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Migration Networks and Diaspora Resilience: The Case of a Greek Micro-Diaspora in Zurich

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of social networks in the formation, maintenance, and reproduction of migration, focusing on the case of a Greek micro-diaspora originating from Livadero, Kozani, and settled in Zurich, Switzerland. The research is based on a qualitative case study and draws on semi-structured interviews with first-, second-, and younger-generation migrants. Its aim is to highlight how kinship, friendship, and local ties facilitated the movement, settlement, and social integration of migrants. The findings show that social networks functioned not only as general forms of support but as everyday, practical mechanisms of assistance. Participants described how many newcomers were temporarily hosted by relatives or fellow villagers, received information about available job vacancies, were guided through the first administrative procedures, and were gradually integrated into the local Greek community of Zurich. In this way, the initial settlement of certain community members created the conditions for the successive migration of relatives, friends, and fellow villagers. Of particular importance is the fact that these networks were not confined to the first migrant generations. On the contrary, they were maintained and reactivated after the economic crisis of 2009, supporting new forms of mobility, even of individuals with high educational and professional capital. The study argues that migration is not merely an individual decision but a socially organized process, based on trust, common origin, collective memory, and the intergenerational transfer of experiences. Overall, the case of Livadero highlights the significance of micro-diasporas as resilient transnational communities, capable of maintaining active ties and reproducing migratory pathways over time.

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1. Introduction

Migration is a complex and multidimensional social phenomenon, shaped through the interaction of economic, social, cultural, and institutional factors. In recent decades, the international literature has shifted from purely economic and macro-structural interpretations of migration toward approaches that highlight the role of social relations, transnational ties, and the forms of social organization that connect communities of origin with host countries. Within this framework, migration network theory argues that the interpersonal ties among migrants, relatives, friends, and communities of origin reduce the cost and uncertainty of movement, facilitating the continuation and reproduction of migratory flows (Castles, de Haas & Miller 2014). ^[6]

Despite the significant development of migration studies, the international literature still exhibits a limited empirical understanding of how small and socially cohesive micro-diasporas function, particularly in cases where kinship and local ties

remain active for many decades. Most studies focus either on large national diasporas or on broader migratory flows, placing less emphasis on small communities of high social cohesion, in which relations of trust, common origin, and collective memory directly influence strategies of mobility and social integration (de Haas 2010) ^[10].

At the same time, the understanding of the long-term resilience (diaspora resilience) of migration networks remains limited—that is, of their capacity to be maintained, to adapt, and to be reactivated under different historical and socioeconomic conditions. Although the literature on transnationalism has highlighted the importance of cross-border social relations, fewer studies have empirically examined how small communities of origin are transformed into long-term transnational social systems, capable of reproducing migratory pathways even across different generations.

The present study seeks to contribute to this discussion through the investigation of the micro-diaspora of the residents of Livadero, Kozani, who settled in Zurich, Switzerland. This particular case is of special research interest, as it concerns a community with strong kinship and local ties, an intense collective identity, and long-term migratory continuity. This case allows for an in-depth analysis of the social mechanisms through which migration networks organize movement, facilitate settlement, and maintain forms of transnational social cohesion over time.

The research is based on a qualitative case study and draws on semi-structured interviews with migrants of different generations, as well as personal narratives concerning experiences of movement, settlement, and social integration in Zurich. Through these narratives it emerges that migration was not organized exclusively through individual strategic choices but was supported by already existing social networks of relatives, fellow villagers, and community relations. Participants described how newcomers were often temporarily hosted by kin, received information about work and housing, and gained access to forms of everyday support that facilitated their adaptation to the new social environment. The aim of the study is to investigate the way in which social networks contribute:

to the formation and reproduction of migration,
to the reduction of the uncertainty and social cost of mobility,
and to the maintenance of transnational forms of social cohesion between the community of origin and the host country.

More specifically, the research seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How do social networks function in the process of migration?

RQ2: In what ways do kinship and local ties facilitate the settlement and social integration of migrants?

RQ3: How do these networks contribute to the intergenerational reproduction of migratory mobility?

RQ4: In what way were the migration networks reactivated after the economic crisis in Greece following 2009?

The contribution of the study is twofold. On an empirical level, it offers primary data on the functioning of a Greek micro-diaspora of high social cohesion, highlighting everyday practices of solidarity, support, and transnational connection. On a theoretical level, it contributes to the discussion surrounding migration networks, social capital,

and the resilience of transnational social systems, arguing that migration is a socially embedded and temporally reproduced process, organized through relations of trust, collective memory, and common local identity.

2. Theoretical Framework

The understanding of migration as a social phenomenon has changed significantly over the past few decades. Contemporary approaches in the international literature move away from purely economic or macro-structural interpretations and place greater emphasis on the role of social relations, networks, and transnational forms of social organization that connect communities of origin with host countries. Within this framework, migration network theory, the concept of social capital, and transnationalism approaches constitute basic interpretive tools for understanding international mobility.

2.1. Migration Network Theory

Migration network theory, as developed primarily by Massey and his colleagues, argues that migration is not exclusively the result of individual choices or economic inequalities but is organized through social networks connecting migrants, former migrants, and communities of origin (Massey, Goldring & Durand 1994) ^[20]. These networks facilitate movement by providing information, support, and access to work and housing, thereby reducing the economic and psychological cost of migration (Massey *et al.*, 1993; Massey, 1990) ^[19, 18]. More recent scholarship has further argued that migration systems should be understood as dynamic and evolving social processes, continuously reshaped by changing institutional, economic, and relational contexts rather than as fixed structures (Bakewell, 2014; Wasserman & Faust 1994) ^[1, 29].

This approach is directly connected to the concept of chain migration, according to which each new migratory movement reinforces the already existing networks and creates the conditions for further movements. Migration thus ceases to be an isolated individual strategy and becomes a socially reproduced process (Boyd 1989) ^[3]. This particular theoretical approach is especially useful for the present study, as it allows for an understanding of the way in which the kinship and local ties of the Livadero micro-diaspora facilitated, over time, the movement and settlement of new migrants in Zurich.

2.2. Social Capital and Social Embeddedness

The concept of social capital, as formulated by Bourdieu, refers to the resources that individuals acquire through their participation in social networks and relations of trust (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988) ^[2, 8]. In the migratory context, social capital is manifested through access to information, professional opportunities, and forms of social support that facilitate the settlement and social integration of migrants (Ryan 2011; Small 2009) ^[24, 26].

At the same time, the concept of embeddedness, as developed by Granovetter, argues that social and economic practices cannot be understood independently of the social networks in which individuals are embedded (Granovetter 1985) ^[15]. Migratory decisions are directly influenced by relations of trust, reciprocity, and social interaction (Portes 1998) ^[21]. In the case of the Livadero micro-diaspora, kinship and community relations functioned as forms of social capital,

enabling newcomer migrants to gain access to already established networks of support and social integration (Putnam 2000) ^[23].

2.3. Strong and Weak Ties

Granovetter's distinction between strong and weak ties offers a complementary interpretive framework for the functioning of migration networks. Strong ties, based primarily on kinship and close community relations, provide direct support, a sense of security, and practical assistance during the first stages of settlement (Granovetter 1973) ^[14]. By contrast, weak ties broaden access to new information, professional networks, and social opportunities beyond the narrow boundaries of the community. In the migratory environment, the two forms of ties often function complementarily: strong ties reinforce cohesion and solidarity, while weak ties facilitate social and professional mobility.

This distinction is particularly important for understanding the evolution of the Livadero micro-diaspora, as the first generations relied mainly on strong kinship ties, while the younger generations developed more extended social and professional networks.

2.4. Transnationalism and Migration Infrastructures

Contemporary approaches to transnationalism argue that migrants maintain simultaneous social, economic, and cultural relations both with the host country and with the community of origin (Portes, Guarnizo & Landolt 1999; Vertovec 1999) ^[22, 27]. According to Levitt and Glick Schiller, transnational social fields allow for the maintenance of forms of social participation beyond national borders (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004; Vertovec 2004; Glick Schiller *et al.* 1992; Safran 1991; Faist 2000) ^[17, 28, 13, 25, 12].

At the same time, Xiang and Lindquist introduce the concept of migration infrastructures, arguing that international mobility is organized through stable social, cultural, and institutional structures that facilitate and reproduce migration over time (Xiang & Lindquist 2014) ^[30].

The case of the Livadero micro-diaspora is of particular interest within this framework, as it highlights that migration networks functioned not only as temporary forms of support but as long-term social infrastructures. The relations created by the first migrant generations remained active and were reactivated even after the economic crisis in Greece following 2009, supporting new forms of mobility and social integration.

2.5. Theoretical Synthesis and Connection with the Research

The combination of the above theoretical approaches allows for an understanding of migration as a socially embedded and

transnationally organized process. Migration networks function as carriers of social capital, while kinship and community ties contribute to the reduction of uncertainty, the facilitation of settlement, and the maintenance of transnational forms of social cohesion.

Within the framework of the present study, this theoretical synthesis allows for the analysis of the Livadero micro-diaspora not only as an example of migratory mobility but also as a form of long-term social organization based on trust, collective memory, common origin, and the intergenerational transfer of experiences. This particular case highlights that micro-diasporas can function as resilient transnational social systems, capable of maintaining active social networks and reproducing migratory pathways across different historical periods (Cohen 2008) ^[7].

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The present study adopts a qualitative research approach, based on the qualitative case study methodology, with the aim of an in-depth investigation of the mechanisms through which social networks shape, maintain, and reproduce migratory flows in micro-diaspora settings (Yin 2018) ^[31]. The choice of this particular methodological approach was deemed especially appropriate, as it allows for the analysis of complex social phenomena within their natural social and historical context, highlighting dynamics and experiences that are difficult to capture through quantitative or macro-structural approaches (Creswell & Poth 2018) ^[9].

The research is grounded in an interpretivist research orientation, according to which social reality is approached as the result of social interactions, experiences, and processes of meaning-making. Within this framework, particular emphasis was placed on the way in which the migrants themselves perceive and experience the functioning of social networks, community solidarity, and transnational mobility. The choice of the case study allows for an in-depth analysis of a community with a high degree of social cohesion and long-term migratory continuity. The case of the Livadero micro-diaspora is of particular research interest, as it allows for an investigation of the ways in which kinship ties, common local origin, and relations of trust influence the formation and reproduction of migratory mobility.

The qualitative approach was also deemed appropriate due to the need to understand the cultural, symbolic, and emotional dimensions of migration. Through the personal narratives of the participants it became possible to investigate not only the practical functions of migration networks but also the ways in which experiences of mobility are connected to collective memory, local identity, and the intergenerational continuity of the community.

Element	Explanation	Key Concepts Involved	Contribution to the Research
 1. Qualitative Approach	Appropriate for exploring the cultural, symbolic, and emotional dimensions of migration that quantitative methods cannot adequately capture.	• Culture • Symbolism • Emotions	Provides an in-depth understanding of the meanings, values, and feelings that shape migration experiences.
 2. Personal Narratives	Through participants' life stories, the study investigates both the practical functions of migration networks and their links to collective memory, local identity, and intergenerational continuity.	• Migration networks • Collective memory • Local identity • Intergenerational continuity	Reveals how mobility experiences are embedded in community memory, identity, and transmitted across generations.
 3. Case Study Design	Allows the connection of micro-level empirical data with broader theoretical issues in the international migration literature.	• Micro-level data • Theoretical linkages • Contextual understanding	Bridges local realities with wider theoretical debates and migration theories.
 4. Theoretical Frameworks	The case is interpreted through key theoretical perspectives commonly used in migration studies.	• Chain migration • Social capital • Transnationalism • Migration infrastructures	Positions the case within major theoretical currents, enhancing the explanatory power of the findings.
 5. Aim of the Research	The study does not only describe a specific community but also contributes to the theoretical understanding of migration.	• Socially organized process • Temporally reproduced process • Beyond description	Advances theory by showing how migration is organized socially and reproduced over time.
 6. Alignment with Contemporary Research	Reflects the broader trend in migration research that emphasizes certain key dimensions.	• Migrants' lived experiences • Transnational forms of social organization • Local social structures influencing mobility	Ensures the study is consistent with current scholarly priorities and contributes to contemporary debates on migration.

Fig 1: Rationale for the Qualitative Case Study Approach

At the same time, the case study allows for the connection of micro-level empirical data with broader theoretical issues in the international literature, such as:

1. chain migration,
2. social capital,
3. transnationalism,

4. and migration infrastructures.

In this sense, the research does not seek only to describe a specific community but also to contribute to the theoretical understanding of migration as a socially organized and temporally reproduced process.

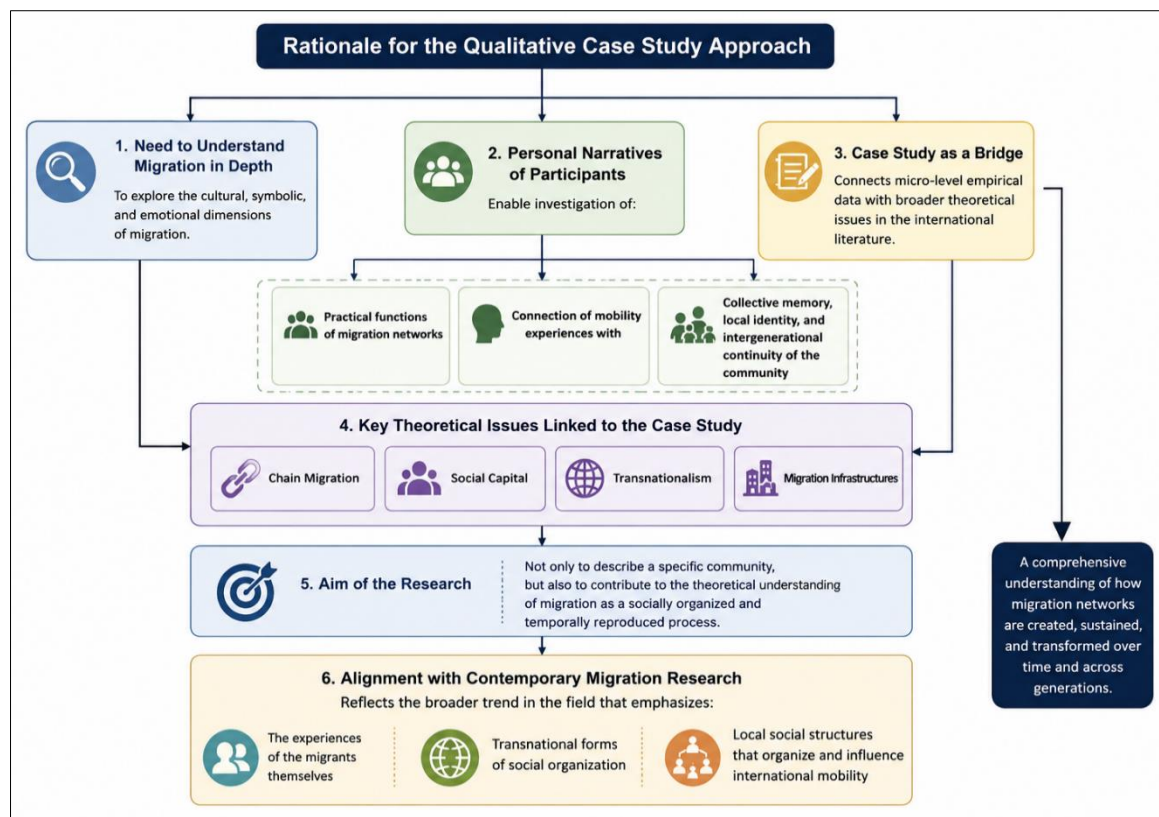


Fig 2

Finally, the choice of the qualitative case study corresponds to the more general tendency of contemporary migration research to place greater emphasis on:

1. the experiences of the migrants themselves,
2. transnational forms of social organization,
3. and the local social structures that organize and influence international mobility.

3.2. Case Study

The present research focuses on the study of the migrant community of the residents of Livadero, Kozani, who settled in Zurich, Switzerland. This particular case was selected because of its distinctive characteristics, which make it especially suitable for investigating the functioning of migration networks, chain migration, and the long-term reproduction of transnational social ties.

Livadero is a community with strong kinship and local ties, an element that contributed to the formation of a high degree of social cohesion among the members of the diaspora. This social cohesion facilitated the development of forms of solidarity, trust, and mutual support among the migrants, both during the first stages of movement and during their long-term settlement in Switzerland.

The choice of Zurich as the principal place of settlement was not accidental. The city became an important destination for Greek labor migration as early as the 1960s and 1970s, within the context of the increased demand for labor in the Swiss economy. The first migrants from Livadero gradually created a web of social relations and informal mechanisms of support, which facilitated the successive settlement of relatives, friends, and fellow villagers.

The participants' narratives showed that newcomer migrants were often temporarily hosted by relatives or acquaintances, received information about available job vacancies, and were supported in the first administrative and practical procedures of settlement. In this way, social networks functioned as everyday mechanisms for facilitating mobility and social integration.

This particular case is of special research interest, as it allows for the study of a micro-diaspora of high social cohesion, in which local identities and kinship ties remained active for a long period of time. In contrast to larger and more heterogeneous diasporic communities, the Livadero micro-diaspora provides the possibility of a clearer depiction of the mechanisms through which social networks organize migratory mobility and influence strategies of settlement and social integration.

At the same time, this case allows for the investigation of the intergenerational continuity of migration. The presence of multiple generations of migrants in Zurich makes it possible to analyze the way in which experiences, social relations, and strategies of mobility are transferred and reproduced over time. Of particular interest is the fact that the community's social networks were not confined to the first migrant generations but continued to influence newer forms of mobility as well, even after the economic crisis in Greece following 2009.

The study of this particular micro-diaspora also allows for the connection of local experiences with broader theoretical discussions concerning:

1. transnational mobility,
2. social capital,
3. and the resilience of migration networks.

Through the case of Livadero it emerges that local social structures can be transformed into long-term and resilient transnational social systems, which continue to organize forms of mobility and social integration across different historical periods.

In addition, the existence of organized community institutions, such as the Cultural Association of Livadero Residents of Zurich, further enhances the analytical value of the case. These institutions function as mechanisms for maintaining the collective memory, cultural continuity, and social cohesion of the micro-diaspora, allowing the study not only of the initial migratory processes but also of the long-term institutionalization of social networks.

Overall, the case of the Livadero micro-diaspora in Zurich constitutes a particularly fertile field for studying the interaction among social networks, migration infrastructures, and transnational social organization. The high social cohesion of the community, the intergenerational continuity of mobility, and the long-term maintenance of local ties offer significant empirical and theoretical possibilities for understanding contemporary migratory phenomena.

3.3. Data Collection

Data collection was based mainly on semi-structured interviews and on the analysis of personal narratives of migrants belonging to different generations of the Livadero micro-diaspora in Zurich. The choice of this qualitative technique was deemed especially appropriate, as it allowed for an in-depth investigation of experiences, perceptions, and social practices related to the functioning of migration networks and the long-term reproduction of mobility.

The data collection process was carried out during the period from March to November 2025. A total of eighteen (18) interviews were conducted. Of these, twelve were conducted with first- and second-generation migrants, while six concerned younger migrants who settled in Switzerland after 2009, drawing on the community's already existing social networks. The participation of different generations was considered particularly important, as it allowed for the investigation both of the initial forms of migratory settlement and of the long-term reactivation of social networks across different historical periods.

The selection of participants was carried out through purposive sampling, with the basic criterion being the ability to provide substantial information regarding:

1. the experience of migration,
2. the functioning of community networks,
3. and the maintenance of transnational ties.

At the same time, the participation of individuals of different gender, age, generational position, and professional profile was sought, in order to capture multiple experiences and different forms of migratory trajectory.

In some cases, elements of snowball sampling were also used, as participants already involved suggested other community members who possessed significant experiences or long-term participation in the social and community activities of the micro-diaspora. This process facilitated access to individuals with a strong social presence and contributed to the development of relations of trust between the researcher and the participants.

The interviews were conducted either in person or through online communication platforms (Zoom and Microsoft

Teams), depending on the availability and geographical location of the participants. The language of the interviews was Greek, which facilitated the development of natural and detailed narratives concerning experiences of migration and social integration.

The average duration of the interviews ranged between 45 and 70 minutes, while in some cases supplementary

communications were also carried out to clarify particular issues that arose during the analysis of the data. All interviews were conducted with the consent of the participants, were digitally recorded, and were subsequently fully transcribed for the purposes of the analysis.

The interview guide was organized around basic thematic axes, which included:

Table 1

Thematic Area	Purpose of Investigation
Decision-making process for migration	To explore the factors, motivations, and circumstances that influenced participants' decision to migrate to Switzerland.
Role of kinship, friendship, and local networks	To investigate how family members, friends, and fellow villagers facilitated migration, settlement, and access to employment and housing.
Experiences of settlement and social integration	To examine participants' initial adaptation, challenges encountered, and integration into Swiss society and the local Greek community.
Maintenance of ties with the community of origin	To explore the ways participants maintained social, cultural, and emotional connections with Livadero over time.
Functioning of community institutions	To investigate the role of community organizations (e.g., the Cultural Association of Livadero Residents of Zurich) in preserving identity, solidarity, and transnational relationships.
Intergenerational transfer of experiences and mobility strategies	To examine how migration experiences, values, social networks, and mobility strategies were transmitted across generations and contributed to the continuity of migration.

The semi-structured form of the interviews allowed for the maintenance of basic thematic coherence, while at the same time giving participants the possibility to freely develop their personal narratives and to highlight issues that they themselves considered important. This flexibility contributed to the production of rich research material and to the recording of the multiple dimensions of the migratory experience.

Of particular importance was also access to the members and activities of the Cultural Association of Livadero Residents of Zurich. The association constituted an important point of contact with the community and contributed substantially to the understanding of:

1. the forms of social organization,
2. the collective identity,
3. and the maintenance of the transnational ties of the micro-diaspora.

During the research, basic principles of research ethics were observed. All participants were informed regarding:

1. the purpose of the research,
2. the use of the research material,
3. and the safeguarding of the anonymity and confidentiality of the data.

Participation was voluntary and the narratives were used exclusively for research and academic purposes.

The data collection process continued until theoretical saturation (data saturation) was reached—that is, until the point at which new interviews no longer produced substantially new thematic patterns or significant variations in the interpretations of the phenomena under investigation. The achievement of theoretical saturation reinforced the coherence and analytical adequacy of the research.

Table 2: Basic characteristics of the participants

Category	Description
Total number of participants	18
First generation of migrants	8
Second generation of migrants	4
Migrants after 2009	6
Men	11
Women	7
Age group	28–79 years old
Years of residence in Switzerland	3–55 years
Professional profiles	laborers, craftsmen, health professionals, service employees, academics

Overall, the data collection process allowed for the creation of rich and multilayered research material, through which it became possible to gain an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms that organize and maintain the functioning of migration networks in this particular micro-diaspora.

3.4. Method of Data Analysis

“The analysis of the data was carried out through reflexive thematic analysis, following the approach of (Braun and Clarke 2006, 2019), which is considered particularly appropriate for the study of complex social experiences,

processes of meaning-making, and forms of social interaction. This particular methodological approach allowed for an in-depth interpretation of the participants’ narratives and for the identification of recurring thematic patterns related to:

1. the functioning of migration networks,
2. the intergenerational continuity of mobility,
3. and the maintenance of the collective identity of the micro-diaspora.

The analysis process followed multiple, interrelated stages. Initially, a systematic transcription and repeated reading of

all the interviews was carried out, in order to achieve substantial familiarity with the research material and to identify the basic narrative and social structures that ran through the participants' experiences.

Subsequently, an open coding process was applied, during which initial units of meaning, expressions, and recurring patterns related to the following were identified:

1. the processes of migration,
2. the functioning of kinship and community networks,
3. the reduction of the uncertainty and cost of mobility,
4. the intergenerational transfer of experiences,
5. collective identity,
6. and the maintenance of transnational ties between Livadero and Zurich.

Coding was carried out mainly inductively (inductive coding), allowing the basic themes to emerge from the data themselves rather than through predetermined theoretical categories. However, at a subsequent stage, a theoretically guided interpretation of the data was also carried out, through the connection of the empirical findings with theoretical schemes from the international literature, such as:

1. migration network theory,
2. social capital,
3. chain migration,
4. transnationalism,
5. and migration infrastructures.

For the organization and systematic management of the research material, the software NVivo 14 was used, which supported the coding process, the organization of the data, and the comparative analysis of the narratives of different generations of migrants. However, the interpretation of the data and the formation of the thematic categories were the result of a reflexive and theoretically grounded research process.

After the initial coding, the individual codes were organized into broader thematic categories, which were repeatedly revised through comparative reading of the data and continuous interpretive reflection. This process allowed for the gradual formation of the basic thematic units of the research, such as:

1. social networks as mechanisms of entry,
2. the reduction of the cost and uncertainty of migration,
3. the dynamics of chain migration,
4. the intergenerational transfer of mobility experiences,
5. the reactivation of networks after 2009,
6. and the formation of collective identity within the micro-diaspora.

The analysis was not confined to a descriptive presentation of the participants' experiences but sought the interpretive understanding of the social mechanisms that organize migratory mobility and the transnational social organization of the community. Within this framework, particular importance was given to the way in which individual experiences were connected to collective practices and shared strategies of mobility, as well as to the relationship between

past and present through the long-term functioning of the social networks of the micro-diaspora.

At the same time, the reflexive dimension of thematic analysis allowed for the continuous evaluation of the interpretive process and of the relationship between the researcher and the research field. The analysis was treated not as a mechanical process of categorization but as a dynamic process of meaning production through the continuous interaction among theory, empirical data, and research interpretation.

The use of direct excerpts from the interviews contributed significantly to strengthening the interpretive validity of the analysis, allowing the "voice" of the participants to emerge and the theoretical conclusions to be connected with the migrants' own experiences. At the same time, the comparative analysis of narratives of different generations facilitated the understanding of:

1. the intergenerational continuity of migration networks,
2. the changes in the forms of mobility,
3. and the changes in strategies of social integration over time.

Particular importance was also given to the search for variations, contradictions, and alternative experiences among the participants, so that the analysis would not be confined exclusively to highlighting elements of social cohesion and solidarity but would also capture the different social experiences that developed within the micro-diaspora.

Overall, reflexive thematic analysis allowed for an in-depth understanding of the functioning of the micro-diaspora as a transnational social system and contributed to highlighting the mechanisms through which social networks organize, reproduce, and reactivate migratory processes under different historical and socioeconomic circumstances.

3.5. Issues of Validity, Reliability, and Limitations of the Research (Improved Version)

The validity of the present research was ensured through the systematic connection of the empirical findings with established theoretical frameworks from the international literature, as well as through the use of narratives from different generations and social categories of migrants. The analysis was based on recurring thematic patterns that emerged over time from the participants' narratives, reinforcing the coherence and interpretive adequacy of the research conclusions.

The data collection process continued until theoretical saturation (data saturation) was reached—that is, until the point at which new interviews no longer produced substantially new thematic patterns or significantly differentiated interpretations of the phenomena under investigation. The achievement of saturation contributed to the stabilization of the basic thematic categories and to the strengthening of the analytical coherence of the research.

The analysis of the data was carried out through reflexive thematic analysis, which allowed for an in-depth interpretation of the narratives and the identification of recurring social and cultural patterns. The process included multiple stages:

Table 3

Stage	Description	Purpose
1. Familiarization with the Data	Repeated reading of interview transcripts to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' narratives.	To become immersed in the data and identify initial patterns.
2. Coding	Identification and labeling of meaningful units, concepts, and recurrent ideas emerging from the interviews.	To organize the data into meaningful analytical units.
3. Categorization	Grouping related codes into broader categories representing common concepts and experiences.	To develop coherent thematic categories.
4. Comparative Reading	Continuous comparison of narratives across participants and generations to identify similarities, differences, and variations.	To strengthen analytical consistency and interpretive depth.
5. Interpretive Synthesis	Integration of themes with theoretical concepts and research questions.	To ensure theoretical coherence between empirical findings and the conceptual framework.

with the aim of ensuring theoretical coherence among empirical findings, research questions, and theoretical concepts.

At the same time, particular emphasis was placed on ensuring the trustworthiness of the qualitative research. Trustworthiness was reinforced through:

Table 4

Trustworthiness Strategy	Implementation in the Present Study	Purpose
Comparison of narratives across generations	Narratives from first-, second-, and younger-generation migrants were systematically compared to identify common themes and generational differences.	To enhance the credibility and depth of the findings.
Repeated interpretation of the data	The interview transcripts were revisited several times throughout the analytical process.	To refine interpretations and ensure consistency in the emerging themes.
Cross-checking of thematic patterns	Themes and categories were continuously compared across interviews to confirm recurring patterns and identify divergent perspectives.	To strengthen the dependability and analytical rigor of the findings.
Continuous integration of empirical evidence with theory	Emerging themes were constantly interpreted in relation to established theoretical frameworks, including migration networks, social capital, and transnationalism.	To ensure theoretical coherence and strengthen the study's analytical validity.
Use of direct interview excerpts	Representative quotations were incorporated throughout the Findings section to support the interpretation of the themes.	To increase credibility, transparency, and confirmability by grounding interpretations in participants' own accounts.

The use of direct narrative excerpts contributed significantly to strengthening the interpretive validity of the analysis, allowing the “voice” of the participants to emerge and the theoretical conclusions to be connected with the migrants’ own experiences. The reliability of the research was also reinforced through the continuous comparison of the narratives, the reflexive interpretation of the data, and the theoretical consistency between empirical material and analytical categories.

However, the present study presents certain limitations, which must be considered when interpreting the findings.

First, the research focuses on a specific micro-diaspora, which limits the possibility of statistical generalization of the conclusions. The aim of the study was not to produce generalizable quantitative conclusions but to gain an in-depth understanding of the social mechanisms through which social networks organize and reproduce migratory mobility. In this sense, the research seeks mainly analytical and theoretical transferability toward similar social and migratory environments.

Second, the participants’ narratives are based on retrospective experiences and personal memories, which may be influenced by phenomena of selective memory or by the after-the-fact reconstruction of migratory experiences. In particular, the narratives of first-generation migrants may contain elements of idealization of community cohesion or of retrospective interpretation of the past through the prism of subsequent social and professional stability.

In addition, the high social cohesion of the community may influence the way in which the participants present their experiences. The strong collective identity of the micro-

diaspora appears to reinforce narratives of solidarity and community cohesion, while it probably limits the emergence of social tensions, conflicts, exclusions, or different experiences of mobility that may have existed within the community. This particular dimension is considered especially important, as communities of high social cohesion often reproduce collective narratives that reinforce the image of unity and mutual support.

Of particular importance is also the researcher positionality. The researcher’s familiarity with the social field of the research significantly facilitated access to the participants and allowed for the development of relations of trust during the interview process. However, this proximity may create risks of interpretive bias or of excessive identification with the community’s narratives.

To limit these risks, practices of reflexivity were applied, with the aim of maintaining critical distance from the research field, continuously re-examining the interpretations, and systematically connecting the conclusions with the empirical data and the theoretical grounding. Despite the above limitations, the present study offers significant empirical and theoretical evidence regarding the functioning of migration networks in micro-diasporic environments of high social cohesion.

The case of Livadero constitutes a particularly useful analytical example for understanding the long-term resilience of social networks, the intergenerational continuity of migratory mobility, and the formation of transnational forms of social organization. Overall, the research highlights that micro-diasporic communities can function as resilient social and transnational systems, which maintain active ties,

transfer experiences between generations, and continue to organize forms of mobility even under changing social and economic conditions.

4. Historical Context of the Migration

The migratory movement from Livadero, Kozani, to Zurich, Switzerland, is part of the broader historical context of the Greek migratory exodus toward Western Europe during the second half of the 20th century. After the Second World War and the Civil War, Greece faced intense economic, social, and developmental difficulties. The limited employment opportunities, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, combined with low incomes and limited prospects for social mobility, pushed a significant part of the population to seek better living and working conditions abroad. Post-war migration toward Western European countries, such as Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland, became a basic strategy of economic survival and social advancement for thousands of Greek families.

Western Macedonia was among the regions particularly affected by the migratory currents of the period. The region's economy was based mainly on agriculture, livestock farming, and limited forms of local commercial activity, which significantly restricted the possibilities of stable and adequately paid work for the younger residents. Within this framework, migration was gradually viewed not only as a necessity for economic survival but also as a strategy for improving the social and professional position of the entire family.

Livadero was a relatively small and socially cohesive community, where kinship ties, neighborly relations, and common local identity played a decisive role in the organization of everyday life. The strong social cohesion of the village contributed to the creation of close forms of solidarity and mutual support among the residents, an element that proved particularly important in the subsequent development of the migration networks. As several participants described, during the 1970s almost every family in the village had at least one member settled in Switzerland, a fact that gradually shaped a strong "culture of migration" in the community.

The first movements of Livadero residents toward Switzerland are recorded as early as the 1960s, while the migratory flow was significantly reinforced during the 1970s. During the same period, the Swiss economy presented increased needs for labor due to the country's rapid industrial and economic development. Zurich, as one of the most important economic and industrial centers of Switzerland, attracted a large number of migrants from Southern Europe, among them Greek workers. The Swiss labor market offered significantly higher wages, more stable employment conditions, and better professional prospects compared to the Greek provinces of the period.

Many of the first migrants worked in industry, construction, transport, and later in the services sector. For several families from Livadero, work in Switzerland was connected with the possibility of financially strengthening the household, building homes, financing studies for their children, and improving their standard of living more generally. The participants' narratives show that migration was gradually viewed as a collective family strategy and not exclusively as an individual choice.

The very beginning, however, of the migratory pathway between Livadero and Zurich is connected with a particularly

characteristic historical circumstance, which highlights the role of personal relationships and everyday social interactions in the creation of migration networks. According to the participants' narratives, a decisive role in the first stages of migratory mobility was played by the presence of a Swiss Red Cross volunteer in Livadero.

This volunteer found herself in the community within the context of humanitarian and social support for the region during the post-war period. During her stay she was hosted by a family of the village, which led to the creation of personal relations of trust with members of the local community. Through this relationship the first substantial connection of Livadero with Zurich was created. According to the narratives, the Swiss volunteer helped a young resident of the village to travel to Switzerland, facilitating the first steps of his movement and settlement in Zurich. This particular case constituted, in essence, the first link of the migration chain that gradually developed over the following decades between the community of origin and the host country.

This historical circumstance is of particular interest, as it highlights that the creation of migration networks does not arise exclusively through state or economic mechanisms but often begins through personal relationships, forms of interpersonal trust, and seemingly random social contacts. This initial connection functioned as a catalyst for the gradual development of a broader network of mobility, which expanded through kinship ties, friendly relations, and common local origin.

This first migrant subsequently functioned as a point of reference for later members of the community, providing information, guidance, and practical support to relatives and fellow villagers who wished to migrate to Zurich. Several participants reported that they traveled to Switzerland without knowing the German language, relying almost exclusively on relatives or acquaintances who had already secured temporary housing and work for the newcomers. In many cases, the younger migrants were temporarily hosted in small apartments of relatives or fellow villagers until they stabilized professionally and economically.

The narratives also show that finding the first job was often carried out through personal acquaintances and informal community networks. Older migrants informed relatives and friends about available job vacancies, helped with administrative procedures, and functioned as intermediaries between the newcomers and the local labor market. In this way, an initially isolated movement gradually evolved into an organized chain of migration, leading to the creation of stable social ties between Livadero and Zurich.

The functioning of these informal networks was decisive for reducing the uncertainty that accompanied migration. The existence of already settled relatives, friends, or fellow villagers in the host country provided newcomers with access to information about work, housing, administrative procedures, and living conditions in Switzerland more generally. At the same time, these social relations functioned as mechanisms of emotional and practical support, facilitating adaptation to the new environment and reducing the sense of uncertainty that accompanied the initial migratory experience.

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experience.

The gradual consolidation of the migration networks led to the formation of a cohesive micro-diaspora in Zurich, with strong characteristics of social cohesion and intergenerational continuity. The common local origin, the kinship ties, and the shared cultural references reinforced the development of relations of solidarity and mutual support among the members of the community. These ties were not confined only to the first generation of migrants but were maintained active in the following generations as well, through family relations, cultural practices, and community activities. The creation of associations and forms of collective organization of the diaspora further contributed to the maintenance of the collective identity and of the connection with the place of origin. Particularly important was the role of the Cultural Association of Livadero Residents of Zurich, which functioned as a space of social gathering, cultural continuity, and maintenance of the ties among the members of the micro-diaspora.

Of particular interest is the fact that the community's social networks did not cease to function after the first migratory decades. On the contrary, they were reactivated in later historical periods, particularly after the economic crisis in Greece following 2009. Younger generations drew on the already existing social infrastructures of the micro-diaspora, a fact that demonstrates the long-term resilience and functionality of the community's migration networks.

Overall, the case of the Livadero–Zurich migratory pathway highlights the way in which local social relations can evolve into stable and long-term transnational networks of mobility. This case shows that migration was organized not only around economic motives but also through family strategies, relations of trust, and forms of community continuity that remained active for many decades (King 2000).^[16]

5. Results / Findings of the Research

5.1. Social networks as mechanisms of first reception and settlement

The findings of the research show that social networks constituted the most basic mechanism for facilitating the first settlement of migrants from Livadero in Zurich. Almost all participants reported that upon their arrival in Switzerland there was already some relative or friend from the village, who welcomed them and helped them in the first stages of adaptation to the new environment.

For most first-generation migrants, the move to Zurich was accompanied by intense uncertainty. Many did not know the language, had limited financial resources, and did not have a clear picture of the living and working conditions in Switzerland. Within this framework, the already settled relatives and fellow villagers functioned as basic mechanisms of support, guidance, and social protection.

In most cases, the newcomers were temporarily hosted in the homes of relatives or acquaintances until they found work and secured their own housing. Several participants described that this practice was considered almost self-evident within the community. As a first-generation participant characteristically reported:

“When I went to Zurich, I stayed about two months at the home of a relative from the village. I didn't know the language or how things worked there. If it hadn't been for him, I would hardly have managed.”

This support was not confined only to hosting. The older migrants helped the newcomers to find work, to complete

administrative procedures, and to adapt to the everyday life of the city. One participant recalled characteristically:

“The old-timers showed us where to go for work, how to do the paperwork, how to get around the city. It was as if there was an informal survival guide.”

In several cases, the new migrants arrived in Zurich without knowing either the language or the actual working conditions they would face. Nevertheless, the existence of people from the village functioned as an important factor of psychological security. As one participant reported:

“We weren't so afraid of the unknown, because we knew that our own people were already there. Even if you had nothing, you knew that someone would help you in the first days.”

Particularly strong also appears the importance of the emotional support that the community provided. The presence of people with common origin and common experiences functioned as a source of familiarity and stability within a foreign social environment. One participant reported characteristically:

“The most important thing was that you didn't feel alone. You heard Greek, you saw people from the village, and you felt that there was someone to support you.”

The narratives also show that an important role was played by the informal circulation of information within the community network. Information about available job vacancies, housing, employers, or administrative procedures was transferred mainly through kinship and friendly relations. Access to this information significantly reduced the uncertainty of movement and facilitated the social and professional integration of the newcomer migrants.

At the same time, several narratives present the community as a relatively “closed” but protective social circle, within which the new migrants were gradually integrated through relations of trust and common origin. These ties were based mainly on kinship relations, local references, and the sense that the members of the community shared common experiences and obligations.

However, the functioning of the networks was not always the same for everyone. Although most participants described experiences of solidarity and mutual help, some narratives show that access to support was influenced by the closeness of kinship relations, personal reputation, and each individual's position within the community. In other words, the networks functioned protectively, but not always with the same degree of openness for everyone.

The experiences also differed between the generations of migrants. First-generation migrants described mainly experiences of survival and intense dependence on the community networks during their first years in Switzerland. By contrast, the younger migrants who settled in Zurich after 2009 appear to have drawn on the already existing networks more as mechanisms of initial facilitation and less as an exclusive framework of social integration, as several had a higher educational level and greater familiarity with international environments of mobility.

At the same time, the help that the newcomers received often created an informal moral obligation of reciprocity toward the community. Many participants reported that, later, they themselves helped younger relatives or fellow villagers who migrated to Zurich. As one participant described characteristically:

“That's how the village worked. They helped me when I went, and then I helped others too. It was something natural.” Overall, the participants' narratives show that kinship and

local ties were not simply forms of social contact but active mechanisms for organizing mobility and first settlement. Social networks functioned as forms of practical, emotional, and informational support, essentially shaping the very conditions of the migratory experience.

5.2. The chain reproduction of migratory mobility

The participants' narratives show that the migratory mobility from Livadero to Zurich did not evolve as a series of isolated individual decisions but as a long-term social process organized through kinship relations, community ties, and networks of trust. Over time, each new migratory movement reinforced the already existing social framework of the community and created the conditions for new forms of mobility.

The participants described that the successful settlement of the first migrants in Zurich gradually created a strong sense of security and trust toward this particular migratory pathway. The existence of relatives and fellow villagers in Switzerland significantly reduced the uncertainty of movement and made migration seem more feasible and socially acceptable.

As a first-generation participant characteristically reported: "When one person left and found work, then the road opened up for others too. There was the sense that 'we have our own people there.'"

In many cases, the migratory process was organized almost on a family basis. Initially one member of the family migrated, who subsequently helped siblings, cousins, or other relatives to settle in Zurich. In this way a dense web of social relations was gradually created that continuously connected Livadero with the Swiss city.

One participant described characteristically:

"First my uncle left, then my father went, and later other relatives followed too. Usually someone was waiting for the next one."

The narratives also show that an important role in the maintenance of this migratory continuity was played by the continuous circulation of information within the community. The migrants' summer returns to the village, the family visits, and the everyday conversations among relatives functioned as basic mechanisms for the transfer of experiences and knowledge about life in Switzerland.

A second-generation participant reported:

"Every summer they came from Zurich to the village. They talked about work, about life there, and so everyone knew more or less what was happening in Switzerland."

Through these repeated narratives and contacts, Zurich gradually began to acquire, in the collective consciousness of the community, the image of a place of stability, professional opportunities, and better life prospects. For several young people of the village, the possibility of migration was by now considered something familiar and realistic from childhood or adolescence.

As a younger participant described characteristically:

"We grew up with the idea that if we struggled in Greece, there was always the option of Switzerland. It was something natural for the village."

The narratives further show that this chain process was not based exclusively on economic motives. In several cases, the existence of relatives and of an already organized community in Zurich functioned just as importantly as the professional prospects. The sense that someone would find "their own" people in a foreign country reduced fear and reinforced the

decision to move.

One participant reported characteristically:

"You didn't go to a foreign city with no one. You knew that you would find people from the village, that you would have somewhere to lean on."

At the same time, the narratives show that the intergenerational reproduction of migratory mobility also created specific social expectations within the community. For several young people, the possibility of migration was presented almost as a natural continuation of the family experience, a fact that in some cases limited the perception of alternative professional or social pathways in Greece.

However, the experiences differed between the generations of migrants. The first generations described migration mainly as a forced economic choice, connected with difficult living conditions in Greece and intense dependence on community ties. By contrast, several younger migrants who moved after 2009 appear to have drawn on the existing social networks more as mechanisms of initial facilitation and less as an exclusive framework of social integration.

At the same time, several participants reported that, over time, the social relations of the community became less "closed" compared to the past. The younger generations appear to have developed more open social pathways and greater mobility beyond the narrow boundaries of community life. Nevertheless, the ties with the community continued to function as an important point of reference, particularly during the first stages of settlement.

Of particular interest is the fact that the migration chain remained active even when the social and economic conditions changed significantly both in Greece and in Switzerland. Despite the decline of the traditional forms of labor migration, the social relations of the micro-diaspora remained functional and continued to facilitate newer forms of mobility, particularly after the economic crisis in Greece following 2009.

Overall, the narratives show that migration toward Zurich did not function as a fragmentary process of individual mobility but as a socially organized and intergenerationally reproduced practice. Family relations, local ties, and the collective experience of migration contributed to the formation of a stable transnational social space that connected Livadero with Zurich over time.

5.3. Social capital, solidarity, and community cohesion

The participants' narratives show that the Livadero micro-diaspora in Zurich was organized around strong ties of solidarity, trust, and community cohesion, which transcended the narrow kinship relations and shaped a broader framework of social mutual support. The social relations of the community were not confined only to the exchange of practical help but also functioned as mechanisms of emotional security, collective identity, and social integration. The participants repeatedly described that the common origin from the same village created an intense sense of familiarity and mutual responsibility. Even individuals without a close kinship relation were often treated as members of a broader "community family."

As one participant characteristically reported:

"In Zurich we may not all have been relatives, but because we were from the same village there was a different relationship. One helped the other without a second thought." This solidarity was manifested in many aspects of everyday life. The older migrants helped the younger ones in the search

for work and housing, guided them through administrative procedures, and often supported them even in personal or family difficulties.

One participant recalled characteristically:

“If someone lost their job or had some problem, there was always someone from the village to help. That kept us bound together.”

In several narratives, the community is presented as a protective social framework within which the migrants felt greater security against the difficulties of life in the host country. The existence of people with common experiences, a common language, and common cultural references reduced the sense of isolation and significantly facilitated psychological adaptation.

One participant described characteristically:

“At first everything seemed difficult and foreign. But when you met people from the village, you felt that there was a piece of your home there.”

A particularly important role also appears to have been played by the social gatherings of the community. Family visits, celebrations, common meetings, and cultural events contributed to the maintenance of the social ties and to the reproduction of the collective identity of the micro-diaspora.

As a second-generation participant reported:

“Our parents wanted us to keep in touch with one another. We gathered often, we held celebrations, and we did not lose the relationship with the village.”

The narratives also show that the social cohesion of the community was closely connected with the maintenance of the collective memory and of the local identity. The stories about the village, the experiences of migration, and the family narratives functioned as elements of cultural continuity among the different generations of the diaspora.

In several cases, even the children or grandchildren of the first migrants maintained a strong emotional connection with Livadero, although they had been born or raised in Switzerland.

A younger participant reported:

“I may have been born in Switzerland, but at home we constantly heard stories about the village. There was always this connection.”

At the same time, the participants described that help toward the members of the community was treated not only as a practical necessity but also as a form of moral obligation toward the common origin and the experience of migration.

As one participant characteristically noted:

“It was self-evident that you would help someone from the village. That’s how we grew up.”

However, the narratives do not present only images of harmony and solidarity. Although the close community ties functioned as an important mechanism of protection and support, in some cases they were also accompanied by forms of informal social control. The high social cohesion of the micro-diaspora appears to have often created intense expectations of conformity with the values and behaviors of the community, particularly for the younger generations.

A younger participant described characteristically:

“Everyone knew everyone, and many times there was the sense that the community was watching what you did and how you lived.”

At the same time, some younger migrants appear to have developed more relaxed ties with traditional community life compared to the first generations, maintaining more selective forms of connection with the community and the village of

origin. The younger generations more frequently appear to move in more open social and professional environments, beyond the narrow boundaries of the micro-diaspora.

Despite these variations, the overall picture that emerges from the narratives is that of a community with a high degree of social cohesion and long-term continuity. The social capital of the micro-diaspora was not confined only to practical forms of support but constituted a broader system of social relations, collective memory, and cultural continuity. The community functioned simultaneously as a space of protection, social integration, and maintenance of the collective identity, shaping a stable transnational social bond between Zurich and Livadero.

5.4. Intergenerational continuity and transfer of the migratory experience

The participants’ narratives show that the migratory experience of the Livadero micro-diaspora was not confined only to the first generation of migrants but was transferred intergenerationally through family narratives, everyday practices, and stable forms of transnational social connection between Livadero and Zurich. Migration appears to have been gradually incorporated into the collective memory of the community and became part of the social and family experience of many generations.

The participants described that, for decades, Switzerland constituted a stable point of reference in the everyday life of the community. The stories about life in Zurich, the narratives of the older migrants, and the continuous contacts with relatives living in Switzerland shaped, from early on, a sense of familiarity around migration. For several children of the community, Zurich was not presented as a distant and unknown place but as somewhere closely connected with their family and social reality.

As a second-generation participant characteristically reported:

“From a young age I constantly heard about Zurich. We had relatives there, they came to the village in the summers, and you felt that Switzerland was a part of our life.”

A particularly important role in the maintenance of this intergenerational connection appears to have been played by the summer returns of the migrants to Livadero. These visits did not have only a family character but also functioned as mechanisms for the renewal of the collective memory and the social cohesion of the community. Many participants recalled that the village “came alive” every summer with the return of the families from Zurich.

One participant described characteristically:

“In the summer the village changed. Everyone came from Zurich and the community came back to life.”

The narratives also show that the younger generations grew up within a social environment where migration was presented as a possible and socially acceptable professional and personal pathway. The existence of relatives and acquaintances in Zurich created the sense that there was already a stable social framework abroad, within which they could integrate if they chose to.

As a younger participant reported:

“You didn’t feel that you were going somewhere completely unknown. You knew that there were people from the village who would help you.”

The transfer of the migratory experience was not confined only to practical information about work or settlement. The participants described that, within the families, specific

perceptions were also transferred concerning work, economic stability, education, and professional advancement. In particular, the younger generations appear to have been strongly influenced by the experiences of the first migrants, mainly regarding the importance of education and professional specialization.

One participant characteristically noted:

“The old-timers had a hard time at work. They always told the children to get an education so they would have better opportunities.”

Of particular interest is the case of a participant who, after studies in Medicine in Greece and professional experience in the United States, finally settled in Zurich as a professor of Cardiology. Although this particular trajectory differs significantly from the forms of labor migration of the first generation, the social ties of the micro-diaspora continued to function as an important point of social reference and connection with the community.

As he characteristically reported:

“Although I had already lived and worked abroad, when I went to Zurich there was still this connection with the people from the village. I felt that I was not starting out alone.”

This particular case shows that the social infrastructures of the micro-diaspora were not confined only to traditional forms of labor mobility but maintained their functionality even in environments of high educational and professional capital. Despite the significant changes in the social characteristics of the younger migrants, the family ties, the common origin, and the cultural references continued to function as stable factors of collective continuity.

The narratives also show that even members of the second or third generation maintained strong emotional and cultural ties with Livadero. The family visits, the stories about the village, and participation in community activities functioned as mechanisms for the maintenance of the collective identity.

A second-generation participant reported:

“Although I was born in Switzerland, I always felt that I had a relationship with the village. Our parents never let this contact be lost.”

However, the narratives also show certain variations between the generations. The first migrants appear to have maintained a more intense and everyday relationship with the community of the village, while several members of the younger generations described a more symbolic or cultural connection with the place of origin. At the same time, several younger participants reported that they often felt as if they were moving between two different social and cultural worlds, trying to balance between Swiss everyday life and their Greek family heritage.

Overall, the findings show that the Livadero micro-diaspora functioned as a long-term system of social and cultural continuity, through which not only experiences of mobility were transferred but also values, expectations, forms of identity, and collective representations concerning migration. Zurich did not constitute simply a place of settlement but was gradually incorporated into the collective memory and the intergenerational social experience of the community.

5.5. Reactivation of the networks after the economic crisis of 2009

The findings of the research show that the migration networks of the Livadero micro-diaspora maintained their functionality even many decades after the first migratory flows toward Zurich. The economic crisis in Greece following 2009

appears to have functioned as a critical historical circumstance for the reactivation of already existing social and community ties, which facilitated new forms of mobility toward Switzerland.

The participants described that the economic uncertainty, unemployment, and limited professional prospects in Greece led several young people of the community to once again consider the possibility of migration. Within this environment, the already settled relatives and fellow villagers in Zurich again functioned as basic mechanisms of support, information, and guidance.

As one participant characteristically reported:

“After the crisis, quite a few people started thinking about Switzerland again. The important thing was that there were already people from the village there and they could help.”

In contrast to the first migrant generations, the younger migrants did not start from a zero base. Most already had access to an organized web of social relations that could offer information about work, help in finding housing, advice on administrative procedures, and general guidance about life in Zurich.

One participant described characteristically:

“When I decided to leave, I already had relatives there. They told me where to look for work and helped me with the first steps.”

Several participants reported that the community’s social networks functioned almost as a “ready-made reception mechanism” for the new migrants. The existence of this framework of support significantly reduced the fear and uncertainty that accompanied moving abroad.

One participant reported characteristically:

“You didn’t feel that you were going somewhere completely alone. You knew that there were people who would help you until you got on your feet.”

At the same time, the narratives show that the forms of mobility after 2009 differed significantly from those of the first migrant generations. The first migrants were connected mainly with manual labor, factories, and construction, while the younger generations more frequently appear with higher levels of education, better knowledge of foreign languages, and different professional aspirations.

One participant characteristically noted:

“The old-timers left for factories and hard jobs. The younger ones left with degrees and other prospects.”

The economic crisis appears to have influenced not only the professional decisions of the new migrants but also the way in which they perceived their future in Greece. For several participants, Zurich appeared once again as a space of stability, professional opportunities, and better life prospects.

As a younger participant characteristically reported:

“During the period of the crisis, many of us felt that there was no prospect here. Zurich looked once again like a solution that could provide stability.”

Despite the significant changes in the forms of mobility, the basic mechanisms of functioning of the social networks appear to have remained, to a large extent, stable. Kinship relations, common local origin, and ties of trust continued to constitute basic factors in the organization of mobility and of initial social integration.

However, the narratives also show certain transformations in the functioning of the community. The younger migrants appear to have developed more open social and professional pathways compared to the first generations, which were based more on the internal cohesion of the micro-diaspora. In

several cases, the social networks now functioned mainly as an initial point of support and less as an exclusive framework of social life.

At the same time, some participants reported that the conditions of mobility after 2009 were accompanied by greater professional uncertainty and less stable forms of integration compared to the first migrant generations. The existence of community ties continued to function supportively, without however necessarily ensuring the same conditions of stability that characterized earlier periods of labor migration.

Despite these variations, several participants described the sense that the relationship of Livadero with Zurich maintained a stable and long-term character.

One participant reported characteristically:

“The relationship of the village with Zurich never stopped. The times and the people changed, but the network stayed alive.”

Overall, the findings show that the migration networks of the micro-diaspora presented a high degree of resilience and adaptability toward the changing social and economic conditions. Despite the changes in the forms of mobility and in the social characteristics of the migrants, the social relations of the community continued to function as long-term social infrastructures that supported the transnational continuity between Livadero and Zurich.

5.6. From labor migration to high-skilled migration

One of the most important findings of the research concerns the gradual transformation of the forms of migratory mobility of the Livadero micro-diaspora. The participants' narratives show that, while the first generations were connected mainly with forms of low-skilled labor migration, the younger generations more frequently appear with higher levels of education, international professional mobility, and different professional strategies.

The first migrants described experiences of intense physical labor, difficult living conditions, and limited professional options. For many of them, migration to Switzerland constituted mainly a means of economic survival and support for the family that remained in Greece.

A first-generation participant characteristically reported:

“Most of us went to work wherever there was work. Factories, construction sites, hard jobs. There weren't many options back then.”

The narratives show that the first migrant generations had limited possibilities of professional mobility and relied to a great extent on the community networks for finding work, housing, and social support. The migration of that period was connected mainly with the need for economic stability and with the improvement of the living conditions of their families.

By contrast, the younger generations appear to have followed different forms of mobility, more connected with university studies, professional specialization, and international professional experience. Access to higher education and the internationalization of the labor market created new possibilities of mobility that differ significantly from the patterns of the first migrant generation.

A younger participant described characteristically:

“Our parents and grandparents left in order to survive. Our generation left more for professional opportunities and advancement.”

This differentiation concerns not only the type of work but

also the way in which the younger generations perceive migration. While the first migrants often described their departure as a forced choice, several younger participants appear to view international mobility more as a strategy of professional development and personal advancement.

Particularly characteristic is the case of a participant who, after completing studies in Medicine in Greece and acquiring professional experience in the United States, finally settled in Zurich, taking up a university position in Cardiology. Although his professional course differs significantly from that of the first labor migrants, the ties with the micro-diaspora remained active.

As he characteristically reported:

“Although I already had international experience, when I went to Zurich there was still this bond with the people from the village. I felt that there was a community behind me.”

This particular case shows that the social relations of the micro-diaspora are not confined only to low-skilled forms of labor mobility but maintain their functionality even in environments of high educational and professional capital. Despite the transformation of the social characteristics of the migrants, the family ties, the common local identity, and the cultural references continued to function as stable factors of collective continuity.

At the same time, the narratives show that the increasing professional differentiation of the younger generations was also accompanied by more relaxed forms of connection with traditional community life. Social and professional mobility beyond the boundaries of the micro-diaspora appears in some cases to have reduced dependence on the community networks, particularly at younger ages.

However, even in cases of high specialization and international professional mobility, the community continued to function as an important point of social reference. The participants described that the ties with the village and with the people of the diaspora continued to provide a sense of familiarity, emotional security, and cultural continuity, particularly during periods of professional or personal transition.

The narratives also show that the transition from traditional labor migration toward forms of high specialization was also accompanied by changes in the expectations of the families regarding migration. While the first generations connected migration mainly with economic survival and the support of the household, the younger generations appear to connect it more with professional advancement, international experience, and personal development.

Overall, the findings show that the Livadero micro-diaspora did not remain a static social scheme but evolved and adapted to the changing social and economic conditions. Despite the transformation of the forms of mobility and of the professional trajectories of the migrants, the social ties of the community continued to function as stable mechanisms of connection, collective continuity, and transnational social reference.

6. Discussion

The present study shows that the case of Livadero does not constitute simply a local example of Greek migration but a particularly useful field for understanding the way in which small communities of origin can create resilient and long-term forms of transnational mobility. The findings not only confirm the importance of social networks in the migratory process but mainly highlight the way in which these networks

are transformed, adapt, and are reactivated in different historical periods.

The case of the Livadero micro-diaspora shows that migratory pathways are not organized exclusively through economic factors or individual strategic choices. On the contrary, they develop within a web of social relations, community ties, and forms of collective experience that reduce the uncertainty of movement and create stable forms of social continuity between the place of origin and the place of settlement.

Of particular importance is the fact that the beginning of this migratory pathway is connected with a seemingly random but decisive social contact: the presence of the Swiss Red Cross volunteer in Livadero and the help she provided to the first young person who went to Zurich. This element shows that migration systems do not always begin through organized institutional or economic processes but are often born through personal relations of trust and social circumstances that acquire long-term consequences.

This case is directly connected with Granovetter's concept of social embeddedness, according to which decisions of mobility are not made in a social vacuum but are shaped within specific networks of relations, reciprocity, and trust. In Livadero, the existence of relatives, fellow villagers, and community contacts in Zurich made migration less uncertain and more socially manageable.

At the same time, the study enriches the discussion surrounding social capital, showing that it functioned not only as a practical mechanism for finding work or housing. In this particular case, social capital also acquired a symbolic dimension, as it created a sense of community, continuity, and moral obligation among the members of the diaspora. Mutual help appears not only as a strategy of survival but also as a culturally legitimized practice connected with common origin and the collective experience of migration.

6.1. Theoretical contribution: from migration networks to social infrastructures

The findings of the research show that the migration networks of the Livadero micro-diaspora did not function simply as informal mechanisms of help for the newcomer migrants. Over time they evolved into stable social infrastructures, which facilitated the movement, adaptation, and maintenance of the ties between Zurich and the place of origin.

The significance of these networks was not confined only to the first stages of settlement. On the contrary, they remained active for decades, allowing the younger generations as well to draw on social relations, information, and forms of support that had been created by previous migrant generations. In this way, the Livadero micro-diaspora was gradually shaped as a continuous transnational social space, within which the ties with the village continued to remain active despite the geographical distance.

Of particular importance is the possibility of reactivation of these networks under new historical and economic conditions. The economic crisis in Greece following 2009 appears to have functioned as a catalyst for the activation of already existing social infrastructures, allowing younger generations to draw on forms of social capital that had been created many decades earlier.

This development shows that migration networks do not constitute static remnants of previous migratory waves but dynamic social systems with a high degree of resilience and adaptability. Migration appears not only as an individual

movement but as a process of creating and maintaining long-term transnational social relations.

6.2. Transnational identity, collective memory, and institutionalization

The findings of the study also show that the Livadero micro-diaspora was maintained not only through informal kinship relations but also through more organized forms of collective expression. A characteristic example is the Cultural Association of Livadero Residents of Zurich, which functioned as a space of social cohesion, maintenance of the collective memory, and reinforcement of the cultural identity of the community.

The role of the association was not confined only to the organization of cultural events or celebrations. The participants' narratives show that it constituted a stable mechanism for maintaining the relations among the members of the diaspora, reinforcing the sense of continuity between Zurich and Livadero. Through social gatherings, common activities, and repeated contacts, forms of collective memory and common identity were reproduced.

Particularly important appears to have been its role for the younger generations, who did not have direct experience of the original migratory pathway. Through participation in community activities, the younger ones-maintained contact with the history of the community, the family narratives, and the cultural references of the village.

This case shows that migration does not necessarily lead to a severing from the place of origin. On the contrary, it can create more complex forms of transnational identity, within which the migrants and their descendants maintain ties simultaneously both with the country of settlement and with the community of origin.

6.3. Resilience, crisis, and transformation of mobility

One of the most important findings of the research concerns the transformation of the forms of mobility of the micro-diaspora. The first generations were connected mainly with manual forms of work and low-skilled labor migration, while the younger generations more frequently appear with higher levels of education and different professional pathways.

The case of the participant who settled in Zurich as a professor of Cardiology, after studies in Greece and professional experience in the United States, shows that the social networks of the micro-diaspora are not confined only to low-skilled forms of labor mobility. On the contrary, they continue to function in environments of high educational and professional capital as well.

This finding broadens the theoretical understanding of chain migration, as it shows that community ties can influence not only early labor movements but also more complex forms of international professional mobility. The micro-diaspora does not remain static but is transformed in parallel with social and economic changes.

At the same time, the period after 2009 shows that the same social structures can be reactivated in periods of crisis. The economic recession in Greece appears to have revitalized already existing transnational ties, allowing younger generations to draw on social relations and infrastructures that had been created by previous migrant generations.

In this sense, the case of Livadero offers a characteristic example of diaspora resilience—that is, of the capacity of a micro-diaspora to maintain active forms of social organization and to adapt to new historical and economic

conditions.

6.4. Critical reading and limits of the networks

Despite the significant function of social networks in supporting migratory mobility, the findings should not lead to an idealized image of the diaspora. The narratives show that the forms of solidarity and social cohesion did not function in the same way for all members of the community. Access to support appears to have been often influenced by the closeness of kinship relations, the individual's position within the community, and the degree of participation in community activities. At the same time, the high social cohesion of the micro-diaspora could in some cases also be accompanied by informal forms of social control or by expectations of conformity with the values of the community. In addition, the narratives show that the ties differed according to generation, educational level, and the professional pathways of the migrants. The second and third generations appear to maintain ties with Livadero, but often in more flexible and less dense ways compared to the first generation.

This observation is important, as it shows that the micro-diaspora does not constitute a static or absolutely cohesive social scheme. On the contrary, it is a dynamic social field, within which solidarity, collective memory, intergenerational variations, professional mobility, and changing forms of identity coexist.

Overall, the present study highlights the micro-diaspora as a particularly useful analytical unit for the study of migration, social resilience, and transnational continuity. The case of Livadero shows that small communities of origin can create resilient transnational networks, transform the forms of mobility over time, and maintain active social and cultural ties for many generations.

7. Conclusions

The present study investigated the functioning of migration networks and the long-term evolution of the micro-diaspora of Livadero, Kozani, in Zurich, Switzerland, focusing on the role of social relations, social capital, and transnational forms of social organization in the formation and reproduction of migratory mobility.

The findings of the research show that migration from Livadero to Zurich was not exclusively the result of economic needs or individual strategic choices. On the contrary, it developed through a dense web of kinship, friendship, and community relations that facilitated both the movement and the social integration of the migrants in the host country. The ties of trust and the common local origin functioned as basic mechanisms of support and social cohesion of the micro-diaspora.

Of particular interest is the fact that this particular migratory pathway appears to have begun through a seemingly random but decisive social contact—namely, the community's acquaintance with the Swiss Red Cross volunteer. This case highlights that migratory processes are not shaped exclusively through economic or institutional factors but often begin from personal relations of trust that acquire long-term social dynamics.

The research also highlighted that the social networks of the micro-diaspora were not confined only to the initial phase of migration but gradually evolved into stable forms of transnational social organization. The ties between Livadero and Zurich were maintained active for decades through

family relations, community institutions, cultural activities, and forms of collective memory that continuously connected the community of origin with the country of settlement.

At the same time, the findings show that the migration networks of the community presented a high degree of resilience and adaptability. Their reactivation after the economic crisis in Greece following 2009 demonstrates that micro-diasporas can function as long-term social infrastructures, which continue to organize new forms of mobility even many decades after the first migratory waves. Of particular importance is also the gradual transition from the traditional forms of labor migration toward forms of high professional specialization. The case of the participant who settled in Zurich as a professor of Cardiology shows that the social networks of the micro-diaspora continued to function as important mechanisms of social reference and support even in environments of high educational and professional capital. This element broadens the theoretical understanding of chain migration, as it suggests that migration networks are not confined only to low-skilled forms of mobility but can influence more complex professional pathways as well.

On a theoretical level, the study contributes to the international discussion surrounding migration networks, social capital, transnationalism, and migration infrastructures. The case of Livadero shows that micro-diasporas can function as resilient and long-term systems of social organization, which maintain active forms of collective identity and social continuity beyond national borders. At the same time, it emerges that small communities of origin can shape stable transnational social structures with a long-term effect on the migratory pathways of subsequent generations. The study also highlights the importance of local social structures in the formation of international mobility. Migration appears not only as a process of geographical movement but also as a form of social reproduction, intergenerational continuity, and maintenance of social ties at a transnational level.

Although the research focuses on a specific micro-diaspora and is based mainly on qualitative data and personal narratives, the case of Livadero offers significant empirical and theoretical evidence for understanding the way in which social networks organize, maintain, and reactivate migratory mobility over time.

Future research could comparatively examine other Greek micro-diasporas in Europe as well, in order to investigate possible similarities and differences regarding the functioning of social networks, community institutions, and forms of transnational social organization. At the same time, of particular interest would be the further study of the relationship between traditional migration networks and contemporary forms of high specialization and international professional mobility.

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