personal experiences, collective memory, and historical discourses. Both generations are, further, agents and victims not only of great social, political, and economic changes but also of personal relations and everyday life experiences that impact the ongoing processes of redefining exchangee identity.

The present study evidence how the identity category cannot be static or rigid, and how it has remained fluid across open reinterpretations across generations by their descendants while engaging themselves with historical accounts, cultural memory, and present socio-political realities. Understanding these generational shifts creates critical entrances into the intergenerational transmission of memory and ways in which historical displacement continues to shape identities today.

Mannheim also argues that the conflicts within societies do not originate from class conflict alone, but also from changes in thinking and thought structures, the use of judgment, and modes of perceiving reality. It is these contrasts that are highly instrumental in dictating social cleavage and conflict. From this point of view, this thesis uses Mannheim's theory of the social determination of knowledge with a specific emphasis on the social context of thought. The core of his argument is that the understanding of the “rhythm of history” requires the analysis of the “transparent fabric of social processes” and their effects on generational phenomena (Pilcher, 1994, p. 484)

I will suggest in this study that the identity of the exchangees has been transformed through processes of social interaction and historical change. Identity is not a constant entity but rather one determined by the superior sociopolitical context within which it exists. With amplified interdependency, the world has never been more interconnected, and globalization seems to have hit the very core of the views on cultural identity. While globalization critics claim that it produces cultural homogenization and the enthronement of Western hegemonic tropes, others claim it creates more awareness of different cultural histories (Tomlinson, 2005). In this thesis, I argue that the dynamics of globalization, together with regional and national developments in the sociopolitical environment, have reshaped the identities of the descendants of exchangees. Political changes increased transnational mobility and transformed academic and social interest in historical memory have inspired individuals from various ethnic backgrounds to explore their ancestral past more intensely.

In particular, the descendants of exchange migrants increasingly tend to reconstruct and redefine their identities vis-à-vis historical narratives and contemporary sociopolitical realities, especially in the third generation. This generational shift emphasizes the flexibility of identity and the continuous reshaping of historical memory about changing conditions in society.

Central to Mannheim's theory is the sociology of knowledge; he is considered one of the founding figures in the discipline. He was less interested in searching for some absolute or objective truth than in exploring how persons and societies create and interpret knowledge. Mannheim claims that human perception is not innate, not purely sensory, but rather an ideological way of perceiving the world that has been fashioned through culture, social position, and historical context.

He states;

“the approach of the sociology of knowledge intentionally does not start with the single individual and his thinking in order then to proceed directly in the manner of the philosopher to the abstract heights of “thought as such”. Rather, the sociology of knowledge seeks to comprehend thought in the concrete setting of a historical-social situation out of which individually differentiated thought only very gradually emerges. Thus, it is not men in general who think or even isolated individuals who do the thinking, but men in certain groups who have developed a particular style of thought in an endless series of responses to certain typical situations characterizing their common positions” (Mannheim, 1936).

Here, knowledge cannot be neutral because it is profoundly anchored in structures and power relationships within society. People do not see "a world out there" as such with an objectivist view of things; what people do, however, is trying to interpretively make meanings with lenses embedded within their individual experience, affiliation within groups, or ideological location.

Because Mannheim's perspective on knowledge construction is irretrievably tied to his view of generations, his framework is especially applicable to the present study. In the sense that knowledge itself is socially and historically mediated, so too does there come a generational consciousness in response to major historical events. By examining how second and third-generation exchangees remember, narrate, and reinterpret past events, this thesis seeks to discover the "particular styles of thought and positions" that Mannheim describes. These generational responses do not occur in isolation; instead, they are situated within wider social structures, framed by personal experiences, and influenced by the shifting realities of migration, nationalism, and cultural memory.

Through oral narratives and participatory research, the changeable natures of the exchangee descendants' identities shaped by the crossings of personal memory, collective history, and contemporary socio-political conditions become obvious. Especially relevant in this context is Mannheim's concept of generational location. In defining a generation, he identifies generational location as a critical aspect of the "existential determination of knowledge," whereby persons who belong to the same historical generation, having witnessed the same socio-political transformations, develop a shared mode of thought and action (Mannheim, 1952).

Moreover, Mannheim assigns significant importance to *generational location*, which he defines as a "key aspect of the existential determination of knowledge.";

"certain definite modes of behavior, feeling, and thought. [...and] the individuals are further internally stratified; by their geographical and cultural location; by their actual as opposed to potential participation in the social currents of their time and place; and by their differing responses to a particular situation so that there may develop opposing generational units."

Therefore, the environment one grew up in urban, rural, social class, and dominant social trends of one's times has a lot of impact in shaping one's thinking, feelings, and outlooks. Mannheim identifies that in a generation, one can have "certain definite modes of behavior, feeling, and thought" that binds them together through shared social and shared experiences in a period. Yet, he identifies that information, experiences, and feelings one can have access to in society are not leveled out but vary in terms of social classes and groups having access to certain information and outlooks, shaping one's worldview in a certain direction.

The same distinction could be seen in the participatory activities in this thesis, too. Participants with different socioeconomic statuses had a variety of engagements with and interpretations of one's exchange-migrant heritage. In them, one could observe and understand how the experiences of a generation shape with intersectional social and financial factors.

Mannheim distinguishes between two types of generations: “mere collective facts” and “concrete social groups”. Where a concrete social group, a family, for instance, consists of persons with direct and continuous contacts, a mere collective fact is a larger generational experience one possibly doesn't even consciously know about and partake in with a group consciousness

In the case of descendants of exchange migration, they don't form a bounded, organized social group with a definite membership, for even in most cases, they don't even know each other's presence. Yet, they have a shared social-historical reality, necessarily uniting them together. That brings a relevant question: How can one characterize the character of such a generational group as a social entity? Despite a lack of immediate or organized contact, its members unite through shared locations in a same generation and shared experiences in the same era. Its tie isn't an organizational one, capable of simply fading, but a continuous and growing part of shared social consciousness. Analysis of such a generation in its proper social and historical reality enables one to understand in what manner, over some time, their identities, information, and memories form and shape them.

This thesis confirms that the social environment in which descendants of exchange migration form, is responsible for shaping a collective identity, and for sustaining a shared experience even over several generations. For Mannheim, one's position in a socio-historical structure predetermines one's experiences, with a

strong accent placed both on formative years, and youth in general, in shaping an identity and a worldview (Mannheim, 1952, p. 489). That is why, for example, such a disparate variety of approaches towards encountering heritage and family background is taken by, say, second and third-generation exchange migrants.

Mannheim's theory of “historical consciousness” can serve to explain why such disparate interpretations of the same social and cultural processes occur in successive generations. Any new generation, even living in the same continuum of history, constructs a specific view and an individual relation with past events, in terms of its specific socio-political environment in which it matures. For descendants of exchange migration, for example, a second-generation tend to inherit a direct, experienced relation with migration through parents' experiences and stories, and a third generation, maturing in a new social and political environment, tends to view its heritage with new curiosity, conditioned, for example, with larger discursive frameworks for identity, heritage, and discourses of globalization.

The contrast between them reveals the changing character of a generation's identity. For a second generation, a background of migration could become a part of an individual and family narrative, but for a third generation, it tends to become a source for reconnecting with a past, re-mapping memories, and re-configuring cultural affiliation in terms of a modern social environment.

Mannheim's notions of “ideology” and “utopian thinking” have been found particularly useful for examining the arrival experiences of the population exchange migrants in the receiving country. In his argument about ideology, dominant groups, empowered as they are in maintaining their position in society, often take an interest-bound stance that excludes a view of social realities from becoming visible which could undermine the foundations of their rule.

“The concept ‘ideology’ reflects the one discovery which emerged from political conflict, namely, that ruling groups can in their thinking become so intensively interest-bound to a situation that they are simply no longer able to see certain facts which would undermine their sense of domination. There is implicit in the word ‘ideology’ the insight that in certain situations the collective unconscious of certain groups obscures the real condition of society both to itself and to others and thereby stabilizes it” (Mannheim, 1936).

This is well reflected in the reception accorded to the exchange migrants. The moment they arrived, despite ethnic and religious affinities, they became the others—on account of marked differences in language, culture, and even history sometimes. For example, in Turkey, Greek-speaking Muslim refugees were sometimes referred to as “Greeks” by the locals because of their Greek dialects, customs, or accents, while in Greece, the Orthodox Christians coming from Turkey were similarly thought of as “Turks” despite their Hellenic descent. This ideological framing contributed to their marginalization and exclusion from mainstream society. In contrast, Mannheim’s “utopian thinking” shows how these migrants, being oppressed and displaced, tried to reorder life.

As he defines it, utopian thinking is the tendency of the underdog to focus on transformative possibilities often to see only those elements that align with their desire to invert the dominant social order. This, for the exchange migrants, was a struggle to transcend continuously into their outsider status by the assertion of their cultural identity to the dominant, in due course through processes of social and economic adjustment, new community structures, acculturation, and negotiation for a place within the national framework.

Such a dynamic highlights how migrant identity is shaped through external ideological constraints and internal utopian aspirations. Whereas the dominant society viewed them at the beginning through a strict ideological lens, classifying them as foreigners, the migrants themselves were busily at work in redefining their position vis-à-vis such perceptions and constructing new collective identities.

The long-term process of adaptation and integration was therefore not one of individual experience, but part of a greater socio-historical transformation influenced by both ideological structures and the migrants' agency. The forced migration due to the exchange of populations drastically changed the course of the lives of the displaced communities, not only in the immediate but also long-term social, economic, and biological aspects. Torn out of their homeland, leaving behind their belongings, memories, and established ways of life, they were compelled to start anew in Turkey under conditions that were often harsh and unpredictable.

Social and economic contingencies formed a crossroads upon which their lives depended. In time, new social solidarities were generated by the second and subsequent generations of migrants by building identities both from inherited memories of displacement and lived experiences in their homeland. These generations were shaped not only by the conditions of their parents' forced migration but also by the evolving social, political, and economic landscape of Turkey.

The forced migration due to the exchange of populations drastically changed the course of the lives of the displaced communities, not only in the immediate but also long-term social, economic, and biological aspects. Torn out of their homeland, leaving behind their belongings, memories, and established ways of life, they were compelled to start anew in Turkey under conditions that were often harsh and unpredictable.

One important consequence of this migration was the tearing apart of that which Mannheim might call “biological rhythm”: changes in life span, aging, and health due to the hardships that were experienced before and after displacement. Malnutrition, disease, and the mental strain of migration affected many people, weakening workers and their adaptation and economic abilities. In several instances, it was these processes that directly changed class positions. These families were middle or upper class in their former home but found themselves in the poverty bracket in the new environment, unable to regain their former status due to lost resources, unfamiliarity with the new environment, or systemic discrimination. Yet, it was not just biological factors that determined the course of exchange migrants' lives.

While integrating themselves into various professional fields, systems of education, and social networks, different patterns of class mobility appeared, showing how complex migrant adaptation was. The experiences of the population exchange migrants finally show that forced migration is not only a moment of displacement but also an ongoing intergenerational process of transformation. The structures entered, along with the individual and collective agency of the actors, played a crucial role in defining their place in the social texture of the host country.

In analyzing the forced migration process, generational shifts, and their impact on the identities of exchange migrants, Pierre Bourdieu's practice theory serves as a complementary framework to Karl Mannheim's theory of generations. Bourdieu's concepts help to further illuminate Mannheim's ideas by providing a deeper understanding of how identities are shaped through both structural constraints and individual agency.

According to Pilcher, Mannheim's essay on generations highlights a "dialectical, symbiotic relationship" between individuals and society, emphasizing the interconnectedness of biography and history (Pilcher, 1994, p. 490). This perspective aligns with Bourdieu's theory, which focuses on the dynamic interplay between "objective structures" (such as social class, institutions, and cultural norms) and "subjective phenomena" (including personal experiences, perceptions, and agency). While Mannheim emphasizes the historical and social conditions that shape generational thought and experience, Bourdieu provides a more detailed framework for analyzing how these experiences are internalized and reproduced through "*habitus*," which refers to a system of fixed dispositions and ways of thinking that individuals attain through their social environment.

In the case of exchange migrants, Bourdieu's practice theory helps explain how their identities were reconstructed within new socio-political contexts. The forced migration experience disrupted their established "*habitus*", requiring them to adapt to unfamiliar structures while negotiating their sense of belonging. Thus, Bourdieu's theoretical contributions enrich Mannheim's framework by addressing the "practice" of identity formation, how exchange migrants actively construct, negotiate, and transform their identities within the constraints of their social world.

Bourdieu's approach offers a way out of the objectivist-subjectivist impasse because he places "practice" as the product of a dialectical relationship between "structure" and "agency". This allows the researcher to be concerned with both the official story of culture and the everyday of the individuals, thus carrying on the struggle to interpret and make sense of their social worlds. In "Outline of a Theory of Practice" (Bourdieu, 1997); Bourdieu criticizes traditional epistemological approaches for separating the observer from the observed reality. Bourdieu suggests that knowledge is not just constituted by the particular position an observer occupies in time and space, as any straightforwardly relativistic approach might claim. Instead, the very act of observation itself transforms the nature of practice.

By stepping out of the lived experience and assuming an exterior vantage point on it, researchers run the risk of turning “practice” into an abstract object of analysis loose, that is, from dynamic and embodied dimensions of social life.

This point feels especially relevant when studying exchange migrants and the transformations that have unfolded across generations. If we focus only on institutional narratives or dominant historical accounts, we risk overlooking the active ways in which migrants have continuously renegotiated their identities and positions over time. Bourdieu's determination on “interpreting practices” throughout the research process invites us to consider how migrants engage with historical memory, reconstruct their sense of belonging, and negotiate power structures in their everyday lives (Ritzer, 2007).

By combining the insights of Bourdieu and Mannheim, this research will go beyond the structure-lived experience dichotomy in understanding how the exchange migrant identity has changed across generations. In this respect, it is obvious that an analysis of historical and social structures must be supplemented with a description of subjective and lived experience by those who directly experienced it and those generations who inherited the consequences of forced migration.

In the process of population exchange, external structures, state policies, legal frameworks, and nationalist ideologies, acquired an immediate and palpable reality for the migrants and entered their everyday experience. Herein lies the importance of the historical timing of the exchange, which coincided with the early years of the newly established Turkish Republic, a state that, like its Ottoman predecessor, followed to the “strong state” tradition. In this political framework, the position of the citizens was largely that of a subject, who should fulfill state regulations without necessarily actively negotiating their claims and identities.

In this regard, structural and cultural limitations possibly underline migrants' and locals' relations with the state. Notions of persecution or membership in a particular group were not purely legal or political categories but contributed hugely to forming the perceptions and behaviors of the exchange migrants themselves. Their own anxieties and uncertainties, even their sense of belonging or non-belonging, were bound up with wider socio-political structures that engineered their resettlement and integration. These fears were anything but abstract; rather, they were deeply personal and permeated how migrants positioned themselves in and moved through new surroundings and how they were perceived by the receiving society.

While these structures wielded immense influence over individuals, the process was not one-sided. Through lived experiences and everyday interactions, migrants played a role in reconstructing social and historical realities. Over time, their responses, ranging from adaptation and resilience to resistance and reinterpretation of identity, shaped broader social discourses. The interplay between structure and agency becomes evident: while the state-imposed regulations and constraints at any given moment, migrants actively negotiated their position within these frameworks, influencing social and historical developments. Therefore, understanding population exchanges requires a dual perspective: one that considers top-down structural imposition and another that highlights migrants' agency from below in reshaping collective memory and social belonging.

Cultural and social change has been the central theme among sociologists when discussing migration and identity formation. These changes are integral in defining the identities of exchangees through time. The concepts of “acculturation, assimilation, “and “incorporation” become, within this framework, very important analytical tools for understanding the process of exchange. While migration patterns may often show remarkable similarities across historical and geographical

contexts, each experience of migration progresses within its own rhythm of hardship, transformation, and adaptation. This leads to an acknowledgment of cultural relativism to some extent, which tentatively claims that individuals' actions and experiences are best understood within their own cultural framework.

Throughout my research, I have noticed many parallels between the development of the exchange migration and other migrations around the world. At the same time, I am constantly reminded that each migratory experience unfolds within its own unique historical, social, and cultural context. The population exchange between Greece and Turkey was not simply a repetition of other forced migrations; it was a process deeply shaped by its historical circumstances, state policies, and the actions and choices of the people involved.

It was here that Bourdieu's concept of the "*habitus*" facilitated an explanation of the relational dynamics of relationships, connections, and changes across generations and individuals. For Bourdieu, the "*habitus*" is the "mental or cognitive scheme through which individuals perceive and act in the social world (Ritzer, 2007, p.175). It involves a system of internalized schemes that organize the perception, interpretation, evaluation, and assessment of the social world.

These schemas not only guide the production of individual practices but also influence how individuals perceive and evaluate those practices. Consequently, even though policies in and of themselves do not directly shape the "*habitus*" of individuals, they do have an important role in shaping the external structures within which individuals learn to adapt and sustain their lives. These objective structures inculcate the individual's "*habitus*" over time and, at times, breach their expectations and anticipations of the future (O'reilly, 2012).

About migrants, this may be illustrated with an example like that of silence, as shall be expanded in more detail in the analysis sections. Migrants might keep silent about their experiences to avoid inviting criticism or misunderstanding during the initial years of migration and settlement. Over time, the influence of policies, external structures, and local reactions, be they cultural or political, are taken in and internalized through perceptions and understanding of migrants. In this way, assimilation takes place as part of the constant interaction between these forces and an evolving “*habitus*”.

O’reilly emphasized we need to;

understand the external structures that constrain and enable the migration process [and the migrants’ behaviors at the same time]; learn [...] about the habitus of the migrants and gain some insight into the [...] internal structures that develop as migrants learn how to go on in their new setting, to come to know the communities of practice and conjecturally specific internal structures that are relevant to their daily practices, and consider the external and internal structural outcomes of these processes. (O’reilly, 2012, p. 129).

Beginning with an open mind, free from biased judgments, I aimed to explore every facet of their lives, delving into various topics connected to the exchange process and its aftermath. Since I could not anticipate which, aspects would emerge as particularly significant or which themes would resonate most strongly, I adopted a comprehensive approach. This allowed me to uncover shared experiences, commonalities, and unique perspectives among the participants. By examining a wide range of topics, pursued to identify patterns, contrasts, and insights that might otherwise remain hidden, guaranteeing a thorough and inclusive understanding of their journeys and the broader implications of their experiences.

Employing these theoretical models, the thesis seeks to understand to what degree migration stories in 1923 have continued in modern settings and, in turn, shaped cultural memory and identity politics in communities experiencing role-switching. By linking migration studies, identity theory, and intergenerational memory, the study seeks to bridge past experiences with present-day identity creation, providing an in-depth analysis of how experiences of forced migration inform later generations' conceptions of both temporal frameworks and duration's meaning.

## CHAPTER 4

### COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH WITH IZMIR AND THESSALONIKI EXCHANGE COMMUNITIES

*“Through others, we become ourselves.”*

Lev S. Vygotsky

1896-1934

#### 4.1 CBPR Research Design and Implementation

In this chapter, I take a closer look at studies on exchange communities in Thessaloniki and Izmir. Nearly a century after the 1923 population exchange, CBPR has allowed me to conduct an in-depth exploration and systematic comparison of their perspectives, identities, and everyday practices. This chapter highlights also their unique and shared practices, tracing how these have evolved and how they continue to interact within their cultural contexts today. At the same time, situating the dynamics of their exchange experiences and the challenges they faced within the theoretical models and conceptual discussions developed in the earlier chapters.

My journey into Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) began during my participation in the Mentor Training Program (MTP) in November 2023 on the 9th cohort organized by the Knowledge for Change (K4C) Consortium. Based at the University of Victoria (UVic) and the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), this Chair is co-directed by Dr. Budd L Hall and Dr. Rajesh Tandon. This consortium aims to address the global scenario for community-university engagement and to provide preparation for the next generation of practitioners and academics performing community-based participatory research.

Through a cascading training pathway, the K4C Consortium offers a 21-week Mentor Training Program consisting of online learning activities, a 2-week

face-to-face learning residency, and a locally conducted field study under the supervision of a local mentor. On completing the program successfully, mentors are awarded a joint certificate from the UNESCO Chair, PRIA International Academy, and the University of Victoria. These certified mentors aid in developing and nurturing local and regional hubs by participating in curriculum development, improving pedagogy, and enhancing research capacities.<sup>6</sup>

The UNESCO Chair welcomes partnerships that piled up development options for building the fledgling consensus on knowledge-democracy, and I first became acquainted with the principles of community-based research under this initiative. Through workshops, fieldwork, and conversations with experienced practitioners, I began to look more and more at certain things about CBPR, which stands against conventional class structures for research and sees cooperation, mutual learning, and joint ownership of knowledge as key. Looking back on this chapter, these early episodes were quite instrumental in shaping my methodological perspective, particularly about choosing to mix participatory activities with gathering oral histories.

CBPR offered me a unique lens for exploring the 1923 Greek Turkish Population Exchange, a historical event whose legacy is often underexplored in both Turkish and Greek literature. Revisiting the chapter on theoretical frameworks and previous studies, I realized that including the voices of those directly impacted through oral testimonies, collective memories, and accounts of lived experience was central to understanding how identities and senses of belonging have evolved across generations. This methodological choice became another milestone, guiding my approach to engage with exchangee communities in Izmir and Thessaloniki in

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<sup>6</sup> The UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education provides detailed information about the Mentor Training Program, including its objectives, structure, and global network of participants. For more information, see: <https://www.unescochair-cbrsr.org/mentor-training-program>

a way that prioritized their perspectives, rather than imposing a solely academic interpretation.

Having outlined the broader context, the focus now shifts to a closer examination of the strategies employed during field interactions and the development of the methodology guiding this inquiry. This chapter also offers reflections on the dynamics among exchangees and explores how these interactions influenced patterns of settlement and strategies of adaptation over time.

This chapter will also explore population exchanges' effects on building up communities of multiple generations and the collective memory. Therefore, my inquiry's primary focus is on the cities of Thessaloniki and Izmir, analyzing contributions by these two urban hubs to future development through exchangees and their resettlement sites. I will also analyze unique features in both cities and the reasons for their choice as my objects of inquiry. The insights gathered through my participatory activities and interviews will be synthesized to compare and contrast in life stories of exchangees, something made possible by my interventions in their contexts. Analytical focus is on networking and various aspects of transformation, and their impact on initial and subsequent communities' identities. Having an in-depth understanding of such changes, the focus shifts to generational dynamics to map possible opportunities and limitations for subsequent generation's settling.

Finally, this chapter also considers the problems and hardships faced by the first generation of migrants once their settlement process had been completed, alongside an inquiry into how subsequent generations have recalled and interpreted these historical experiences. Even though the experience occurred 102 years ago, I interviewed only one first-generation descendant of a migrant who migrated from Thessaloniki to Izmir, Şaban Yaylalı. Although I was only able to interview one member of the first generation of migrants, this limited direct testimony does not allow for a comprehensive analysis of their integration processes. Nevertheless, the

memories and narratives transmitted by the second and third generations provide valuable insights into perceived experiences of integration and the ways in which identities have been shaped across time. The political, social, and economic contexts affecting the life of the exchangees will be elaborated upon further in this chapter. Furthermore, it will assist in shedding light on how emotions and identities were shaped and reshaped across subsequent generations of exchange migrants.

The exchangee communities in both Izmir and Thessaloniki illustrate diverse paths of memory transmission and adaptation, shaped by their unique socio-cultural contexts. In the early stages of my research, I dedicated considerable time to preparation and planning, recognizing that establishing initial contact and opening dialogue with the communities was crucial. A key milestone during this phase was the formation of a Community Advisory Board, assembled through my academic and community networks, which provided guidance and helped ensure that the research maintained a collaborative approach. Despite these efforts, I was not able to engage with certain communities, a limitation that I will revisit and address in later sections of the chapter.

Nevertheless, the process fostered meaningful community-building efforts, as trust was gradually developed through repeated visits, transparent communication, and shared objectives. The research design was continuously revised in response to the evolving dynamics in the field, integrating ethnographic methods with community-based participatory approaches. The following paragraphs will examine these preparatory efforts and the community-building processes in both cities. They will also explore how I maintained dialogue with participants during and after the fieldwork period. These phases of engagement were essential to the research, not only in shaping the methodology but also in deepening my understanding of the lived experiences, memory practices, and identity formations within these communities.

## 4.2 First Steps

### *Preparing and Planning*

Before undertaking a collaborative research project, it is expected that all participants undergo a preliminary step focused on defining mutual expectations. It involves assessing the feasibility and benefits relevant to pursuing a proposed research activity and/or partnership for each party. In my experience, a research partnership can be understood as a collaborative effort among individuals and organizations, such as community members and university academics working together toward a shared purpose and a common research agenda.

A core element of this process is identifying effective communication strategies. Within research settings that involve participants with differing linguistic proficiency, carrying out translation and interpretation services involves careful planning to ensure inclusiveness and facilitate collective understanding. Secondly, when working with communities traditionally on the margins, such as exchangee societies, a strategy must be developed that will best facilitate their participation. This involves providing safe spaces where participants feel comfortable sharing their views, with a priority placed on giving a voice to their opinion at all costs over silence, as well as being sensitive to potential risks associated with their participation.

In Izmir and Thessaloniki, however, the preparatory and planning phases constituted the most crucial part of research design. For Izmir, these phases had been completed before travelling there for a visit in November 2023. I contacted with Dokuz Eylül University through Professor Kemal Arı, a renowned expert on the subject, with a request for his input and suggestions on how best to engage with the exchange communities within the city.

When arriving in November, I began my active involvement with local libraries and museums, conducting preliminary research on exchangee communities as well as identifying potential communities and activities that would be essential for fieldwork. I had to carefully craft my methodology, as exchangee organizations in Turkey often face discrimination. These communities are frequently demeaned as "half-infidels" and may also be seen as supporters of Greek nationalist agendas, making their quest for any level of visibility, much less acceptance, all that much harder. With this sensitive background, I moved carefully with a view not to be thought of as one propagating inherent biases and stigmas. Instead, the focus was to approach these communities on academic and respectful grounds, giving due consideration to their experience and understanding and also finding a sense of partnership as well as respect.

In November 2023, I began attending the lectures of Prof. Kemal Arı on the Population Exchange at Dokuz Eylül University. This activity opened the doors of the university library and, more significantly, to the extensive personal archive of Prof. Arı. Exploring these materials was invaluable in deepening my understanding of Turkish-language literature on the topic, allowing me to see perspectives and sources that had not been widely circulated in previous research.

In addition, participating in two academic seminars on the Population Exchange at the university further enriched my knowledge and provided opportunities to engage with scholars and peers, helping me expand my academic network. These experiences were more than logistical milestones; they shaped the way I approached my research methodology, particularly in emphasizing the importance of engaging directly with local knowledge holders and archival sources. Looking back to earlier chapters, this engagement reinforced the need for a community-centered perspective and informed the design of participatory activities in Izmir, linking archival research with oral histories and first-person testimonies to

build a richer understanding of how the exchange continues to influence identities and memory across generations.

Meanwhile, I started to establish contact with four of the most active exchange organizations in Izmir, in light of their significant role in preserving and transmitting the memory of the exchangee phenomenon. These organizations were namely: International Federation of Cretans and Exchangees (Representative: Zafer Güzelkasap); Association of Lausanne Exchangees, Aegean Region Representation of Izmir (Representative: Emel Acar); Izmir Bornova Association of Cretans and Exchangees (Representative: Hakan Gülen); Izmir Buca Thessaloniki and Balkan Immigrants Association (Representative: Aydoğan Hepdemirgil)



Figure 3: The logos of the most active exchange organizations in Izmir

The appointments were made with these organizations to find out about their activities and the communities they work with. This direct contact was beneficial to learning about the perspectives, issues, and activities of exchangee communities in Izmir and was a basis for further ethnographic investigation and cooperation.

On the other hand, during the planning phase in the Thessaloniki, I was privileged to work with Associate Professor Leonidas Karakatsanis of the Department of Balkan, Slavic, and Oriental Studies at the University of Macedonia during the research stay in Thessaloniki from March 31st to July 1st, 2024. In April

2024, I initiated contacts with organizations directly engaged with the memory and legacy of the Population Exchange.

In doing this, I became intimate with the Pontic<sup>7</sup> community and how they identified themselves with their tradition and identity. Through the university, too, I was able to get intimate with Pontic PhD candidates, who invited me into their group and introduced to their cultural activities, a new but valuable development in the research. Although the primary intention was to establish contacts with exchangee organizations in Izmir, this contact with the Pontic community provided me with a deeper understanding of another dimension of displacement and identity preservation which their community dynamics will briefly analyzed in following chapters.

Having done some research previously with exchangee organizations in Izmir, my main goal in Thessaloniki was to contrast and compare these two communities their work, cultural preservation strategies, and understandings of identity. To keep with this comparative focus, I collaborated with the Historical Archive of Refugee Hellenism (HARH)<sup>8</sup> of Thessaloniki, who gave me access to their materials.

One of the greatest challenges encountered was the language barrier in Thessaloniki, which initially hindered communication. Nevertheless, with the

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<sup>77</sup> "Pontos" or "Pontos identity" is a term that has a historical and cultural meaning, and it refers to the Greek-speaking people who came from the Pontos (Pontus) region, which is usually identified as the southern coastal area of the Black Sea and today's Karadeniz region in Turkey. Pontic identity discourse goes beyond just mentioning a territory named Pontos; it identifies an ancestor's homeland, which is through ethnic and historical criteria, namely the areas where Pontic populations once resided. Despite displacement, Pontic communities continue to actively sustain and protect their identity through various practices that transmit cultural memory and reinforce a sense of collective belonging across generations (Hassiotis, 2006; Tsekouras, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> The Historical Archive of Refugee Hellenism (HARH) has been operating since 1994, as a Legal Entity under Public Law of the Municipality of Kalamaria. The institution aims to contribute to the rescue, preservation and dissemination of the history of the refugees and the promotion of the historical identity of the refugee Hellenism as a whole. For more information: <https://iape.org.gr/en/>

support of a scholarly network, it became possible to establish effective relationships with relevant organizations and carry the research through to completion. I was also lucky to get in touch with the second-generation exchangees who still speak fluent Turkish.

During the preparatory phase of the research, our consensus was on the need to establish a mutual understanding, discuss their expectations, and share their hopes and concerns regarding the collaboration. Key questions to consider include what the commonalities and differences are whether collaboration is feasible and productive and whether there are expectations that need to be adjusted. All the consent of sharing their stories as well as their photos and personal information has been taken. This stage would have may even lead to the conclusion that a proposed research partnership is not viable. But sharing personal experiences and narratives facilitated trust-building and help identify shared values and aspirations.

### ***Failed Attempts***

In both Izmir and Thessaloniki, not every organization approached was open to collaboration, each for different reasons. While many exchangee organizations in Izmir focus on the broader historical context of the 1923 Population Exchange, some adopt a more pan-Balkan perspective, incorporating migrations from Balkan countries and the integration of Balkan refugees into their collective identity. One such example is the International Federation of Cretans and Exchangees, founded on June 2, 2019, and led by Zafer Güzelkasap. He articulates this perspective as follows:

“Exchangees are a branch of the Balkan (Rumeli) Turks.  
Our mission is to bring together all the Balkan (Rumeli)

Turks under their common identity and work for the re-establishment of the great power.<sup>9</sup>”

This viewpoint reflects a broader Balkan-Turkish identity, which is distinct from the historical and socio-cultural identity of exchangees. While aligning with contemporary political narratives and facilitating engagement in current socio-political discourse, this Balkan-centric approach does not fully encapsulate the unique experience of the exchangee communities in Turkey, who do not generally identify as Balkan immigrants. This distinction presented challenges in forming research collaborations with some organizations in Izmir.

Similarly, in Thessaloniki, not all organizations were open to collaboration. The Syrmniot organization *Σύλλογος Σμυρναίων - Μικρασιατών "Η ΙΩΝΙΚΗ ΕΣΤΙΑ"*<sup>10</sup> did not respond any of the outreaches attempts through different channels. While their lack of engagement could stem from various factors, one possible reason might be their current nationalist stance. Additionally, the fact that me as a researcher who is willing to enter their community also originate from Izmir, the same city as their ancestors, might have influenced their reluctance to collaborate. This also stated by one member saying that “you are not from Izmir, we are!”.

Experiencing this resistance firsthand was more than a logistical hurdle; it revealed the deep layers of memory, identity, and territoriality that influence how communities engage with researchers. It reminded me that access is never guaranteed and that collaboration requires sensitivity, patience, and humility. Although these early setbacks were discouraging, they ultimately guided me toward organizations that were more open and active in both Izmir and Thessaloniki. By focusing on these welcoming spaces, I was able to form meaningful partnerships

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<sup>9</sup> To check the federation Facebook page that explains their missions see: [Facebook Group] (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/461409040876709>)

<sup>10</sup> More information on the organization: <https://www.ionikiestia.gr/>

and gain rich insights into the lived experiences of exchangee communities, seeing both the challenges and resilience embedded in their collective memory.

### ***Community Building***

When embarking on a CBPR, one of the first considerations is defining what constitutes a community. The term "community" has been used in many different ways throughout the social sciences<sup>11</sup>; Hillery (1995) reviewed the previous literature and found more than 90 different definitions of community. While consensus on a definition eludes sociology, the discipline does rely on the notion of community members being interconnected and builds on the concept of a "sense of community" and "shared emotional connection".

A community can be "a collection of individuals tied together by at least one shared characteristic, e.g., geography, shared interests, values, experience, or tradition" (Yale Centre, 2009). Community is also used to refer to a sense or feeling of belonging, a type of relationship, a physical place, or an organization. Thus, the term "community" can be employed to refer to one or more of the following: (i) a specific geographic or political area, e.g., a neighborhood, town, or region; (ii) a group with specific attributes, e.g., race, ethnicity, age, or gender; (iii) an entity that operates within society (and outside the researcher's own institution), e.g., a business, civic association, educational institution, religious body, or government agency.

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<sup>11</sup> Ferdinand Tönnies, in his famous classic *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* of 1887, gave the original distinction between community and society. Emile Durkheim, with *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893), investigated another dimension—the social cohesion of different kinds of communities. In *Economy and Society*, Max Weber, and in *Sociology: Inquiries into the Construction of Social Forms*, Georg Simmel gave crucial insights into the functioning of social relations and forms of sociability. Historically, these currently juxtaposed theories can be used to understand community both as a social structure and as a lived experience.

While Izmir hosts multiple exchangee organizations, only a limited number of these are grounded in an active and cohesive community. Lozan Mübadilleri Vakfı (LMV) Aegean Representation<sup>12</sup> stands as one that represents the concept of community that focuses specifically on developing social and cultural solidarity among the exchanged population of 1923 and furthering amity between peoples of both Turkey and Greece.

First and foremost, all the participants need to familiarize themselves with each other, define their expectations and concerns about the research process, and establish expectations. What do the participants have in common? What are the differences among the participants? Is cooperation possible and productive? At this point, one would know if the research project or the contemplated cooperation makes sense or if expectations need to be re-tuned. Offering into the diversity and life experience of participants would also become the positive factor in identifying common targets and values. Establishing the said level of acquaintance may also allow all potential members into the team.

According to the UNESCO Chair's manual (2015), engagement is the practice of establishing relationships with people and leveraging these relationships to achieve shared objectives. The art of engagement lies in understanding when to focus on developing relationships and when to invoke them to accomplish group tasks. When practitioners come together to discuss what “engagement” is, debate often focuses on the variety of terms hung around the idea.

Overall, “engagement” is a broad term that encompasses the wide variety of interactions between people. It covers a spectrum of approaches, from one-way communication or information provision, through consultation, involvement,

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<sup>12</sup> To visit the website of LMV and get more information on their objectives: <http://www.lozanmubadilleri.org.tr/ege-bolge-temsilciligi/>

collaboration in decision making, and empowered action in informal networks or formal partnerships. Among these, partnership stands out as one of the most significant forms of collaboration, particularly in addressing issues of human beings. Partnership is a mode of being and a style of working with others that is characterized by mutual understanding, search for the common good, reciprocity, shared decision-making, and transparency of outcomes.

Among the four active organizations in Izmir, there was consensus to move forward with the community engagement process with the *Lozan Mübadilleri Vakfi* Aegean Representation, thus starting the initial steps in a process directed towards building trust.

In November 1999, a group of second-generation exchangees originally from Greece initiated the establishment of a foundation in Istanbul, named "*Lozan Mübadilleri Vakfi*" (Foundation for Lausanne Exchangees, henceforth LMV), and commenced collecting oral history accounts. The efforts initiated in November 1999 culminated in the notarization of the foundation's charter on November 30, 2000, and its registration on April 25, 2001, granting it legal personality. The official registration of the foundation was confirmed on May 25, 2001, when it was published in the Official Gazette. They developed a website and established an email list, organized conferences and documentaries on the exchange, compiled recipes, archived photographs, and other documents belonging to the exchangee communities, collaborated with counterpart organizations in Greece, and arranged trips to their families' homeland, which many had never seen before.

In Turkey, LMV played a pivotal role in fostering academic discussion by creating a space for dialogue. The foundation spearheaded various European Union projects, leveraging oral history to gather narratives from the last survivors of the Population Exchange. The Aegean regional representation was established in Izmir on November 15, 2012, by the decision of the board of directors of the *Lozan*

*Mübadilleri Vakfı*, aiming to introduce various events and the unknown aspects of the exchange. Since then, the Aegean Regional Representation of the *Lozan Mübadilleri Vakfı* has been one of the most active foundations in Izmir, conducting activities to promote the exchange and its lesser-known aspects.

The objectives of the foundation are as follows, within the scope of the "Population Exchange Agreement" signed on January 30, 1923, in the city of Lausanne, between the government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and the government of Greece:

“To preserve and perpetuate the culture, art, and folklore values of the exchanged population; To scientifically research and document our recent history and the exchange; To strive for the preservation of cultural assets, which are the human legacy left behind by the exchanged population; To promote friendship, love, and cooperation between the peoples of Turkey and Greece, and to endeavor for the establishment of a culture of peace.; To ensure social and cultural solidarity and mutual assistance between the exchanged population and subsequent generations.” (LMV, 2012)

Before initiating any activity, the first and most fundamental step was to show trust and demonstrate unwavering dedication to the community. This initial step was the cornerstone in setting the conditions for long-lasting and sustainable interaction. While in the process of developing this trust, there came a deeper appreciation of the strengths and assets of the community. LMV Aegean Representation aligns with the concept of community by representing a group of individuals with diverse characteristics who share common social ties and a unified perspective.

Through human-to-human contact, the members of the community were met, their stories attentively listened to, and their everyday lives were examined. This not only helped to advance the rapport with the community but also developed a deeper understanding of their collective strength. For one month, I regularly visited every week to participate in activities of a choir and other activities organized in shared areas both in Izmir and Thessaloniki. These activities allowed for direct observation of community life, cultural practices, and expressions of resilience. It is important to note that my background as a Balkan immigrant and familiarity with the culture played a significant role in trust-building. This shared connection fostered a deeper sense of understanding and relatability, establishing a strong foundation for mutual respect and collaboration.

In Thessaloniki, the process of gaining trust was different, mainly because of the limited linguistic capacity. In this respect, I had to use our networking skills and adopt a snowballing approach to reach the “*ΣΥΛΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΤΙΡΛΙΤΩΝ ΑΓΙΟΣ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΙΠΠΟΔΡΟΜΟΣ*” Katirliton Association in Kalamaria<sup>13</sup>. It was quite difficult to gain the trust of this community, as the members were suspicious about my presence as a Turk there and they were curious to understand the reason behind my research.

However, through persistent weekly meetings, the atmosphere gradually changed. Once the community members realized my serious intention to learn from and collaborate with them, they started volunteering to tell their stories. This transformation underlined the importance of rapport-building and showing sincerity in our approach. Among many such learning moments, one stood the immense importance of networking and getting introduced to a community by a representative whom they already trust.

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<sup>13</sup> To see more about their activities visit: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1854881198121925>

In line with the stipulated research objectives, the identification and inclusion of the respective persons and stakeholders within the process become imperative. Involving individuals who have expert knowledge, vested interest, or suitable experience related to the area makes the process more inclusive and better represented. Academic researchers, exchange organizations, community leaders, and historians provide distinctive inputs that cumulatively strengthen the initiative.

### ***Community Advisory Board***

In CBPR, community leaders often serve as representatives, offering valuable insights from their unique perspectives. However, their status as appropriate representatives may vary among community members. While achieving full community representation may be challenging, the process of learning about the community and identifying leaders is ongoing. A community advisory group was formed to enhance community representation, enabling broader participation in the research process. Structured relationships with community partners fostered ongoing engagement throughout the project. The collaboration with a "community advisory board" (CAB) provided a platform for continuous dialogue with community members.

Within LMV, the advisory group was already established, with Emel Acar as head of the Aegean Representation since 2019, supported by community consensus. As our partnership progressed, I welcomed the Head of the Department of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution History at the Institute of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution History Prof. Dr. Kemal ARI to bring historical perspectives and, Archeologist Ercan Çokbankır to cross-check the data gathered from the community.

The Community Advisory Board (CAB) was formed during the early stages of my fieldwork in Thessaloniki, specifically within the first month of my stay.

Adopting the snowballing strategy, I approached the Katirliton organization whose members were in the third generation with active initiating of conversation with the older second-generation members. Communication was not their only engagement; their activities also included providing requisite history and culture background during the entire research period. This early engagement allowed for the co-design of research activities and ensured that the project remained responsive to the community's priorities throughout the subsequent phases of the research.

The existing networks of the Lozan Mübadilleri Vakfı (LMV) with exchange organizations in Thessaloniki played a significant role in expanding research connections. Through these networks, contact was established with Ariadni Antonidou, whose dual role as both an expert and an exchange provided invaluable insights. Her personal connection to the exchange experience allowed for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of historical events, as well as a more accurate interpretation of community narratives. Her contributions went beyond academic expertise, as she facilitated connections, contextualized archival materials, and offered firsthand perspectives that enriched the research process.

Apart from community participants, academic practice also played a crucial role in ensuring the comprehensiveness and precision of research. Professor Leonidas Karakatsanis helped cross-verify information and make connections easier with the community. His counsel helped get past the complications of the study while maintaining collaborative practice that permeated the research. The collective effort of the CAB, the community participants, and scholarly mentors provided for an engaged and participatory research process, built on shared exchange and trust.

### 4.3 Application and Analysis

#### *Research Design and Implementation*

One of the main challenges in enabling wide participation is linked to the dominant cleavages between the societies engaged in the population exchange. Some frameworks can potentially exclude others based on different approaches to the population exchange, differing understandings of historical importance, or differing political alignments. Further, structural barriers, such as budget limitations, time constraints, or language barriers, can discourage participation. One needs to understand and resolve such issues by enabling research setting that is open, inclusive, and transparent.

It is critical to offer a range of engagement options as one positive choice alternative since participants' preferences will vary from wanting intensive participation in all aspects of the research or only wanting intermittent participation. Notating participants about the options that exist for their participation like regarding the study plan, the collection and analysis of the information, or the development and sharing of the results increases the accessibility and responsiveness of the participation. Having open and fair decision-making procedures in order to define roles and expectations is critical in order not to make one person feel forced into contributing more than they have a capacity for or being kept away from essential parts of the work.

The research process was organized as a joint effort, being aware of their purposes and objectives. The goal from the outset was to develop a research design that was well-balanced between academic rigor and community engagement, considering the different expectations and motivations of the different stakeholders. While I aimed to contribute to the literature and complete a thesis, community partners were encouraged to think about their own expectations and needs, and their voices were actively involved in shaping the research direction. To be able to make the research questions more precise, collaboration with community partners was

essential. Questions were first formulated based on literature and existing evidence, but through dialogue with the Community Advisory Board (CAB), they were refined and also reflective of the realities in the community. The CAB played a big role in ensuring that the research aimed at serving academic agendas and being responsive to the lived realities and issues of the community.

Once consensus was reached on the research question which emerged through collaborative dialogue with the CAB and will be discussed in detail in the following sections: the CAB and I worked together to formulate hypotheses and select appropriate methodologies. The feasibility of these approaches was carefully assessed, considering both academic needs and practicality. Community partners were actively engaged in deciding whether the proposed methods were workable and sustainable in their environment. The research design turned into a negotiation process, whereby academic researchers presented methodological designs and community members offered insight into applicability and possible effectiveness.

Knowledge can be defined in a variety of ways, such as facts, feelings, or experiences of individuals or groups, a condition of knowledge and awareness, and knowledge acquired through experience or learning. Moreover, knowledge can be generated through lived experience wisdom, through survival in the world, and is embodied in forms such as text, poetry, music, ceremonies, political rhetoric, social media, speeches, drama, and storytelling. In recognition of these multiple and diverse sources of knowledge production, any former academic monopoly on knowledge creation no longer exists. Civil society organizations are increasingly involved in the co-production of knowledge and independent knowledge production. Therefore, I focused on collaboration with such multiple sources of knowledge in creating new understanding mutually relevant and useful.

Data gathering was participatory, with the active involvement of the community members in the form of departure documents, photographs, and records.

With a detailed data analysis and mapping, with members of the community playing key roles in the identification of historical place names and putting the results in context. The collaborative nature of this activity enriched the research as well as the capacity of the community, allowing its members to actively interact with their own histories.

Having established the potential for collaboration, identified key participants, and agreed upon a set of aims and objectives, developing a working agreement was a crucial step in fostering transparency and trust. The conversations that led to this agreement increased understanding of the needs and fears of all involved thus strengthening the foundation of respect and shared responsibility. Involvement in the discussions enabled the negotiation of power relations, promoted fair decision-making processes, and fostered democratic participation in the research endeavor. A central aspect of this partnership was the procurement of informed consent.

Community members who provided information or allowed access to different areas of their lives were given full descriptions of the goals and possible uses of the research. Ensuring that participants had enough information to make a fully informed decision about participation was paramount. In many cases, consent went beyond individual considerations and required group approval from the community. Recognizing that the boundaries of research may change over time, consent was viewed as an ongoing process, subject to ongoing review and renegotiation, especially with regard to publication and dissemination plans. In both Izmir and Thessaloniki, the community stated explicitly their willingness to participate, with ongoing discussion facilitating ethical openness.

Protecting personal data was not merely a dimension of the research; it was an ethical obligation laid down for the entire process of social inquiry. To ensure the utmost privacy for participants, for those who didn't want to share any personal

information; any identifiable information including names and addresses was separated from the research data. This commitment to confidentiality was essential to fostering trust with participants and ensuring the integrity of the research process. Recognizing that some community members were hesitant to submit personal photographs and names, these concerns were completely honored. Ethical protection of confidentiality was especially important in situations where researchers were community members, neighbors, or had family ties. To maintain ethical standards, confidentiality was strictly maintained when individuals shared highly sensitive or potentially harmful information.

In some situations, this meant excluding certain data from the research, while in other situations, careful anonymization was necessary to ensure participant privacy.

Ownership, control, and the use of research data and findings were also key issues that were discussed and clarified from the outset. In collaborative research, particularly within CBPR, it is essential to determine who retains access and ownership over generated data, as well as the rights to use and disseminate it. If data were to be jointly owned, establishing guidelines on how findings could be shared and whether partners required mutual consent for publications or presentations was a necessary step. In both Izmir and Thessaloniki, community members were consistently informed about my thesis progress and were made aware of the shared ownership of research materials, ensuring that all contributors felt included and valued in the process.

### ***Generating and Analyzing Data***

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) involves a wide range of methodologies that combine traditional research methods, like interviews and surveys with participatory approaches, such as participatory arts and appreciative

inquiry. For this research a mix of these methodologies were employed. In some cases, participants narrated their individual experiences about the exchange process of their families, and in other cases, they participated in mutual learning. This project was inherently complex and required careful planning, continuous reflection, and flexible methodologies to ensure alignment with the overall research goals and objectives. The methodologies chosen should provide a reliable data and be feasible for the Community Advisory Board to execute, since the validity of the research largely relies on the rigor used during data collection and analysis.

It is common practice for experienced researchers or individuals with significant experience within the field to lead the data analysis and interpretation stages. Nevertheless, this study aims to integrate a heterogeneous range of insights throughout the analytical process to enable a greater understanding of the outcomes. While the flexible methodology, such as proposed, it required more time, training, and creativity. However, it produced meaningful insights through the integration of different perspectives that are relevant to the research findings. Where such extensive participation in data analysis proves to be infeasible, active participation in discussions related to the data obtained and the primary interpretations is equally important. Such collaborative effort allows all research associates to situate the findings and express their perceptions, thus furthering the significance and relevance of the research findings.

The input of community partners greatly enriched the research by providing contextual data and enabling the analysis of findings. Their involvement ensured that the research included a rich variety of perspectives, leading to a more comprehensive and richer representation of the lived experiences of the community. During the three months of research periods both in Turkey and Greece, several participatory approaches were employed to encourage involvement and gather a variety of data types.

The research design arose out of a collaborative process, where academic researchers suggested a range of methodological options, and community participants determined their applicability. The major onus of data collection was on community members, who contributed initial documents, photographs, and other archival materials. With CAB, I analyzed and mapped the data collected, though this process was greatly enriched by the inputs of community participants in terms of the identification of historical sites and interpretation of findings. This collaborative process not only expanded the scope of the research but also played an important role in building community capacity, thus fostering a collective sense of ownership of the research process.

Every community holds stories that serve as tangible evidence of its lived reality. The collaboration with the LMV Aegean Representation in Izmir primarily involved nineteen participants, all aged forty-five and above, comprising eleven males and eight females. Among them, one participant was a first-generation migrant, two were second-generation, and sixteen were third-generation exchangees.

Meanwhile, the collaboration with the *Katirliton* Association in Thessaloniki engaged eighteen participants, also all above forty-five years old, including fourteen females and four males. In this group, ten participants were second-generation, while eight were third-generation descendants of exchangees. Notably, even three generations after the population exchange, participants' engagement in social interactions and community activities continued to play a crucial role in shaping their collective identity.

While the following chapters will provide an in-depth analysis of participatory activities, it is essential to highlight the use of community mapping also known as asset mapping which is a participatory approach that emphasizes local resources while fostering engagement. This method was employed in both

Izmir and Thessaloniki to identify and visually represent the assets, people, activities, and skills within each community. By actively involving participants in mapping their community, the process empowered them to become advocates for transforming their living spaces while reinforcing a sense of civic responsibility.

Given that place names were altered following the population exchange, existing literature was consulted to cross-reference historical and contemporary names. Community mapping involves a sequential process of identifying, visually representing, prioritizing, and mobilizing both tangible and intangible assets within a given space. The inherently participatory nature of this method ensures that community members play a central role in the research, directly engaging in the development of contextually relevant solutions to the study's research questions.

The community mapping activities with LMV began with a clear communication of the project's objectives and purpose. After defining the research aims, the geographical scope of the target communities was determined using multiple maps containing both historical and modern place names. The mapping workshops were scheduled for completion within a two-week period. Google Maps was initially used for preliminary exercises, allowing participants to visually engage with the findings before transitioning to more advanced digital mapping tools. For online mapping, ArcGIS was employed.

To initiate the activities, I utilized existing digital maps of Greece and Turkey, incorporating historical place names and printing them for reference. Participants were divided into smaller groups and encouraged to share their families' migration journeys during the population exchange. Rather than relying on predefined questions, researchers facilitated brainstorming sessions that allowed participants to organically reflect on their experiences. Each participant was provided with pins and differently colored threads to visually map out their families' trajectories. Throughout the mapping process, discussions were documented and

recorded, ensuring the preservation of valuable insights and perspectives shared by the participants.



*Figure 4: Demonstration from Community Mapping Workshops on 27/12/2023 with LMV Aegean Representation community members*

Another technique employed in the research was storytelling. Most of the exchangees' descendants continue to retain objects such as house keys, fabrics, jewelry, musical instruments, books, or even simple utensils that hold deep emotional and historical significance. These objects serve as memory carriers, linking them to their lost homelands and family histories.



*Figure 5: Demonstration from our storytelling workshops. On left: A third-generation descendant Zozo Oikoinomou is holding a tablecloth from her grandmother. On right: A third-generation descendent Mehmet Özcan is holding a Lute from his grandfather*

Through this process, the partners were invited to share their individual and collective past through narrative around these artifacts, so towards the building of a living archive of identity and memory. People brought an object inherited from their ancestors and narrated its history, how they inherited it generation by generation, the sentiments associated with it, and the part it played in their family history.

After conducting the community mapping workshops, I had several main areas in Izmir and Thessaloniki. To better understand, I have worked with members of the community to visit these neighborhoods in person, doing community walks to pinpoint characteristics they felt embodied their cultural identity. Beyond tangible items, immaterial cultural elements were instrumental in perpetuating and transferring identity. Despite variations in languages, music provided the bonding agent. During our workshops, everybody sang together, finding commonalities of song that bypassed linguistic divisions and evoked an aura of sharedness and belonging. Similarly, dances, clothing, cooking habits, and even coffee ceremonies

became cultural bridges between generations. Participants freely shared recipes and stories about how dishes have been prepared for generations in their households, interweaving intergeneration's and culture continuity. The implications of all participatory activities shall be deliberated extensively in subsequent chapters.

#### **4.4 Ethical Reflections and Engaging an Ongoing Dialogue**

Following the critique articulated in *Writing Culture*, this study treats reflexivity not as a methodological weakness, but as an ethical and analytical necessity (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). In Thessaloniki and Izmir, there was open and honest discussion from the start regarding what to disclose, what was hoped for, and what the potential negative consequences could be. Both groups were frank and keen to share their stories, emphasizing the importance of being heard through the appropriate channels. Among the salient points of our discussion was the recognition that, while there may be political tensions in the modern geopolitical sphere, these do not always comprise realities at the community level. Participants consistently asserted that there is no hatred between themselves and their counterparts across the Aegean, underlining the shared historical and cultural bonds which unite them.

Ethical consideration should be embedded in all stages of research, fostering a space for open discourse where all voices are honored and heard. This approach encourages critical engagement that embraces constructive challenge and reflection. During the research period with both communities, a commitment was made to collaboratively explore topics and matters significant to community members. Complex contributions were respected and recognized, ensuring that no single voice dominated at the expense of others. From the outset, the aim was to establish an ongoing dialogue and ethical reflection. The research not only produced substantial knowledge but also contributed to a more inclusive conversation. This dialogue remains active, continuing to shape and reflect the evolving relationships with both communities.

## CHAPTER 5

### TRADITIONS AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION IN IZMIR AND THESSALONIKI EXCHANGE COMMUNITIES

Clifford Geertz insightfully shows that individuals frequently become involved in what he refers to as "struggles for the real" which is a quest to establish their understanding of the fundamental nature of the world and uphold associated standards for societal behavior. Geertz notes that such struggles occur not just in formal political fora but in the more subtle domains of cultural existence and everyday sense. He argues that "the political processes of all nations extend farther and penetrate deeper than the formal institutions established to regulate them; many of the most crucial decisions regarding the direction of public life are not made in parliaments and presidiums but in the unstructured realms of what Durkheim called the "collective conscience." Furthermore, there are competitions not merely for political and material power but for control of the determination of truth, justice, beauty, and morality; the final substance of reality" (Geertz, 1973, p. 316)

This theoretical perspective offers important insights into the role of traditions within communities shaped by the exchange. The maintenance and performance of cultural practices that is stretching from music and dance to religious rituals and cuisine all need to be grasped as activities embedded in larger struggles for meaning, identity, and legitimacy. Rather than fixed remnants of an earlier time, such traditions are actually dynamic sites where contending stories of belonging and patrimony are negotiated and fought out. They function simultaneously as symbols of continuity and as sites for remaking the social and moral order following experiences of displacement and forced migration.

In this line, McGregor argues that culture can never be considered static but rather as a process. It is a continuous activity whereby some individuals, at specific moments in time, try to make sense of their lives and forge meaning through their living (Kaplanoglu, 1999, p. 22). As Aime (2004) suggests, migration becomes a

significant determinant for culture and its concepts. With this viewpoint, the old idea of cultures being isolated systems and individuals as stable beings is broken down, instead bringing to light the fluid and constant negotiation that is characteristic of cultural interactions.

The cultural elements which get carried from the origin places, and those which get formed within the recipient locations, eventually get integrated to give rise to a new cultural phenomenon. The process of adaptation to a new habitat generally begins with the learning and understanding of the local traditions. As McGregor argues, such cultural adjustment is never spontaneous but gets built up over a long period of time like a true process. Bruno Nettl also suggests that migration provokes cultural changes, which are most evident in the realm of music. Although the roles of traditional forms of music may be altered, they can also be maintained in the context of novel environments. This process makes possible the creation of hybrid, syncretic, and integrative patterns, reshapes ethnic and national identities, and speeds up the evolution of new cultural productions (Nettl, 2005, p. 335-336)

A central feature that triggers the process of learning culture is language. Chambers (2014, p. 43) aptly asserts that it is impossible for individuals to abandon their past completely and adopt a completely new language, just as it is to take on a completely new identity without challenge. We can't shed or change what we have acquired from our past life, such as knowledge, language, and identity. The cultural legacy we inherit in the form of our traditions, histories, linguistic forms, and collective identity continues to be impervious to annihilation. Yet, it is also susceptible to fragmentation, criticism, re-interpretation, and re-direction onto new paths. Our language and identity components and relations cannot be completely discarded and renounced; neither can they be fully re-assembled into a coherent, concordant, and critically engaged totality.

I have already mentioned that the population exchange between Greece and Turkey, initiated in 1923 can both temporally and materially be defined; however,

its political and cultural repercussions are still felt by both nations today. A potential alternative perspective of comprehending this compelled migration and its effects on society is through certain aspects of oral culture. A knowledge of historical occurrences or places cannot be obtained from the records kept by official historians alone. These accounts, kept by such authorities, can be biased, incomplete, or lack the thoroughness to shed light on all aspects of the happenings in question. Here, to have a full picture of the historical background of a certain event or place, one needs to invoke not only the techniques and methodology of official historiography but also literary works and more generally the oral cultural forms of that area (Fidan, 2011).

Ethnographic research on the afterlives of the 1923 Greco-Turkish population exchange has created a substantial body of work that examines how displacement is carried forward through family memory, place-making, everyday practice, and cultural production. Many studies approach the past as a living social source, mobilized in the present through oral narration, ritual, and cultural forms such as music and food<sup>14</sup>. Foundational ethnographic work by Hirschon (1989, 1991, 1996) has showed how refugee identities were negotiated through domestic space, material culture, and kinship relations, revealing the perseverance of Asia Minor memory within new urban and social settings. Subsequent research has further analyzed intergenerational memory transmission within the generations with changing constant political and social contexts<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> For memory or analyses as a socially produced and constantly negotiated process among the descendants of Asia Minor refugees, see Exertoglou (2016), who looked at the matter of how the narratives of the Asia Minor Catastrophe were transmitted and reshaped in interwar Greece through the generational story-telling process. Gedgaudaitė (2021) situates her research on the past and present in the context of the Greek cultural production of the day, showing how memories of Asia Minor circulate and by which itineraries of remembrance that relate past suffering to present-day cultural expression. Arcel (2014) gives a psychosocial viewpoint on the intergenerational trauma while Halstead (2018) talks about the situation of Greek expatriate communities from Turkey negotiating belonging all the time.

<sup>15</sup> For studies focusing on second- and third-generation experiences, see Paköz Türkeli (2016) on the intergenerational reinterpretation of population exchange memories in Greece and Turkey; Anastasopoulou (2022) on narrative transformation among refugee descendants in Greece; and Nerantzaki (2023) on symbolic identity-making and claims for recognition among Cretan-origin communities in Turkey.

Recent contributions have extended their concentration on borders and belonging. Gedgaudaitė and Stroebel (2022) bring together recent scholarship on refugee memory, borders, and belonging. On the other hand, Örs (2018) complements this by examining cosmopolitan memory narratives in Istanbul and Athens, by linking urban belonging to post-Ottoman displacement histories. For instance, Tsimouris's (2003) work on Imvros adopts an advocacy-oriented ethnographic approach that centers oral narratives not merely as sources of data, but as active sites of cultural continuity and meaning creation<sup>16</sup>. Rather than maintaining a position of detached observation, the research acknowledges the ethical and political implications on documenting the marginalized memories and to render visible voices that have viewed as peripheral within the dominant historical framework.

Building on the preceding analysis, my focus on this chapter is to investigate how music, dance, cuisine, and other intangible cultural elements have served as powerful tools for memory preservation and identity reconstruction among exchangee communities in both Izmir and Thessaloniki. Drawing on the participatory activities based on the descendants' oral testimonies, ethnographic observations, and archival research conducted in both cities, the chapter examines the transmission, transformation, and preservation of cultural traditions across generations. These traditions not only reflect the communities' efforts to maintain continuity with their ancestral pasts but also reveal adaptive strategies employed to navigate their marginal status and reconfigure a sense of belonging in unfamiliar settings.

In this chapter, I also turn to the shifting role of cultural institutions, local associations, and grassroots initiatives, and how they take part in keeping these traditions alive while also reshaping them. What struck me during the research was that these practices are not only maintained for the sake of preservation but often

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<sup>16</sup> While Tsimouris's work stands as an critical intervention, related oral history based approach can also be found in Tansuğ (2018) and Psaradaki (2021) on the oral memories of Cretan Turks in Bodrum.

reinterpreted to meet the identity needs of the present. The spatial and performative dimensions of memory became especially revealing festivals, commemorative sites, and embodied practices emerged as living spaces where the idea of "home" was not only remembered but also re-created in diasporic settings. Watching how these moments unfolded helped me see how communities weave together continuity and change, drawing on the past while navigating the realities of their present lives.

Ultimately, I discuss that cultural traditions within exchangee communities' function not merely as nostalgic relics of a lost past, but as dynamic expressions of resilience, resistance, and identity negotiation in the face of historical trauma and ongoing social change.

### **5.1 Music as a Memory Carrier in Exchangee Communities**

Through the lenses of "displacement and a sense of irreparable loss under the shadow of national identity," Clifford depicts this to reflect people's perception of identity in migrant societies (Clifford, 1994). Having undergone the trauma of integrating into a new society after population exchange, and the effort upon their part to prevent the extinction of their culture by transforming it into ritualistic application, indicates the importance of music. Music is still a substantial part of exchangee groups both in organized events and socially active media dissemination in contemporary times. The communities' "presenting" of music attests to their present sentimental attachment to their past. While the "lost homeland" discourse still dominates, as Alpan argues, in Greece, in Turkey, the exchangee identity has been limited to its terms of political and economic integration, organization, demands for citizenship, and human rights (Alpan, 2012). In other words, the national narrative linking history and migrant identity through the discourse of the lost homeland that exists in Greece has not been established in Turkey. This was also confirmed by some of the exchangees during the workshops.

Music is a language of dynamic expressions so potent that it embodies symbolic and cultural codes of a society, portrays daily life and emotions, and serves as a social instrument epitomizing peculiarities of both individuals and communities. It cemented its identity as a society, transmitting its narratives from the past into the future. Such a belief becomes especially viable among displaced communities who opt for a stronger preservation of cultural consciousness. Therefore, it would not be incorrect to state that exchangees are more conscious than others of the preservation of their musical traditions.

According to Nettl (2005, p. 75), the need for a particular music and repertoire, the choices of language, instruments, and musical structure that give a sense of ethnicity, are of paramount importance in representing the cultural identity of a group. The researchers say that, in Greece since the 1980s, there appears to have been an increasing desire to connect again with Anatolian music (Samson, 2013). This trend closely parallels the revival of traditional music in Greek musical culture, which sparked another interest in Turkish music. *Rembetiko*, while being a genre with Greek lyrics, harmonizes with Anatolian musical forms and modal (*makam*) features. Thus, for a long time in Greece, it had been considered Eastern such as the other and even corrupt wandering through various channels of censorship and prejudice.

While enjoying permanent popularity amongst the common folk, the state largely undermined this repertoire. A few musicologists and intellectuals went against these views, challenging that *Rembetiko* music demanded by the people was in fact an authentic Greek musical form and tried connecting it to a Greek historical narrative dating back to Byzantium and even to ancient times (Zaimakis, 2010). Izmir played an important role in the history of *Rembetiko*. Pallis called Izmir, describing it as the cradle of the Hellenic race. Besides its great musical history, the fact that many rebetiko performers were exchangees also underscores the transmission and assimilation of Anatolian melodies within the Izmir-style rebetiko repertoire under the name of "Izmir songs" (Pallis, 1997).

In his fieldwork undertaken in southern Albania near the Greek border, Pistrick (2008) describes the manner in which individuals and communities problematize their cultural differences, their relationship with a homogeneous state, and the way they feel about belonging to it, through the common musical practices of melody, dance, and bilingual lyrical production. According to Pistrick, "Singing can be said to have acted for musicians as a means to create and even erase regional and transnational borders" (Pistrick, 2008). For Turkish and Greek musicians working with collective strength, establishing a discourse based on a shared song from Izmir has become a means to handle the question of common cultural heritage between two societies long overshadowed by political tensions.

Many bilingual tunes, considered to be the traditional and still well-known songs in both Turkey and Greece, go along with the traditional sounds with which they transcend their borders. These shared songs often heard in Turkish in Turkey and either Greek or Turkish in Greece are heard in cities, local festivals, and traditional fairs. Since the early 2000s, Turkish and Greek musicians and choirs, often affiliated with population exchange associations from both countries, have actively performed bilingual songs during ceremonies commemorating the Population Exchange, as well as during concerts organized in the name of peace and friendship (Tsekouras, 2016).

Recently, the dialogical types of Pontic singing have become visible once again in the context of commemorative and transnational settings. Tsekouras in his performance analysis based on the memory of Santa indicates that bilingual call-and-response singing creates the communicative way for performers to express their feelings of loss, displacement, and belonging over the language barrier. Since the early 2000s, these kinds of performances have found their way more and more often into population exchange commemorations and peace-oriented cultural events, where music works as a medium to negotiate shared but still contested pasts (Tsekouras, 2024).

One of the milestones of my fieldwork in Thessaloniki came during my visits to the Katirliton Association “ΣΥΛΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΤΙΡΛΙΩΤΩΝ ΑΓΙΟΣ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΠΡΟΔΡΟΜΟΣ”<sup>17</sup>. In the meetings there, bilingual songs were shared, sung in both Greek and Turkish, and this became a turning point in my understanding of how exchangee memory is preserved and reimagined through music. When sitting in the midst of community members, listening to songs they knew from previous settings but now altered, the weight of history seemed to rest in that very room. To my mind, this was more than mere data collection: the realization hit me that memory exists not just in words or monuments, but also in sound, voice, and performance. It is through such experiences that I came to look upon cultural practices in this thesis, not as remnants of their freezing past, but as living entities bearing identity with a potent vocabulary in loss and continuity.

Initially said to be a lament peculiar to the Cretan exchangees, *Fourtuna* was adopted by other exchangee groups and danced to in the bilingual performance that we recorded in the field. The song is anonymous. Its story is known as: on a stormy day, a woman would beg her husband not to go fishing. But because he had to raise a living, the man went out to sea and was never seen again. Days went by, with no trace of him being seen anywhere. Grief-stricken, the woman went down to the shore and uttered the following lines to the sea. The lament is considered to have been composed by the illiterate fisherman's wife who had to courageously go to the open sea, like many others who lived along the Cretan coastline, where little fishing was done close to shore. The lament would have read the following, translated into English:

I told you once and say it again,  
Don't go down to the seashore.  
The sea makes waves;  
It will take you and get lost (in the waves).

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<sup>17</sup> Singing Fourtuna with Katirliton Exchangees:  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HlnS17UlgcrthEA-LJqPLuRKunU63Ft/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HlnS17UlgcrthEA-LJqPLuRKunU63Ft/view?usp=drive_link)

If it takes me, it will take me  
Down to the deep waters.  
I'll make my body a boat  
And my hands oars,  
My handkerchief a sail,  
I come and go to the shore.

I told you once and say it again,  
Don't write me any letters because  
I don't know letters (meaning I don't know how to read)  
And I start crying.

Through this song and the shared sense of nostalgia it evoked, I was able to connect more deeply with the community. During the trust-building process, such songs played a crucial role not only in fostering emotional closeness but also in cultivating mutual understanding and a sense of shared cultural memory within our collaboration with the association. Being able to perpetually revive this particular song during the annual commemorative events kept alive by the Aegean Regional Branch of the Lausanne Treaty Emigrants Foundation also demonstrates the symbolic value placed upon it by members of the community<sup>18</sup>. The very history of recurrence of this song in the ceremonies testifies to its potential to breathe life into the corpse of cultural memory and fortify collective identity across generations of exchangee descendants.

This reflection of shared nostalgia for Anatolia on the Greek side and then on the Turkish has brought together many new Turkish and Greek musicians for collaborative projects (Stokes, 2010). One prominent example is Café Aman İstanbul, an Istanbul-based ensemble that has regularly collaborated with Greek

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<sup>18</sup> Such song is also performed during the commemorative event on the 30.01.2024  
<https://youtu.be/UXmaJnApX50?si=4zrqgbvNMwnxsIUS>

musicians in performances reviving *Smyrneika* and rebetiko traditions. Through concerts in Turkey, Greece, and Europe, *Café Aman İstanbul* has contributed to the rearticulation of a shared urban musical heritage that transcends national boundaries and foregrounds common histories of coexistence<sup>19</sup>. For instance, in 2015, the Okeanos Greek Ensemble from Izmir, founded by Evrim Ateş, with musicians from Thessaloniki, created the Orchestra of the Two Shores (Neabanda, or New Orchestra) to participate in the documentary project *Journey to Smyrna*.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, between 2022 and 2024, Evrim Ateş, in collaboration with the İzmir Metropolitan Municipality, organized a series of concerts performed by the *Mübadil* Choir. These concerts featured six-language Balkan songs.<sup>21</sup>

## 5.2 Dance Traditions and Embodied Memory in Izmir and Thessaloniki

A body is an intermediary placed between personal and collective memory and between individual subjectivity and collective identities. Under these terms, memory and the body are very inclusive, including all these dimensions at the same time. A body effortlessly waltzes across shifting contexts and encounters, settling any arguments between past and present (Geise & Keightley, 2022). Body-mediated performances of memory, in any case, seem to incarnate and react to the social environment of the individual. In this regard, dance, "through its predominantly embodied modes of transmission, shows a tendency to foreground cultural memory as a tangible and enacted practice" (Buckland, 2001).

Traditional dances represent cultural acts conducted in a geographical and local context. When this local setting changed through the general migration process, the altered socio-spatial limits also altered the cultural practices of the community. The city of Izmir laid a dreamlike atmosphere where people created a community and viewed taverns and restaurants as loci of enjoyment with live music

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<sup>19</sup> For further information on *Café Aman İstanbul* see the ensemble's website and Instagram page: <https://eternalcityistanbul.com/cafe-aman-istanbul/> ; <https://www.instagram.com/cafeamanistanbul/>

<sup>20</sup> *Journey to Smyrna*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8TA5quxIoA>

<sup>21</sup> The concert on the 31st of May 2022 published on Youtube <https://youtu.be/ozun5Mkds5A?si=tafoPYfmtMoq6wrQ>

and dancing. Izmir folk songs were dear to the communities and hence they used to keep alive their traditional dances called *karşılama*, *zeybek*, and *kasap havası / hasapiko* (the butcher's dance).

In June 2024, I had the privilege of taking part in the Kalamaria Dance Festival in Thessaloniki. Watching members of the Katirliton Association, now in their second and third generations, step into traditional costumes and bring to life the dances of their ancestors was a powerful moment in my fieldwork. For me, this was not just a performance to observe; it was an embodied act of memory, where movement and costume carried stories of displacement and belonging. Watching the younger generation perform reminded me that cultural practices are not static but are dynamic and renewing themselves. This was the turning point in my thoughts on the processes by which exchangee traditions travel through time, adapting themselves to modern-day contexts without severing the core ties with the past<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Kalamaria Dance Festival 13.06.2024  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Zlt0jTRDIJ2-Fm\\_Er3yZMhyOCx6ID7gx/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Zlt0jTRDIJ2-Fm_Er3yZMhyOCx6ID7gx/view?usp=drive_link)



Figure 6: A photo with the members of the Katirliton Association on 13.06.2024 during the dance festival

Of all these, the main traditional dance of the Turkish inhabitants settled in the rural areas of Izmir is *zeybek*. The dance is held mostly in open-air settings, with slow and noble melodies playing as backdrop, accompanied by such instruments as *davul* (drum) and *zurna* or alternatively, *çığırma* and *darbuka*. It can be danced solo (alone), in pairs, or in small groups forming a circle. The tempo of the *zeybek* music is considerably slower compared to other traditional dance music's as a musical phrase being in 9 beats while the step pattern in 8 counts. Although traditionally a male dance, it can also be danced by women.

This thesis does not attempt to give a comprehensive study of the Pontic community, yet my encounters with them during fieldwork left a lasting impression. Engaging with what many describe as the “Pontic world” offered insight into the warmth and hospitality that coexisted with the broader political tensions between

Turkey and Greece over genocide<sup>23</sup> accusations. The Pontian's, an ethnic Greek group native to the region of Pontus along the Black Sea coast in what is now northeastern Turkey, carry with them a distinct dialect, unique traditions, and a rich musical and dance culture. I also passed through the village of Panagia in May 2024, where I joined their commemorative events and witnessed the power of dance as an expression of memory for the genocide<sup>24</sup>. Being present in that moment as a Turkish researcher revealed to me how such embodied practices not only preserve history but also renew communal bonds and identity across generations<sup>25</sup>.

Pontic dance is a symbol of resilience, collective memory, and identity. Sharp, vigorous steps and formations of groups are the basic elements of these dances, which generally narrate the stories of endurance, survival, and attachment toward ancestral lands. According to Manos (2020), in fact, dance is not absent from the socio-political processes, but it establishes the medium through which people portray their stands. In recreating its collective identity in the new environment, the community will often depend upon dancing and music as carriers of collective cultural memory.

From a perspective whereby Tsekouras (2024) emphasizes that the dynamics of Pontic performing arts also capture the act of dance and *muhabeti*;

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<sup>23</sup> The term "Pontic genocide" is applied to the events of mass violence, forced displacement, and death experienced by Greek Orthodox populations in the Black Sea region during the last years of the Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish nationalist period (1913-1923). Still, the classification of this mass violence is an ongoing dispute among historians. Some scholars see it as part of the wider cleansing or genocidal policies against Ottoman Christians (Akçam, 2006; Hofmann, 2012), while others view it through war, population exchange, and the process of state building (Alexandris, 1999; Pentzopoulos, 2002 [1962]). The figures fluctuate from approximately 15,000 to over 350,000 (Agtzidis, 2003), 2013; Alexandris, 1999; Pentzopoulos, 2002 [1962]). The existence of these discrepancies highlights the lack of consensus among scholars, thereby fueling the historiographical debate and the ongoing political discussions between Greece and Turkey.

<sup>24</sup> The commemoration of the Pontic genocide is observed annually on May 19 by Pontic associations and institutions. The selection of this day coincides with May 19, 1919, which is the day when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk initiated the nationalist movement and is regarded as the beginning of the Turkish War of Independence. The contrast of the narratives also appears on the commemoration day with alternative histories of violence and displacement. (Charalambidis, 2004)

<sup>25</sup> Pontic Events on 06.05.2024

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/15WXlrXayHTbO7IWLLqIxJOH7mcr4IM1M/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/15WXlrXayHTbO7IWLLqIxJOH7mcr4IM1M/view?usp=drive_link)

which is one of the forms of resilience of the Pontic community that can be described as an intimate social gathering where people come together as a collective and share food, drink, and music for enjoyment. Both dance and *muhabeti* are everyday acts of resistance against the impacts of separation and oppression and endure relevance in present-day contexts. Furthermore, dance and *muhabeti* are used to process trauma during difficulties such as loss and forced relocation.

In the context of dance, personal experiences and emotions related to dislocation exist in a collective social environment where everyone can share their experiences with each other. People in the community may express sadness as an emotional response by dancing, while at the same time, other members of the community will respond to that sadness with an emotional response to the person through their danced physical interaction with that person. As these occur between individuals within a community, the community creates stronger internal bonds and preserves the sense of belonging together formed from collective histories of migration (being moved away) and homelessness.

### **5.3 Culinary Heritage and the Taste of Memory**

Food is a basic necessity for human survival. It exists in perfect alignment with human existence and remains one of the very essential parts of life for man. Variables such as the geography in which cultural groups reside, the human diversity of that geography, the groups' way of subsistence, and the religious beliefs determine not only how this biological need is fulfilled but also confer symbolic meanings to food. And conversely, food becomes a matter of culture. It shows status and power relations, reflects social differentiation, constitute a dialectical relation to religious beliefs, and reproduce social roles (Beşirli, 2010).

Food consumption, according to Harris, is first a matter related to social memory and only later with the stomach, and foods are consumed not necessarily because they taste good, but because they satisfy various socially learned needs and are embedded in the social memory (Harris, 1998). Food is interwoven with

multiple cultural aspects such as identity, memory, social structure, and rituals around human life. From my perspective, food and memory are deeply intertwined, often carrying meanings that extend far beyond nourishment. For instance, bread has very different connotations depending on the cultural and religious setting: in Islam it is seen as a blessing, while in Christianity it symbolizes the body of Christ. Likewise, alcohol is prohibited in Islam but holds a place in Jewish tradition. Over time, these distinctions settle into the fabric of collective memory and identity, shaping the way communities understand themselves and others.

One of the functions of the food is identity building and consolidation. Memory and identity complement each other in the aspect of bringing about continuity. According to Olick (2014), remembering has the intrinsic value of unifying and bringing the community together. To remember is to reinstate the community. Therefore, he notes, some scholars have suggested the notion of "memory communities" rather than simply "community" to underscore the importance of foundational narratives in this context. According to his views, "individual and collective identity are not separate phenomena but rather two sides of the same coin."

This section focuses on the culinary practices observed during fieldwork with exchangee communities who predominantly resettled in Thessaloniki and İzmir. The culinary traditions of Cretan exchangees, however, are set aside here, as they merit dedicated attention and will be examined in detail in the following chapters. Besides culinary variety, an exchange community from Thessaloniki cuisine has differential characteristics from other groups. A food culture serves, in turn, to maintain the group's differentiation within day-to-day life and strengthens individual senses of belonging within the group. They are also mechanisms of remembering.

The emphasis is stronger on ritual feasts. At certain times of the year, ceremonies are held, and people simply know instinctively what to do. In fact, the rituals leave very little space for individual improvisation as the order in which

events occur, the people involved, and the structure and content of activities are all social constructs. These events are fixed in collective memories and repeated annually, by so doing, guarding against forgetfulness. Similarly, the foods prepared for the occasion are clearly defined and hardly ever changed. Thus, sharing the ritual meal strongly binds the community to one another.



Figure 7: Kapama Bread (Örnek, 2023)

Among Thessaloniki exchangees, considerable importance is attached to the ritual preparation of *nohutlu ekmek* (bread with chickpeas) on the eves of Kurban and Ramadan festivities. The bread in question has often been considered a non-staling one, but this characteristic is not unanimously accepted by all Thessaloniki migrants. Those who do underline this feature say that such bread was made during holidays and weddings-namely the days that did not really permit the baking of bread on a daily basis. This custom is still observed by the Thessaloniki exchangees of today. The bread is made in an act of solidarity and thereby strengthens communal identity. *Nohutlu ekmek* is one of the foods that distinguishes Thessaloniki exchangees from other groups. Thessaloniki bread is baked by means of a *kapama* type baking; this is a method involving an apparatus consisting of a tray and a lid which resembles an oven, where the bread is baked on top of the lid. This technique and method of baking are taught and passed down through generations.

For the exchangees from Thessaloniki, Greek names are still given to dishes, especially to underscore their more distinctly Anatolian way of cooking. Anatolia is rich in savory pastries (*börek*). In the Thessaloniki exchangee community, there are many pastries referred to as *pita*, which are typically filled with fillings such as onions, cheese, or spinach. Such pastries became widespread in the post-exchange period, particularly when meat was less frequently available. Throughout my fieldwork, the participants in Izmir often indicated that their cuisine generally only created dishes that were limited by scarcity.

Olick (2014, p. 194) believes remembering is a form of integration. This is evidenced in the reaction of the Thessaloniki exchangees, who historically produced *helva* (a semolina-based dish, involving milk and sugar) after a person has died. *Helva* was produced in the mosque courtyards during the time of the post-exchange, when there were so many deaths (from epidemics) that the term "*helva* house" emerged to describe a mosque courtyard where *helva* was cooked. The continued malleability of the spirit in time before a funeral was recognized as potentially influenced by the pleasant smell of fresh *helva*. The *helva* made was to be consumed collectively. Wertsch (2015) reiterates that what is collective about collective memory is that members of a group share similar narrative resources. He states that "a group is identifiable with respect to how its members draw upon and engage with their shared narrative resources." The practice of *helva* preparation, trauma is reworked and narrated to both individuals in and out of the community.

As previously noted, the exchangees were not resettled in regions where they had previously lived outside the community of exchangees, and this challenge also influenced their cooking practices. Many of them cultivated only one agricultural crop, tobacco and others also learned multiple sorts of agriculture gradually. But they continued to practice their cooking traditions. A number of the sweet (chocolate, sugar, condiments) recipes that the exchangees brought are still influencing and creating new configurations of Turkish *börek* culture. Rice pudding (*sütlaç*) recipes have been adapted from Thessaloniki and adopted in Turkey over

time. *Lokum* (Turkish delight) recipes and other desserts brought by the exchangees have fit into broader Turkish dessert culture with "*Selanik lokumu*" being recognized eventually. On special occasions organized by exchangee communities, dishes from the Thessaloniki culinary tradition were served to keep the culture alive. Due to their traditionally high meat consumption, dishes like *Keftedákia* (meatballs) became increasingly common.

Today exchangees frequently share recipes and organize activities together across various platforms to keep their culinary culture alive. One such project is "*Asırlık Mübadil Lezzetler*" ("Centennial Exchangee Flavors"), formulated by the Samsun Balkan Turks Association. With this project, a collection of 160 almost forgotten exchangee recipes from four cities was compiled into a cookbook and disseminated through social media. In doing so, they documented and preserved these 160 traditional dishes<sup>26</sup>.

Cookbooks also play an important part in safeguarding Pontic Greek culinary traditions, not simply as collections of recipes but as written vessels of memory. Recording traditional dishes, techniques, and culinary practices captures bits of a cultural world that was shaped by displacement. Each recipe is a little archive that preserves not only the preparation of food but also the Pontic identity that has been lived and remembered through the ages. Pontic people are very much reflected in the publication of the new cookbooks devoted to the Pontic Greeks and their foodways. The focus of attention is not only on books but also on two covers of the well-known cooking magazine *Gastronomos*, which is widely circulated in the country, that are dedicated to Greek Pontic cuisine, as well as on the increasing number of food-oriented events organized by local cultural associations (Keramaris, 2022).

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<sup>26</sup> To follow their social media accounts:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/asirlikmubadillezzetler>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/asirlikmubadillezzetler/>

Now, interchangeably, dishes become precious cultural linings of the exchange of culinary heritage. Sometimes a dish(s) becomes part of the conflict between Turkish and the Greek. As dishes circulate across borders, they acquire a status of precious cultural lining so certain dishes like baklava, coffee become sites of contestation. As Örs argues this as the cuisine is embedded in complex power relations, food can become and object of struggle over ownership and a vehicle for symbolic representation on international platforms (Örs, 2024).

Yenal's (2016) examination of the so-called "myth" of Turkish cuisine highlights the fact that narratives around the national delicacies are not the result of passive inheriting but rather of careful curating. By describing Turkish cuisine as a refined and intricate blend of regional influences, the richness is constantly attributed to the Ottoman imperial legacy and the geographical position of Anatolia at the junction of ancient food routes. This does not merely show the historical processes of culinary exchange; it also tells us a history where diversity, sophistication, and cultural interaction are turned into sources of collective pride. So, the cuisine becomes an assertion of historical depth and civilizational continuity, enabling the state to view itself as both welcoming and culturally authoritative.

The Ottoman past is therefore used not only as history but also as a legitimizing means that links the current identity to a prestigious and cosmopolitan line (Soysal, 2000). With this understanding, Turkish cuisine becomes sort of a storytelling tool that brings together diversity and shows complexity as one of the inherited national virtues. This narrative process, similar to that of other national food narratives, uncovers how cuisine positions through which national mythologies are created, negotiated, and made culturally persuasive, thus incorporating political imagination into ordinary practices of eating and remembering.

Paying attention to the layered nature of Aegean cuisine opens up another way of thinking about Greek Turkish relations, one that moves away from solid

boundaries and toward shared experiences of these populations. When culinary complexity is foregrounded, food begins to tell a story of movement, contact, and long-term coexistence rather than rivalry. As Türker (2018) says, this kind of taking up can be seen as a kind of gastrodiploacy that uses food as a way of dialogue rather than conflict. The recognition of the baklava, dolma or *keftedes* as common dishes and the overlapping culinary practices such as the recognition of these dishes in Greece and Turkey all contribute to the emergence of the discourses of cultural proximity. Such narratives do not deny the differences; rather, they place the similarities within a wider history of exchange and coexistence.

My own research encounters with participants in both Greece and Turkey repeatedly returned to food as a powerful way of belonging. Exchangees indicated that cooking traditional meals provided transient feelings of connection to their homeland. So, food becomes a source of continuity and gives importance to the acts of defending. A common theme was the depth of connection that the younger generations have with the knowledge of cuisine passed down from previous generations. Even among fourth-generation descendants, there is a visible desire to learn traditional recipes and to pass them on to younger family members. This interest cannot frame as nostalgia alone, but as a responsibility, a way of maintaining connection to a past that might otherwise feel distant.

Thus, the recognition of several influences and intertwined food histories makes one rethink the claims of exclusive ownership and presents the cuisine as a cultural ground shared by all. Framed this way, the Aegean foodscape becomes a space where histories overlap and boundaries blur. Maybe instead of asking where a dish “belongs,” attention shifts to how it has travelled, changed, and been shared over time. What is of utmost importance is that these two communities coexisted for a long time and mutually enriched each other’s food cultures. It is more meaningful to celebrate the wealth this intertwined culture has created for the two cultures rather than bickering about its inception.

## **5.4 The Role of Cultural Institutions and Associations in Preserving**

### **Traditions**

Through the ages, cultural and local institutions have been the very bones upon which traditions, memory, and identity are held and passed down. These entities do not simply preserve cultural heritage but are rather active agents and arenas for the recreation of collective memory, cultural pride, and intergenerational dialogue.

After resettlement, exchangees both in Turkey and Greece have felt a social need to preserve and transmit their past experiences to new generations, along with their amassed knowledge and cultural values. Sometimes this need expresses itself in a strong feeling of belonging to a particular group or into an identity. To fulfill these needs, civil society has played a crucial role in fostering spatial and institutional forms of togetherness. According to Keyman (2004), civil society is conceived of as the arena in which individuals voluntarily come together to carry out different collective actions they cannot accomplish alone; in this regard, civil society is an enactment of solidarity, voluntarism, and collective agency. Thus, agencies within these organizations have become important frameworks through which these exchangee communities maintain identity, foster a sense of belonging, and ensure continuity between generations.

From the start, coffeehouses in neighborhoods and villages cannot be incorrectly considered as the earliest civil society spaces. The coffeehouses were among the most important spaces for social interaction (Bayındır-Goularas, 2012, p.131). Beyond their social function, such everyday spaces also played a crucial role in sustaining memory and identity. Örs illustrates that cafés, open-air markets, and communal dining are places of implicit memory where urban identity is re-created and passed on to areas outside the original city (Örs, 2018, pp. 21–22).

Building on this insight, it becomes possible to understand why Greece and Turkey followed markedly different trajectories in the formation of exchangee

organizations. Greece and Turkey, however, had very different paths when it came to the creation of exchange organizations. Turkey did witness similar forms of organized exchange associations developing in the first decade of the 21st century, but in Greece, the refugee associations were already present in the very first decades after the population exchange. Salvanou (2013, p. 6) mentions that among the first associations, the ones formed in urban settings and led by intellectuals played the main role and that these groups sought to frame displacement as part of a broader national history and thus to integrate refugees into the Greek national narrative. Through such early institutional initiatives, refugee experiences were connected with national identity, thus enabling the formation of collective memory at a much earlier stage.

According to Triadafilopoulos (1998, p. 25), the refugee associations operating in Greece took on a very political role and became direct vehicles for the mobilization strategies of the Venizelist political parties. However, this relative political cohesion did not persist. Triadafilopoulos further mentions that World War II and civil war, changed this social and political status in the post 1940s. The visibility of refugee associations in the Greek historiography was greatly enhanced during the 1970s. One of the most notable viewpoints was expressed by Salvanou (2013, p. 10) who stated that this epoch changed the refugee's position from being passive subjects into active political agents within Greek social life. Salvanou further maintains that this politicization provided both the ground and the motivation for the renewed activity of refugee associations. As Hirschon (2014, p. 37) also observes, many Greek homeland associations became "noticeably nationalistic and vociferous" in their claims-making by the late twentieth century. In particular, this shift is evident in the case of Pontic community. The Pontic genocide discourse created new opportunities for collective mobilization, becoming a central axis around which many Pontic refugee associations reorganized their agendas (Hassiotis, 2006, p.46). By the late twentieth century, this narrative had already become so intertwined with the identity and political discourse of many Pontus associations that it reinforced their role as actors in contemporary memory politics (Salvanou, 2013, p. 11).

In Turkey, exchangee associations became publicly visible much later than in Greece, which was inextricably linked to internal migration and the process of urbanization. Toumarkine interprets this like, the Republic era large-scale rural-to-urban migration led to the creation of new types of collective organizations among migrants which were mainly in urban centers. The first associations of migrants in Turkey were largely composed of people coming from the Balkans and the Caucasus, whose identities were easier to integrate into the larger stories of migration and national belonging (Toumarkine, 2001). However, Işıkcı points out that the path of migrant associations was not straight. A major break occurred after the political interference of the 1930s, when associational life was severely restricted and many civil organizations were dissolved or rendered inactive. It was not until the 1990s that migrant associations became visible again, and this very much depended on the shifts in Turkey's foreign policy. The Balkans and the Muslim population of the area became major concerns of Turkish foreign policy during this time, which in turn resulted in either the support or at least the toleration of migrant and Balkan origin associations by the government (Işıkcı, 2018).

As far as the basic objectives and operating fields of exchangee associations are concerned, the counterparts commonly exhibit a considerable similarity both in Greece and Turkey. Generally speaking, the basic objectives are: to do scientific research on the population exchange and to lay documentation of its history; to save and sustain the culture and traditions of the exchangees, including artistic and folkloric values; to foster among peoples a culture of peace; to improve members' economic, social, and cultural knowledge; to introduce local customs and traditions to the younger generation so that these traditions will be carried over to future generations; to promote the social, economic, and cultural solidarity of the members; to foster feelings of affection and friendship among members; and to encourage cooperation and unity.

For these purposes, they collect and exhibit documents, records, photographs, films, posters, books, journals, clothing items, and memorabilia of cultural and historical significance. They also aspire to establish centers of

documentation for the publication of newspapers, magazines, and books and organize scientific meetings concerning their specialties. Their other fields of action include cultural, social, artistic, and sporting events, forming community groups, and offering training courses. These include organizing gatherings with meals, picnics, charity fairs, festivals, folk dance performances, balls, concerts, exhibitions, theater productions, excursions, and other entertainment events.

According to the General Directorate of Civil Society Relations, which exists under the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Türkiye, 80 associations function in İzmir (T.C. Ministry of Interior, 2025). Still, since almost all of these function as Balkan migrant associations, the number of associations specifically working for the population exchange issue tends to be lower. My research period also concluded that, in İzmir, the Lausanne Exchangees Association is the most active association working in the population exchange field. Most of their engagements revolve around music; moreover, the choirs themselves are active. Associations of this nature organize various other activities and events, including educational and artistic activities, festivals, celebrations, and symposiums.

In contrast, the landscape of refugee associations in Greece appears considerably more extensive. Existing studies estimate that more than 150 refugee associations were active nationwide as of 2017 (Bayındır-Goularas, 2017, p. 118). In Greece, it is most commonly the case that exchangee associations are on a small-scale and locality-based model, with the organization often being around a specific village, town, or micro-region of origin in Asia Minor or Pontus. Instead of coming from broad migratory categories, the membership is mostly based on shared ancestry and place-based memory, resulting in highly cohesive but community-specific organizations. Thessaloniki is a model of this pattern, where a number of associations are still very active at the local level, preserving unique identities, dialects, commemorative practices, and genealogical narratives connected with specific places of origin. The *Katirliton Association*, for instance, with its largely membership composed of descendants of one village's former inhabitants, is a perfect example of this localized and kinship-oriented model of organization.

On the other hand, associations in Turkey mostly function at a wider and more inclusive organizational level, usually under the umbrella of “Balkan immigrants”. Data from İzmir shows that these associations do not often make a distinction between specific places of origin or exchange experiences, but rather, they focus on a generic migrant identity. This structural difference affects memory transmission in a significant way: the Greek model promotes the detailed micro-histories and strong attachments to ancestral localities, while the Turkish model builds solidarity through broad networks but, at the same time often obscures the particularities of the population exchange experience.

Obviously, such an identity does little if any good to guarantee the preservation of the highly specific exchangee experience; another result is that exchangees themselves rarely acquire information about where their ancestors came from. This difference has also been witnessed from a governmental point of view: Greece affords more access to archival records and strives to preserve and disseminate collective memory regarding places of origin. Conversely, in Turkey, the identity of being a *mübadil* remains complex and somewhat controversial. This stems from multiple factors, including national narratives that prioritize a homogenized Turkish identity over pluralistic or regionally distinct heritages. Public discourse has very often stressed underrepresented or subsumed within broader categories like “immigrant” or “Balkan Turk,” making it more difficult for descendants to access information, assert cultural distinctiveness, or maintain links to their historical roots.

In Greece, I have also seen a strong sense of community among descendants of exchangees, along with a clear separation between the smaller-scale communities. These communities are not only socially active but are often organized through formal associations and federations dedicated to preserving local memory, traditions, and cultural practices. For instance, the Federation of Refugee

Associations of Greece (Ομοσπονδία Προσφυγικών Σωματείων Ελλάδος, OPSE)<sup>27</sup>, founded in 1984, serves as the oldest secondary body uniting numerous Asia Minor associations across the country with reference to origins from regions such as Pontus, Constantinople, Imvros, Tenedos, and Eastern Thrace, with headquarters in Athens and a branch in Thessaloniki.

The associations tend to be very active in maintaining local memory, dialects, and customs, and they are varied and frequently centered around a single village or town of origin. A rich mosaic of micro-histories within the larger exchangee narrative is produced by this localized approach, which strengthens a strong attachment to particular locations of ancestral origin. Through commemorative events, publications, and cultural activities, these organizations actively maintain local dialects, folklore, and customs, while reinforcing strong attachments to specific ancestral locations. But this intense localization also results in a fragmented environment where there is little room for national collective organization. Even though each association works hard to protect and promote its own heritage, it may be difficult to create a unified effort if these groups don't coordinate or work together. In this way, the variety of active associations fosters a certain insularity in which communities are more invested in their unique histories than in a single exchangee identity, as well as the richness of cultural preservation.

### **5.5 Memory Spaces and Key Locations in Izmir and Thessaloniki**

The forced geographic displacement is unquestionable as the principal cause behind adopting the search for roots and identity through the generations by the population exchangees. In the 1990s, the uprising of civil societies and the organization of excursions by associations started to garner interest for the rejuvenation of exchange-related sites. If anything, museums and memorial houses created with assistance from municipalities to preserve the memory of the exchange

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<sup>27</sup> For more information on the Federation and the network visit:  
<https://mikrasiatis.gr/mikrasiatika-somateia/>

act as the best institution for understanding the past and creating a link to the future. The very first instance of such an undertaking in Turkey is the Population Exchange Museum in Çatalca in Istanbul<sup>28</sup>.

One of the aims that were put forward during the establishment of the Lausanne Exchange Foundation (Lozan Mübadilleri Vakfı, LMV) in 2001 was a museum dedicated to the memory of the population exchange. The museum was supported by the Municipality of Çatalca, which provided staff and resources throughout the construction process, and came through the bureaucratic obstacles and difficult weather conditions the museum was completed on 18 December 2010. The Population Exchange Museum was then opened to the public on 20 December 2010 with a public ceremony. The museum, which was acknowledged as the first one in Turkey that was specifically intended for migration and population exchange, was the center of large national and international media attention and thus the moment of migration memory institutionalization in Turkey was marked.

As of now, there are ten population exchange museums/memorial houses spread all over Turkey<sup>29</sup>.

Although the exact number remains unknown, some of the most prominent examples of population exchange-related museums in Greece include the Museum of Asia Minor Hellenism (Filio Chaidemenou) in Athens, the Museum of Greek Refugees in Kavala, and the Nea Smyrni Hearth Museum. A common feature shared by museums in both Turkey and Greece is the exhibition of ethnographic objects, including everyday household items, clothing, and photographs. During the course

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<sup>28</sup> For more information of the museum: <http://www.lozanmubadilleri.org.tr/catalca-mubadele-muzesi/>

<sup>29</sup> As of 2025, the museums and memorial houses in Turkey that have been established and maintain a focus on the population exchange within their collections are as follows: the Population Exchange Museum in Çatalca (Istanbul), the Population Exchange Museum in Alaçam (Samsun), the Foça Historical Center (Izmir), the Tuzla City and Population Exchange Museum (Istanbul), the Migration History Museum (Bursa), the Görükle Population Exchange House (Bursa), the Migration and Population Exchange Memorial House (Izmir), the Kuşadası Population Exchange Memorial House (Aydın), the Yoran Population Exchange and Cultural House (Aydın), and the Population Exchange Museum and Cultural House (Sinop).

of my research, I had the opportunity to visit the Migration and Population Exchange Memorial House in Izmir and the memorial house belonging to the Mikrasiates Association in Chania, Crete.

This memorial house for Migration and Population Exchange is in the Buca district of Izmir. Governed and run by the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality (IMM), it was opened to the public in 2018. This 116 years old historical edifice in Kasaplar Square of Buca, with views over the square and the area around it, used to belong to a Greek family before the population exchange; after restoration, it was converted into a museum. Starting with the establishment of the museum and the creation of its collection, through the conducting of a symposium aimed at serving as a scientific basis for the museum, to the collection of written and visual materials for exhibiting, the Ahmet Piriştina City Archive and Museum (APIKAM) has been in constant action. This agency, operating under the Municipality itself, was involved in all stages of the process.



*Figure 8: Photos from The Migration and Exchange Memory House (photo taken by the author in November 2023)*

The museum's primary goals are to raise awareness of the population exchange and its events, preserve the cultural heritage that has been hidden in exchangee families for years, organize events to promote this heritage, and, lastly, promote friendship, affection, and cooperation between the Greek and Turkish peoples who experienced the population exchange. The museum's primary goals are to raise awareness of the

population exchange and its events, preserve the cultural heritage that has been hidden in exchangee families for years, organize events to promote this heritage, and, lastly, promote friendship, affection, and cooperation between the Greek and Turkish peoples who experienced the population exchange.

The museum's collection was largely influenced by public donations, scholarly research on the exchange, and oral history interviews with migrant families and foundations/associations in Buca, an area known to have had a predominately Greek population before the exchange. Both the museum's establishment and the artifact collection were greatly influenced by civil society organizations. Including both exhibited and stored items, the museum houses approximately 500 objects. These are primarily composed of family and special occasion photographs, diplomas, marriage certificate, population exchange documents, garments, trunks, and everyday household items.

According to Foucault, space is a fundamental component of communal life. When considered from this perspective, the practice of producing space is essentially an act of recalling the self (Crampton, 2007; Stuart Elden, 2007). In their new settlement, the exchangees should have forgotten the homes they were forced to leave behind and should have found an abode in their new circumstances. But the other side of this story is that the infliction of the homesite had been an entire world wherein the social life and group relations were reproduced. This led the exchangees to undertake the projection of recreating the homes that had been left behind and, also, creating memory spaces wherein they could reproduce their cultural imagery. I observed this while conducting research. One of the questions I posed to the exchangees was, "If I were to ask you where your home is, what would your answer be?" They seemed adroitly capable of constructing places that helped them with their recollections within exchangee memory.

During our community mapping workshops, we identified certain areas in Izmir that served as hotspots for exchangee settlements, namely Buca, Bornova, and Gaziemir. Bornova, whose oldest known name is "*Birun-u Abad*", has had

settlements dating back to the Hellenistic era. Although it appears as "*Birunabad*" in Ottoman records, the mismatch between the Persian word "*birun*", meaning "outer" or "external", and the suffix "-abad" typically used in conjunction with a proper noun in place names (such as Islamabad or Haydarabad), suggests that "*Birunabad*" might be a distorted or adapted form of another name. It has been suggested that the name initially appeared as "*Burunova*"<sup>30</sup>.

After the War of Independence, the Greek population was forced to leave Bornova, while some of the Levantines continued to live there. Over time, Bornova replaced its population loss from the Greek migration with immigrants from the Balkans, Crete, and Anatolia. Known for its greenery, okra, tomatoes, pomegranate orchards, and picnic areas, Bornova has hosted various cultures throughout history and continues to uphold this legacy.

Today, many coffeehouses are still to a great extent important for exchangees, so these places have been sites for Greek exchangees to speak their mother tongue. These spaces also help in sustaining communal memory by displaying the photographs of exchangees on their walls. In her account of coffeehouses in exchangee villages, Bayındır-Goularas (2012) explains that photographs become familiar terrains of the imagination through bodily memory for generations who have experienced the seeing. As sites of reminding and socialization, coffeehouses are spaces of generation for everyday memory.

The second most populated neighborhood in Izmir was Buca. Although Buca became a mixed town with Levantines and a small number of Armenian, Jewish, and Turkish populations, it continued to maintain its predominantly Greek identity. However, its historic district was destroyed due to a fire in 1922. Greek families had already left Buca by October 1922. For exchangees, the most significant reason that turned spaces into homes was often the memory objects they

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<sup>30</sup> Historical information about Bornova was taken from: <https://izmir.ktb.gov.tr/TR-77444/bornova.html>

invented. In Buca, motifs that pointed to the past, such as an abandoned house or a tombstone with no known owner, served as “physical mnemonic bridges” for them.



*Figure 9: An Abandoned Greek House and a Tombstone in Buca, Izmir*

Seydiköy, like Buca, which had a Greek majority population in the past, has not undergone intense urbanization and has maintained its small structure, although it is now connected to Gazıemir. With the assistance of our Community Advisory Board member, Archaeologist Ercan Çokbankır, the Seydiköy Memory House

opened on 12.02.2011. The Memory House brings to life the home life of a family living in Seydiköy between 1925 and 1950.



*Figure 10: Photos from our community walks in Seydiköy (Ercan Çokbankır in the middle, third- generation exchangee Nilgün Tepeli on right)*

Places were renamed after the population exchange by Greece as part of the broader cultural landscape endeavor. Renaming place names was considered a top-down process tailored to suit the national Greek culture. The Place Names Committee, which had been established to give effect to this policy, was responsible for Hellenizing place names that were deemed foreign, cacophonous, or devoid of historical value (Dimitropoulos, 2020). Place names, in a way, describe the space in which the relationship exists between refugee memory and Greek national memory and represent the transformation of refugee memory into public memory.

These new names were accepted by the refugees because they facilitated a feeling of belonging for the communities in their new homes, reminding them of their old homelands and pasts. Besides names recalling the original place, it was

quite common to add the Greek prefix meaning "new" (neos/neo/nea) to the name of the former homeland (Salvanou E. , 2022). This practice is exemplified nationwide, with cities such as Nea Smyrni, Nea Krini, Nea Efessos, Nea Moudania and so on that all of which evoke the memory of Anatolia.

During my research period in Thessaloniki, what attracted our attention the most were the "invisible boundaries" known by all exchangees. Since they were settled in specific places by state policy, even today they differentiate from each other on a micro level, neighborhood by neighborhood, and within their neighborhoods, they know among themselves where they originally came from. Besides, images that try to reconstruct the lost homeland, like an imposing picture of a big ship, actually became symbols with which to embody the difficult journey encountered during the population exchange. These reminders, in a way, kept the memory of displacement alive within the community. Exhibitions would very often present photographs of first-generation exchangees so that visitors might personally connect with those people who experienced firsthand the historical event. Furthermore, the stories of the pioneers were passed down through oral history from one generation to the next, thereby preserving this collective memory and bolstering their common identity.



*Figure 11: Photographs of the first-generation exchangees and the ship in Katirliton Association*

### **5.6 Literary and Cinematic Representations of the Population Exchange**

The preservation of memory among exchangee communities has not only relied on tangible objects and memorial spaces but also on the continuity of cultural traditions that carry the imprint of a lost homeland. From culinary practices and musical forms to religious rituals and linguistic patterns, these embodied forms of heritage have served as living conduits through which collective memory is sustained and transmitted across generations. As memory gradually transforms across generations, these oral and performative expressions increasingly find their place in literary representations. Fiction, memoirs, and autobiographical narratives have emerged as powerful mediums through which exchangee experiences are archived, reinterpreted, and made accessible to wider audiences. Literature, in this context, becomes a secondary site of memory, a space where the emotional landscapes, fragmented histories, and intergenerational dialogues of displacement are articulated and preserved.

While working with the two communities, literary works would often come up. Exchangees were familiar not only with the literary works but also with the

strong emotional and cultural attachment they felt toward them. For me, this was an eye-opener: literature was not spoken of as something far and abstract, but as an actual thread binding people to their family histories and shared pasts. These works became a point of reference, intergenerationally influencing the manner in which memories were narrated and how identities were understood. Sometimes, they use these works as a vehicle to express their own memories, their identities, and the feeling of loss caused by displacement. The knowledge of literature not only shows a high degree of cultural engagement but also showcases how tales, poems, and novels undergo the transformation into instruments for the remembrance and comprehension of those past experiences. In this sense, literature becomes paramount to memory preservation and in determining how memory of the exchange is carried forth into the present and spoken about across generations.

Literature of the interwar and early postwar periods has examined the different experiences of refugees and has made it clear that displacement was not over when they arrived in Greece. As Hirschon (1989) points out, the dividing lines between the local population and the refugees became part of the social fabric of the Greek state itself and continued to be felt for decades after the population exchange. Pentzopoulos (1962) also emphasizes that these internal divisions were still apparent even after fifty years. Such reflections are also found in the literary works of the time, for instance, Venezis' *The Number 31328* (2003), and Stratis Doukas' *Prisoner of War's Story* (1999) which narrates survival through the adoption of a Muslim identity.

These highlights the survival strategies of the refugees that not only challenge the rigid ethno-religious categories but also complicate the nationalistic themes of fixed identity. Ilias Venezis was born in Ayvalık with Number 31328; he built on personal experiences. It narrates the unbearable experiences of the Anatolian Greeks taken into imprisonment and describes how they survived the mass executions and murders. A peculiar feature of Venezis's account lies in his refusal to load it with political commentary, or at least nationalist or anti-Turkish

feelings. Another strong emphasis falls on the calmly uniform co-existence of Turks and Greeks before the disaster.

Nikos Kazantzakis' *Christ Recrucified* (1962) goes one step further and shows the encounter of a local Greek village and a refugee population. On the other hand, *Farewell Anatolia* by Dido Sotiriou (Sotiriou, 1962) has been one of the most influential literary works dealing with the population exchange, especially in Turkey. The novel presents the early times of the exchange, putting forth the notion that the catastrophe was not mainly an act of Turks or Greeks but instead Western imperialist powers, particularly the British and the French. The main character of the novel is Manolis Axiotis, who is said to be an Orthodox Greek living in the village of Şirince, near İzmir. He presumably fought on the Greek side during the war and, in the population exchange, was subsequently forced to migrate with his family.

Professor Kemal Arı, while visiting Şirince one day, saw a photograph of the actual Manolis Axiotis among the villagers. This gave evidence that Axiotis was not merely a fictional name created to serve the plot but was instead a historical personage; thereby producing the novel as an account in literature and a reflection of peoples' real historical experiences. The mingling of memory and history offers a lens to understand the personal and collective trauma experienced during the exchange. The story of Manolis continues into the 1980s, when he began sending letters to the village master of Şirince. During this period, he taught himself modern Turkish and eventually succeeded in returning to Şirince, where he was able to find his former home and spend time with the family then residing there.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> My research on Şirince village and the story of Axiotis is published on the Lausanne Project on August, 2023 <https://thelausanneproject.com/2023/08/11/tourists-in-paradise/>



*Figure 11: Current state of Manoli Axiotis's home in Şirince, Izmir. Photo is taken by the author on August 2025.*

In Greece, the Centre for Asia Minor Studies was the main actor in the preservation of refugee memory. They started collecting and publishing oral testimonies systematically from the people who had lived through the population exchange. Even though the gathering of these testimonies took place as early as 1930, at the time when the wounds of displacement were still very fresh, their publication was exceptionally postponed. It was only after half a century that these voices were transformed into written texts and reached the public in the form of the two-volume collection entitled *H Eξοδος* (The Exodus) published in 1980 and 1982 (Apostolopoulos, 1980). The release of *H Eξοδος* was not only to be seen as a turning point in the historiography of the Asia Minor Catastrophe but also as a simultaneous foregrounding of the daily experiences of displacement but most importantly a move from national narratives towards embodied, lived histories (Sokou, 2004).

The theme of population exchange in Turkish literature got to see a major breakthrough in serious literary and hence especially novelistic engagement with the topic after only after the 1990s. Until 1980s, the exchange and migration were hardly ever addressed as direct subjects of literary works. Among such factors that contributed to this silence was the political ideology dominating in this era, influence of the political climate upon the writers and researchers. Also, the late establishment of the refugee associations through which exchangees manifested and organized themselves.

One of the works that received wide recognition in the eighties is *Emanet Çeyiz* or *The Dowry in Trust*, by Kemal Yalçın (1998). Sharing from his field research, Yalçın relates the statement from an old 'exchangee' who explained, "The beauty of a garden comes from the variety of plants and trees it contains." During the political turbulence in Turkey, these words revived an idea of cultural unity. The book won the Abdi İpekçi Friendship and Peace Award<sup>32</sup> in 1991, after which it was translated into many languages. In a summary, Turkish literature depicts population exchange through the lived experiences of individuals rather than as a political or ideological process. Instead of interpreting the events solely within a national framework, these narratives frequently concentrate on personal suffering.

The ideological, political, and social climate of the time has a significant impact on film, just like it does on literature and historical writing. The tragic events of 1922 and the violence committed by Turkish militias are depicted vividly in the Greek film "1922", which was directed by Nikos Koundouros in 1978 and was based on İlias Venezis's important 1931 work "Number 31328". With cinema, the film portrays horrific events by the Turkish militias. Parallel developments extended in the realm of popular culture. From the 1970s onward, television series adapted from literary works, such as *Serenity* and later *The Witches of Smyrna*

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<sup>32</sup> In honor of Turkish journalist Abdi İpekçi, who was assassinated in 1979 and was a leading proponent of Turkish-Greek rapprochement, the Abdi İpekçi Peace and Friendship Awards were created. Through literature, journalism, art, and civic projects, the awards which are co-sponsored by Greek and Turkish institutions seek to advance friendship, peace, and cultural cooperation between the two countries.

(Gedgaudaitė, 2021). These were crucial in sustaining and reshaping public memory.

Over time, not only in the field of science and literature but also in popular culture, a variety of points of view and stories about the issue have emerged. During the very initial phase to get to know the community, the people involved often brought up the movies showing the themes of displacement and coexistence, and I was sometimes directly asked if I had seen the Turkish movie *My Grandfather's People* (*Dedemin İnsanları*, 2011) by Çağan Irmak, and the Greek movie *A Touch of Spice* (*Politiki Kouzina*, 2003).

Documentary practices come to underline the importance of visual culture even more. For example, documentary maker Maria Iliou clearly associates her work *Smyrna: The Destruction of a Cosmopolitan City, 1900–1922* with an inherited memoryscape that she demonstrates by her father and stepfather's stories (Iliou, 2012). She proves that the challenging intergenerational memory transmission, through images, still brings back the lost homeland and, at the same time, enables the audience to face its violent demise. These allusions were not just to illustrate examples but served as common cultural reference points through which participants felt out familiarity, empathy and commonality.

In this way, the films and documentaries were discussed as being directly related to the fieldwork's relational dynamics. By acknowledging and interacting with such references, I was also gradually building trust, as it was a sign of being aware of the stories that the participants already regarded as the most significant portrayals of their history and lives. The films' warm and emotional representations of lives after exchanges not only acted as cultural texts but also as facilitators in the community-based research process by allowing communication and recognition to take place.

To bring this chapter to a close, I have traced how exchangee communities in Izmir and Thessaloniki continue to sustain their cultural heritage in ways that are

both resilient and creative. Through music, dance, cuisine, film, theater, cultural institutions, and memory spaces, while witnessing the living practices that carry stories of the past into the present. What stood out to me was not just the variety of these expressions, but how they work together as threads weaving a sense of belonging across generations. These forms of cultural production and preservation not only provide powerful mediums through which memories are narrated and reflected upon but also function as vital tools for sustaining a sense of belonging across generations.

Although it was not possible to address every aspect or include the full spectrum of cultural practices, the aim of this chapter was to emphasize the diversity of preservation strategies that enable communities to remain connected to their past, while also navigating the challenges of the present and imagining their futures. As demonstrated throughout this chapter, there is now a growing recognition in both Greece and Turkey of the shared traumas and suffering experienced by exchangee communities. This increasing awareness reflects a broader societal shift toward empathy, understanding, and reconciliation regarding the legacy of forced displacement.

Through the continuous efforts of cultural institutions and the establishment of dedicated memory spaces, these communities not only safeguard their traditions but also strengthen social ties and facilitate the intergenerational transmission of memory and identity. In doing so, they actively contribute to the enrichment of the cultural landscapes of both Izmir and Thessaloniki, while simultaneously asserting the enduring significance of their historical and cultural presence.

## CHAPTER 6

### ECHOES OF THE FORCED MIGRATION IN THE IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION

In this chapter, I turn to the results of the participatory activities carried out with the descendants of population exchange migrants. These activities made it possible to identify both the diverse and shared experiences and practices of the informants, as well as the types of relationships they maintain today. My analysis looks closely at how the second and third generations understand and remember the population exchange, and how their knowledge and perceptions compare across time. To make sense of these reflections, I draw on the concepts and theoretical approaches discussed earlier, using them not as fixed frameworks but as evolving interpretive tools that continuously interact with the insights emerging from the field.

The first part of the research involves gathering general information obtained through the descendants of exchange immigrants, complemented by an in-depth exploration of their occupational and family structures. The second part clarifies the nature of the relationships they had or continue to have with other exchange immigrant families, as well as the role these social networks played in the adaptation process and in the broader experience of the settlers.

The discussion now turns to a matter of great importance to many immigrants: the material goods they were forced to leave behind. This section examines how the resulting material deprivation has influenced the identities, lives, and memory transformations of both the first and subsequent generations of immigrants. Attention then shifts to the geographical areas of Izmir and Thessaloniki, exploring how the specific characteristics of these settlement areas have contributed to the construction of identities and shaped the future trajectories

of exchange immigrants. The unique features of these regions will be highlighted, along with their broader significance within this context.

In analyzing the interviews and life stories, a comparative analysis will be carried out in regard to those migrants who have settled in urban areas and those living in rural areas, hence utilizing the diversity of the migrant populations engaged in exchanges. One of the highly evident themes to appear in the interviews regards the theme of change, and its repercussions for the identity of not only first-generation migrants, but also the following generations. This theme of change will, in turn, enable a view of the differences across the generations, and more specifically, the challenges and opportunities faced by the subsequent generations.

My focus in this chapter is on first-generation immigrants and the challenges they faced in the early stages of resettlement. In addition, I look at how subsequent generations perceive these historical occurrences and consider how difficult it was for their parents and grandparents to adjust to new surroundings. Because of this dual viewpoint, it is possible to observe how the first generation overcame social, political, and economic difficulties as well as how their descendants have incorporated these experiences into their own identities and sense of place. This chapter approaches as a chance to integrate inherited narratives and lived memory, drawing on the participatory activities I conducted during my research.

## **6.1 First Generation Migrants**

At the beginning of this study, I focused on developing a framework of dialogue that could help me interpret the perspectives of the second and third generations on the population exchange. As I listened to their stories, it became increasingly clear that the choices made by the first generation, together with the policies of state institutions in the 1920s, left a strong imprint on how later generations experienced and understood this history.

One of the interesting findings was that a noteworthy portion of the participants who had come to Turkey in their families were engaged in agricultural activities in Greece, while those having come to Greece were largely of commercial occupations. Additionally, the big difference with these community was that the Rum minority who were leaving Turkey were city dwellers, while the Muslim immigrants moving away from Greece consisted mainly of members of agricultural settlements.

Consequently, agricultural work and allied processes tended to have a more direct correlation with Muslim immigrants. This differentiation can best be expressed by the fact that, in the Ottoman Empire, hierarchies of occupation and social roles were usually demarcated on lines of ethnicity and religion (İnalçık, 1994). The roles allotted to specific ethnic communities in the wide-ranging imperial hierarchy had a predestination to them in character. Muslims generally held roles about matters of law, military duties, spiritual duties, or land holding in character. Converts to Islam tended to rise to administrative positions and reach high ranks in the military and naval establishments, and in the process, became loyal subjects of the Sultan (Barkey, 2008). Anatolian Rums, however, lived in urban centers and engaged in international and regional trade, and hence formed the middle class of the Empire (Kasaba, 1988). Most of this group engaged in artisanal occupations, though some of them also engaged in business activities. Jews tended to engage in commercial activities and moneylending (Temel, 2014).

According to the biographies and interviews, upon reaching a new foreign land and recovering from the initial shock for some time, the first reaction of migrant workers from certain professions was to evaluate opportunities provided by the Turkish state. Since they were provided with land and housing by state governments, their first choice of settlement was usually the place assigned by the state authorities in Turkey, and their occupational activity became inextricably

linked with the character of these new settlements. The incoming migrants were classified by Turkish government officials according to their points of origin and were usually assigned to three occupational categories: (1) tobacconists (*tütüncü*), (2) agriculturalists (*çiftçi*), and (3) grape-growers and olive dealers (*bağcı ve zeytinci*) (Yıldırım, 2006, p. 140).

What is noteworthy is that this categorization continued to influence the subsequent generations, as evident in the interviews. Until the third generation, families who received land and settled on the outskirts of Izmir and Thessaloniki were predominantly engaged in agriculture and livestock rearing. In other instances, migrants failed to move into the previous homes of Rum minorities since, with the vacant houses, issues of ownership remained unresolved.

The second overall reason for relocating migrants to suburban areas was economic. In Fridtjof Nansen's, the League of Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees, words, as he explained in his report, "many fields [were] already ploughed and many only waiting their animal cultivation.". It is greatly in the interests of both Greece and Turkey that this summer they ought to have maximum production (Yıldırım, 2006, p. 57). Once the settlement process was complete, economic need was among the main drives for migrants in choosing a place to live. In an effort to sustain their families, migrants had to move to places where they could sustain a farming way of life. Rural towns tried to restore their lives in circumstances that were comparable to the ones they had abandoned. After settling in towns such as Izmir, migrants found it hard to acquire decent employment for their family members and, therefore, eventually ended up settling in villages or the countryside to follow their peasant lifestyle.

However, there were instances in which the opposite applied, particularly for migrants who originated from urban centers such as Thessaloniki. Rather than seeking rural or agricultural settlements, these migrants were able to continue their

lives in urban settings in Turkey, drawing on skills, occupations, and social practices shaped by city life. Additionally, when migrants were established in rural regions whose climates and soil types were vastly different from what they had at their original locations, they would seek out new locations where they could plant crops similar to what they had before or where the climate would be more comfortable for them.

Today, exchange migrant families engaged in farm labor are still observed. Attention should also be given to those individuals who, through their own abilities, managed to build homes in mid-sized cities. Similarly, exceptions and inconsistencies can be noted in relation to external forces such as state-led legislation and regulations. Generally, the government decided where the exchange migrants were to live, and it was only after they had remained in those areas for some time that others could be able to shift to other areas. With the participatory activities, many participants stated that they left the land and the houses since they were not suitable for cultivation or their main occupation.

Müjgan Gürgen, a participant in Izmir, who was a third-generation migrant and whose family members had migrated from Thessaly to Adana, Turkey (then eventually settled in Izmir) maintained that they were never provided with the chance to use the left-behind properties. The same grievances were raised by other migrants in the sessions as well. Such instances also directly impacted the socio-economic status of the families since it would mean that they would not be able to receive any further government aid after losing their lands in Greece.

Their labor also contributed to shaping their feeling of belonging and identity as members of the host country. Farmers, for instance, formed a strong bond with the ground and cultivated it to the best of their capabilities. The ground, over time, became a representation of their new home-even if, in some cases, they still yearned for the lost lands in Greece. Between later generations, this feeling of

attachment to land only intensified. The type of labor that they engaged in also shaped family life and the general social framework through which they existed.

In Greece, most had lived within extended family households, and professions such as farming and animal breeding entailed cooperation, transforming these tasks into family duties. When they initially settled in Turkey, they predominantly maintained this large family setup and proceeded to support one another through the recovery process. Married couples typically lived near other members of their family. In line with the interviews, both familial and neighboring relationships were very important. During farming activities such as harvesting or ploughing, members of the family and neighbors too actively participated. The women, in particular, played a significant role, offering their support to relatives and neighbors on significant family occasions.

All the first-generation members had undergone arranged marriages. The female respondents, in particular, highlighted the humble, soft, and polite nature of their parents' relationships in the past. This tradition facilitated the easy passing on of norms and values to the next generations, who were more likely to adopt such inherited practices. The older generation members and the parents, whom they respected very much, wielded enormous control and influence, and these greatly impacted the identity and decision-making of the next generations.

The role played by social networks, whether rural or urban, continues to be demonstrated in the face of centralized assistive intervention by governments. It is increasingly clear that such social networks have much to do with determining where migrants in their adopted settlements prefer to settle. The early migration from Greece had such a compelling impact on later generations of migrants. Migration from the Balkans continued, with many newcomers settling in areas already occupied by earlier migrants.

Stone (2010) believes residential movements need to be examined in conjunction with descent since the geographical proximity of persons united by descent is an essential component of the strength of their social connections. She contends, too, that the proximity of individuals to one another makes it much harder for their social group to break apart. And just as network theory says, the connections made among the people in the migrant communities are very strong, and this is the very reason why they manage to deal with the uncertainties and challenges of migration in unfamiliar places, which only increases the feeling of unity among the members of these communities. Nevertheless, one of the consequences of such unity is the rise of stronger social control within the groups, which is often the case that a defensive closure toward the host majority accompanies the stronger social control. The argument implies that the power of family and social relations boosts the confidence and independence of migrants in their ability to conquer the hardships. It shows that networks were the crucial factor in the migration process; this will be the subject in the following chapter dedicated to network theory.

A consideration of settlement neighborhoods shows that migrants consciously tried to settle in areas where they had personal connections, either in terms of friendships or family relationships. This proximity provided them with increased security and confidence with regard to the migration process. In their destination countries, these connections also provided economic and cultural assistance, with familiar faces being readily present to help them settle and to offer advice throughout the acclimatization process. The presence of reliable contacts also eased the process of dealing with bureaucratic entities as well as making social contacts. This connection particularly mattered to independent migrants that is, those who migrated from Greece without state assistance because knowledge of previously existing settlers in an area played an important role in their decision-making process, which saw them prefer districts where a reliable family member lived.

## 6.2 The Consequences of Lost Property

During our storytelling activities with the participants in Turkey, one theme surfaced again and again: the pain of leaving behind belongings. As participants shared their memories, I noticed how often their stories circled back to houses, fields, or objects that could not be taken with them. None of those I spoke with recalled their families being able to sell their properties before leaving for Turkey, a detail that carried a sense of both loss and injustice. This pattern was also evident in the biographies and written life histories examined. A first-generation migrant, Şaban Yaylalı (aged 102), born in Thessaloniki, recounted that they left behind six hundred sheep in Greece and could only bring a blanket and a few personal belongings when migrating to Turkey.

Their primary concern at the time was escaping the war and ongoing conflict in Greece. He also explained that, with the support of the Turkish government, they were able to obtain legal housing and were granted land. While he expressed regret for what was lost, he emphasized their gratitude for what they managed to achieve through hard work in Turkey. Even today, one of the most commonly voiced grievances among migrants is that “a great majority of these people had been subjected to temporary settlement (*İskân-i adi* or *tali İskân*), with a view to being repatriated to their homelands once these lands were recaptured, and therefore not compensated properly for the properties they had left behind [...] and [demand] compensation for their lost properties.” (Yıldırım, 2006, p. 240)

Yaylalı explained that although they had been quite wealthy in Greece, they arrived in Turkey with virtually nothing. Participants from both sides of the exchange, including Muslim families resettled in Turkey and Greek Orthodox families relocated to Greece, similarly described how their parents or grandparents could only bring a few possessions, as they were in a rush and feared violence or persecution by local populations. Many walked long distances on foot with their children until they could find a form of transportation to take them to Turkey. Given

these dire circumstances, it is easy to imagine how few belongings they were able to carry. Many embarked on their journey with nothing more than a quilt and a suitcase. Another major reason for leaving possessions behind was the urgency of the process itself. With ongoing conflict and the imminent threat to their lives, most migrants left their homes suddenly, without the opportunity to plan or prepare their migration in advance.

Some succeeded in reclaiming their certificates of property ownership in Greece, which they presented to the Turkish state in exchange for shares in land that they had previously owned. Others, though, ended in much more difficult circumstances; they had to vacate in such a hurry that they missed carrying such important documents with them. They thus had to settle for whatever lands they received from the Turkish state without negotiating for an equitable compensation in proportion to their earlier properties.

Belk argued that "[o]ur possessions are a major contributor to and reflection of our identities" (Belk, 1988). The goods, furniture, and other belongings both living and nonliving left behind in migration were a part of the participants' history. Over and above their economic value, regardless of how valuable they were, these precious belongings had rich intangible meaning. They were a source of continuity with the past, emotional security, and identity. The loss of all these possessions also ultimately became a contributing factor toward the silence that was observed in the first generation when they first arrived in Turkey. Even though the absence of possessions might not have been the primary reason behind the silence, it surely did become a cause for regret and longing for subsequent generations too.

The items left by the migrants were not only things but also animals that were very deeply emotionally valued. In a situation where even one thing has a deep personal significance, losing homes, animals, and lands was an even deeper emotional loss. It is therefore hard to fully grasp the extent of the impact which such

losses had on them. It can be argued that they were still looking for objects which would be a remnant of the past. Moreover, leaving their belongings behind helped erase memory from the past since they were left with nothing to remind them of it. Material and psychologically, then, loss of these possessions had a severe and lasting impact on them.

Akkayan (1979) argues that the fundamental distinction between migration and other movements lies in the profound social and economic transformation which the migrants experienced. If examined carefully, one would be able to perceive that such large transformations of people's lives profoundly affected their identities as well as sense of belonging across generations. So, besides social and environmental situations, individuals' lives and their own definition of the issues they were facing can deeply affect what happens next and the individuals themselves.

As Mead (1972) suggests, the distinctive characteristic of human beings is their capacity to generate "minds" and "selves" as a consequence of the evolutionary processes. Human beings possess the ability to overcome obstacles to their further activities by manipulating symbols within their minds, therefore evaluating and selecting among alternatives. Mead, reflecting on Dewey's perspective, emphasizes that "the individual is no thrall of society; rather, the individual constitutes society just as genuinely as society constitutes the individual".

Castles emphasized that in the context of forced migration, it is crucial not to overlook the structural dynamics that shaped the population exchange. While displacement and exile are often discussed through cultural and subjective lenses,

Castles reminds us that;

social transformations [...] that led to forced migration – decolonialization, internal wars, violence, ethnic conflict, the development of new states and so on-cannot be understood without recognition of the prior and continuing links to [...] economic interests, to global political and economic networks and [...]imposition of value systems. (O'reilly, 2012, p. 120).

In most cases of forced migration, the actors involved had minimal power or agency at the onset of the process. The same applied to the exchange migrants. While their experiences were profoundly shaped by structural forces and constraints, it is evident that individuals did have a crucial role in shaping the sequence of events and influencing the destinies of others. Despite being constrained by policies, laws, and economic limitations imposed upon them, most contemporary migrants are satisfied with their present situation and focus on developing themselves, rather than brooding over the suffering of their forebears. There was a common understanding among the participants that, prior to the Greek-Turkish Population Exchange Convention of the Lausanne Treaty, there were certain Turks residing under the authority of the Greeks who wanted to sell their assets or seek the approval of the government to remain in Greece. However, none of them were granted such approval (Yıldırım, 2006, p. 134).

The exchange of population spurred a root-level social change, transforming drastically the internal social composition of the populations involved. Simultaneously, alongside these structure changes, the people themselves and their mentality. also changed drastically. The routines of the everyday life of the migrants were totally transformed after their displacement and resettlement in an alien country. Their daily routines also underwent a transformation, contributing to their identity formation, the tactics they employed, and the choices they made in settling into new lives.

During my both fieldwork experiences in Greece and Turkey, the prevailing theme that surfaced was the deep longing for the lost homelands. The participants never stopped talking about regrets for having left and never to return. They were missing the friendships they had formed and the environments that had shaped their childhoods. In Thessaloniki, Asia Minor was spoken of as a motherland that stayed alive in their hearts. As much as the migrants pined for their former friendships in Greece, there were others who had evidently gradually adjusted to their new surroundings and neighbors in Turkey after ten years of hardship and adaptation.

Over time, the migrants came to accept their new surroundings as their home, and their children were raised in an environment markedly different from their own. They established new friendships and cooperative relationships. For instance, Litsa Chadalaki, aged 70, whose father migrated from Istanbul to Greece, explained that her father spent his entire life yearning for the social ties they had once enjoyed in their homeland. She recounted that he would often speak nostalgically about the good neighbors they had in Asia Minor. The family settled in Kurtuluş, Istanbul, and during her own childhood, she remembered that they maintained warm and close relationships with both their Muslim and Greek/Rum neighbors, up until the events of 6–7 September 1955<sup>33</sup> in Turkey. She emphasized that, prior to those events, the Muslim community had never treated them as “others” nor subjected them to any form of disdain.

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<sup>33</sup> Since the 1950s, the Cyprus issue has made the Greek population and Greece themselves targets of widespread enmity. During the height of the conflicts involving the Cyprus issue, a group of young protestors organized a demonstration in front of the *Apoyevmatini* newspaper on August 26, 1955. This demonstration paved the way for the tragic events later described as the pogrom of the 6–7 of September 1955. Popular sentiment was aroused by rumors that Greeks in Cyprus were about to attack Turks. The immediate cause of the unrest was a false report in the *Istanbul Express* newspaper on the morning of the 6 of September stating that Atatürk’s house in the Salonica suburb of Thessaloniki was the target of an explosion attack. The aftermath was devastating in its effect: in the space of a single night, 4,340 shops, 2,000 houses, 110 restaurants, 83 churches, 27 pharmacies, 21 factories, 12 hotels, 11 clinics, 5 union headquarters, 3 printing houses, 2 cemeteries, 26 schools, and 5 sporting facilities were damaged or destroyed (Kaya, 2024). According to Kocabaşoğlu (2000), 4,447 people suffered losses to the tune of 69,579,244 Turkish lira from the destruction. Two Greek Orthodox clergy were also killed, and some 200 Greek citizens were injured.

The same sentiment extended to her family even during the crisis; she shared that her mother was pregnant with her at the time, and they were able to find protection and support from a Turkish friend who helped them after their house was burned down and protected them in their homes against the crowd. She stated that they had once been like a family. However, after the outbreak of the events in 1955, she explained that they lost all contact with one another. She expressed that it was only after the year 2000 that they were able to reconnect, thanks to the emergence of new forms of communication such as the internet and social media networks. When she manages to visit the area today, she still stays at their former house.

In these narratives, changes, and depictions, I also experience the loss of what Bourdieu has termed social and cultural capital. Bourdieu describes that the amount and worth of the capital individuals possess determine their standing in a society. Perhaps, throughout the migration process, nearly all of the capitals economic, cultural, social, and symbolic that individuals had accumulated through their lives in Greece were lost to a significant degree. This loss made it even more difficult for them to start anew. One of the most apparent changes in the lives of the migrants was the shift of location and environment. "In any society, descent needs to be considered about residence patterns, since the physical proximity of individuals related by descent strongly influences the strength of the bonds between them" (Stone, 2010, p. 15).



Figure 12: Identity card of the Kemal Kurul (uncle of Mine Vatansever)

The familial and neighborly relations were drastically ruined or dissolved. Mine Vatansever, one of our second-generation participants in Izmir, told us that something unusual happened during their displacement from Greece, her grandmother gave birth to her uncle on the ship, and even his birthplace was listed as "ship" on his ID card. Another strange but unfortunate event happened to a second-generation participant from Thessaloniki, 81-year-old Anna Mostriyalaki. She reported that her grandmother's brother was loaded on another boat as the migrants were being shifted. Due to this, the family lost him and had no idea where he went. They saw him neither, heard of him nor ever laid eyes on him again, and they missed years of each other's lives.

Meanwhile, the family that had established themselves in Thessaloniki assumed that their brother was dead and, after some time, gave up looking for him. Though all the family members were really alive and did settle again in their new destinations, they were unaware of each other's status and had to begin anew

without their siblings. Losing segments of their families along the way to Anatolia was also common practice among migrants. Numerous individuals perished because of the severe travel conditions, such as hunger, sickness, or wounds.

The change, of course, was reciprocal. Migrants also contributed to transforming the receiving societies. Where they were resettled, migrants radically altered and diversified the demographic, social, and cultural composition. Adjustment, according to Ruben (1983), is a continuous process of adaptation and change to difficult situations, environmental alterations, and adverse conditions in the environment. The capacity of any system is linked to the relationship between the population and the resources accessible to them. As they adapted to their new environment, migrant communities were compelled to adjust alongside the migration process; they were compelled to abandon some of their previous friends while creating new ones. Through these newly established and broken relationships, their perceptions of the world and their connection to the world were reshaped. Now, it is also fitting to recall Herder's belief that "each culture should be appreciated for what it is, rather than being judged by the standards of another." (Sikka, 2011).

### **6.3 Memory's Rebirth After Resettlement**

The common denominator among the participants was the separation of some of the relatives or family members during ship boarding, since space had, by no means, ever been available. Forced separation stamped itself in the collective memory of the majority of the immigrant families.

As Henry Morgenthau outlined in his states:

[S]even thousand people crowded in a ship that would have been taxed to normal capacity with two thousand. They were packed like sardines upon the deck, a squirming, writhing mass of human misery. They had been at sea for four days. There had not been space to permit them to lie down to sleep; there had not been no food to eat; there was no access to any toilet facilities. For those four days and nights many had stood upon the open deck, drenched by an autumn rain, pierced by the cold night wind, and blistered by the noonday sun. They came ashore in rags, hungry, sick, covered with vermin, hollow-eyed, exhaling the horrible odor of human filth-bowed with despair (Morgenthau, 1929, p. 101)

The experience of the Turkish migrants was the same. Alaeddin Irkli, a second-generation migrant in Izmir, explained his parents' experience: they walked one hundred or so kilometers to arrive at the port of Thessaloniki, without food and water. They were very frightened of being shot by Bulgarian or Greek troops, or by locals who were hostile and acted violently against Turkish people. Another migrant recollected that even in the boats from the port of Thessaloniki, the conditions were very poor. Majority of the passengers were ill, away from their family members since the boats were overcrowded, and hungry. Some even perished during the journey, and their bodies were dumped into the sea. As forced migrants, they did not control the events that happened to them, and their voices were largely disregarded whenever they were recounting their experiences.

A second-generation immigrant, 92-year-old Meri, residing in Thessaloniki also believed that altering political atmosphere, altering ideologies, and the worsening prejudices among the general public made people of differing ethnicities turn upon each other and use violence as a means of resolving their disputes. She spoke of how the girls were raped by the soldiers, and then added that Greeks too committed such acts, evoking collective responsibility and vicarious trauma. Mannheim argues that individuals who reside among groups of people do not merely co-exist alongside one another, apart, and separate from each other; they do

not navigate the world as individual minds or solo beings. Rather, they operate with and against each other in heterogeneously organized collectives, and thereby they think together and in opposition. Even individual decisions in such a case can be interpreted as the outcome of collective action, and the decisions taken need to be interpreted in terms of this (Mannheim, 1936, p. 3).

The choice made by a neighboring woman, say, can be seen as a wake-up call to this reality, allowing her to "gain a new type of mastery over previously uncontrollable forces in the mind." Meri explained that her parents chose to warn and educate their neighbors instead of surrendering to hate. This single step can be seen as an exception since it shows how important individual choices are and how they can affect change in society. Under such circumstances, carrying the weight of political ideologies, dominant social customs, and settled practices (structures), her countermovement bears tremendous symbolic weight, emphasizing individual agency and selection in building the social world.

As Atkinson (2002) argues, life narratives serve a number of functions: in the first instance, they provide psychological guidance and contribute to the construction of the self. Second, they enable individuals to make sense of and verify their lives in the social world, bringing into being and affirming connections to other individuals. These narratives enable individuals to fit into socially normed expectations, and in certain instances even modify their identities in accordance with broader societal requirements. Life stories, then, foster a sense of belongingness and contribute to the creation of a community identity. Third, they are religious and mystical in value, offering transcendence from the mundane and the possibility of "entering the land of the spirit."

The third generation, therefore, who have been increasingly exposed to these life stories through regular day-to-day contact, appear to have received an increased level of the past memory's awareness. Their emotional connection to the

experiences of the first generation, as well as their desire to learn inherited values and habits, seems greater than that of the second generation. Such interest in the past was also increased by such intergenerational transmission and accumulated memories. Second-generation members, however, often reported indifference or unawareness of these accounts. Although they recalled their parents narrating the past, they admitted that they had never delved into the details of those tales.

#### **6.4 How “the Other” Becomes “the Local”**

Aydin (2009) argues that two dominant emotions shape the relation between the state and citizens: fear and security. In this regard, the state is seen as a father figure. Because of this, the majority of citizens think that the state should be protected from all kinds of "threats," even from ideas within the nation. After they had been moved out of their homes, the exchangees, who had once been part of the Ottoman Empire, were granted citizenship in the new Turkish Republic and did not face any legal problems that set them apart from locally living citizens. The state helped the exchange migrants to be legally integrated into the national society; nevertheless, in daily life, locals were still reserved in behavior and contact with them. The natives did not actively oppose the government's declarations and regulations but were cautious against anything new or divergent from what they had been accustomed to. This caution stemmed from fears that such divergences could alter their normal ways of thinking and behaving, potentially weakening the state's cohesion and power in the long term.

So was the case with the exchange migrants. Though they feared traveling to a new nation, meeting new people, and experiencing tremendous change in their lives, they largely agreed with the settlement decisions of the Great Powers and the state. Most of them fled in the hope of saving their lives and protecting their belongings. In building the nation, focus on one national language was crucial in order to build a common national identity. Almost everyone from both Izmir and Thessaloniki reported that language was a big barrier for them as they settled in and

that the indigenes did not welcome the exchangees warmly at first. A clear similarity in the stories was the experience of a "silent period."

This referred to a time when first-generation migrants avoided speaking about their migration experience, along with the cultural and traditional differences that they had carried with them. There could be many reasons for this silence, but two such obvious reasons were: firstly, the effect of "fresh contacts," such as the changes in their atmosphere and lives; and secondly, the fear and anxiety created because of the accidents they had just experienced. In addition, this silence could have had a few motivations. These range from preventing their children from developing hatred towards the homeland of their ancestors, evading local prejudices, assisting the second generation in establishing a healthy and stable life in their new environment, and facilitating their integration process. It was also to shield them from potential discrimination and enable them to overcome the pain and sorrow that was associated with their past memories.

The absence of narrated experiences and the ongoing silence should not be interpreted as a lack of memory or historical awareness. Rather, this silence could be interpreted as socially and politically produced conditions, influenced by the regimes and power. As critically emphasized in debates on ethnographic representation, what remains unsaid is often as analytically significant as what is openly expressed. In this regard, silence is not a methodological limitation, but rather a way of fieldwork that uncovers the boundaries of what can be spoken about, recognized as legitimate, or recalled as history within particular social settings (Clifford & Marcus, 1986, p. 184).

As Mannheim suggests that;

“The continuous emergence of new human beings certainly results in some loss of accumulated cultural possessions; but, on the other hand, it alone makes a fresh

selection possible when it becomes necessary; it facilitates re-evaluation of our inventory and teaches us both to forget that which is no longer useful and to covet that which has yet to be won” (Mannheim, 1952, p. 294).

Mannheim (1952, p. 294) argues that if a society is to be sustained, social remembering is as crucial as forgetting and beginning again. Like the Thessaloniki exchangees, such an argument accounts for how the first generation were, in effect, permitted to start again, as if they did not exist before they emigrated to Turkey. Their previous lives were not fused into their present lives soon after the migration. As a result, what the second generation learned or absorbed in childhood or adolescence was influenced by what their families selectively revealed.

A third-generation migrant from the Prousta area of Thessaloniki, reported that she traveled to Greece several times, and on those occasions, she started to learn more about her family's history. Her grandmother had explained about their previous life, like the fact that they used to use a Pomak dialect<sup>34</sup>, as she listened from her side. In listening to their stories, she became familiar with other members of their family and was eventually able to find where they used to live.

The overwhelming majority of respondents on both sides pointed to the labelling they had been given by the host societies. Thessaloniki exchange migrants were "infidels" or "Greek seed," while those in Izmir were "Turkish seed" or "*tourkalo/a* (meaning the Turk in a humiliating way)". Here, it has to be mentioned that while the exchangees in Izmir very often lived in mixed neighborhoods, the corresponding ones in Thessaloniki were not that integrated.

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<sup>34</sup> Those who migrated from the Karacaova region of Greece, known today as Edessa and its surroundings, speak a distinct language. Their mother tongue is of Slavic origin. Some refer to this language as Macedonian, while others call it Pomak. Similarly, those who came from the mountainous areas of Drama speak Pomak as well, which is considered a dialect of Bulgarian. (Sepetçioğlu, 2014, p. 53-54)

Even from village to village, they were resettled in different neighborhoods, as if there was an invisible line between them. This means that cultural differences and the recent memories of the war years made it more difficult for migrants and locals to trust one another immediately after resettlement. As Olsen (1965) correctly asserts, "strong feelings of alienation certainly influence people's attitudes and opinions." The risk of being alienated also conditioned migrants' behavior and emotional state. Even if the locals ultimately accepted them, migrants continued to undergo an entire range of problems, particularly with language. Either they could not communicate as they did not know the language, or they used a foreign accent, which alienated them from their new world even further.

### **6.5 From Homeland to Memory land: Transnational Connections**

When we consider the environment in which the second and third generations grew up and molded their identities, we can see that the entire social, political, and cultural scenario was substantially different from that of their parents. In the broader backdrop of globalization and the erosion of the nation-state, there is a parallel to be made between the rise of popular Islamist discourse in 1990s Turkey and the postmodern currents of the West during this period. Both attempted to destabilize the unitary and centralizing frameworks of the nation-state. As a result, since the 1980s, we have witnessed the demise of nationalist movements and the global rise of identity-based issues (Touraine, 2005). Accompanying this movement was the emergence of multiculturalism as a socio-cultural phenomenon that gained momentum in the wake of critiques of modern culture as well as of the nation-state and with the growth of globalism.

This phenomenon was both shaped by and the resultant of economic and political restructuring in various societies. Multiculturalism debates were at their highest in Turkey during the end of the twentieth century. During these decades, Turkey and the world experienced a decade in which political campaigns and

contests became more focused on cultural issues, and events from the past entered everyday usage in unprecedented fashion. In that context, it is not surprising that we also saw a rising concern among new generation exchangees about their identities and their ancestral cultures.

Culture becomes a way of life and mode of being chosen by the individual, comprising patterns of doing and being an important component of one's identity. Together, a collective identity is created and a symbol-rich culture, memories, art products, values, norms, habits, beliefs, and knowledge in common based on a common past and common memory. Culture is an essential hauler of memory. While culture is indeed regarded as a unifying factor and constructor of collective identity in a community, observe that: "the 'commonality' which is found in community need not be a uniformity. It does not clone behavior or ideas. It is a commonality of forms (ways of behaving) whose content (meanings) may vary considerably among its members." (Cohen, 2001).

The triumph of community is thus to encompass this diversity that its very inharmony does not negate the apparent unity which is represented by its limits. Thus, we must consider the function of symbols that could hold together a community within the limits of a common culture. They symbolize subjective representations for a culture, and such symbols and codes' common employment act as reconciliatory role between commonalities and individualities.

Additionally, Geertz's (1973) three propositions explain how cultural difference has progressively become acknowledged throughout time: initially, that "culture (webs of significance) is created and continually recreated by people through their social interaction"; secondly, that as a steady process, culture possesses no determinist strength or objective references such as 'laws'; and lastly, that culture communicates by means of the capacity for human beings to add meaning to social conduct. That is, behavior in itself does not have meaning; instead, it is read as meaningful by human interpretation, we make sense of what we see.

Thus, the cultural and behavioral variations of the populations gradually got ingrained in the shared local environment they ultimately came to reside. It was only through the routine practice, perception, contemplation, and inter-action that they began to truly feel like an integrated society. As Bhabha has argued, "[...] the sign of the 'cultured' or 'civilized' temper is the ability to appreciate cultures in some sort of imaginary *musée*; as if one should be in a position to accumulate and indulge in them" (Rutherford, 1990). The social practices that people come to internalize over time, Bourdieu's habitus, played crucial impacts on the exchange migrants and residents amongst whom they lived. Their frequent daily encounters, apart from state-sponsored discourses, permitted a slow mutual acceptance, including their differences in culture. Over time, their initial anxieties and biases decreased, and the erstwhile aloof and distrustful relations between locals and exchange migrants eased. In this background of increasing harmony, a developing interest was observed among the third-generation exchange migrants.

The reasons for this interest are numerous, brought about by a complex web of global, regional, and local political and social developments in the respective societies. The progress in science and the advent of the internet brought about a plethora of social and cultural impacts. People today are deeply rooted in computers, internet websites, and social networking websites. Technological innovations, especially the widespread use of mobile and smart phones, have made connections and communication between groups easier. These platforms allow people to view, participate, follow, and be informed about events related to them even without being physically present. The majority of the migrants reported being in contact with Greek citizens and other exchange migrants via the internet and organizing events with the help of such technologies. All these online connections enabled them to interact with fellow individuals with parallel experiences and identifications, yet again reinforcing and enhancing their knowledge of culture, as well as bringing these issues to the general public's notice.

All participants stated that after the 1990s, there was a noticeable increase in the touristic visits of Turkish exchange migrants. These visits made them more enlightened about their past and strengthened their sense of belonging to the exchange migrant (*mübadil*) identity. From the interviews, it became clear that before the 1990s most migrants had no chance to visit Greece, the land their families had once left behind. While a few individuals had managed to go as early as the 1980s, these trips were rare and usually possible only for those who had the financial means to travel abroad. After these visits, the entire village began to show increased curiosity and awareness about their past. Their longings, unanswered questions, and uncertainties took on a tangible form after they had physically seen these lands. The houses and towns they visited left a profound impression on the next generations. Stories once told to them in childhood took on material form through the eyes of these younger generations, serving as a binding element across successive generations.

Those who had the opportunity to visit Greece first set out to see the lands their parents had once inhabited. Some had no difficulty locating the houses and communicating with the current residents of the neighborhood. A few recognized their ancestral homes by identifying trees that had been described in family stories. These places had been so vividly etched into the memories of the earlier generations that, even decades after the population exchange, first-generation migrants could describe the geography in great detail, enabling the younger generations to search for and imagine these former homelands. Many participants described moments of shared tears with the new inhabitants, who were themselves aware of the historical context of the population exchange. Several visitors mentioned searching for the graves of their parents or elders, bringing soil from Turkey to Greece and vice versa. The absence of their parents' graves was described as especially painful. Some were unaware of, or unable to find, the burial places of their relatives, yet prayed at Muslim cemeteries assuming that their ancestors might be buried there.

One particularly striking story we discovered with Prof. Leonidas Karakatsanis was by second-generation migrant Ioannis Gaisiris, whose father

received land in the village of Panagitsa in Thessaloniki. While attempting to cultivate the land, he discovered human bones, which he believed belonged to members of the former Muslim community. He respectfully reburied the bones under a pile of rocks and told his son: “Protect them, because one day they will come and search for these bones.” Then comes the Tetik family from Sakarya, Turkey, who managed to visit their former village, Panagitsa, in 2012 with their back then 98-year-old first generation migrant, father, Habil Tetik. Upon arrival, Habil recognized a plane tree and was able to locate his former home, now inhabited by Ioannis Gaisiris. They meet with Ioannis and finally they succeeded in finding the bones, and a few years after a burial ceremony was held beside the Orthodox cemetery. The funeral was conducted jointly by an imam and a priest, symbolizing such a rare moment of shared remembrance and respect.<sup>35</sup>



*Figure 13: One left: Ioannis Gaisiris shows where the bones were buried. On right: The burial ceremony in Panagitsa with Imam and Priest together*

Now, from this particular yet very interesting story, it can be argued that identities have been shaped so that they "cut across" traditional notions of

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<sup>35</sup> A report by *Milliyet*, a Turkish newspaper, which published an article titled "*Türk-Yunan dostluğu kabristan'la pekişti*" ("Turkish-Greek friendship strengthened through a cemetery"), documenting this extraordinary event and emphasizing the symbolic unity represented by the joint funeral held by an imam and a priest in Panagitsa in 2012, <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/turk-yunan-dostlugu-kabristan-la-pekisti-1906683>, accessed April 18, 2025.

belonging. Furthermore, the 2000s were the years in which foundations such as the Foundation of Lausanne Treaty Emigrants and the Foundation of Exchange Migrants were established. These programs made people more conscious of others who share a similar background and enabled visits to their country of origin in a planned manner. All these advancements enhanced the passing down and passing over of memory to subsequent generations so that there may be a stronger awareness among younger generations of what has happened previously.

We might, then, talk about the emergence of “social generations,” shaped by a sense of belonging and the feeling of “us” that comes from shared experiences. Many people I spoke with would smile and tell me, “It’s the politics, not the people, who can’t get along; we never had problems with each other.” What stayed with me most was how often they described the warmth of the welcome they received during their visits, how doors were opened, meals were shared, and conversations flowed as if no years had passed at all; a reminder that, as in all great conflicts and genocides in history, the roots of hatred were not natural but socially constructed.

Those memories and experiences get transmitted to coming generations in terms of form as well as dimension so that they are able to “seize attachments and identifications which transcend frontiers” (Ehrkamp, 2005). This process probably has also developed a new category of transnational identity for those individuals who never took personal tours to those home countries. Although the third generation never experienced first-hand living there, it is possible to realize that their sense of closeness to the homeland and culture of their ancestors extends beyond the realms of religion and race. It is what they have remembered, spoken about, and the individuals whom they met that they adopted and integrated and made part of themselves. These have clearly contributed to the creation of new transnational social and cultural space, ultimately giving rise to a new form of transnational community.

Wessendorf's (Wessendorf, 2007) article identifies the "third space" for the formation of identity that has emerged, and the parents' country of origin seems

particularly applicable in this thesis as well. Although neither born nor raised in their place of birth, yet with no intention of staying there, when asked about what makes them who they are, they would all go back with something like "We are exchange migrants from Izmir/Thessaloniki" or "I am from Izmir/Thessaloniki." This very much indicates that even among the third generation, the migrant identity firmly holds on, but one with peculiar focus placed predominantly on their race, religion, or homeland. In the cases where the respondents told us they were from Thessaloniki, the city of their grandfather's origin, the affective connection appeared even stronger. This is particularly significant because, except for brief visits as tourists, they had never resided in the city.

According to Pentzopoulos (1962), migration (*göçmenlik*) was an essential phenomenon for consolidating bonds among the Greek people of Asia Minor. The term migrant became an institutionalized identity filled with meaning that reinforced an identity rooted in shared experience. The awareness that came with migration created an atmosphere of shared history that became an integrating factor binding those who were dispersed geographically. In Greece, the label of the migrant is viewed as an inherited status handed down from one generation to the next. Greece's exchangees are often referred to as refugees (*prosfygas*) or Anatolians (*mikrasiates*), terms that have been used by the first generation of migrants but have become adopted by subsequent generations as well.

In Greek, the term "Mikra Asia" corresponds to "Anatolia" in Turkish. Another example is the distinction between the concepts of "Greek" and "Roman" in Turkish, which does not exist in Greek. In Greek, regardless of historical or geographical context, the term "Hellenes" is used to encompass all people who follow the Orthodox Christian faith.

Participants currently residing in Thessaloniki referred to themselves as *prosfyges* (refugees) or *Mikrasiates* (Asia Minor Greeks), using both terms contextually. By these names, therefore, they viewed themselves as being separate from the indigenous Greeks- the old Greeks, women and men attached to the nation-

state years before their own arrival. Though never using the term Rum to self-describe, however, all were very clear that their origins lay in another world which is the Ottoman Empire. Coming to the Greek state was not envisaged as going back to some kind of home, but an exile from an adopted land in which their roots were deep.

Perhaps the most important finding from our participatory activities in Thessaloniki was that although economically disadvantaged, *Mikraasiates* in Thessaloniki felt culturally superior to native Greeks (*dopioi*). The *Mikraasiates* maintained a vivid connection with Byzantium, yet their point of reference was not Athens but Constantinople. They saw themselves as witnesses and bearers of a tradition entrusted to them by the Orthodox Christian faith with a rich linguistic, cultural, and ideological heritage.

A second-generation woman respondent from Thessaloniki used to epitomize their views about their local people in such descriptions as: “The locals were ignorant. They could not even speak or comport themselves in an orderly fashion. They lacked manners. We taught them to dress. Through us, their eyes were enlightened. They could not even eat. They ate pickles, fish, and raw vegetables. We taught them to have proper meals.” First impressions on life in Greece were dominated by sheer disappointment. What they saw there was that their country was tiny, archaic, old-fashioned, and that their people were “uncivilized”. Claims for higher culture were sensed in a similar manner. They felt proud to emphasize that they adhered to religious prescriptions more rigorously and were more observant than locals. Among indicators for otherness were etiquette, manners, and above all, eating habits an unbeatable legacy in particular among women belonging to minorities. Male respondents used to downplay Greece's fragile economy as well as entrepreneurial spirit.

They hailed being "last Ottomans," and their behavior and way of life were portrayed as having a cosmopolitan orientation. Most notably, unbelievable, lasting memories maintained an image of distinction. Another finding from our research

that astounded us was that such cultural motifs, formulated in lasting memories and constant devotion to their nation, were retained in the fourth generation.

## CHAPTER 7

### A DISTINCT EXCHANGEЕ COMMUNITY: CRETAN EXCHANGEES

*“The cross and crescent side by side, from time to time they were in peace and from time to time a Cretan storm caught them up in a rage, and they attacked one another, and they impaled their teeth to one another’s flesh...”*

N. Kazantzakis, *Freedom or Death*

In Western languages, Crete is known as "Creta" or "Crète," while Greeks refer to it as one of two names, "Krete" or "Kriti." In Arab-speaking societies, it is named "Ekritiṣ" or "İkriṣ," and it is named "Candia" by Italians as a name of the Heraklion city, while in Turkish it is named "Girit." The fifth largest of the Mediterranean Sea islands, Crete is also second in size in the Eastern Mediterranean, following Cyprus, which is the largest one. Its strategically important position is midway between the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas, covering an area of 8,259 square kilometers. The island stretches about 260 kilometers from east to west and is 15 to 50 kilometers wide. Geographically, Crete is an important entrance to the Aegean Sea. The northwest tip of the island is approximately 90 kilometers from the Peloponnese Peninsula, its northern limit is about 150 kilometers from Anatolia, and its southern shore is about 325 kilometers from Benghazi, Libya (Banoğlu, 1991).

The main urban settlements, running from west to east, include Chania (Hanya, Χανιά), Rethymno (Resmo, Ρέθυμνο), and Heraklion (Kandiye, Ηράκλειο). The settlements largely grew up on the northern coastline, which is open to the Aegean Sea. Conversely, Ierapetra, meaning "Sacred Stone," is the most important settlement in Crete's relatively more sparsely inhabited southern part of the island. It lasted from 1669 up to 1913 in Crete under the Ottoman rule "Two hundred sixty-seven years, seven months, and seven days in a span." Thousands of

Christian conversions to Islam took place in recent years, sometimes quirkily and sometimes while entire communities converted, immediately after the island came under Ottoman control. The confessional communities were often connected by blood links and, in the absence of direct kinship ties, different social footwear established familial bonds between them.

In major towns, there was quite visibly demographic diversity that resulted under Ottoman rule. In rural settlements, Muslims and Christians were interspersed in specific areas; however, towns inhabited exclusively by Muslims or Christians were also found. The Muslims, who were in Crete, were comprised of Turks called *Tourkokritikoi* (Turkish Cretans), who were transferred to the island upon its conquest, Muslims hailing from various parts of the Ottoman Empire, local Arabs who were already established in Crete, converts to Islam from among the autochthonous populace, and, to a lesser degree, from Venetian Crete's population (Stathakou, 2017).

Though Ottoman bureaucrats sent to Crete from the imperial capital used Turkish, Muslim and Orthodox populations mostly used Cretan Greek (*Kritika*) as the means of communication. Agriculture and pastoralism were the primary subsistence practices of the rural population. In towns, townspeople took advantage of Crete's geographical proximity to Asia, Africa, and Europe, as well as to its strategic location on important maritime trade routes, which resulted in trade and craftsmanship becoming prevalent economic practices. Urban Muslims, who were well off, mostly practiced soap-making, leather-tanning, and seafaring trade. Middle-and working-class Muslims drew upon trade or manual labor and were especially known to be skilled in clock-making, saddle-making, cobbling, and cookery skills. In addition, they were known to be skilled cobblers and chefs to an extraordinary degree. They largely governed the making of the iconic Cretan knife (*pasalides*), which is an icon of masculinity in Cretan cultural life, as well as governing the manufacture of traditional Cretan boots (*sitivania*), which were largely made by Muslims (Stathakou, 2017).

The Cretan identity occupies a unique space within the broader context of the Greek-Turkish population exchange in 1923. Further investigation into the island's historical and political context, both at the time of the transfer and today, reveals specific qualities that impacted upon Cretan migrants' experiences in and through the transfer. These qualities, critically involved in transforming their perceptions of belonging and identity through multiple identity determinants and contexts of belonging, lie largely in areas including language, religion, music, and food.

In this chapter, I explore the identity of Cretan people who were active participants during my fieldwork experience, by looking closely at their everyday cultural practices and how these have evolved or stayed the same over time, especially through language, religion, music, and food. I approach these practices not just as isolated habits, but as windows into how people understand themselves and their place in the world, drawing on ideas like social identity, social categorization, social comparison, and social structure. Utilizing such analytical tools allows for a more insightful approach to understanding identity as flexible and context dependent as opposed to fixed and homogeneous.

Cretan migration within the framework of the population exchange has been a well-explored subject in political history<sup>36</sup>. The unique experience of Cretan exchangees calls for a more focused approach that emphasizes participatory methods and oral testimonies. While official documents shed light on settlement decisions, they offer little insight into the lived experiences of resettlement and the

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<sup>36</sup> See Tahmiscizade Mehmed Macid (1977). *Girit Hatıraları* [Memoirs of Crete]. İstanbul: Tercüman; Akdağ, E. (2005). *Şahitlerin Dilinden Unutulan Büyük Göç: 1923 Türk Yunan Nüfus Mübadelesi* [The Forgotten Great Migration through the Words of Witnesses: The 1923 Turkish-Greek Population Exchange]. İstanbul: Zaman Kitap; Özsoy, İ. (2003). *İki Vatan Yorgunları: Mübadele Acısını Yaşayanlar Anlatıyor* [Exhausted Between Two Homelands: Stories from Those Who Suffered the Exchange]. İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları; Yalçın, K. (1998). *Emanet Çeyiz* [Entrusted Dowry]. İstanbul: Belge Yayınları. See also Giannuli, D. (1995). Greeks or "Strangers at Home": The Experiences of Ottoman Greek Refugees During Their Exodus to Greece, 1922–1923. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 13(2), 271–287; Herzfeld, M. (1991). *A Place in History: Social and Monumental Time in a Cretan Town*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Hirschon, R. (1989). *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe: The Social Life of Asia Minor Refugees in Piraeus*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

challenges of adaptation. In Tansuğ's view, oral history interviews bring out the aspects of displacement that are usually overlooked or just superficially dealt in written history, not by reconstructing the past events as such but by making clear the implications of the individuals' experiences (Tansuğ, 2018, p. 24). Without an oral history perspective, it is still hard to have a comprehensive understanding of the suffering of the people, the things that they had to leave behind, and the emotional ways they had to cope with the huge disruption in their lives.

However, there is an increasing number of ethnographic and ethnohistorical works that have started to consider these aspects. Koufopoulou (2004) in her work on Cretan Muslims in Cunda (Ayvalık) analyses the transformation of "ethnic identity" after resettlement in Turkey, thus illuminating the enduring importance of Cretan identity and the cultural differentiations between the Cretan Muslims and the exchangees from Lesvos. Similar to that, Yılmaz (2011) pays attention to Cretans in Ayvalık and interprets their adaptation to the local social arrangement through land allocation, sociability and belonging with other refugee and exchangee groups, especially those from Lesvos. Sepetçioğlu (2011) presents an elaborate ethnohistorical study of the Cretans who were settled in the village of Osmaniye in Davutlar, starting from 1902, and reveals settlement patterns that were taking place prior to the exchange. Şenesen (2011) points to one of the cultural aspects of the Cretan Muslims living in the Çukurova area that is the folklore. Güler (2012), the oral historian, conducts interviews with the descendants of Cretan refugees to investigate into the reasons behind departing and resettling, besides assessing how positive the impression of Çanakkale was as a new place of belonging. Psaradaki (2021) looked into members of the second and even third generations of Cretan Muslims living in Bodrum with a focus on the memory. Nerantzaki (2023) concentrates on Cretanness and the symbolic meaning that encompasses among second and third generation Cretans in Ayvalık and Mersin.

My field research in İzmir was between December 2023 and January 2024, involving nine participants of Cretan origin (seven men and two women), all members of the *Bornova Giritli ve Mübadiller Derneği* (Bornova Association of

Cretans and Exchangees). In Crete, research took place from March to May 2025. During one month in Chania, collaboration occurred with three female members of the Brotherhood of Asia Minor Refugees of Chania (*Αδελφότητα Μικρασιατών Ν. Χανίων*). In Heraklion, engagement involved four participants (three women and one man) affiliated with the Association of *Alatsatians* in Heraklion (*Συλλόγου Αλατσατιανών Ν. Ηρακλείου*). Among all participants, only three had descendants who migrated during the population exchange, while the rest migrated either before the 1890s or after the 1950s.



Figure 14: Photos from our participatory mapping workshops with Bornova Girtililer Derneği in December 2023

Although time constraints limited the number of participatory activities, participatory mapping workshops were successfully conducted in Izmir. Oral testimonies provided insight into how the Cretans viewed the population exchange and maintained their unique identity over time. These testimonies also revealed parallels and discrepancies between the two communities. Additionally, it became clear how memories have shaped their perception of the past and their current way of life. The identity of "*mübadil*" Cretans emerged as having very clear and powerful connotations.

According to Thompson (2000), oral history is "a history built around people," which makes it possible to include heroes "not just from the leaders but also from the unknown majority of the people." Because of this characteristic, oral

history differs from traditional historiography, which frequently concentrates on notable historical figures rather than common people. Oral history provides "less about events than about their meaning," as Portelli highlights (1998). Oral history allows us to understand not only what happened but also how the narrators interpret the past.

Within relations taking place in Crete, identity practices more often do not exist as exclusive and single affiliations. Rather, identity stories presented by people who were moved to Anatolia and by people who migrated from Anatolia to Crete tend to take on a dual or multiple form. In particular, while many Cretans insist on strong Cretanness, they at the same time integrated into societal and cultural practices existing in their locale. This research reveals insightful information about the process by considering that identities are constructed based on the qualities of respective groups. When group characteristics advance disadvantage and marginality, people normally use adaptive tactics to present their social identity in a more advantageous manner.

In this context, the blending of identities is marked by the co-presence of elements taken from both Cretan and Anatolian cultural traditions is both understandable and predictable. The case of Cretan exchangees illustrates the way that identity reconstruction unfolds as a response to both intra-community and broader societal perceptions. Unlike many other exchangee communities, the Cretans do not retain a direct, lived memory of the exchange itself. This absence, however, does not weaken their sense of collective identity. It should be noted, however, that these observations are based on research conducted over a one-month period with nine participants, and therefore should be interpreted cautiously to avoid overgeneralization. On the contrary, individuals of Cretan origin continue to identify themselves primarily as Cretans, often expressing a deep cultural and emotional attachment to their ancestral homeland no like the other exchangee communities I have observed in Thessaloniki and Izmir.

Their narratives are rooted not in personal recollection of displacement, but in inherited stories, shared customs, and intergenerational memory. What makes the Cretan case particularly unique is that, despite the historical rupture caused by the exchange, the community still exhibits a distinct loyalty to its pro-Lausanne roots. This enduring identification reflects a complex process of memory formation, cultural preservation, and identity negotiation, making the Cretan exchange a compelling case study for understanding how exchangee communities sustain a sense of belonging across time and space.

Far from being simply a response to attempts to protect one's identity or to assimilate into another, Cretan identity is expressed as an ongoing and willful negotiation between multiple attachments informed by memory, a desire for belonging, and an ongoing search for recognition in post-exchange Turkey.

### **7.1 Brief Historical Overview of Crete**

Tukin (1996) states that the Cretan or Minoan civilization, named after King Minos and regarded as a cradle of modern European civilization, dates back to between 3000 and 1400 BCE. Archaeological excavations conducted at sites such as Knossos, Phaistos, Hagia Triada, and Gournia indicate the existence of a Neolithic culture on the island as early as 4000 BCE. Around 1400 BCE, Greek incursions began with the arrival of the Achaeans from the Peloponnese, followed later by the Dorian invasions, which brought this period to an end.

Crete was conquered by the Romans in 67 BCE and, when the Roman Empire divided in 395 CE, became part of the Byzantine Empire. In 826 CE, during the reign of Caliph al-Ma'mun, the island was conquered by the Arabs. Around 10,000 Arabs who had been driven out of Al-Andalus settled in Crete and settled down there and constructed the city of Kandiye (Heraklion today) as Rabdh al-Khandaq. The island was under Arab control for 134 years before being reconquered by the Byzantine Empire in 961 CE (Bilgehan, 2011).

Following the Fourth Crusade, in 1202, Crete was entrusted to Boniface, Marquess of Montferrat. Boniface, on August 12, 1204, sold the island to the Venetians for 100,000 silver pieces. Catholic leaders, who were both secular and spiritual leaders, inherited the properties and lands of the Orthodox Church under Venetian rule. This restrictive policy led to incessant uprisings—there were over 20 mutinies within 150 years. During one such uprising in 1362, the native people, being guided by a Cretan called Nikephoros Kallergis, stormed the government palace and imprisoned the Venetian governor. That was the origin of the first and only Cretan Republic, which nevertheless lasted for eleven months before it was crushed (Tukin, 1996, p. 86).

The Venetians controlled Crete since the early 13th century till the Ottoman conquest in 1669. Crete was the last territorial expansion of the Ottoman Empire, which is why it had less central authority compared to other regions (Adiyeke A. N., 2024). While strategically important to the Venetians, it was economically important to the Ottomans. Regardless, Crete was given the title of an *eyalet* (province) which made her the only island within the empire to enjoy such administrative distinction. Over time, it maintained her value while serving the empire (Greene, 2000).

The Ottoman conquest of the island of Crete began in 1645. The war continued for 24 years, 4 months, and 16 days and finally ended the 465-year-long Venetian Republic's rule on the island that had begun in 1204. Ottoman troops were directed not to harm the property or local inhabitants by damaging the land or its resources. Regardless, other architectural and religious changes were made. Mosques were built from the major churches in first Chania then Rethymno and later in Candia. For instance, the Church of St. Nicholas in Chania was changed into the Hünkar Mosque while the Metropolitan Church of Saint Tito in Candia metamorphosed into the Vezir Mosque. Unlike the major relocations of Muslim population from Anatolia to the Balkan territories, which were settled during Ottoman rule through to militaristically enforced social engineering deaths, there were no such transfers on Crete (Dimitriadis, 2003). There was, however, changes

on the island were accomplished through conversion into Islam (Andriotis, 2004). These conversions started as early as the first years of Cretan War (1645-1669), then further expanded in the decades surrounding the Ottoman conquest, through to the 1821 breakout of the Greek War of Independence (A. N. Adıyeke, 2001).

The Greek War of Independence in 1821 and the establishment of the Greek State in 1830 vastly assisted the cause of independence among the Christian inhabitants of Crete. The 1821 revolt in Crete served for two purposes: to unite the Christian population on the island and to effectively cease the phenomenon where individuals were converting from Christianity to Islam. The years 1834 to 1881 saw a marked increase in the population of Christians on the island, which was around double the increase for Muslims during the same period (Greene, 2000). In Kallivretakis's words, such changes in the demographic structure of the Christian population indeed require some other explanation beyond the scope of population growth. This phenomenon hints at deeper social and political forces in motion during and after the revolutionary period. (Kallivretakis, 2006).

The year 1897 marked the turning point for the Muslims of Crete, paving the way for the transformation into an autonomous state and, eventually, into an annexed state, in 1913 (Kostopoulou, 2012). The revolt set off a massive exodus among the Muslim community on the island to other parts of the Ottoman world. The majority of Muslims in Crete were indigenous, descending from families having converted to Islam in the mid-seventeenth century after the Ottoman conquest. Greek-speaking, not very conscious beyond the shores of the island, their migration was an extreme dislocation, a loss not merely of homeland, but of a peculiar culture, as well. Their migration preceded the Greek Turkish population exchange of the 1920s.

The tragedy in Crete was the extreme case of the larger currents in the "Eastern Question," a composition created in the wake of the breakdown of the Ottoman world order and the rivalry among the European powers and nationalist movements in the Balkans for the control of the old Ottoman lands for strategic

purposes (Anderson, 1978). For most public onlookers, the “Eastern Question” was as much, if not more, a euphemism for the rule of the Ottoman Empire over the Christian population. In the public eye in the European world, the situation in Crete revived the memory of the failure in the humanitarian sphere in the massacres in the Armenian provinces of Anatolia in 1894 and 1896 (Rodogno, 2012). In the popular imagination, the island now represented the crusade-like conflict between the “oppressed” Christian Cretans and the “oppressive” Muslim Ottoman regime in which the Muslim Cretans were a part setting the stage for their migration that followed.

Rebellions throughout the whole of Crete broke out in January 1897 as Christian insurgents rose against Ottoman domination to achieve their traditionally pursued aim for union with Greece (McCarthy, 2022). European nations responded by sending troops and warships to the island to suppress the uprising (Peçe, 2024). The political ambitions of the Christian revolutionaries led to violent and often deadly clashes with Muslim counterparts, with atrocities against the other being committed by both groups. Displaced and having no access to their homes, Muslim refugees were often left with nothing, while their properties were burnt down or seized by Christian neighbors (Peçe, 2016).

British officer Noel Chermiside concluded that the only feasible resolution would be the mass emigration from the island of Muslim Cretans into other parts of the Ottoman Empire after the Christian seizure of the island was consolidated. The tensions created with the 1897 uprising intensified led to fresh clashes in Candia (now Heraklion) in September 1898 (Peçe, 2016, p.112). It was also believed that the emigration of the Muslim community would result in Christian refugees, having fled into Greece, returning into the island, thereby reducing the humanitarian burden for Greece. Having no prospect in the island, the Muslim community of the island began leaving in large numbers in the second half of 1898 up to 1899, emigrating primarily to the port city of Izmir (Andriotis, 2004, p. 71-72).

In November 1898, 3,000 Muslims from the island of Crete then reached Izmir, and in May 1899 the number was 20,000. Whereas the flow tapered in the second half of 1899 because of new Ottoman restrictions, Muslim families from Crete emigrated to Izmir, especially as the island progressed towards union with Greece and eventually the 1923 population exchange (Limantzakis, 2015). To prevent the Muslim concentration in Izmir, the Ottoman state engaged in other resettlement operations, relocating the families elsewhere in the Empire, e.g., Anatolia, Aleppo, Tripoli, Benghazi, and Beirut (Peçe, 2016, p. 121–123).

The Autonomous Cretan State ceased when the island was annexed by Greece on December 1, 1913, putting an end to Crete's Ottoman rule (Clogg, 2013).

## **7.2 The Effects of Population Exchange in Crete**

The Population Exchange ended the presence of the Muslim community in Crete. Starting from 1911 the Muslim population in the island started to migrate and by 1923, the Muslims on the island had decreased significantly. As seen in the table above, around 28,000 people moved to Anatolia as part of the population exchange. But the precise figure is contentious. For Sari (2015), the figure was 25,000; for Adıyeke (2021), 28,000; and Evren (2021) gives the figures 24,200 and 22,700. Arı (2003) claims that, from 1923 onwards, 22,812 persons emigrated.

Table 4: The abandonment of property by Cretan emigrants. (Adıyeye A. N., 2017)

| Districts    | Muslim        | Greek Orthodox | Jewish     |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|------------|
| Chania       | 8,810         | 57,927         | 422        |
| Isfakion     | 29            | 34,998         | -          |
| Rethymno     | 4,954         | 56,382         | 3          |
| Heraklion    | 12,655        | 98,298         | 62         |
| Lassithi     | 1,404         | 61,207         | -          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>27,852</b> | <b>307,812</b> | <b>487</b> |

In his Memoirs on Crete, Tahmiscizade Mehmet Macit (1977), a Turkish author and historian, mentioned the population exchange agreement in his reflections. According to him, by 1921, the Muslim population in Crete endured such harsh conditions that they could barely cross the city limits. He asserted that the massacre in fact was averted; the population exchange agreement therefore saved the Muslims who went from Crete to Anatolia. During the pre-exchange period, Turks living in Cretan villages migrated to the cities because of mounting pressure. In contrast, those Muslims who were awaiting departure from Crete to Anatolia were practically forced to open their houses to Greeks who had fled to the island from Anatolia (Miroğlu, 1977). Inside of the Cretan community I have interviewed, there is a common understanding that some Muslims converted religion so they could remain in the island and avoid having to emigrate.

Beginning in November 1923, the embarkation ports designated for transportation, Rethymno, Chania, and Heraklion, started sending exchangees to their new country. The first group of Muslims leaving Crete arrived at İzmir in November 1923 aboard the ship *Bahr-i Cedit*, which had left from Chania. After health checks, they were sent to Ayvalık for resettlement. Their first stop in Ayvalık

was at Cunda Island, where, before the formal settling of exchangees, they were housed in either school buildings or orphanages temporarily. As of January 1924, the relocation of Cretan Muslims into Anatolia was continuing, with transport operations prolonged until March. The major worry for the resettlement of the exchangees brought into Anatolia was to integrate them into productive roles without delay, moving them from despair as passive consumers. To realize such a thing, they had to be settled in regions that mirrored the places they had been forcibly removed from and corresponded to their occupational skill sets. Although this was never fully realized in the case of the Cretans, a portion of the island's exchangees were indeed settled in areas similar to Crete (Sepetçioğlu, 2007).

Upon hearing that the population exchange was to be put into effect, many Cretans had to sell their properties at very cheap prices, sometimes even below the actual value of the properties, as they could not withdraw their savings from the banks. As such, the exchangees were not able to stay in the localities to which they had first been relocated, resulting in waves of internal migration.

In his book *Emanet Çeyiz*, Kemal Yalçın describes the plight of the Cretans as follows: "Crete enjoyed a balmy climate. Here (Cunda), it was cold. Life was difficult. People really suffered until they got used to the climate and the living conditions. Many died." For the Cretans, the struggle was immediate and tangible: harsh winters, unfamiliar landscapes, and the scarcity of resources made everyday survival a challenge. Many sought refuges in larger cities like İzmir, or in places where extended networks of relatives and fellow migrants could provide some support, ensuring a slightly easier adjustment. Those who had come from rural villages, however, often stayed in Cunda, perhaps due to limited resources, fewer connections elsewhere, or a willingness to rebuild life in a quieter, rural setting. (Yalçın, 1999).

### 7.3 Identity Formation Among Cretan Exchangees

During my research in both Izmir and Crete, certain themes kept coming up: especially through Bektashism, a Sufi order within Islam, emphasizes values such as tolerance, equality, and spiritual introspection. Its inclusive and humanistic worldview often intertwines with the memories and cultural expressions of exchangee communities, memories of natural beauty, and longing for a lost homeland. To highlight how these memories shape Cretan identity, I will examine under the following headings to emphasize these memories and their importance in forming Cretan identity. In this chapter I will concentrate on the most significant elements, including language, religious identity, Cretan cuisine, and their cultural preservation practices, even though a variety of identity-related difficulties were noted.

According to McGrattan (2012), basic in nature are customs, traditions, values, and stories about past events and relationships in forming identities. McGrattan underlines even more how memory functions as a binding tool guiding daily activities and future goals. Although they were not born in Crete, the oral stories showed the interviewees identified as Cretans. This identification stayed strong even among third-generation exchangees. Their introduction with the words "I am Cretan" highlights the strong emotional and symbolic link they keep with a territory they have never visited. Pınar Şenışık (2013) notes that the term "being Cretan" marks a common regional or cultural identity. The same pattern can be seen in the oral stories of the Cretan Turks residing in Bodrum, where daily declarations like "I am Cretan" are viewed as means to perform during which, through the very act of talking, belonging and ancestral memory are passing on and keeping alive over generations (Psaradaki, 2021, p. 46).

The social identity of the Cretan Muslims, as well as that of all who were relocated and resettled, is far more intricate than what the Convention suggested. The Muslims affected by the population exchange were linguistically and culturally heterogeneous with manifold individual and collective memories. Monger particularly focused upon the notion of an "exchangee identity" with particular

reference to the Cretan community. As Sophia Koufopoulou (2004). points out, unlike most Muslims who were expelled from Greek territories, Cretans did not refer to themselves as *muhacirs* (a Turkish term for immigrants or refugees), but rather as *mübadils* (exchangees).

Bound by Turkey's diverse socio-cultural fabric, an association of the term *muhacir* with negation and poverty made distinguishing sense: Cretans preferred identifying themselves as Cretans first. Differentiation became possible through the entitlement of *mübadil* chosen by Cretans not only in terms of ethnic identity but social standing. An interstate accord is what compelled the Cretans to abandon Crete, not an autonomous decision. Understanding the context these people arrived in goes a long way in unpacking the rich linguistic tapestry of the Turkish vernacular, for very few among them spoke this language on arrival in their new Aegean coastal towns and cities.

The Cretans distinguished themselves from other exchangee communities. For instance, Niyazi Yemişçi, a 60-year-old third-generation exchangee from Chania, stated: "As Cretans, we grew up very free. We have a European difference. We are different from other exchangees." The interviewees expressed a deep sense of belonging to Crete and continued to preserve the cultural practices they had inherited from their elders. Members of the second and third generations make efforts to learn Greek, visit Crete, and explore their family histories through various archival sources. Their strong attachment to Cretan cuisine also remains a notable form of cultural continuity.

The stories I gathered suggest that the Cretans sometimes view themselves as "superior" to other *mübadils* as well as the local population. Emphasizing that they brought a culture from the "West," most interviewees said they identified as "Western." How they created their self-identity was much influenced by secularism and modernism. Among the most often occurring themes were symbolic actions, especially concerning eating patterns. 65-year-old male third-generation immigrant Adalet Demir said that when his family moved to Turkey, they observed that the

people ate on the ground. We carried Western culture, he said. We never ate off the floor and never ate from the same plate either.

Islanders are another proud identity of Cretan immigrants. According to them, the relationship between men and women was intimate and interwoven thanks to their geographical position. The genders were not clearly distinguished, and women were not oppressed. Second-generation Chanian immigrant Mine Vatansever characterizes Cretan women as strong and contemporary. She makes a point of pointing out that they didn't wear veils, implying that being exposed represented modernity. She says, "We Cretans taught the locals how to dress." Women were able to work and receive an education. "We brought civilization," she said. Our men held their women in the highest regard.



Figure 15: Mikraasia, homeland of our hearts-A visual representation from within the Brotherhood of Asia Minor Refugees of Chania (Αδελφότητα Μικρασιατών Ν. Χανίων)

Most of the participants in Crete expressed their sense of belonging through melancholic and nostalgic tones. In previous chapters, I briefly addressed the events that took place in Istanbul during the 1950s<sup>37</sup>. Two of the participants were among

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<sup>37</sup> See the p.131

those who managed to escape from Istanbul and resettle in Chania. While their traumas remain vivid, their emotional attachment to their lost homeland appears even more profound than that of the other participants. They continue to visit their former homes and relatives who remained there, watch Turkish television channels, and speak Turkish.

Narratives often expressed their yearning for the natural beauties of the Crete. Most of the exchangees in Izmir stated that they were primarily peasants, while some were tailors and artisans. They frequently spoke of the fertile soil and often described Crete as the most beautiful place in the world, known for its citrus fruits and aromatic herbs. These herbs were used for medicinal purposes, and their grandparents would often speak of how much they missed the fragrance of the fruits.

Mustafa Sual, a third-generation descendant from Chania, speaks about the properties their family left behind, emphasizing the act of remembering. He states that they owned 19 properties and were considerably wealthy. His father was a tailor, and during the population exchange, he could manage to bring his sewing machine. However, they were forced to sell their properties for virtually no value with the population exchange.

One recurring theme in Izmir was that some families chose not to speak about their lives in Crete. Because their pain remained vivid, they preferred not to share the difficulties they faced in adapting to their new environment, aiming to prevent the transmission of resentment to their children. This also helps explain why most participants did not know the exact names of their ancestral villages. Adalet Demir, a 65-year-old male from the third generation, states: “The people who came from there to here, and those who went from Turkey to there, were excluded at the time and referred to as ‘half-infidels.’ They would not speak in the streets because they were a minority in the places they lived. There were no issues there, but here, unfortunately, the locals excluded them. My father had his

reservations, probably. They never told us anything because they had experienced painful events.”

#### 7.4 Preservation of Cretan Language

Culture and language are inextricably linked. Anthony Giddens contends that language is a constructed phenomenon, meaning that it is not an autonomous entity but rather is shaped by the daily activities of its speakers. (Giddens, 1979). Language was a significant marker of discrimination experienced by Cretan immigrants. They spoke a dialect known as *Kritika*, a form of Greek, and most members of the first generation did not speak Turkish. Although they were Muslims, they were subjected to discrimination by the local population, who referred to them as “half-infidels” and treated them as second-class citizens (2011, p. 309).

Ali Yemişci, a 65-year-old third-generation exchangee, states: “They came here like this as if they were second-class citizens, as if my grandmothers were afraid of something. It’s a pity they were called half-infidels just because they spoke a foreign language... Look, they all belonged to the Ottomans. We are not the other. We are not—this was always the land of the Ottoman Empire. But they always saw us as the other. Still, we tried not to see them that way. And now, we have made ourselves accepted as part of this place, proving that we are not the other.”

Due to the language policies of the Republican era, *Kritika* is no longer spoken among the third and fourth generations. However, one element that has persisted to the present day is the use of *nicknames*. According to Tsimouris, nicknames can occasionally have negative connotations and serve as crucial markers for identifying people within a community (Tsimouris, 1997, p. 179). According to Tsimouris, a person's nickname can honor a specific aspect of their personality or appearance, signify a significant life event. The participants stated that they still refer to each other using these nicknames today. In his examples about the current meanings of nicknames, Sepetçioğlu mentioned cases such as "*Mavro*

*Hüseyin*" (dark-skinned Hüseyin), "*Sirko Mustafa*" (weak Mustafa), "*Ispanoz Ali*" (beardless Ali) (Sepetçioğlu, 2011).

A tangible representation of the community's cultural legacy, *manis* (rhyming folk quatrains) hold a special place in Cretan culture. This poetic form, which is part of folk literature and is called *madinadha* in the local dialect, has been used for generations by Cretans to convey joy, excitement, and sadness. *Manis* can be performed with musical accompaniment and are made up of quatrains. The *lyra*, also called the Cretan *lyra* or *kemençe*, is the preferred instrument, though other instruments like the violin, *bouzouki*, and clarinet may be used (Hakkı, 2019).

All migrant groups were impacted by the newly formed Republic of Turkey's attempts to forge a national identity, including the Cretans, who were obliged to learn Turkish, the state's official language, in addition to *Kritika*. As we have seen from the practices above; the Cretan people created their own customs to perpetuate and maintain their prevailing cultural identities, despite the state's tremendous efforts to create a single national identity.

### **7.5 Religious Identity of Cretan Exchangees: The Role of Bektashism**

According to Amin Maalouf, people tend to hide their identities when they are unable to maintain them. Likewise, in order to prevent exclusion, Cretans had to rebuild their religious identity (Maalouf, 2001). On the island of Crete, a sizable section of the Muslim populace practiced Bektashism during the Ottoman Empire. *Horasanizade Derviş Ali Dede* founded the first Bektashi lodge in Crete in the village of Voni. After April 1647, this village came to be known as "*Dedeler Köyü*" (Village of the Elders). The *Horasanlı* Lodge, which was constructed in Candia (present-day Heraklion) in honor of *Horasanizade Derviş Ali Dede*, was largely responsible for the spread of Bektashism on the island. In *Kritika*, Cretan Bektashi's carried out their religious rites, and among the Muslim Cretan community, Bektashism emerged as a fundamental component of cultural identity. The discrimination that Cretans experienced after their migration during the population

exchange was also significantly influenced by their religious affiliation (Koufopoulou, 2004, p. 322).

Although Bektashism is no longer a defining religious identity for Cretans, the *tekke* (dervish lodge) continues to serve as a significant cultural symbol. Its importance for Cretan identity remains observable today. In Heraklion, the *tekke* is still open to visitors and is maintained by the Association of *Alatsatians* in Heraklion (*Συλλόγος Αλατσατιανών Ν. Ηρακλείου*)<sup>38</sup>. During the 1930s, migrants from Alaçatı (a town in İzmir) established associations, primarily to offer mutual support and resources to address the hardships that uprooting and resettlement in metropolitan Greece inevitably entailed. In this context, the Alatsatians of Heraklion Prefecture founded, for the first time in 1936, an association in Heraklion, Crete, under the name "Union of Alatsatians of the Prefecture of Heraklion." Its core objectives were to provide mutual aid and solidarity among members, and to foster relationships aimed at addressing shared social needs.

Their initial priority was to ease the challenges of settlement and adaptation to the new environment. However, by the 1980s, following the death of many first-generation refugees from various cities in Asia Minor, the bonds between their descendants began to weaken. As a result, the visible and direct transmission of Asia Minor Greek culture was at risk of fading. In response, new associations emerged with the explicit purpose of preserving the traditions and customs of the homeland, while also strengthening the bonds among refugee descendants.

On September 14, 1982, the association is reopened in *Tekke* (lodge) to unite all those originating from Alatsata in Asia Minor, and to ensure the preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage, customs, and traditions of the unforgettable homeland across the Aegean.

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<sup>38</sup> For more information and the activities of the organization: [Alatsatean Organization](#)



Figure 16: At the Tekke with Giorgos Tsoumpas

During my research period in Crete, I had the opportunity to meet members of the local organization, including Giorgos Tsoumpas, a third-generation migrant from *Alaçati*, Izmir. He introduced me to the *Alatsatean* community in Heraklion and guided me through the tekke. The *Tekke* is now open to visitors and serves as a venue for the association's workshop activities. Tsoumpas noted that, if asked where his home was, he would say it is the *Tekke*. For the *Alatsatean* community, the *Tekke* represents a space where they see their culture reflected and preserved.

Even though he had never been to Heraklion, the presence of the tekke and their Bektashi ancestry in Izmir allowed for the development of a cultural bond, especially through the adoption of a more secular way of life and a Bektashi-based drinking culture. The *Bektashis*, who are defined against Sunni Islam, portray themselves as fundamentally modern and democratic, general defenders of gender equality and human rights, as anthropologist Albert Doja observes (Doja, 2006). It is therefore not surprising that Cretans who consider themselves “modern” frequently highlight their Bektashi cultural heritage. Consequently, it is not

unexpected that those Cretans who view themselves as “modern” often stress their Bektashi cultural heritage possibly because of its association with the fairly gentle and moderate forms of Islam, which could be the reason they choose to highlight such a facet.

## 7.6 A Taste of Heritage: Cretan Cuisine



*Figure 17: A Traditional Cretan table featuring fava (yellow split pea puree), avrones (wild bitter greens), grilled cheese with balsamic vinegar, artichokes in olive oil and split pea, russian salad, tzatziki, and a lamb cooked with local herbs*

One of the most important factors that sets one community apart from another is the intricate connection between food and culture. For Cretans, their food is the most important part of who they are. Herbs, vegetables, different kinds of olives, olive oil, legumes, and meat dishes are the main ingredients of Cretan cuisine. However, a rising number of ethnographic and ethnohistorical researches have begun exploring these aspects. In her study of Nerantzaki (2023, p. 86), considers food as a symbol and a metaphor at the same time and highlights its close connection to social relations, including power, inclusion, and exclusion, and

culturally rooted systems of classification. Food has been proven to be a common ground and a medium of belonging in migration and displacement contexts, keeping cultural differences alive while making their quotidian re-articulation across generations and places possible.

According to some accounts, Cretans were also known to eat a variety of wild herbs that could be found on the island; in fact, they would "eat any herb that even a goat could eat." "I can name every herb in the world for you," said 54-year-old fourth-generation Cretan Eray Tuna. Like mallow, wild fennel, chicory, and 'donkey helva' (a type of herb)... Due to their fondness for herbs, Cretans were sometimes ridiculed. When someone went to pick herbs, people would say: 'If there's a cow in the field, don't drive it out; drive the Cretan out; they'll eat all the herbs.'

As an embodied form of memory, food has become a particularly powerful indicator of Cretanness. Within Cretan communities, "Cretan food" is maintained as cultural customs that pass down knowledge, morals, and a feeling of community to future generations. The most significant component of Cretan cooking is probably snails. The locals socially excluded the dish, which they call *hohulus*. When cooking snails, Cretans would grind the shells into a powder and mix them into the soil so they wouldn't be noticed. The culinary customs that the Cretans have preserved are still practiced today and are still important.

### **7.7 Cultural Preservation in Cretan Exchangee Communities**

There has been a discernible shift in how people started to think about their past and family histories since the 1999, when a new phase in Greek Turkish relations emerged. This change promoted historical appropriation in both the public and private spheres. The stories of people who lived through the Population Exchange started to be featured in documentaries, books, and movies. In this regard, the third and fourth generations of Cretan immigrants and exchangees began to form a separate foundation for Cretan immigrants and exchangees. Other components of

their cultural tradition have remained essential to their sense of continuity, even though others, like music, have faded or lost significance.

For Cretan exchangee communities, cultural preservation has been essential to the formation of their identities and shared memories. Numerous exchangees and their descendants have been able to preserve unique aspects of their Cretan heritage in spite of the trauma of forced migration and the difficulties of resettlement, adjusting to new sociocultural contexts while guaranteeing their generational transmission. These include the establishment of associations and foundations, the oral tradition of *mantinades*, language, food, and the institution of the family. When taken as a whole, these show the Cretan community's unwavering dedication to passing on their heritage to future generations as well as to preserving its memory. Through the material representations of their shared identity, the Cretans of Turkey have managed to preserve their sense of solidarity in the face of many obstacles.



*Figure 18: A photo with Elektra Mariakis on the left and Stella Gozani Charitaki on the right and Litsa Choudalaki on the far right in Chania, Crete April 2025.*

It is clear that the communities in İzmir and Crete both have a deep emotional bond with their "lost homeland." Numerous people have come, and some have even been successful in finding their old family homes or getting in touch with old family members. I received outstanding hospitality from both groups, who freely shared their knowledge and stories and generously offered their food.

According to their perspective, being able to extend hospitality is a prerequisite for being genuinely "Cretan." Despite having personally witnessed hatred, Litsa Chadalaki, a survivor of the events in Istanbul in 1955, said she had no hatred for the Turkish people. On the other hand, history teacher Elektra Mariakis recalled that she hated Turks as a child because of the hardships her parents had gone through. she came to recognize that she was still carrying the pain of a previous generation. As a result, she made a conscious decision to stop perpetuating hatred and began encouraging her students to do the same.



*Figure 19: Lace Workshop in Tekke by Cretan women*

Through a range of cultural activities, Cretan associations are still very active today in both Turkey and Crete, carrying on their traditions. For instance, women continue to host weaving and lacework workshops in the *Alatsatean* Association of Heraklion with the goal of passing on these crafts to future generations. Lace is a complex craft that has been practiced by people since ancient times. It is made by crocheting with threads of different thicknesses using a hook

or needle. From curtains to bedspreads, it can be used in a variety of ways. It is frequently made as insertions between fabrics or along the edges of fabrics. Extensive coverings can be created by repeating motifs.

According to Özbaş (1959), lace underwent substantial development in the Middle Ages, starting in Italy and swiftly expanding to France and other Mediterranean nations. The literature has identified several varieties, including Brussels lace, Argenton lace, *Kopanaki* lace (*Dentelle aux fuseaux*), Venetian lace (*Les dentelles de Venise*), English lace (*Dentelles à l'aiguille*), and *Alençon* lace. In Turkish culture, lace is also used to decorate homes, clothes, and textiles, passing it down from mother to daughter like an heirloom. Its classic style is still relevant today, finding new expression in variations for various purposes, such as table and bed linens. Lace has long been used in both outerwear and interior design because of its strength, style, and aesthetic appeal. In particular, Cretan women have experimented with two-needle lacework, creating a unique style that is referred to as "Cretan Lace" in their cultural tradition.

Identity preservation has been greatly aided by dance and music. To think of music only as a pleasing arrangement of sounds made by musical instruments or as a collection of particular notes would be reductive. Another idea that helps create group identity is music, which communicates a feeling of inclusion in a specific social group. In fact, Cretan music and the dance culture that goes along with it have helped to set them apart from other groups, redefining the line between self and other. I come across dance forms like *kasaposerviko*, *zeibekiko*, *aptaliko*, and *syrto* after Crete was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire. The "lyra," the most significant musical instrument of the Cretan exchangees, has evolved into an integral part of Cretan dance. The Cretans say, "*An eşi i Kriti diyo psişes i proti ine i lira*," which translates to, "If Crete has two souls, the first is the lyra." (Hakkı, 2019, p. 92).

Despite the painful disruption of forced migration, the example of Cretan exchangee communities shows how cultural identity can be actively maintained,

changed, and passed down through the generations. In both Crete and Turkey, Cretans have maintained a unique communal identity that transcends geographic displacement through oral histories, music, dance, culinary customs, textile traditions, collective memory, and the development of associations. These customs are dynamic instruments for intercultural communication, intergenerational continuity, and community cohesion rather than static holdovers from the past. Younger generations who participate in these customs add to a living legacy that strikes a balance between the realities of their present sociocultural contexts and longing for a "lost homeland." Cretan identity is not just remembered; it is reconstructed, enacted, and performed through routine actions of culture.

## CONCLUSION

Short-term studies are not the most desirable or relevant way to examine migration with its long-lasting consequences. Migration, beyond its real *raison d'être*, is a continued process that affects the lives of migrants and creates a shared memory for communities for generations. As Abdelmalek Sayad reminds us, migration always has a dual nature: every *immigration* is simultaneously an *emigration* (Sayad A. , 2004). Without recognizing this duality, our understanding of migration and its long-term implications remains incomplete. Viewing it through this lens, focusing on the migrant experience presents particular relevancy, given that it reveals how individuals and communities undergo displacement, form identity, and find their bearings within a new sociocultural circle. Studying the manner in which migrants interpret, transmit, and modify their experiences over time offers an understanding of those enduring consequences of migration, not only on individuals, but also on the historical memories and cultural continuity of the communities they themselves forge or enter. So, the most meaningful studies are those focusing on migrants' experience and sentiment in long time spans, on how memory and identity change through time, and through changing social and political environments.

In this thesis, my main focus is to explore the experiences of exchangees from their own perspectives, aiming to present and compare the memories, narratives, and identities of different generations within these communities. The goal is not to produce historically precise or verifiable data, but to understand how people and communities remember, interpret, and assign meaning to the past. Memory, in this sense, is seen not as a simple reflection of fact, but as a living, subjective process shaped by personal experience. What I seek instead was to highlight both the connections and the differences between generations, paying close attention to how the meaning of displacement and its legacy evolves over time.

During this study, all the people who generously shared their stories gives me the opportunity to see the other side of the coin; allowing me to observe the complex layers of memory, resilience, and negotiation of identities that are usually veiled behind the official narrative of the population exchange. It is from listening to their testimonies that I could arrive at broader conclusions about the ways in which communities remember, reinterpret, and pass on the consequences of displacement.

Throughout this thesis I emphasize various times that the 1923 population exchange was fundamentally shaped by religious criteria. Both Turkey and Greece entered into the exchange agreement with the clear goal of creating more homogeneous national populations. From the perspective of the Turkish state, the exchange was seen as an essential step to eliminate the influence that foreign powers had historically gained through the protection of non-Muslim minorities during the late Ottoman period. The trauma of repeated foreign interventions under the appearance of minority protection contributed to the state's desire to reconfigure its demographic structure based on religion rather than ethnicity.

This logic helps explain why non-Muslim minorities, such as Armenians, often faced harsher forms of exclusion or marginalization, whereas Muslim communities of diverse ethnic backgrounds such as Bosnians, Pomaks, or Albanians is more easily included into the newly founded Republic. Their Muslim identity, rather than their ethnic origin, was the key factor in determining their inclusion within the imagined national community. This religion-based categorization reveals the priorities of early Republican nation-building and challenges simplified narratives that portray the exchange purely as a bilateral ethnic separation.

From the Greek perspective, the population exchange is also considered acceptable based on strategic and religious considerations. For Eleftherios Venizelos, one of the main advocates of the exchange, the Orthodox Church was seen as a dominant institution that could facilitate the integration of incoming

Orthodox Christian refugees from Turkey into Greek society. The shared religious identity, combined with the church's social and cultural influence, is expected to ease the process of adaptation and mitigate potential disruptions caused by the large-scale demographic shift.

Furthermore, long before the formal population exchange is implemented, Greece has already been facing with significant migration flows, particularly following the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913. These earlier waves of migrants from the collapsing Ottoman territories had created logistical and political challenges for the Greek state, especially in terms of resettlement and resource allocation. In this context, the idea of relocating departing Muslim Turkish populations and resettling incoming Christian refugees in their place appeared both practical and politically advantageous. It is framed as a solution to the growing refugee question, while concurrently serving the broader national goal of homogenizing the population within the territorial boundaries of the Greek state.

However, such policies are not abstract or purely administrative, they are shaped by political actors and negotiated at the level of governments. What this thesis seeks to do, in contrast, is to move beyond official narratives and policy decisions by focusing on the lived experiences of those most affected. By shifting the lens to the community level, the research aims to understand how individuals and families experienced these transformations, remembered them, and continue to make sense of their consequences across generations. At the heart of this research lies a fundamental concern: to understand how entire communities were forced to leave the only homeland they had known, and the lasting traumas this rupture inflicted on individuals and their descendants.

The current literature on the refugees from Asia Minor has highlighted in unison that the historical event of displacement is not closed but rather it is a continuous process whose effects are felt across generations. The ground-breaking research of Hirschon indicates that silence, selective remembering and everyday practices are not only the absence of memory but also important responses to

displacement (Hirschon, 1989; 2003). In line with this idea, Arcel emphasizes the long-lasting psychological and emotional repercussions of the Asia Minor Catastrophe by the showing that the trauma persists and is passed on through three generations, mostly being unexpressed but very much a part of the physical being (Arcel, 2014).

These are the people most directly and profoundly affected by the population exchange which those who were uprooted from their homes, often with little time to prepare or say goodbye, and who had to reconstruct their lives in unfamiliar territories. My goal is to follow the emotional and social ripple effects of this displacement and to give voice to those whose experiences have too often been reduced to mere statistics or policy outcomes.

When reflecting the historical conjuncture in which the population exchange took place, it is important to understand that both Turkey and Greece were settling down from prolonged and exceptionally devastating periods of war. Such a post-war environment was characterized by economic instability, political uncertainty, and widespread social disruption. Given this fragile situation, speedy integration of the exchanged populations within the economic and social fabric of the two countries, became an urgent matter for both states. Yet, the very essence of the exchange as a compulsory mechanism, established under international law to uproot people from their ancestral homes, is an infringement of these people's most fundamental human and property rights. At a level inhered from legal and politic considerations, the exchange shall forever etch in the memories of those affected deep emotional and psychological scars.

The research has been shaped not only by the testimonies of the exchangees I encounter during my fieldwork, but also by a wide range of narratives documented in bibliographic and historical sources, predominantly the publications of the Foundation of Lausanne Treaty Emigrants, centered on interviews and memory-based testimonies. These multiple layers of narratives both oral and written, have informed my understanding of exchangee identities, perspectives, and generational

shifts. To analyse these dynamics, I draw on Karl Mannheim's theory of generations, particularly as articulated in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, to understand how collective memory and social location shaped generational experiences. Additionally, Pierre Bourdieu's *theory of practice* offers a valuable framework for understanding the evolving social transformations and symbolic strategies through which exchangee communities negotiated belonging, position, and identity across time.

The thesis begins by providing a brief historical background, placing the 1923 Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations within a broader trajectory of political and demographic transformations. Particular attention was given to the dynamics leading up to the Lausanne Treaty and the incidents that followed its implementation. It is emphasized that prior to the 1877–1878 Ottoman-Russian War, public and social life in the empire was relatively stable and harmonious. However, the period following this war marked the beginning of large-scale migrations from Balkan states toward Anatolia, a process that would eventually put the foundations for the 1923 population exchange.

Within this historical background, the cities of Izmir and Thessaloniki emerged as pivotal not only because they were profoundly affected by the exchange, but also due to their cosmopolitan structures and layered identities. Both cities represent spaces where diverse ethnic and religious communities coexisted for centuries, often as neighbors. One facet of the literature highlights the importance of place and especially the city in the process of identity and belonging formation. Displacement is viewed as a process not just through national policies and frameworks but also through urban specific pasts which are attached to a city rather than a nation-state (Örs, 2018). In this light, attachment to the homeland continues to exist even when there is no return to the territory which leads to the creation of belonging that is both geographically dislocated and emotionally linked at the same time (Halstead, 2018). Smyrna's symbolic centrality in Greek cultural memory is a clear example of how some cities become points of reference for national identity and cultural imaginings beyond the refugee population (Gedgoudaitė, 2021).

Based on these cities, the comparative analysis done in this research indicates that both Izmir and Thessaloniki are very powerful memory sites that are not only geographical locations but also mnemonic and symbolic producers through which the issues of loss and belonging are always being contested.

Chapter 3 engages with the population exchange by positioning it within the broader field of forced migration studies. I begin by reexamining general migration theories and identifying main elements that were predominantly relevant to the 1923 exchange. Migration, as one of the oldest and most studied phenomena in human history, has appealed scholarly attention from various disciplines, including demography, economics, anthropology, history, geography, and sociology. The chapter reflects on how migration studies experienced a significant boom in the twentieth century, especially in reaction to political upheavals, wars, and forced displacements.

While briefly acknowledging foundational theorists and dominant migration models, the focus gradually narrows to highlight how the population exchange aligns most closely with the characteristics of forced migration. This conceptual framing serves as a critical entry point for understanding the exchange not merely as a bilateral political arrangement, but as a deeply human and historically situated rupture with enduring consequences. The rise of nationalism, in particular, created environments in which minorities were progressively seen as existential threats to the nation-state, making their integration into new societies deeply challenging.

Within this context, I also explore the concept of identity and its entanglement with migration, drawing from diverse theoretical frameworks to examine how identity is often constructed and reinforced through processes of othering. Furthermore, this chapter is dedicated to the origins and meanings of relevant terminology, which is essential for understanding the sociopolitical language that shaped public perception. In migration contexts, identity formation frequently involves a negotiation between self-perception and externally imposed

labels, revealing the ways in which belonging, exclusion, and memory are intertwined.

In addition to these theoretical discussions, the chapter also delves into the origins, meanings, and implications of key terms that have historically shaped the discourse around the population exchange. Language is never neutral, and understanding the terminology used both at the time of the exchange and in its aftermath which offers valuable insight into the sociopolitical narratives that influenced public perception and state policy. One of the central concepts examined is that of the “*mübadil*”, a term used in the Turkish context to refer to the descendants of those who were displaced in 1923. The chapter traces the historical emergence of this term, exploring how the term has been adopted, transformed, and reinterpreted differently in the popular context and in academic literature. This analysis brings out how labels such as *mübadil* bear multiple layers of meaning that reflect not only historical experience but also changing notions of identity, memory, and community.

These complexities underscore the importance of approaching such terms not simply as static descriptors, but as active elements in how communities construct their sense of self and belonging. It is precisely this depth and nuance that guided the methodological choices presented in Chapter 4, where I turn to Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR). Here, I outline its origins, core principles, and explain why it offered the most appropriate framework for engaging with the sensitive and multifaceted legacy of the 1923 population exchange. Given the emotional resonance and historical burden carried by the topic, it is crucial to adopt a participatory approach that centers the voices of those directly affected. CBPR provided the necessary tools to approach memory and identity from within the communities themselves, rather than imposing external narratives.

An important argument raised in this chapter was that, although individuals during the exchange were largely subject to external forces and had limited control over the migration process, small moments of agency could still be observed.

During the interviews, I encounter occasions in which personal decisions or subtle acts of resistance had ripple effects, revealing that even within highly structured and controlled contexts, individual agency was not fully absent. As Türkeli has noted, “a life story gives us a vantage point from which to see how one person experiences and understands life, his or her own especially, over time. It enables us to see and identify threads and links that connect one part of a person's life to another” (Türkeli, 2016).

To fully grasp how identities were transformed during and after the exchange, I argue that the process must be construed through Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice. His conceptual tools allowed for a deeper analysis of how structural forces and individual actions interact dialectically. As O'Reilly has emphasized, “policies and practices are often supported [...] by ideologies, so looking at them we begin to see how structures are interpreted and sustained in practice” (O'reilly, 2012, p. 135). Anastasopoulou (2022) has approached refugee memory as an intergenerational negotiation shaped by both family narratives and broader political contexts, highlighting how later generations reinterpret, reframe, or strategically silence aspects of the refugee past. Read together, these frameworks helped clarify the mutually constitutive relationship between global structures and the lived realities of individual agents of their thoughts, actions, and interactions. These intertwined dynamics became especially visible in the narratives I collected during my fieldwork in Izmir and Thessaloniki, revealing how social transformation unfolds not just from above, but also from within everyday life.

Throughout this thesis, Karl Mannheim's theory of generations serves as a foundational framework for analyzing the generational dynamics of exchange communities. His works *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge, Ideology and Utopia*, and *An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* were dominant references in this regard. Mannheim's emphasis on the concept of the “social generation” highlights the construction of collective identities through shared historical experiences and a sense of belonging. This concept of a generational “we” became particularly cherished in the later chapters, where during the analysis it

proved how the descendants of the exchanged populations articulate a shared identity rooted in inherited memory, loss, and displacement. Drawing on Mannheim's perspective, the chapter also engaged with how communities sustain a coherent sense of cultural memory across generations, even as those memories evolve in response to shifting socio-political contexts.

Building on this theoretical grounding, Chapter 5 presents the extensive participatory research I carried out with exchangee communities in Izmir and Thessaloniki. Rather than simply reporting findings, the chapter underscored the critical importance of the preparation and planning phases in Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR), particularly the challenge of identifying and accessing a "community" willing to participate and share their memories. I reflect on the delicate process of building trust and finding the right approach, as well as on the failed attempts I encounter in both cities, each of which provided valuable insights and lessons that shaped the trajectory of the research. These experiences stressed that participatory research is not linear or predictable, but rather a process of negotiation, patience, and mutual recognition.

This chapter also observes the participatory activities themselves, which were designed collaboratively with community members. I emphasized the importance of open communication at the outset and the need to co-create not only the research questions and tools, but also the formats of engagement. Involving participants in the dissemination of findings and ensuring their feedback at every stage became an ethical and epistemological priority. These practices not only deepened the data collected but also helps to promote a shared sense of ownership over the knowledge produced. By grounding the research in dialogue and shared authority, it became possible to engage more deeply with the emotional and cultural landscapes shaped by displacement.

This commitment to centering community voices naturally extended into Chapter 6, which explores the cultural practices and traditions that continue to be preserved and transmitted among exchangee communities. As Tsekouras (2016)

and Keramaris (2022) highlights; memory is enacted and transmitted through music, food and oral storytelling. With such a start, the chapter dealt with the power of music to unify, underlining its ability to act as a form of resistance and a shared language of emotion and its function as a dialogical space . Particular attention was given to the *Rembetiko* style as an instance or symbol for deterritorialization, living in the margins and expressing the pains and endurance of forced migration. I go on to show how many of the songs that are traditionally associated with these communities are still sung and remembered today, serving not just as cultural artefacts but also as focus to connect to and build a relationship during fieldwork. During fieldwork, these songs became focal points around which relationships were built and deepened, bridging past and present through shared memory and emotion.

From an analytical viewpoint, it appears that such embodied practices project memory and identity into the bodily expression of dances or communal rituals. In turn, dance thereby becomes a non-verbal language of social glue; it can operate as an uninterrupted continuity for culture and heritage being alive through dance. This embodied transference offers a counterargument to the exchange of identity, whereby cultural memory can remain intact amidst all the displacement, fragmentation, and dilution. It also portrays how intergenerational participation maintains collective belonging, wherein movement shared amongst these generations constitutes an advertisement for the repository of history and feeling.

I also examine the cuisine as a marker of the continuity in the preservation of their identities. Not only the recipes but also the technique served as a medium through cultural memory which enacted in their daily life. Many of these culinary traditions from their memory land are still intact and through the generations they symbolize both resilience and rootedness. All of these and many more cultural practices are forms of living archive of exchangee heritage. They bridge the gap between the past and present and present how memory is preserved not only in stories but also in rhythm, movement, and flavor.

Building on this, the focus to the community dynamics observed during my fieldwork in both Greece and Turkey, examining in Chapter 7 of these processes through the lens of generational change. One of the main patterns to emerge was the way identity formation and adaptation to the environment went on for second- and third-generation exchangees. Their families, for many years, had known what it was to be alienated and distanced from host societies, but gradually many have found ways of overcoming these inherited prejudices, often through interaction and shared spaces. Community members speak of their lives, education, relationships, and changing points of view. It is this willingness to share such intimate histories that became the very core of this research.

Coming to the most crucial phase of the research, a stake in an interview with Şaban Yaylalı, one of the oldest first-generation exchangees at 102 years old. He narrated the initial hardships in settling, hostile relationships with the locals, wherein they constituted a subject of labeling and differentiation. There lay another dimension I observe dispossession and its emotional and material aftermath whereby I can further understand how dispossession affected his perception of identity and self-perception. So, dispossession and transformation constituted another thread for my analysis under the concept of capital by Bourdieu. After migration, exchangees lived a total break in all fields of capital-economic, social, cultural, and symbolic-from which they had to reconstruct their existence. From one day to the next, interpersonal networks which constructed over years of trust and familiarity, were wiped out.

With participatory activities, I can still note the loss of capital in economic and social terms. Many spokes of their childhoods stemming from a background of absence and poverty, which was often explained together with narratives of collective resilience. Third-generation exchangees occasionally invoked these tales of material scarcity or traumas of loss. This cross-generational shift points to the ongoing process of recovery and reconstitution.

Another remarkable pattern that appeared especially among the third-generation migrants in Izmir was a realization of the lack of detailed knowledge about their families lives in Thessaloniki. Many of them commented that their grandparents, the first-generation exchangees, had mostly refrained from speaking about their experiences. That silence, apparently shaped by trauma or loss, or maybe out of a desire to shelter the next generation from the pain of displacement, has caused a severe disruption in intergenerational memory transmission.

Consequently, many in the third generation were brought up with no conscious knowledge of their origins; all they have are faint and fragmented stories passed down from family members. But lately, a change in this situation has become evident. The fervent aspiration many carry to reconnect with their ancestry has led them to engage with exchangee organizations, take part in memory tours, and visit territories their families once called home. These endeavors represent a conscious effort to fill in the blank of that which remains unsaid and lost, thereby reawakening a sense of belonging through inter-generational dialogue.

Memories in the words of Maurice Halbwachs (1992) are about not only how collective minds work in a particular society, but also how mental activities are shaped and structured by social arrangements in transformations. He claims that for a person to acquire, recall, and locate a given memory, that memory must be situated within the social environment to which that person belongs. In this sense, the social groups to which one belongs frame the memory. Memory, therefore, does not develop in isolation but grows while interacting with others. Further developing this theory, Jan Assmann (1992) states that in the course of their lives, individuals are interacting with many different social groups, with the interaction starting in the family and continuing to religious and national communities. Accordingly, memory is indeed multilayered and thus shaped by the variety of social relationships and attachments an individual sustains.

Building on Maurice Halbwachs' perspective, and Jan Assmann's idea that memory is multidimensional; we can begin to grasp how the collective memory of

exchange migrants progressed within their host societies. Assmann reminds us that memory is not simply an internal or individual act but a dynamic process that is fostered through cultural and communicative engagement. This perspective allows us to view memory as something that can be reawakened, restructured, or even intentionally silenced, depending on the social and political context.

The exchangees are considered immediately as a part of the national body in the Turkish Republic. Nevertheless, they carried with them cultural codes, languages, and ways of life that were considered alien by the communities they were settled into. The imposition of national ideals created pressures that demanded that these exchangees conform and assimilate under the umbrella of a "Turkish-Muslim" nation. Such circumstances mostly silenced their past life experiences in what had, overnight, become lands of an enemy especially in the early 10 years after the population exchange.

Although an initial silence prevailed for quite some time, and at times there was fear that they might be labeled as foreigners due to their geographical-cum-cultural origins, the common religion and shared experiences of trauma, displacement, and survival carved out a fragile yet powerful bridge for the migrants and local populations. These memories that were either kept secret or suppressed at the beginning started seeing light through family tales, community practices, and eventually through the organized exchangee associations.

The "memory rebirth" that began to occur in the third generation, often during return visits or tours to villages in Greece. These journeys reflect how memory can be re-activated and re-contextualized over time with the changing. It demonstrates how cultural memory, as Assmann suggests, is never static but constantly mediated by new social configurations and intergenerational dialogues. Oral history, through this lens, shows that displaced people mostly recall their experience through fragmented narratives shaped by affective and experiential dimensions rather than linear chronology (Tansuğ, 2018; Psaradaki, 2021). The way people recount their identities through small daily acts of self, identification is

evident in these stories, even though a direct territorial continuity is missing (Nerantzaki, 2023). Thus, we can observe how cultural memory not only framed the pain of loss but also gradually enabled exchangee descendants to reclaim their narratives, reshaping them into sources of identity, continuity, and belonging both in Turkey and in connection with their ancestral homeland.

In return, as exchangees navigated their habitus; it gradually transformed, modified, or, in certain cases, reconstructed. This change, however, did not simply pertain to the external behaviors of the migrants, but also to their emotions, ways of thinking, and ways of perceiving the world. Silence never became voiceless in effecting this adaptation. One of the ways in which migrants contributed to their integration into the homogenizing national narratives was silence on the issues relating to their past and cultural distinctiveness. It was almost a way of coping, a mode of aligning with the requirements of the new national order. Potential acceptance began to form from an erosion of the initial prejudices as interrelations deepened, and mutual dependencies developed over time. Subsequently, the social distance between the host and migrant communities became narrower. What was previously a strongly marked identity started to become uncertain, ambiguously marked, and more assimilated into a common social fabric, especially when a more hybrid identity, less visibly tagged as foreign, was passed on to subsequent generation.

Drawing on Assmann's theory of cultural memory, it becomes clear that memory is not confined to a single form but unfolds across multiple layers of everyday life. Practices such as singing, cooking, and communal rituals act as living archives each layer carrying fragments of the past that, when reassembled through associations and shared experiences, bring memory vividly back to life. These layers, though sometimes isolated, interact dynamically, allowing memories to be continuously reactivated and reshaped.

In this process, the other gradually became the local. Through shared daily practices, intermarriages, economic cooperation, participation in community

rituals, and the eventual fading of the original migration memory, the once-distinct cultural markers of the exchangee communities became embedded within local life. The transformation was not only one of inclusion but of co-creation: the migrants did not merely adapt to the local identity; they helped redefine it. Over generations, the distinction between who arrived *and* who was already there blurred, giving rise to new, layered localities that bore the traces of both rupture and continuity.

The emergence of postmodernism in the 1980s, coupled with the rise of globalism in the 1990s, once again saw efforts on the Turkish side to join the European Union. Appearing within the larger political and cultural context, this helped in finally bringing stabilization to Turkey-Greece relations. As the notion of national frontiers got more fluid and the discussion on identity began, a social trend fostering the questioning of cultural identity and heritage began spreading in both countries. More and more people were breaking away from the silence of previous generations, pondering, and putting forth questions concerning their ethnicity and family backgrounds.

In this evolving context, I observe a major definitive alteration in the exchangee descendants. For many, the idea of belonging was no longer relegated to their immediate locality or national territory. Rather arose a deep feeling of attachment toward a memory land, a symbolic geography based on ancestral stories and collective memory. What is striking about this attachment is that often it existed in the absence of any concrete experiences of life in the homeland.

In their words, "home" was not necessarily a place where they lived, but the gut-wrenching memory of an existence taken away from their grandparents, an existence that was forcibly wrested from their grandparents. This idea of belonging to an imagined or remembered homeland does indeed stand as a testimony to the enduring force of cultural memory—one that enables identity to transcend spatial and generational envelopes.

Magat emphasizes:

Home is also a center. Here, the term center indicates a meaning system or a viable, indispensable source of identity. Centering encompasses, adequate integration of past, present, and future; it implies satisfactory reconciliation of immediate (proximate) and ultimate (abstract or distant) concerns (Magat, 1999).

Building on this framework, I explore how this deeper understanding of home manifests within exchangee communities. For them, home transcends the simple idea of the house their parents once lived in; it becomes a place richly imbued with memory, emotion, and cultural significance. No matter where the homes are, their pictures are able to express an amazing but also sad feeling of solitude where each one is a physical island with its boundaries marked out, and the sea of diversity that is typical of the adjoining urban fabric is the one that surrounds them. This layered conception of home reveals how space and memory intertwine, shaping a sense of belonging that endures across generations. Drawing from Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) (1989), I show how abandoned buildings, tombstones, or even uninhabited landscapes can act as powerful symbols of continuity, anchoring identity across generations.

This theme is further elaborated in Chapter 8, where I examine the Cretan exchangees' understanding of home through the example of *the tekke* which is a religious site that is no longer in active use but continues to function as a symbolic space of belonging. For these communities, *the tekke* serves not just as a historical or spiritual reference, but as a living site of memory, a mnemonic anchor to a past that endures in collective imagination. These spaces, both material and symbolic, reaffirm the idea that home is shaped as much by memory and affect as it is by physical geography, and that identity often finds its center in places that bear witness to absence, silence, and continuity.

The chapter is intentionally designed to focus on the distinctive experience of the Cretan exchangees, who were clearly demarcated into particular identities

throughout the study by means of their cultural practices. Here I analyze how the very identities of Cretan exchangees, formed by specific historical trajectories, allows for a nuanced approach to the general experience of exchangees. The Cretan exchangees represented this gatekeeping of local approaches in the study of memory and identity, as their sense of belonging and cultural particularism exposed dynamics through which other communities were not seen.

As this study draws to a close, it builds on a rich tapestry of theoretical insights that deepen our understanding of identity formation and memory within exchangee communities. Beyond the foundational frameworks of Pierre Bourdieu and Karl Mannheim, the work engages with critical perspectives that highlight the complexity and fluidity of identity. Stuart Hall's exploration of cultural identity and representation proves invaluable in revealing how discourse and power shape the construction of identities. Amin Maalouf's reflections on multiple belongings illuminate the inherent tensions and conflicts experienced by hybrid and diasporic identities, while Eric Hobsbawm's analysis of constructed traditions and Georg Simmel's work on social interaction and the concept of the "stranger" offer essential tools for understanding the dual processes of inclusion and marginalization faced by these communities.

The analytical framework of Hobsbawm (1994) about constructed traditions together with Simmel's (1908) social interaction theories and "stranger" analysis provided essential tools to study exchangee experiences regarding both inclusion and marginalization. According to Bayart (2005) and Sarup (1996) identity emerges as a dynamic social process which gets shaped through historical along with political and cultural factors. Stephan Castles (2003) demonstrated how transnational networks serve as essential mechanisms to maintain migrant communities across national boundaries because they sustain ongoing connections which survive displacement. The concept of collective memory found its primary foundation in Maurice Halbwachs (1992) who developed theories about how social memory functions across generations.

The examples of peaceful coexistence I witness in Izmir and Thessaloniki offer valuable lessons that can enrich broader discussions about identity in diverse settings. Through my participatory work with these communities, I observe firsthand how complex, layered identities not only coexist but also adapt and change over time, offering a meaningful model for embracing pluralism in an increasingly interconnected world. At the same time, the role of transnational networks emerged as a critical yet underexplored factor in sustaining identities that face the risk of erasure or social exclusion. Research using participatory approaches needs to focus on lived experiences which traditional historical accounts exclude to develop more complex inclusive perspectives. During my fieldwork, there are numerous topics I could not cover due to the scope of the thesis. The study of the population exchange would become more comprehensive if researchers examined the experiences of the groups of the Patriots, Pontic Greeks and the *Dönme* in future studies.

This research highlights the importance of participatory approaches that center lived experiences. These connections persist beyond the research phase because they rest on mutual memories along with caring and joint knowledge creation efforts. While my fieldwork uncovered many rich themes, there remain areas beyond the scope of this thesis that deserve attention.

The most enduring part of my experience goes beyond the information or concepts because it consists of unspoken moments between words and shared memories in gazes as well as quivering voices which unveiled tales about loss and survival and belonging. This engagement with intimate writings demanded a reflexive approach—an ever-present consciousness of how one's position within the research processes influenced actions, coupled with preparedness to observe and adapt one's own behaviors. Such ongoing self-reflective attitude renders me fittingly sensitive amidst matters of memory and identity to allow research to proceed naturally and rigorously. This responsiveness and control apply throughout all stages of the research helps me achieve a level of academic depth respectful toward the knowledge of communities and academic demands.

In conclusion, my engagement with the study of the population exchange initially appeared to fit my scholarly interests, this inquiry has always carried deeper, more personal dimension which is driven by empathy, emotional connection and a genuine desire to listen to and honor the voices of those who lived through or inherited the consequences of this forced migration. So, studying within the framework of Community-Based Research appeared particularly relevant. This inquiry did not originate from an explicit desire to transform, but rather from an effort to understand. Over the course of this long journey, however, I have learned deeply from the exchangee communities themselves. In many ways, this research has been as much about giving back as it has been about academic exploration. The knowledge, memories, and experiences generously shared with me have shaped the trajectory of my work, and it is for this reason that I wish to acknowledge my gratitude to these communities, whose trust and openness have been indispensable in the evolution of this research.

So, this thesis is for those of you, who left your homes and for you, who remained. It is for the quiet strength in your memories, for the stories you carry and pass on, for the songs, the flavors, and the rituals that keep your past alive. Through your memories, you build bridges between what was and what is, and in doing so, you teach us that home is not only a place, but something we carry in our hearts. This work is a small tribute to your resilience, your longing, and the enduring beauty of the lives you continue to honor.

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