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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY GROUP

PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES:
TRANSNATIONALISMS AND PLACE
ATTACHMENT IN RESIDENTIAL TOURISTS IN
CUENCA ECUADOR

Thesis Report

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SUMMARY

Residential Tourism is a new and interesting phenomena to study in Ecuador. As the last years have been witness of the aging of the baby-boom generation, economic crisis and the advance of cheaper and faster ways of travel and communications, more people in retirement age are settling in more affordable locations abroad. Ecuador has received significant media attention, positioned on the first places from the last 15 years in International Living Magazine's ranking of 'world's best retirement destination'. This has increased the number of retired migration from North America mainly. I coin the term 'Residential Tourism' used by McWatters to refer to this phenomenon. The objective of this study is to understand experiences and practices of residential tourists related to local traditional festivals in Cuenca, and how these experiences and practices relate to transnationalism and place attachment. A qualitative approach has been chosen to understand the meanings and outcomes, and the connections that such practices and experiences have in various aspects of life. Two methods were used to complete this study, semi-structured interviews to 18 residential tourists in Cuenca, and participant observations during the festivals in order to complement and detect relevant findings not collected in the interviews.

Overall, the findings have shown that by attending festivals in Cuenca, residential tourists are embedded in different experience and practices that have influence on several aspects of life, either these practices can be considered transnationals or not. Residential tourists in Cuenca develop positive feelings and emotions towards the festivals, which have an influence on the process of identity construction. Transnational practices and experience was found mainly within social networks. Residential tourist in Cuenca are part of social networks based on common interests and backgrounds. For instance, in Cuenca there are several religious communities, which provide environments to recreate practices from the sending country. Additionally, I will argue that visiting festivals influence the ways in which residential tourists give meaning to their new places. By attending festivals, residential tourists meet needs that enable place attachment: developing positive emotions, feeling welcomed, sense of security, and escape from routine. To complete the research, the findings show that festivals play a central role in the experience of RTs of migration, adaptation and relating with local settings in meaningful ways.

1. INTRODUCTION

“After International Living Magazine's “Global Retirement Index” anointed Cuenca, Ecuador's third largest city, as the top spot to retire in 2009, a great migration, or what some have nicknamed the “gringo invasion” began. (Payne, 2014)

The previous extract from NBC news about the flocking of North American retirees to Cuenca, highlight a phenomenon that is relatively new in Ecuador. There are no official numbers, but serious estimates show that Cuenca hosts between 3,500 and 5000 North Americans (Bustamante, 2012; Hayes, 2014c). However, not many research has been done in order to understand this newly stream of migration to Ecuador. The existing studies on the increasing number of foreign retirees in Ecuador are focused on the structural context and economical motivations (Bustamante, 2012; Hayes, 2014b, 2014c), cultural imaginaries (Viteri, 2015), health care imaginaries (Miles, 2015), and identity construction in a new racialized social environment (Hayes, 2014a). There is a lack in studying the identification to a place of the retired migrants in Ecuador from the perspective of a transnational experience.

The world population is growing faster in the last decades and it is expected that it will continue to grow (“World Population Prospects,” 2013). The demographic composition is changing and differs depending on regions. While in developing countries rapid population growth is the norm, developed countries forecast aging of their societies along with very low fertility (Bongaarts, 2015). What is happening in the developed countries is an increasing number of retired people, who cope with the current economic instability and at the same time have more and cheaper opportunities to travel. This is also the case of North America, where most of the retired migrants living in Ecuador come from (Bustamante, 2012). As the baby-boomers age, and the economic problems continue in North America, they can eventually increase waves of people in search of affordable places to retire (Knowledge@Wharton, 2012).

International Living Magazine, a monthly worldwide newsletter specialist in lifestyle for retired people, ranked Ecuador at the top of its “world’s best retirement destinations” in 1999, and has

ranked it during the last 15 years among the top three “retirement heavens”. The Expat Insider Survey (2014) ranked Ecuador as number one in their annual report based on a survey of 14,000 expatriates from over 160 countries across the globe, in which a variety of questions about life abroad were asked. This international media attention together with recent improvements of health services, has skyrocketed the number of expatriate retirees to Ecuador. Media attention has increased the number of expats from the so-called Global north countries, especially from the USA and Canada in the last few years. Within Ecuador, Cuenca is particularly the favourite destination to retire. The city itself was designed in 2009 the “best retirement spot in the world” by International Living Magazine. “Cuenca is attracting more expats than any other location in Ecuador”, states the magazine.

Although this flow of migration is not so recent, few research has been done in order to understand the experience of the retirees living in Cuenca. Migration is not new in Ecuador. In the 90s and the beginning of the new millennium, the country experienced an overwhelming exodus of emigrants, mainly due to the economic crisis. An approximate of three million Ecuadorians departed from their homes to North America and Europe, in search of opportunities to improve their families’ material conditions. The province of Azuay, of which Cuenca is the capital, was one of the most affected regions of this migration. As nowadays, what might be considered paradoxical, Cuenca is hosting increasing numbers of expats from developed countries in search for a better lifestyle.

The present study is interested in combining the fields of study of transnationalism, place attachment and residential tourism to enrich the understanding of people-place relationships induced by residential tourist transnational experiences and practices at festivals.

For this research I will recur to transnational theories in order to understand the experiences of the expats in Cuenca. I will coin the term “Residential Tourists” (henceforth RT) to address this group of people. The focus of analysis will be the transnational experiences and practices that create and sustain old and new social bonds. For this I will analyse Cuencano traditional festivals (Independence Day of Cuenca, Declaration of Heritage Site, Procession of Pase del Niño Viajero) as places in which residential tourists may show their transnational lifestyle.

1.1 Problem Statement

Mobility of North Americans and Europeans retirees has skyrocketed in the last years (Brewster, Suutari, & Kohonen, 2005; Hall, Held, & McGrew, 1992). The market campaigns of private magazines, the diffusion of imaginaries of retirement's heavens in online social networks and blogs, world-wide touristic campaigns of Ecuador, and improvements in health and security services has led to an increasing number of foreign retirees in recent years. These factors come into conjuncture with the economic crises that undermine the apparent "good-life" in the global North leading to difficulties to keep habitual lifestyles especially for retirees (Hayes, 2014b, p. 133). However recent in Ecuador this phenomenon is not new in the world. This type of migration has been traditionally produced in big flows within Europe and North America, for example from Germany to Spain or from the United States to Mexico (Casado-Diaz, 2009; Gustafson, 2008; Huber & O'Reilly, 2004; R. King, T. Warnes, & A. Williams, 2000; O'Reilly, 2000; Oliver, 2008). But almost none research has been done to understand this phenomena in Ecuador. Most of the research about this phenomenon has been done under the umbrella of International Retirement Migration, which focuses on the experience of retiree migrants in their new destination.

On the following, I present discussions about the phenomenon of North-South retirement migration. In the developed world, more and more people can make 'informed and financially viable choices about their lifestyles' (Benson & O'reilly, 2009). These people are looking for affordable places to keep their lifestyle at their retirement age, a phenomenon known as North-South migration and which is getting more attention from researchers (Lizárraga Morales, 2013). Although part of international migration, north-south retirement migration represent a new typology different from the traditional migration in the sense that it is not led by economic or labour reasons only (Lizárraga Morales, 2013, p. 132). Most of the studies discussing labour migration, largely focus on the flows of people from the South to the North, from developing to developed countries, in search of better quality in terms of economic prosperity. North-South flows of people differ in motives that impulse their mobility. These new type of migrants, especially retirees, desire a better quality of life that does not rely on work, but are influenced by searching for amenities and a pleasurable and comfortable lifestyle (p. 132).

North-South retired migrants, are migrants who 'do not compete for employment, their displacement are not always permanent, and it is difficult to differentiate (them) from tourists' (Lizárraga Morales, 2013, p. 133). Several definitions have emerged to name this phenomena. One interesting definition for the purpose of this research is "lifestyle migration". Hayes (2014b) uses this definition to refer to the mobility of North American retirees in Cuenca. Hayes' interest of retirees coming to Ecuador is discussed in his article: The Economic Motives and Structural Context of North America's Emigrants in Cuenca (2014). This article discussed the phenomenon of lifestyle migration, defined as "the spatial mobility of relatively affluent individuals of all ages, moving either part-time or full-time to places that are meaningful because, for various reasons, they offer the potential of a better quality of life" (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009, p. 2). As such, lifestyle migrants are people who have made a conscious choice not only about how to live but also about where to live (Hoey, 2005).

1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

This research focusses on residential tourism in Cuenca, Ecuador. The existing number of foreign retirees in Ecuador and the forecast of rising flows of migrants and tourists, made it important to understand the implications these flows have both for the foreigners and the host community. The objective of this study is to understand experiences and practices of residential tourists related to local traditional festivals in Cuenca, and how these experiences and practices relate to transnationalism and place attachment.

The research questions are:

- How do residential tourists experience local cultural festivals in terms of transnational practices and experiences?
- How do residential tourists' experiences and practices in local festivals relate to place attachment to Cuenca?

For answering these question the next sub-questions were formulated:

- What experiences and practices can be considered transnational?

- How do the various social networks of residential tourists interact at local festivals?
- What aspects in the construction of identity and belonging are presented and negotiated at the festivals?
- How are cultural practices of residential tourists expressed at the festivals?
- What elements of transnational practices and experiences are related and produce place attachment to the city and the festivals?

1.3 Relevance of the Study

Several studies have tried to grasp the complexity of the social networks that are formed in migrants' new residence. One important contribution in this regard is, for instance, the work done by Putnam (2000). He describes how in the process of creating networks different types of social capital arise. He distinguishes between "bonding social capital" in which people construct strong social connections among close friends, family, neighbours and other individuals of the same ethnic group. The other type, "bridging social capital", tends to be inclusive in terms of creating connections with people from different social groups and backgrounds. Previous work in Residential tourism has showed limiting bridging forms of social capital, mostly associated with the lack of knowledge of the local language (Casado-Díaz, 2009; Casado-Díaz, Casado-Díaz, & Casado-Díaz, 2013; Ryan, Sales, Tilki, & Siara, 2008). The cited works uncover the diversity of networks that migrants belong, but there is a limited understanding of the interactions of and interrelations between these several social networks. Gielis (2009) addresses this issue by analysing what he calls the 'external complexity' of migrant transnationalism. Gielis refers to external complexity as the interaction and interrelation in the migrants' everyday life of the various social networks to which they belong. In this study, I will analyse the interrelations between the different social networks of residential tourists in Cuenca. In consequence, I will empirically use the 'places as lenses' approach as proposed by Gielis (2009).

Likewise, the current research will help to better understand the residential tourism phenomenon to actors directly and indirectly involved. Local governmental institutions in Cuenca, for example, have interest in the involvement of the residential tourists in the everyday life of the community. Several facilities have been created to help this particular group to make

their stay more pleasurable (E.g. some public website service are available now in English and online newspapers for expats). By studying the foreign community in the city of Cuenca and the way they experience their new setting in terms of involvement with the local community through local festivals, the results could help to develop strategies for policy makers at local institutions.

1.4 Research Context: Residential Tourism

Several social scientists' are "turning" towards mobility as a characteristic of the contemporary societies that goes "beyond the imagery of 'terrains' as spatially fixed geographical containers for social processes" (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Furthermore, attention is paid to better understand mobility and what mobility means to people who crosses geographical boundaries. The loci of this mobility has covered different aspects related to two flows, tourism and migration, and the new and modified structures and agencies these movements engender. Certainly, the boundaries between tourism and migration are somehow blurred. Residential tourism represents a bridge between these two flows that evoke lifestyles that are '[in] between nomadism and sedentarism' (van Noorloos, 2013).

Residential Tourism is the most known among the different types of lifestyle migration (Huete & Mantecón, 2012). Although it seems a contradictory word play, residential tourism is a concept used to describe the phenomenon of flows of people, which is driven by consumption, and which involve people who have decided to enjoy their pensions in places different from home permanently or semi-permanently (McWatters, 2008). Both, lifestyle migration and residential tourism are part of International Retirement Migration (IRM), but what differentiates residential tourism is the inclusion of different temporary situations. This means that people are encompassed within the category of residential tourists no matter if they migrate and stay in a new place seasonally or a whole year. Residential Tourism also takes into account the desires of those who move to settle in their new home indefinitely (McWatters, 2008). Although most of the Residential tourists in Cuenca are retirees, some of them are not within the "age of retirement". And even though they have no financial pressing to work, some have established small businesses and started economic activities in their new environment (Hayes, 2014b). Another important difference is that while IRM is focused on "the initial process of migration", it

excludes the later process of “lasting residential experiences, effects and identities” that is created every day after the process of migration (McWatters, 2008). The economic crisis in the global north in the recent years has made it difficult for the retirees to maintain the lifestyle they used to have when they retire, thereupon they decide to migrate. In this research I will use the term residential tourism to describe the phenomena of expatriates’ retirees in Cuenca.

McWatters (2008) describes two characteristics that are paramount to residential tourism. The first one is that it consists of a lifestyle that is oriented around patterns of leisure and consumption, in which work imperatives are minimal or non-existent. Residential tourists’ motives to move are the search for a more enjoyable retirement, affordable with their financial situation. The second characteristic is linked to the previously mentioned one, temporality: “it takes place permanently or semi-permanently in a particular destinations, outside one’s traditional socio-geographical milieu” (p. 25). The retirees in Cuenca create new social networks with other retirees and maintain contact with friends and family from their country. At the same time they interact and try to create networks with the locals in their attempt to cope with the new environment. This represents an opportunity to comprehend part of the global-local dialectic. According to Amin (1997), this dialectic in the contemporary world, should be “considered to be interactively and relationally (although not necessarily symmetrically) bound to one another”. This relational interplay between the global and the local, or what Robertson (1994) termed ‘glocalisation’ as a means of highlighting the co-presence of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies in processes of globalization, inevitably impacts on social practices, relations, identities and meanings (Torkington, 2012).

As such, Residential Tourism in particular “provides the possibility for new forms of meaningful and enduring intercultural exchanges to occur” (McWatters, 2008, p. 160). In his book, McWatters offers an illustrative example of the venture of people when they establish in a new residence. His research is focused around the construction of sense of place and landscape, showing the similarities and differences in the ways local Boqueños and foreign residential tourists perceive place. The findings show that while native Boqueños experience Boquete (Panama) as a “place to which their entire beings are fundamentally fused”, residential tourists

translate their experience in Boquete as a “landscape from which they are, in many ways, distanced and alienated” (p. 2). Despite the different meanings local and tourist residents have about Boquete, they both share something in common. The fast increase of the residential tourism industry in Boquete makes that both perceptions of place and landscape change rapidly as well. Inevitably locals and residential tourists are transforming the way they relate with Boquete and are embarked in a venture of protecting their home, regardless the feeling of home varies. This can be translated, to a certain extent, to the creation of a shared understanding of place and community. It is precisely my intention to find out how the experience of residential tourists in Cuenca relate to the construction of sense of place in a transnational context.

Residential Tourists in Ecuador

Although the numbers of residential tourists in Ecuador are rising significantly, scarcely attention has been paid to research on this phenomena. Cuenca, the third largest city in the country with an important colonial centre declared Heritage Site in 1999, has been the preferred place of North Americans and Europeans retirees in recent years. There are no official numbers, but it is estimated that more than 5,000 American citizens were living in Cuenca by mid-2013 (Hayes, 2014b, p. 7).

The article of Hayes (2014a) discusses the construction of racialized identities by North Americans migrants in Ecuador and analyses two practices that indirectly implies differentiation from the host community. One is the practice of policing the behaviour of North American retired individuals. The policy has the goal of maintaining good relations with the Cuencano¹ community, ‘the aim was to preserve *gringuidad* as benign, constructive and respectful of Ecuadorian culture’ (pag.9). The other practice relates to the desire of American migrant to integrate into the Cuencano society, in means to reduce their feeling of being “othered”. Retirees consider learning the local language very important in order to ease their integration into the local community. Language is a means to get involved in other practices, like making Ecuadorian friends. Although Hayes focusses on the (re)production of racialized identities, his findings show that these two

¹ Cuencano(a) is the demonym of the people from Cuenca, or related with this city.

practices reflect a desire of the increasing residential tourist community in Cuenca to be involved in the local community.

The researches dealing with Residential Migration are concentrated mostly in Europe mainly because this is the region where this phenomena is more developed. I argue that there are two differences related to the geographical situation: 1. In Europe residential tourists mainly consists of high economic capital residents, while in the Americas the economic crises in the North is an important driver to migrate and therefor the group of expats consists of people with varied economic status. 2. People who migrate from Northern to Southern Europe travel closer distances, and have less regulations which facilitates their hypermobility leading to more temporarily migration related to second homes instead of residential migration. Because in the Americas the distances are longer, people stay longer in their new homes. In traditional destinations for residential tourists like Mexico, Panamá and Costa Rica most of the retirees dwelled into gated developments, areas and neighbourhoods for foreign people (McWatters, 2008; van Noorloos, 2013). However in Cuenca the retirees live mixed with the community, in local residential neighbourhoods, which could be an effect of the relative small number of retired migrants (Bustamante, 2012; Hayes, 2014a, 2014b). This difference, however, could stimulate the inclusion into local cultural practices, what makes Cuenca a good study location.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The epistemological approach I will use here comes from a constructive view point. Adopting a constructivism paradigm means that my understanding of reality is an ongoing and an active creation of social groups. Constructivists place emphasis on the world of experience as it is lived, felt, and undergone by social actors (Gorton, 2010). I will explore the experience and the meanings of residential tourists participating in traditional festivals in Cuenca and how this is related with transnationalism and place attachment. These experiences are subjective, and meanings may differ from one person to another, 'meanings and experiences are human creations that reside within us rather than with the world out there' (McWatters, 2008, p. 170). Thus, constructivism represents a way to understand the reality that is constructed in relation with other humans beings (Leeds-Hurwitz, Braithwaite, & Baxter, 2006). Below I present theories and concepts that will enable me to gain a better insight in the interrelations between meanings and experiences of transnationalism and place attachment of residential tourists.

The next paragraphs discuss the theories and concepts that will be used to make sense of the way transnationalism and place attachment can be studied in relation to each other. I start with an overview of transnationalism and how it is conceptualized in the field of migration studies. I will show how several dimensions of transnationalism can be applied to residential tourists. Then, I will present notions of how festivals constitute an environment where transnationalism can be practiced and experienced. Festivals will be acknowledged as a place with time/space characteristics that is meaningful to people. Finally, the concept and dimensions of place attachment are presented as a means to better understand transnational practices of residential tourists in Cuenca.

2.1 Transnationalism

This first part will explain the concept of transnationalism and some relevant aspects that will be applied to this study. Nowadays the concept of transnationalism has been increasingly used when studying the rise of people's flows, transnational networks and interconnections that are,

all at once, motives and effects of globalization (Munar, 2007). Clear examples within the context of transnational interconnections and networks, are international migration and tourism. One of the reasons of the rise of people travelling long and short distances in the world is because there are cheaper and more efficient modes of transportation and communication (Banister, 2008).

Transnationalism has been studied in relation to the study of migration and research suggests that it became manifest that immigrants produce and reproduce practices and relations that connect the sending and receiving societies (Gustafson, 2008). These practices are known as transnational practices, and links the mobility of individuals with cross-border interactions that this mobility engenders (Mau, Mewes, & Zimmermann, 2008). An important contribution to understand the term comes from Basch, Schiller, and Blanc (1994, p. 6) who define transnationalism as “a process by which migrants, through their daily life activities and social, economic, and political relations, create social fields that cross national boundaries”. This conceptualisation suggests that migrants are involved in practices that are characterised by being simultaneously connected with two or more countries. Hence, a migrant may be embedded in practices related with the society of his/her origin and at the same time may be involved in practices of the society of his/her settlement. Also migrants with this multiplicity of involvements and localities “develop new spheres of experience and new fields of social relations” that are still under-researched (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994, p. 7).

Vertovec (1999) describes transnationalism as a ‘variegated’ phenomenon which is scrutinized into six conceptual premises. These premises are: social morphology, type of consciousness, mode of cultural reproduction, avenue of capital, site of political engagement, and a reconstruction of place or locality. Each one of the six themes is not exclusive and they interrelate with each other. For example, transnationalism does not only happen in social spaces but also refer to consciousness. Residential tourists are aware of their situation living in a different environment, and they can choose with whom to establish relationships in their new residence. People in these circumstances have a desire to establish connections with others “both here and there” while they are “simultaneously home away from home, or here and there” (Vertovec, 1999, p. 450). For instance, the networks that RTs establish in their new homes are a product of

choice to relate with people either locals or with other RTs. The concept of transnationalism, besides being broad and having different premises, also encompasses a range of dimensions. The next section analyses the dimensions with a special focus on the ones that are applied in this research.

2.2 Dimensions of Transnationalism

Gustafson (2008) contributes with another perspective to understand transnationalism when analysing the experience of retired migrants in Spain. Because migrants are embedded in transnational practices (border-crossing practices and relations), he argues that retirement migration can be understood within transnational studies. To prove his point, Gustafson examined relevant aspects of transnationalism from different scholars. The result is a model that shows six dimensions of transnationalism. This model is derived from analytical elements founded in studies of ‘traditional’ migration flows (south to north; labour-led). He states that the same elements of transnationalism can be applied to some extent to all kind of migrations, and that they are particularly suitable for the topic of retirement migration. Table 1 shows the six analytical dimensions.

Table 1: Six dimensions of transnationalism (Per Gustafson, 2008)

Dimensions of transnationalism	Scope
Mobility	Travelling as an ongoing process rather than one-time event.
Identity and belonging	Individual and collective identities and feelings of belonging with both sending and receiving countries.
Social networks and social structures	Social connections among migrants, their relatives and friends, and the social norms emerging from such connections.

Cultural practices and institutions	Cultural flows between sending and receiving societies, the presence and practice of cultural expressions from one country and new cultural expressions; the institutionalized forms of these expressions.
Politics and legislation	Border-crossing political participation and activism, legislation and political initiatives.
Economic activities and exchanges	Capital transfers and other economic activities.

These dimensions represent the transnational phenomena in the empirical world and comprises of a set of practices, relations, activities and institutions in the border-crossing mobility. These dimensions of transnationalism are not necessarily exclusive or independent of each other (one empirical phenomena can include two or more dimensions). For instance, the multiple mobility of people from one place to another creates new networks, which can influence the construction of identity and can unsettle sense of belonging.

Gustafson’s dimensions are applied and empirically analysed for retirement and international migration studies in Europe. In my study I use these dimensions to better understand retirement migration or residential tourism in the Americas. RTs are mostly retirees living abroad with their retirement pensions from their country of origin, therefore they can be acknowledged as retiree’s migrants (McWatters, 2008). Their activities, practices and networks can be understand from a transnational perspective.

Although the six dimensions of transnationalism can be used to study residential tourism, this thesis research focusses on the analysis of three dimensions: identity and belonging, social networks, and cultural practice. Identity and belonging are depended on the locality, so they are helpful in gaining insight in the way people relate to places. Social networks are important

because I'm looking at the interaction of residential tourists with the locals and other residential tourists. Social networks are also an external factor on the construction of identity. Lastly, cultural expressions and practices are strongly linked with identity, belonging, and social networks (Gustafson, 2008, p. 462). RTs negotiate their identities with the local culture reproduced at festivals, they interact with the locals and their friends while dancing on streets or bargaining prices at art crafts booths. Festivals represent a field where sense of belonging and identity construction are at stake. Each dimension and its operationalization on this research will be explained later.

Mobility dimension, as the practice of travelling between the sending and receiving country, is not taken into consideration as I'm looking at experiences on the place of residence only. Participation in festivals may generate implication in the political agenda and financial transactions dimensions, but they were left out in this research because of the limitation of time, and as such the focus of my research relates to more individualistic RTs' experience and how they relate to the place through festivals.

2.2.1 Identity and Belonging Dimension

One characteristic of transnationalism is that it affects several facets of the human experience, like people's identity. Gustafson (2008, p. 458) states that "transnationalism often implies that migrants do not identify exclusively with the receiving society, but maintain and develop individual and collective identities that refer to both sending and receiving countries". This suggests that multi-locality stimulates dual or multiple identification as identity is influenced by the environment. People feel identified or develop a sense of belonging to places in a process with several determinants. As Vertovec states "each habitat or locality represents a range of identity-conditioning factors" (p. 578). To start with, 'identity' is a difficult term to define (Sarbin & Scheibe, 1983). In general terms identity can be understood as the "way in which people conceive of themselves and are characterised by others" (Vertovec, 2001, p. 573). Identity is a way of differentiation and association of one with others, it is a continual negotiation which implies a process of (self) reflexivity. Jenkins (2014) broadly explains the reciprocal process of identity construction. He means by reciprocal that no individual can be separated from the social,

and no social sphere can exist without individuals. Therefore, individuals construct their identity by an ongoing process that depends on internal factors in reciprocity with external factors. According to K. Kwan and G. Sodowsky (1997) internal factors are cognitive, moral and affective aspects within every individual. These aspects are inherent and embedded in every individual and social group. Cognitive, moral and affective aspects are rooted on the self or according to Jenkins (1996) "individual identity". Cognitive and moral aspects specially refer to "the self-conceptions of personal traits they display and others attribute to them" (Brewster et al., 2005, p. 24). The affective aspect is the emotional features the individuals are attached to, like national identity for instance (Hall et al., 1992).

External factors consist of social and cultural aspects that individuals share and have in common with others and bond each other. The socially shared identity, Kohonen (2005, p. 24) claims to be produced "because people are involved in interaction with others through the various roles they have in the community". According to Sarbin and Scheibe (1983, p. 7) "a person's social identity at any time is a function of his or her validated social positions. These positions are validated through appropriate, proper, and convincing role enactments".

While individual and collective identity are 'closely entangled with each other' (Vertovec, 2001, p. 577), and the self is "altogether individual intrinsically social (Jenkins, 2006), identity is also constructed within specific physical environments. This means that identity is influenced by the locality. In the case of people living in multiple contexts, identities are affected by transnational factors in which "the multi-local life-world presents a wider... complex set of conditions that affect the construction, negotiation and reproduction of identities" (Vertovec (2001, p. 578). Consequently, identities of transnational people, are constructed and negotiated everyday inside and across their places where they dwell. Specifically in this research, the locality that will be analysed in relation to the RTs' identities are the festivals of Cuenca.

2.2.2 Social Networks Dimension

As people move, new connections are formed and maintained with receiving and sending localities, and impacts arise upon these connections in economic, socio-cultural and political human facets (Vertovec, 2002). Vertovec (2001, p. 578) notices that "people now live in social

worlds that are... dually located in physical places and communities in two or more nation-states". These connections are known as social networks and they are not necessarily delimited within a unique physical setting as people dwell in multiple habitats.

Social networks of transnational migrants are sustained because of the "desire to maintain social ties across national borders" (Gustafson, 2008, p. 460). This desire might surge because of the act of migration itself might undermine social networks. People separate from friends and families when they relocate to somewhere else. Using the context of residential tourism in Cuenca, I'll examine to what extent residential tourists forge and sustain social networks that link their societies of origin (U.S, Canada) and their new places of settlement. As people establish friendships with locals and, at the same time, they maintain relations with their social groups in their country of origin, they are involved in transnational practices. Therefore, in this research, I will observe the interaction of RTs at the festivals with the locals and other RTs, and to grasp what these interactions signify for them.

2.2.3 Cultural Practices Dimension

The previous two dimensions have an influence on the cultural sphere of RTs. "Questions of identity, belonging and social networks are closely related to cultural practices" (Gustafson, 2008). Cultural practices as language, popular culture, expressions, etc. are part of the everyday life of individuals and intertwine with factors of identity construction. Cultural practices can also take institutionalized forms in the interaction of social networks, as for example a celebration of July 4th within the North-American community in Cuenca. Several researchers have analysed the relations between transnationalism and cultural practices of migrants. The results of these analysis have developed theories of 'cultural exchanges' between the society of origin and the receiving society of migrants, and 'hybridity' that means the merging of elements of cultural expressions from both societies (Herrera Lima, 2001; Jurgens, 2001). Gustafson (2008, p. 463) points out that the main focus of transnationalism research is on "migrants who maintain the culture of their (former) home countries", and questions about the extension of "immigration integration". Based on the results of Gustafson research, I take three analytical characteristics to

examine RTs transnational cultural practices dimension: language, adaptation to local cultural practice, and enjoyment of the local culture.

Language, is considered here because, most of RTs are from North America, so it is assumed that their main language is English. Management of the Spanish language will point out topics related with social life. Adaptation to local practices, besides language, can be observed through how RTs cope and/or integrate elements of the local habits and customs. Coping with the local ways of doing things might also show, in the context of festivals, the enjoyment or not of the local culture.

2.3 The analysis of Transnationalism at Places

As festivals constitute a place where people have meaningful experiences (Picard & Robinson, 2006), the festivals in Cuenca will be the place where meaningful experiences and practices will be studied. The work of Gielis (2009) provides an interesting manner to analyse transnationalism at places. He uses the migrant house as a place where the interrelation of various social networks, cultural expressions and other everyday factors (both cross-border and within the new residence) of migrants can be observed. I argue that the elements of the everyday experience that Gielis analysis at migrant's houses are also present, to certain extent, while RTs participate in local festivals. Hence, bearing in mind Cuencano cultural festivals as places where residential tourists interact with the various social networks they belong, analysing festivals provides an opportunity to better understand practices and experiences related to transnationalism.

In this research, I will adapt the 'place as lenses' approach of Gielis to observe how residential tourists experience and practice transnationalism in the participation at local festivals. Gielis explains that individuals perceive their 'social world' in a '*placial way*' (2009, p. 275). This is helpful for instance when analysing social networks. People make sense of social interactions through its relationship with places. Hence, the interaction of social networks within places, means that "places are filled with social meanings" (p. 275). RTs are transnational citizen that wherever they go "find others who will interact with them in terms of specialized but collectively held understandings" (Hannerz, 1996, p. 107). This means that RTs find in the places they dwell ways to express shared practices and to exchange interests and meanings. And the same applies for the analysis of process of identity construction and cultural practices. In the next section, I

will describe further the meaning of festivals and why it can be considered to study transnationalism and place attachment.

2.3.1 Festivals: places of transnational experiences

In the tourism industry, festivals more and more become an attractive asset. They certainly represent an opportunity to display what is “out of the ordinary” which is a “focal point of consumption by an outside audience” (Picard & Robinson, 2006, p. 2). Around the world millions of people travel long distances to observe and participate in events like Mardi Grass in New Orleans, the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro, King’s Day and the Gay Canal parade in Amsterdam, and the Holi Colors in India. Every festival represents a performance of particular social situations and is embedded with particular symbolisms (p. 2). On a small scale, different towns and communities organize their own festive occasions in an attempt to “re-assert their identity in the face of cultural dislocation” mainly produced by globalization processes (p. 2).

Festivals or ‘celebratory events’ are occasions in which ‘individuals and groups can discursively manifest their visions of the world and create meaningful frameworks of their being together’ (Picard & Robinson, 2006, p. 12). Thus individuals may meaningfully make sense of an experience in which they are involved in with others. In a general notion, festivals can be defined as ‘formal periods or programs of pleasurable activities, entertainment, or events having a festive character and publicly celebrating some concept, happening or fact’ (Janiskee, 1980, p. 97). This definition however useful is limited in terms of viewing festivals as a time compressed phenomena. Festivals happen in places, limited spaces where people gather and walk along to see the different settings that are there for their enjoyment. Thereby, a parade go over streets, booths with crafts and food are stood on parks and sidewalks, stages are set on open spaces and so on. Every event in a festival is scheduled in a time framework and organized in a specific location. Therefore, festivals are considered in this research as places with time/space characteristics, where personal meanings of people’s are constructed.

For a better understanding of festivals as places where people share and construct personal meanings, I recall some notions of *places* as a meaningful concept in social studies. Far from a simplistic conception of place as a limited space enclosed with boundaries, human geographers

understand places as a dynamic entity. Knox and Marston (2007, p. 5) claim that places have “changing properties and fluid boundaries” that not only consist of physical factors but “the interplay of a wide variety of environmental and human factor”. Thus, the dynamics of a place is what makes it meaningful for people’s life. We can illustrate this concept by relating it to a festival. As a festive occasion it calls to remember cultural expressions, and it could be considered symbol of belonging to a certain locality. In Cuenca, for instance, one of the major festivals is the Day of Independence, which is a commemoration of the liberation from Spain. It is embedded with symbolism, as people celebrate their culture and traditions. Thus, in the display of historical events that happens that day in parades, the spectators acknowledge what is going on in several ways. For some people it may signify a remembrance of unfair and humiliating ways their ancestors were treated, for others it may be a celebration of local cultural expressions, and again other people may just see festivals as an opportunity to spend their free time. Different perceptions that interplay in a singular festival demonstrate that it is a place with dynamic characteristics. Thus, the festivals in Cuenca constitute an opportunity to analyse the different ways RTs experiences their everyday life in their new residence.

Places also shape human life because it is there where “people learn who and what they are, how they should think and behave, and what life is likely to hold for them” (Knox & Marston, 2007, p. 5). The meaning of a place is subjective for people, and at the same time places can be powerful emotional and cultural symbols (p. 5). As for example, the Statue of Liberty in NYC, it’s a collective symbol for Americans that represents some important values of their culture and attachment with their country. Places are also understood as a dynamic entity, because they are continually transformed and social interactions have a determinant role on this process. Cresswell (2003, p. 39) claims that “place is constituted through reiterative social practice, place is made and remade on a daily basis”. Here people adopt a role of place makers, an “autonomous actor who, interacting with other actors and nature, society and culture transform environment” (Rota & Salone, 2014, p. 7). This point of view also signifies that no generalization can be made regarding on how people experience a festival. Charged with meanings, every individual experience festivals differently. Therefore, festivals are more than a festive occurrence, they are meaningful places produced and consumed by the constant passing by of spectators, organizers, expositors,

etc. It is in the local Cuencano festivals where RTs can create bonds with the surrounding location, through their practices and experiences.

2.4 Place attachment

Increasing flows of people and interconnections have raised questions on the role of place, place attachment and mobility. Discussions on globalization have, to some extent, changed the notion of attachment to a place in modern society, “social theorists are often somewhat sceptical about the importance of place and place attachment” (Gustafson, 2001b, p. 668). To some scholars, the global flows and interconnections have made that geographical places “lose individuality and meaning” (Gustafson, 2006, p. 21). On the other hand, some social scientists claim that “place still matters, although sometimes in ways not previously envisioned” (Gustafson, 2006, p. 22). Globalization debates have brought a trend to look at place attachment and mobility as two interrelated concepts important to analyse contemporary society (Gustafson, 2006). I frame this research with this last perspective. In the following paragraphs this will be further explained by discussing some notions of mobility and place attachment as experienced by retired migrants, with more emphasis on the latter on purpose for this research.

Gustafson studied mobility and place attachment not as separated or dichotomous expressions of a transnational everyday life but as related concepts to understand “how people live and make sense of their lives in today’s society” (p. 372). Mobility implies movement as well as the ability to move. As a physical characteristic it is associated with having an active life and denotes wellness. People also consider mobility with the search of variation and new experiences, it indicates individual freedom and independence, imagination, initiative, courage and adventure. On the other hand the characteristics of place attachment depends on the locality. Sense of security, stability and familiarity are mostly considered to belong to the place of origin, nevertheless they are also manifested in different degrees in the place of residence (Gustafson, 2001a). This means that place attachment can be developed at the same time in multiple locations. The creation and preservation of social networks with friends and family, and the national features of every locality (cultural and natural) are also characteristics of the ideal of

multiplicity of place attachment. As RTs are foreigners living in other country, they can develop the sense of multiple place attachment.

Place attachment is understood as bonds that people have with one or more (the case of RTs) places (Altman & Low, 1992). These bonds are expressed in affection, cognition, and practice towards places like sense of belonging and the meaning that inhabitants and visitors have about a determinant place.

Another characteristic of place attachment is presented by Rubinstein and Parmelee (1992, p. 143). They describe the nature of place attachment as not static but as “a process that continues throughout life”, then it might change over time. This last premise shows that place attachment depends on circumstances, it is continually constructed and it varies in range of time. Gustafson (2001b) describes this idea using the roots and routes perspective. This perspective represents a metaphorical system that links people to place in a highly mobile society. Roots denote emotional bonds with the physical settings, comparable with a sense of stability, and security towards a place, and belonging to a settled community. But more recently, this bond might also be thought in terms of routes. Routes describe the relationship between place, people and culture that are based, besides the physical settings of places, on “their [of people] mobility, their movements, encounters, exchanges, and mixtures” (p. 670). Gustafson argues that this roots and routes perspectives may be confronted and intertwined in the ways people acknowledge places. For instance, for some people “place is primarily regarded as a source of place attachment, emotional bonds, and community” (p. 672). Meanwhile for others, places are connected with the idea mobility, to and from places, and represent “a desire to ‘get out and obtain new experiences’... personal development and freedom” (p. 673). But it doesn’t mean that people can be grouped in two exclusive segments. In Gustafson’s view the same person may perceive place attachment and mobility in several ways: contradictory, in equilibrium, and complementary. It is the purpose of this research to understand the way RTs make sense of their experience at festival in relation to place attachment.

2.4.1 Definition and Dimensions

Place attachment is a term that has been used in several fields (e.g. human geography, environmental psychology) interested in comprehending the meaning of places that enable people to bond with them. An important contribution on the analysis of place attachment comes from Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, and Watson (1992). They summarize the efforts of various social scientist that have long attempted to describe the experiential process of bonding between individuals and places. They find two primary conceptualization for place attachment: place-dependence and place-identity.

- Place-Dependence refers to the collection of social and physical resources that meet the requirements of people's activities. Stokols and Shumaker (1981) defined this concept as an attachment produced by the particular potential a place has to offer to satisfy the goals and needs of people. These potentials are compared and assessed with the ones of other places that can, likewise, satisfy the same set of needs.
- Place-Identity is a deeper connection to a place with which a person's identity is linked. According to Korpela (1989, p. 244) the environment (physical and social settings) "is important in itself" for the individual. Thus, a place is viewed as an important part of one's self on the identity construction process.

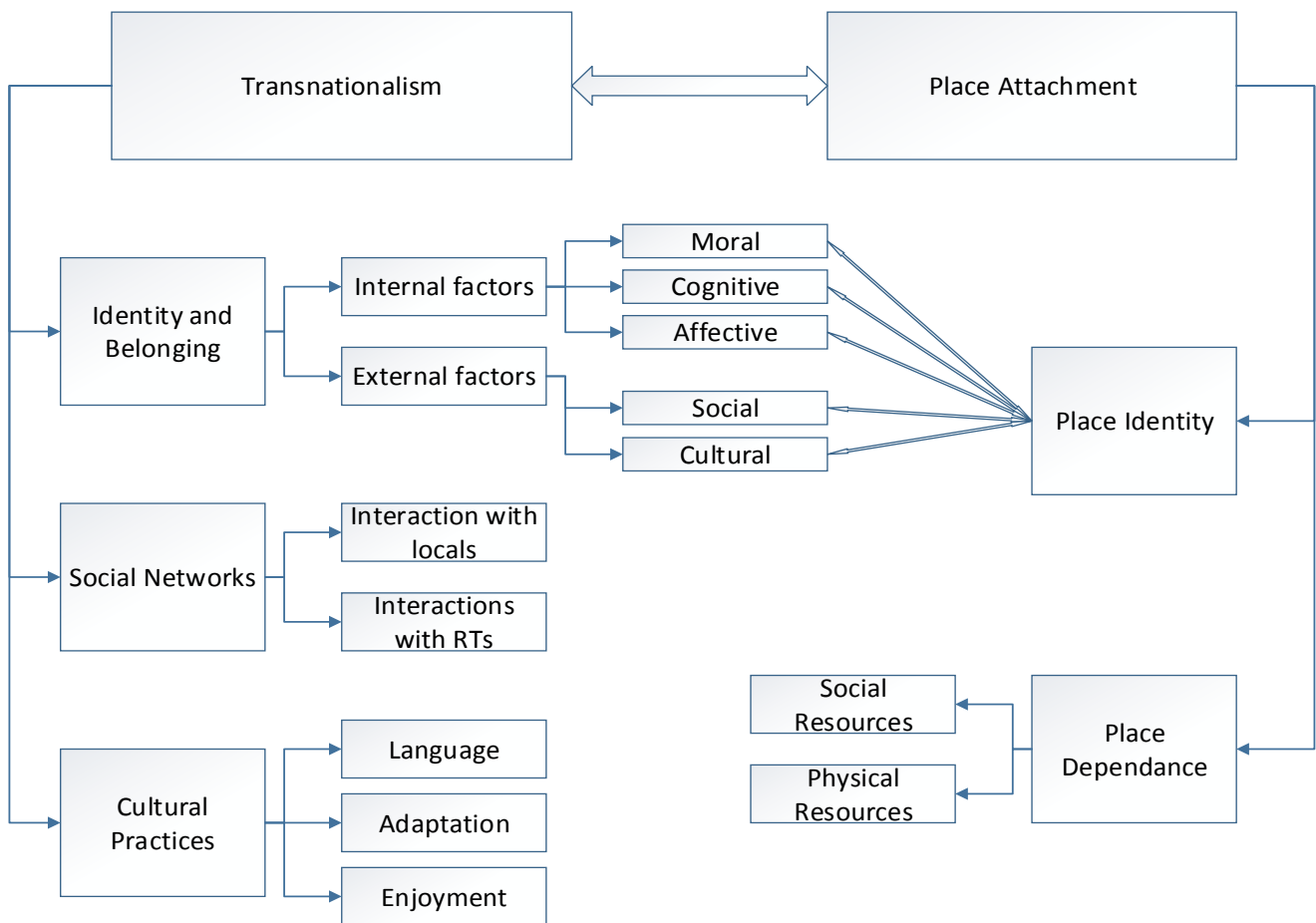
Place dependence and place identity are considered outcomes of RTs experiences in Cuencano festivals in this research. Both determine place attachment and both are in several ways intertwined in the analysis of the dimensions of transnationalism.

2.5 Summing-up: Transnationalism and Place Attachment on Local Festivals.

All the concepts and theories presented will help to answer the research questions of this thesis: How do residential tourists experience local cultural festivals in terms of transnational practices and experiences? And, how do residential tourists' experiences and practices in local festivals relate to place attachment to Cuenca? The local Cuencano festivals are the places to be studied. Identity and Belonging, Social networks, and Cultural practices are the dimensions that will be used to gain insight into the way residential tourists experience transnationalism in the local

festivals. And the three dimensions are interrelated with characteristics that lead to Place Attachment. For instance, the characteristics of identity and belonging dimension (affective, social, cultural factors) are considered here as also characteristics of place identity which is part of place attachment. Social and physical resources, which are factors of place dependence are mainly related with the social networks and identity dimensions. Figure 1 shows an overview of the concepts used in these research. Methodologically, interviews about previous experiences and observations on several local festivals and events, are the source of data.

Figure 2: Conceptual map for the analysis of transnational practices and place attachment



Therefore, the interview's topics were defined by the three dimensions of transnationalism in order to understand the experiences of RTs. The results of the data analysis will served to gain insight in the link RTs' experiences have in place attachment. For instance, questions about the feelings residential tourists have about the local festivals are addressed in order to find out affective factors in the construction of the identity as well the bonds they may develop towards the festivals or Cuenca. The social networks dimension is addressed by getting information about the interaction RTs have with locals and other RTs at festivals. The topic about cultural practice dimension covers language management, adaptation and enjoyment of the festival. And, questions about the sense of security, the activities residential tourists took part in, and how they evaluate their attendances to events in order to address place dependence. Through observations and interviews it is expected to discover, the interactions of the social networks.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview of the methods chosen and the rationale for their use in this research. The theoretical focus of this thesis is transnationalism and place attachment. In order to achieve the research objective: to understand the transnational experiences of residential tourists in local traditional festivals, and how these experiences may relate or produce place attachment- the empirical data used here are the practices and experiences of RTs at Cuencano festivals and events. The underlying approach used to answer the research questions comes from a qualitative standpoint. The main method used to gather data was semi-structure interviews which were conducted to collect information about the experiences of RTs in their participation at local festivals in Cuenca. The practices of RTs were also studied via participant observation which provided me a better context to understand the phenomena.

A qualitative approach has been chosen because these practices and experiences, collected through interviews and observation, are used to describe “meanings in individual’s life” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). It is acknowledged that the way people experience places varies in time and is conditioned by the environment (physical and social features) (Korpela, 1989; Rubinstein & Parmelee, 1992). Consequently there is no unique meaning or reality (Wang, 1999), and the festivals are experienced in different ways for the people. Nonetheless, there are common patterns or categories (interview topics) that were compiled in the theoretical framework in order to give structure to the research process.

Following the strand of Korpela (1989) I will adapt single-site ethnographic method to understand transnational experiences. Gielis claims that ethnographers have given less attention in the analysis of transnationalism in one strategically situated place. Following this argument, Gielis offers an important contribution to the research of transnational experiences using the migrant house as a place where the migrants create meaning of their in-between life. These experiences have two aspects: the ‘relational aspect’ in which people ‘interpret [the] relationality of transnationalism’ and the ‘emotional aspect’ where emotions are considered an essential

characteristic of the human experience (Korpela, 1989, p. 258). Therefore, for analytical purpose, I will consider local festivals as the place where the two aspects of the transnational experience can be observed. The two aspects are related with the concepts of place attachment and the dimensions of transnationalism. In a festival, residential tourists are aware of their new life as several networks interact and interrelate. It is also in festivals where various emotions may be enacted and reinforced. The relational aspects can be interpreted also as the interaction of social networks and the practice of cultural expressions. The emotional aspects are intertwined with the affective bonds people develop towards places. The two aspects are also related with the construction of identity and sense of belonging. Thus, I will acknowledge “festivals” as “places” in which the transnational experiences can be analysed.

3.1 Case Study Selection

Cuenca is an ideal city to study residential tourism in Ecuador. It is the preferred place for most foreign people when they search for places to retire in Ecuador. The spring-like weather, the accessibility of services and amenities and the affordable prices of living allowance, are among the main reasons why Cuenca is the top destination of residential tourism. Most of the local festivals chosen to study are traditional events of the mestizo culture. They are a celebration of the indigenous and Spaniard heritage and the mixture of these two cultures. The main events are: the commemoration of the Independence from the Spanish Kingdom on November 3rd; the celebration of the declaratory of the historic colonial centre of Cuenca as a Heritage Site by Unesco on December 4th; and the popular religious procession of “Pase del Niño Viajero” on December 25th, which consists on a folkloric display of the catholic and indigenous syncretism which turns around the cult to “Niño Dios”.

The arrival of foreign retirees is increasing, but it is still not a massive phenomenon in Ecuador. As an emergent situation, Cuenca offers to the study of transnationalism and residential tourism a different environment than the classical places where the phenomena is hugely developed. For instance in Cuenca, residential tourists live in neighbourhoods that are not exclusive for foreigners, and many of them prefer the downtown colonial area. This area is the heart of the commerce of Cuencano economy and here most cultural events take place. RTs in Cuenca

commute with the locals in the public transport, buy groceries in local stores known as 'tiendas', eat at local restaurants the popular 'almuerzo' (lunch) etc.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Semi-structure Interviews

The qualitative interviews were the main instrument for data collection. Experiences and practices are a subjective field, and can only be assessed by those who live them. Through interviewing RTs, I attempt to 'learn about social life through the perspective, experience and language of those living it' (Rubinstein & Parmelee, 1992, p. 62). The interviews were structured around the meanings that interviewees give to their participation on local festivals (See Appendix 1). A purposive sample was needed in this study. For the selection of the interviewees I contacted foreigners' retirees while I was in Cuenca, mostly by email to blog writers, at the Facebook page "Cuenca Expats", visiting the places where they usually spend their leisure time, and asked them about their participation in Cuencano festivals and their willingness to collaborate in the research. I also used the 'snowball' strategy in order to reach ten interviews, mostly in couples being in total 16 interviewees. Most of the respondents were North Americans retirees ranging in ages from 55 to 70, two Canadians and 14 Americans. The interviews took between 30 to 60 minutes and were recorded, and I also took notes. The interviews took place in coffee houses, and five were executed at the interviewees' houses.

3.2.2 Participant observation

Participant observation method allowed me to gain analytical disposition to study the occurrences around the transnational practices in a natural setting. This observation is 'considered essential in detecting meanings, feelings and experiences' (Rubinstein & Parmelee, 1992, p. 59). The data were collected using field notes on the festivals and during events in Cuenca that took place in December such as the Declaration of the Heritage Site and Pase del Niño Viajero. Most observations at these events were focused on the interaction of the several social networks of RTs. During the parade of Pase del Niño I was invited to a church where Christians RTs gather. I had the opportunity to talk with them and observed how they participate in a local event in the making.

3.3 Data analysis

The data collected thorough interviews and fieldwork notes were weighed with the theory and concepts addressed in order to make sense of the phenomenon at study. The transcriptions of the interviews were coded and analysed using the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA 11. Thus, I read the transcripts thoughtful to find key aspects (open codes) of RTs experiences. Then, using the theoretical framework, I ordered the resulting codes on the previous phase into categories and themes. Also a selection of the most recurrent codes was made in this phase. Finally, using analytical and theoretical skills, I found interrelations and connections of the categories and themes.

4. FINDINGS

The objective of this chapter is to present the RTs' experience and practices at local Cuencano festivals and events, and demonstrate how these experiences relate to the studies of transnationalism and place attachment. This chapter is the result of an extensive analysis of the data gathered during five weeks in Cuenca, Ecuador. During the analysis of the experiences and practices that RTs have in the Cuencano festivals, I focused mainly in the features of the following three dimensions of transnationalism: identity and belonging, social networks, and cultural practices and institutions. One additional dimension came across during the analysis: economic activities. I structured this chapter by the various themes that came forward in the analysis of interview transcripts supported by observation's notes as follows: Firstly, I present the ways in which RTs experience the festivals and their practices. These experiences are mainly focused on aspects that influence the construction of identity. Secondly, I present an overview of the transnational practices at festivals. These practices are related with the creation of transnational social fields. Thirdly, I present the way experiences and practices are related with place attachment. The Cuencano festivals represent here an arena where different elements of place attachment are present. RTs through their activities and experiences in festivals, create bonds that connect them with the social and physical environment. Hence, experiences and practices that are to some extent transnational, represent at the same time circumstances to produce place attachment. This is demonstrated by the different needs, found in this research, which can be met on festivals: generating positive feeling, an escape from routine, sense of safety, and feeling part of the community.

Therefore this chapter is structured by three sections that emerged in the analysis. The first section will provide a wider view on the practices and experiences that RTs are involved at festivals in Cuenca. The second section give insight into the inquiry of transnational practices and experiences, and will serve to answer the research question: How do residential tourists experience local festivals in terms of transnational practices and experiences? The second section presents the results intended to understand the second research question: How do residential

tourists' experiences and practices relate to place attachment to Cuenca? For that purpose, I present the results that link the experiences and practices of RTs at festivals with place attachment.

One point to take into consideration about RTs in Cuenca, as reflected on my sample, is that, even the vast majority are from the United States of America (INEC, 2012) there is a great deal of diversity, so what may be perceived as a socially and culturally cohesive group, is in fact heterogeneous. Age, gender, occupation, religion, and the region of U.S.A. from where they have come from, are just some of the aspects differentiating this diverse group. This is important to have in mind in this chapter, while I'm analysing personal experiences as practices, and tracing general and common connection for the exploration of transnationalism and place attachment.

4.1 Practices and Experiences at festivals

In this study, practices are considered the way of participation and the activities RTs do in the Cuencano festivals. During traditional festivities and events in Cuenca, most of my interviewees respond that their participation consist of buying products at fairs, observing the parades, clapping, etc. Several experiences emerged from these practices that has effects in different aspects in RTs. Hannerz (1996) discusses the experiences gathered by people living in "multiple habitats" arguing that these experiences comprise people's cultural repertoires, which in turn influence the construction of identity. I get insight into how identity of RTs can be affected by their experiences at festivals. In the participation in festivals, my interviewees commented that they develop positive feelings and experiences. Most of my interviewees have expressed their contentedness and expectation for the festivals, which may contribute with an affective influence in the construction of identity. Within the internal factors that influence individual identity: affective, cognitive, moral (Jenkins, 2014), the affective aspect represented the most predominant one for my interviewees. Therefore I present here this singular aspect that have an influence on the construction of identity of RTs in Cuenca. Different emotions and feelings were reported by my interviews when they were asked about their experiences at Cuencano festivals. James, a North American retiree, living in Cuenca for almost 4 years, finds the festivals enjoyable. He expressed his excitement for the festivals and how he experienced one in particular:

“I’ve been waiting now, and I have said to several taxi drivers, ‘it’s coming the Pase del Niño’ and they say, ‘yes but what’s the big deal’, but it is to me... I saw the Pase de Niño I really enjoyed that. I guess I love the way it’s not like the Macy Day parade in NYC or Chicago, where it’s all commercial. It’s the people themselves, it’s the family, it’s also children.”

When asked how people felt about attending the Cuencano festivals, one of the recurrent responses was the amazement and expectation they have towards them. As Nelly, a North American woman living 6 years in Cuenca, mentioned:

“I look forward to them. I look forward to one each of them. And I get excited about them, and even though, I been living here for about 6 years I still have that feeling of wonder, because they are so different from anything that I know back in the US”

Enthusiasm, happiness, positivism are the predominant characteristics that RTs experienced at festivals. These characteristics are by some means interiorized by some of my interviewees and can be reproduced on their behaviour and contribute with their well-being (Getz & Cheyne, 1997). For Nelly attending the festivals are important because she feels that they affect positively on her, that she even takes decisions based on attending certain festivals:

“...the events are so much of fun, happy, positive feelings, and you just absorb all of this positive energy... And we don’t go back to the States for Navidad (Christmas), we stay here because of this (Pase del Niño parade). And that is really saying something, because we have 13 grandchildren in the US.”

The process of identity construction of Nelly might be influenced, because, as well as most of my interviews, she feels sympathy towards the Cuencano festivals, which has an influence on individual identity (K. L. K. Kwan & G. R. Sodowsky, 1997). The process of identity construction is a constant re-evaluation of the self against the surrounding environment and the interaction with other human beings (Cherrier & Murray, 2007). The re-evaluation or self-reflection is constantly reproduced by the encountering of external factors (social and physical). Since RTs encounter differences in the cultural expressions of the hosting society at festivals, festivals offer a place where the re-evaluation of the self can happen.

4.1.1 Cultural Encounters

The Cuencano festivals represents a means for the RTs to get to know the local culture. In this research, I analyse cultural exchange by the perceptions and thoughts of my interviewees in their experience at local culture at festivals. As most of RTs in Cuenca are in retirement age, it can be defying to adapt to a new cultural environment “for older migrants it can be a challenge to live in-between cultures” (Lager, van Hoven, & Meijering, 2012, p. 81). For some of my interviewees festivals are considered as a challenge to understand the local culture. Nancy recalled her experience on the celebration of the Independence Day:

“They have some customs here that may seem very odd to some of the gringos. I don’t understand a few of the things that I’ve seen in parades and we thought it’s rather odd... I understand that that’s their history but it’s just not the type of scene you watch on a parade in the US. You wouldn’t have slavery on a parade.”

She is referring here to some theatrical performances that represent the Spaniard conquest of the indigenous communities in the Americas. For her these performances are over the top for this kind of event, especially because there are children attending. She manifested that for Americans it is strange to see in a public event the way the Spanish conquerors mistreated the indigenous or how the priests converted them by force into Christianity. Her expressions show a shock she encountered in a cultural expression that is common in Ecuador.

The encounters with the local culture sometimes usher to understandings of local habits and mores (Hottola, 2004). Some of my interviewees gave responses that can be interpreted as adaptation to the local culture. One example of this kind of adaptation was tolerance to the fact that events start later than the time they are announced to start. Jules, a musician retiree from the US, found the following characteristics on one festival that caught his attention because he sees it as a reflection of the local culture:

“One thing that I am very interested in and that I’ve noticed also is that even the people that are in charge of the festival or the concert or whatever are very calm. It is not unusual for the orchestra to tune up for a long time, work up the microphones, and I find that very interesting.”

Because in the US everything is ‘chop, chop, chop’ the microphones are already set so you go, sit and start playing, you get down and you go home”

The calm way of being, or ‘mañana attitude’ as described by Jennifer was also found in questions asked about the day-to-day activities of RTs. Jennifer expressed:

“We do kind of have a mañana attitude here..., they say they coming at certain day but they come days later, and they don’t tell you, they say they’re coming at certain time but they don’t, so I guess you just have to kind of go with the flow, not get upset with it”

The previous quote shows adaptation towards, and to some extent inclusion of, a different habit. Similar to what Gustafson (2002, p. 464) found in Swedish retired migrants living in Spain, some RTs adopt certain habits of the local culture, representing an exchange of cultural practice that can be understood in terms of ‘cultural hybridity’. Dano add up to this argument by expressing tolerance and challenge to embrace the cultural difference he finds in Cuenca and the festivals:

“...foreigners that live here, they always say, don’t try to recreate what you had from wherever you came from. You’re in a new world, a new culture, a new lifestyle here, so don’t try to, let’s say, if you really like shopping in the malls in America, don’t expect to be able to come here and find gigantic malls. So it’s the same way with the festivals, why would you not go to the festivals because is part of the local culture. That’s something to me, you should embrace if you are in a new home”

A festival is a place where different people interact. This constitute a social external factor that influence identity construction. According to Kohonen (2005, p. 24) identity is affected “because people are involved in interaction with others”. The following subsection will described some of the experience of the social interaction of RTs at festivals.

4.1.2 Social Interactions

In a more individual level, some of my interviewees have meaningful experiences about their interaction with locals. The following are some of the more relevant findings to understand the meaning for RTs of the interactions with local people in the festivals in Cuenca. Maggie, a single retiree from North America, expressed:

"I tend not have a lot in common with among the group of gringos that are coming here... I have a few gringo friends"

Maggie commented that she has a retired friend from the US with whom she attends the events but she tries not to get involved with the expat community. For Bill, some Ecuadorians friends that he knows have become important for him. He expressed the following about his friends, owners of a tienda² in his building: *"they have become as a second family"*. He also has a strong attachment with the owners of the building, *"People that run the building, that owned the entire complex, they adopted me"*. This individual interactions with locals have affective features which, as previously stated, have influence in the identity.

There are other meaningful experiences that are important to mention. Most of these experiences did not happen at festivals or public events but were more intimate celebrations. Nancy commented about the way she felt about being invited to an Ecuadorian celebration:

"We were the only gringo on the landlord's son graduation party. We were very honoured for being invited to participate in such an occasion. And most of the gringos that I know, if they are invited to participate in something like that, like a family occasion, they are very honoured to be accepted and included."

Although Larry has not participated in the main local festivals in Cuenca, he made a significant comment about his participation in one New Year's Eve celebration. He was invited by a neighbour to join his party together with his family. He interacted with his neighbour's family as being part of them. He commented:

"(New Year's Eve) includes everybody, marks a pass of the time, they included me as family. And I know for Latinos family is very very important. So when they invited me, that's a big thing, it's a big thing for them and it's a big thing for me."

So far I have described the practices and experiences of my interviewees related to a more individual level. These experiences and practices have influence in the construction of identity, as in the case adaptation and tolerance to the mañana attitude. However, they are not directly

² small shop, specially a general store

related with transnationalism. These experiences could be better understood as RTs cultural hybridity between the sending and the receiving countries (Gustafson, 2008). Although it is out of the scope of my research, I can add up to the debate of transnationalism and integration, which “are often perceived as an impediment to immigrant integration into the host country” by arguing that, while RTs are involved in transnational practices, they are still being part of a process of integration into the local community (Snel, Engbersen, & Leerkes, 2006, p. 287). Claim also made by Sheringham (2010) in her study on the Brazilians in Gort. Additionally the experiences described here give some context and wider view into the practices and experiences of RTs in the Cuencano festivals related with transnationalism, that I present in the following section.

4.2 The creation of transnational social field at festivals

Transnationalism as defined by Basch, Schiller, and Blanc (1994, p. 22) is “a process by which migrants, through their daily life activities and social, economic, and political relations, create social fields that cross national boundaries”. Faist (2000a, p. 199) go further to explain that transnational social fields consist of combinations of sustained social and symbolic ties, their contents, positions in networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that can be found in multiple states. Consequently, the process of construction of transnational social fields is built upon day-to-day practices and social, economic and political relations. This study is meant to demonstrate that, to some extent, the practices and experiences, and social and economic relations of RTs in the festivals in Cuenca create transnational social fields. This construction is driven by the activity of immigrants affecting all aspects of their life, “from their economic opportunities, to their political behavior, to their individual and group identities” Itzigsohn, Cabral, Medina, and Vazquez (1999, p. 318).

Economic activities are important in the analysis of transnationalism. Transnational economic practices is highly studied regarding the remittances from migrants to their relatives and communities in their former home country. (Basch, Glick Schiller, et al., 1994). Regarding Residential Tourism this is not necessary the case, because RTs have not migrated in search of jobs or to earn money to sustain families (McWatters, 2008). All my interviewees declared that

they sustain their living costs by pensions from their countries. Therefore, generally, the transactions of RTs at festivals in Cuenca is made by money coming from abroad. Through their pensions, RTs are involved in transnational economic activities. Nelly's words describe what mostly my interviewees do at festivals:

"we definitely participate as far as opening the wallet and buying stuffs, yeah. But we don't participate as far as being part of the ceremony, like we don't sale anything or we don't provide entertainment, or we don't do any of that. But we do participate as taking advantage of the things that are offered"

Transnational social fields contains a range of social networks that link sending and receiving countries (Basch, Glick Schiller, et al., 1994). Gustafson (2008, p. 460) notices that "long-distance migration may separate friends and families" so a there may exist a desire to maintain and create social ties across national boundaries. This is the case of RTs in Cuenca, as most of my interviewees came from North America accompanied by their partners, or alone in the case of single retirees, leaving friends and family behind. Except for one couple that have a daughter living with them in Cuenca, my interviewees reported to not have any relatives in Ecuador.

To understand how RTs creates new networks, language is a key factor to take into consideration for this purpose (Ryan et al., 2008). Most of the RTs interviewed have difficulties with the Spanish language and considered this as a limitation to be more interactive with locals. Nancy commented on experience she and her husband have in communicating with the locals:

"It's hard because we don't understand each other, so it's kind of hard to interact when you try to do sign language and trying to understand, and there's some things you know, like gestures and there's a playing."

Language barriers have an effect on the selection with whom to socialise. Most of my interviewees have few relationships with local people, Nelly and her husband said that they "don't have a lot of Ecuadorian friends, because our problem that we do not speak the language". Again, language is the obstacle for getting access to the local Cuencano society.

Language barrier has influence in the preference of with whom to attend festivals. As expected, the attendance to festivals with local people is less frequent, as Nancy expressed: *“We go occasionally with some of our Ecuadorian friends”*. In the following James explains who he attended the festivals with:

“Just different friends, sometimes with expats, sometimes with Ecuadorians, and sometimes with a group of both, but all depends”

Nancy and James were the only respondents that recalled attending festivals with Ecuadorians. The vast majority of my interviewees attend festivals by themselves. Lely and Jules are an example of a couple that attend festivals by themselves. But they told me, once they are there, they try to interact with the people around, with the objective to expand their network and learn more about the culture:

“We try to interact with those around us, because we want to get to know people and their culture”

Few interaction with locals may led to a low degree of cultural adaptation. R. King, T. Warnes, and A. M. Williams (2000, p. 135) point out two reason for this “linguistic laziness” that may explain the case of RTs in Cuenca. First, RTs social life occurs mostly within their linguistic/national communities, so there are few opportunities for them to speak Spanish. Second, help with interpretation is commonly available, my interviewees told me how some of their Ecuadorians friends respond in English when they are trying to practice having a conversation in Spanish. The interaction in festivals is more frequent, therefore with people that speak the same language, English in this case. Jennifer and Jeff said in this regard: *“But probably more with people that we can communicate so gringo friends”*.

In general, RTs in Cuenca are part of social networks that are based on commonalities as language, origin, interests, religion, etc. These networks provide “institutionalized settings for cultural flows and cultural practices” (Gustafson, 2008, p. 463). As found by Gustafson (2008) the creation of new transnational networks are facilitated by similar social background and the experience of being living in a foreign country.

Cultural dimension is part of the studies of transnationalism in which the exchange of cultural flows and expressions between sending and receiving societies occurs (Gustafson, 2001a). According to responses of the interviewees, groups are formed by RTs for socialization. These groups are organized around common interests, like chess and knitting clubs. Other institutionalized social networks, that I came across in the research, are religious communities. Silvia and her husband, a North American couple who arrived only one month ago, have managed to meet friends within their religious congregation. Silvia commented regarding their friendships and the events they have been part of so far:

“we have met a lot of brothers and sisters in the English congregation and in the Spanish congregation [Spanish speaking] that is up here, so we have been spending a lot of time hanging out and doing a lot of things with them so that’s been a lot of fun”

During the parade of Pase del Niño on December 24th I was invited to participate in a gathering of one Christian community in Cuenca. Most of the people were North American retirees who gathered in a church located in a colonial house in El Centro to observe the parade from the balcony. They interacted during the parade with each other, sharing stories and commenting on their experience in Cuenca and the festivals. They observed mostly from the balcony, not many involvement within the parade happened.

The religious communities of the RTs in Cuenca can be seen, as a transnational social space. The study of Sheringham (2010) proves this point. Her research on Brazilians living in Gort, Ireland concludes that while Brazilians engage in religious practices they create ‘transnational social spaces’ which play a key role in their process of adaptation to life in the town. In fact, Faist (2000b) states that social groups as bars, clubs, religious communities, etc. are “transnational communities” or “transnational social spaces”. Therefore while RTs in Cuenca engage in religious communities they are participating in transnational social spaces. These social spaces may facilitate the process of adaptation by creating a sense of belonging as well the exchange of cultural practices.

During the fieldwork I came across one event that caught my attention. Among the Christmas celebration organized by the Direction of Culture of the Municipality of Cuenca, one concert was

offered at the 'Catedral Vieja'. What caught my attention of this concert was that who performed was a chorus integrated by foreign resident of the city. The chorus of more or less 30 people is an informal organization of mostly RTs to maintain friendships among them and to integrate them in the local community through musical performances. The venue of the concert was overcrowded with mostly foreigners. This cultural performance demonstrates that this orchestra, as well as other social groups, provides to RTs an opportunity to exchange transnational cultural practices and integration with the community (locals and others RTs).

Although interaction with the locals are meaningful for some RTs, these are rather scarce. Therefore, transnational social networks of most RTs are the most common network, because they are created around common backgrounds. This is in accordance with the results that Fernández-Mayoralas and Rojo (1998, p. 195) find about how an expatriate group in Spain has been created "parallel to the Spanish society, in which most of the retirees' social relations are with people of their own nationality' (cf. R. King, A. Warnes, & A. Williams, 2000)

Consequently, what I have discussed so far, can be summarized that practices and experiences of RTs in the festivals in Cuenca create and take place within a "transnational social space". And festivals constitute a place in which RTs these spaces are culturally and socially integrated by the different interactions of the networks they belong. What follows will help to understand the way the transnational social space relates to place attachment.

4.3 Place Attachment in the festivals

The following results analyse the transnational experiences and practices of RTs in Cuenca linked to place attachment developed at festivals. As previously discussed the transnational social networks of RTs in Cuenca are formed mainly by common bonds. But this does not mean, as Kivisto (2003, p. 16) states, that RTs exist in a "bubble that isolates them entirely from the impact of the host society". Therefore a festival as a transnational social fields created by the practices and experiences of RTs provides an environment to connect them with the local environment. This connection may enable place attachment. As a result transnational practices and place attachment can "co-exist in a dialectical relationship" (p. 12). In what follows, I disclose some of the ways this 'co-existence' is manifested through the practice and experiences of RTs in the

Cuencano festivals. I present results that represent how festivals can serve to meet certain needs of RTs. These needs are positive emotions, escape from routine, sense of security, and feeling of inclusion.

4.3.1 Positive emotions

Place attachment are positive bonds that link people with places (Williams et al., 1992). To enable place attachment the configuration of a place needs to offer social and physical features to meet needs or goals (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981). In the interviews place attachment was studied by asking RTs about the importance of festivals for their everyday life, and the safety they perceived attending festivals and events in Cuenca. Only two out of the sixteen interviewees did not consider it important to attend festivals. Danny and his wife Silvia, who had been only one month in Cuenca at the time of the interview, have similar responses in this regard. Silvia said *“we can live without going to them”* and Danny stated *“it’s not a necessity, but I know it will help to understand”*. They considered that most of the festivals in Cuenca are of religious background and they manifested to me that they don’t want to be involved in that.

As in previous sections it was expressed that some RTs considered festivals important that they prefer to stay in Cuenca over going back home to visit family for instance. As Nelly and her husband do for Christmas. Henry and his wife schedule their yearly travels around his favourite festival, Independencia de Cuenca: *“we schedule while travelling, tres de Noviembre, to be here.”* This is because, according to his wife Nelly, attending festivals enhance their experience of living in Cuenca.

Nancy and her husband moved to El Centro, because it is the neighbourhood where most of the cultural events in Cuenca take place, and they manifested their desire to be included in them. They shared with me: *“We like to go as the many of the cultural events as we can”*. Attending the festivals to them is a means for their goal to be part of the community. What follows was expressed within the context of their experiences of attending the festivals:

“Our goal of coming here was to try to become as much as part of the community as we could. Yeah, we don’t speak the language and we definitely don’t look like them but we try to become

part of the community... To us is important to become part of the community, and so we're attending as many of the events as we can."

Therefore, they use the festivals and cultural events that the city provides to meet their goals to be part of the community. For Nancy and her husband, the festivals in Cuenca constitute a social field to interact with the local community.

4.3.2 An escape from routine

The festivals for some of the interviewees constitute a leisure activity that provides excitement, an opportunity to get out of routine. James explained in this regard:

"You know, life no matter how nice a place is, you can fall into routine and then it can get kind of boring after a while. So, it's nice to get at least different holidays and festivals to have something different to do."

Participation at festivals can meet the needs of people in different ways. For instance to Dano, a single retiree from the US, his participation in the local festivals may signified an "authentic and emotional bond with an environment that satisfies a fundamental human need" (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, p. 3). He express the following about how festivals provide a spice in his life:

"Gives a variety of spice of life, so you can participate on the festival in some fashion, because there will be something that it's going to interesting you... Just because is so different to what I'm used to. So, it is very different, like the children's parade for Christmas (Pase del Niño). Back in the US you have a parade, where the floats are very very fancy, a lot of money is spend. While here there's just a truck with children dressed and stand on it, maybe some decorations, very simple, and people really have fun with it. Whereas in the US they may look at it and go, that's very stupid and that's very cheap, or bored because is not fancy enough. I appreciate the authenticity of the country"

4.3.3 Sense of safety

Safety is another need that has to be meet in order to enable place attachment. The sense of safety and security of a place develops in a "strong emotional bonds of place attachment"

(Scannell and Gifford (2010, p. 6)). Safety was one an important issue for my interviewees. Generally, RTs feel safe at the festivals and in Cuenca in general. Nelly replied:

“I feel safe, because usually this events have security guards, and other people, you know, patrolling. I wouldn’t go out on the side track on the dark, and probably my Ecuadorian person next to me would do that either.”

Safety is very important to Americans, according to Larry. Even there are security provided by the police at the festivals and events in Cuenca, RTs take some precaution when they attend festivals. Dano, illustrated this point:

“For the most part, I’m more aware and more attentive of my surroundings. I pay more attention to my belongings. Don’t leave my backpack unzipped or make sure that things on my pockets are secure. But I know that at festivals, because there’re people coming from other cities and other countries, and they take advantage at that.”

4.3.4. Feeling part of the community

Other aspects that contribute to the place attachment of the RTs at festivals is the way they feel welcome by the locals. As Nelly expressed about how she feels welcome by the people but with distancing from a feeling of being part of the festival:

“I felt that I was as welcome there as anyone else. I felt like I was observing, you know, their festival. I never felt like it was my festival, and I felt that I was welcome to be there.”

“...the effigy that we happened to be at midnight, the people in the neighborhood all around, and they welcomed us to join them and watch, and they were drinking canelazo, and they gave us some and welcome. And there we really felt like we were included in a part of it”

The second quote was expressed in the context of the celebrations of New Year’s Eve. Burning effigies is a tradition in Ecuador and Nelly as other RTs have adopted this tradition into their own celebrations. Being included is part of meeting needs as well as being identified with the locality. Larry, although does not attend the big festivals in Cuenca, has been invited to several celebrations in his neighbourhood. He expressed how he feels when he participates in celebrations organized by his neighbours:

“it’s nice to be included. Yes I feel part of the community, they accept me because I’ve been here almost 3 years so the people get to feel comfortable with you”

RTs seem to enjoy the festivals and events in Cuenca as they play an important part of their day-to-day life. Cuenca is a city with a varied agenda of celebration particularly from November to January. James noticed that:

“It’s pretty hard to be here and not to be aware of the festivals because they are big and they take a quite big time of the year.”

In conclusion, it is visible that by the experiences and practices in transnational social fields (Cuencano festivals) RTs develop positive bonds to the city and the festivals. I claim that place attachment is interrelated with transnational practices. Similarly with the study of Sheringham (2010) RTs in Cuenca are involved in particular transnational social spaces (religious communities, orchestra) that enable their feeling of attachment to the local environment. The interaction of RTs with locals provides a setting to negotiate their inclusion to the local community. Festivals in Cuenca as a transnational social field, may sustain place attachment by meeting the needs of RTs, because is there “where they have the opportunity to meet their own people... and where they can engage with the local, non-migrant, community” which at the end, could enable RTs to “cope with living in-between cultures and experience wellbeing” (Lager et al., 2012).

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to understand experiences and practices of residential tourists related to local traditional festivals in Cuenca, and how these experiences and practices relate to transnationalism and place attachment. This chapter will discuss and examine the major findings connecting the objective of the study with scientific literature, followed by the conclusion. Furthermore I will discuss some of the limitations encountered on the research process, and recommendations in terms of practical concerns and future research.

First of all, this study sought to relate practices and experiences of Residential Tourists at festivals in Cuenca with transnationalism, and looked for links between those practices and experiences and place attachment. In line with Gustafson (2008) I have examined four different dimensions of transnationalism in order to better understand practices and experiences of residential tourists at Cuencano festivals. More specifically I have looked at identity and belonging, social networks, cultural practices and expressions, and economic practices to get insight into transnational practices and experiences. However not all the practices and experiences at festivals found in the research can be considered as transnational, but they provide a wider overview into understanding the elements that influence identity. For instance, adaptation to local habits does not imply transnationalism but rather an expression of 'cultural hybridity' (Gustafson, 2008, p. 464). Additionally, I have argued that visiting festivals influence the ways in which residential tourists give meaning to their new places. By attending festivals, residential tourists meet needs that enable place attachment. According to the results four needs can be met at festivals, and these are: developing positive emotions, feeling welcomed by the locals, sense of security, and escape from routine. It is important to stress that the phenomenon of residential tourism in Ecuador has not been studied extensively. In this study I looked at the phenomenon of residential tourism in Cuenca, Ecuador from a transnational perspective. The dimensions of transnationalism studied by Gustafson (2008) in retired migrants from Northern Europe to Spain provided guidelines to claim that residential tourism can be scrutinized within transnationalism. As the results showed,

some of the practices and experience of RTs in the festivals in Cuenca have transnational characteristics.

The dimensions of transnationalism chosen for this study are interconnected “questions of identity, belonging and social networks are closely related to cultural practices” (Gustafson, 2008, p. 462). Several practices and experiences observed in attending festivals influence identity. RTs in Cuenca develop positive feelings and emotions towards the festivals, which can have an effect on their identities (K. Kwan & G. Sodowsky, 1997). My interviewees expressed positive feelings by attending the events such as happiness, amusement, expectation, which imply that their identities are being affected. I have argued that these positive feelings are interpreted as affective internal factors that influence the process of individual identity construction (Jenkins, 2014). Hence, some characteristics found in the research can be seen as acceptance and, to some extent, inclusion of local elements into their own identities. By this I mean, for instance, some of my interviewees tolerate and in some manner adopt what was described as a “mañana attitude”. Some of the residential tourists interviewed incorporate this mañana attitude into their own identity. This is in accordance with the research made by Gustafson (2008) in which he analyses Spanish elements present in the identity of Swedish retirees (Cherrier & Murray, 2007). Although the local elements are ascribed by the perspective of RTs (O'Reilly, 2000). The mixture of elements of the sending and receiving country can be considered a manifestation of transnationalism (Gustafson, 2008).

The identity of RTs is influenced by a constant re-evaluation by the encountering of external, social and physical factors (Cherrier & Murray, 2007). Social factors were considered the different networks that RTs belong. Sustained by the work of Gielis (2009, p. 273) these networks were analysed using a ‘placial lense’. RTs in Cuenca are part of social networks that are based on common interests and backgrounds. For example, the religious communities, which provide environments to recreate practices and they also can be key in the process of adaptation to life in Cuenca (Sheringham, 2010). Religious communities, artistic groups, and more individual level of networks interact in the festivals in Cuenca. These social groups represent transnational social fields created by RTs to maintain connection with their sending and receiving countries (Gustafson, 2008). The reason for the creation of such transnational social fields could be because

most of the RTs in Cuenca let their families and friends behind and relocate in a new environment where they start to create new social connections with locals and other RTs (Hayes, 2014c).

The festivals constitute also a physical external factor that influence identity. RTs learn more about the local culture in the events organized around festivals. At the same time, more organized social networks can serve as means to display common cultural practices in the festivals, like the orchestra of foreigners performing in a public church. Hence, the festivals in Cuenca represent a setting for the analysis of cultural dimension, which is the exchange of cultural expressions and flows between sending and receiving societies (Gustafson, 2008). In that way, some of my interviewees expressed feelings of perplexity by some expressions of the local Cuencano culture. More institutionalized forms of cultural practices were found in religious communities and the orchestra of foreign migrants. The latter “provides to some extent public expression” of the RTs community in Cuenca (Gustafson, 2008, p. 465).

Although it was not researched thoroughly, another dimension of transnationalism came across in this research. By buying food and crafts in the festivals, RTs are participating in transnational economic activities and exchanges (Gustafson, 2008). Pensions from sending countries are expended in the receiving country.

Some of the practices and experiences so far mentioned, constitute activities that create and take place in transnational social fields, which is a characteristic of transnationalism (Basch, Schiller, et al., 1994). At the same time, the practices and experiences that take place in transnational social field can meet needs of RTs and thus produce place attachment. The positive emotions that RTs have towards festivals at the same time may influence identity, and also they contributes with creating positive bonds to link people with festivals (Williams et al., 1992). Positive emotions produced by the festivals is a significant result because it was shared by the vast majority of my interviewees. For some of my interviewees, festivals represent an escape from the day-to-day routine, it give a ‘spice of life’. Another fundamental human need related with place attachment is a sense of safety and security (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Overall, RTs feel safe attending festivals in Cuenca. Finally, transnational practices and experiences at festivals in Cuenca contributes with a feeling of being part of the Cuencano community. As in the study of

Sheringham (2010) in festivals several networks of RTs interact, providing opportunities to exchange cultural expressions and mutual understandings. In the religious groups for instances, RTs found accessible ways to socialize with other RTs and locals, and as Levitt (2003, p. 886) points out that religious practices in migrants can promote integration “though providing immigrants with a sense of belonging”.

Overall, this research has supplemented to the research agenda of residential tourism and has given insights to relate the fields of transnationalism and place attachment. My findings show that through the practices and experience of residential tourists in the local Cuencano festivals they create transnational social fields, and at the same time produce place attachment to the festivals and the city. It has been argued in the theoretical framework and supported by the results found in this study that in festivals in Cuenca constitute a place where transnational social fields are visible. Therefore, festivals represent more than an abstract space that transcends both here and there. Festivals play a central role in the experience of RTs of migration, adaptation and relating with local settings in meaningful ways (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998). By the certain activities that RTs do in the local Cuencano festival they are involved in transnational practices which may influence their identity, their experience in social networks, and the exchange of cultural expressions. Transnational experiences and practices in festivals range from buying crafts in the booths, talking with friends, absorbing positive energies, clapping the parades, taking safety precaution, escaping from routine, or simply enjoyment. These practices within festivals provide a point of view for considering festivals as places that are themselves “dynamic and transient” by revealing the “fluid and multifaceted nature of identity and belonging” produced by transnational practices of migrants (Sheringham, 2010, p. 53).

The process of research the phenomenon of Residential Tourism, a currently trendy topic in Ecuador, has gave me more insight into the fields of transnationalism and place attachment. However combining this two fields together has not been an easy task, especially in a phenomenon (residential tourism in Ecuador) that has not been extensible researched. This created a limitation of counteracting the results with other similar researches. Also this limitation created a lack of specific theoretical approaches, transnational migrants’ place attachment at festivals for instance, forcing this study to be conducted with broader theories and approaches.

Other limitation for this thesis was the size of the sample and the method chose to get respondents. The sample of this research can be considered rather small obtaining mainly via snowball technique which could lead to a bias or an under-representation of the actual population of study. Snowball technique can lead to a sample bias, since one person suggest other within their own social networks (Boeije, 2009). However the sample provided an in-depth look into the experiences and practices of RTs in Cuenca, which is the purpose of this study. The interviewees are from the United States of American and Canada, letting outside viewpoints of RTs of others nationalities.

Due to the fact that transnationalism and place attachment in relation with residential tourism is a rather under-researched phenomenon, different directions for further research can be suggested. A much larger sample could reveal further tendencies and significant results on the topic of experiences at festivals. Certain elements that influence the construction of identity were described in this study, however a more empirical research will help to determine if those elements have actual influence on residential tourist's identity. Essential to get a deeper insight into the study of transnational practices, further studies on the degree of involvement in those transnational practices by the residential tourists could result useful. Some research suggest that sense of belonging is enabled by the capacity to interact with persons of common backgrounds (Gustafson, 2001a; Sheringham, 2010). During the interviews one recurrent preoccupation that came across was the increasing number of foreigners coming to Cuenca. Therefore, an interesting topic to research will be the extent in that availability to find persons of similar background enable place attachment in a growing trend of residential tourism. Lastly, it will be important to get a better understanding of the impact of the transnational practices on the receiving community.

A last remark to be made considering the practical implication of this study for the public and private institutions in Cuenca is that take into consideration this study to get a better understanding on the experiences and practices of the increasing influx of foreign retirees. Better understanding of the practicalities of the experience of residential tourists at festivals can help to develop more bottom-up policies regarding specific necessities, like information about the events in English language, and inclusion into the local community. Festivals can be seen as

opportunities for interaction and social cohesion, and thus prevent exclusion and lack of sense of belonging.

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INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction about myself and the topic of the research

- Thesis topic and what the interview will be about
- Agreement on recording and use of the data.

1. Demographics and motivations (to know some background and the circumstances of their residence choice)

- Where are you from?
- How long have you been living in Cuenca?
- Why Cuenca?
- What do you like the most of Cuenca?
- Would you consider the local culture an important factor for your choice to move here?
- Have you visited some festivals here in Cuenca? Why? Why not?
- Which one? Can you tell me a bit more about it?

2. Transnational experience assessment

- How would you describe your overall experience so far in Cuenca?
- How does a 'normal' day look like? What are you doing? Where do you go?

2.1. Relational factors

- When you attend to Cuencano festivals, how is your participation there? Just observation or dancing, trying food, etc.?

- What characteristics about Cuencano festivals do you like? Why?
- What characteristics about Cuencano festivals do you dislike? Why?
- With whom did you attend those festivals? Why did you go with them?
- Do you feel that it is important to be with people from your country in visiting these festivals? How come? If not, with Cuencano friends?
- Did you feel welcome by the local people participating on those festivals?
- Did you visit festivals in your country of origin? Which one? Can you tell me something about it?
- Are they different from the ones you visited here? If so, why? How would you describe the differences?
- Are there similar things? If so, which one?

2.2. Emotional factors

- Did you like visiting these festivals? Why? Why not? How would you describe the experience? How did you feel when at these festivals?
- Do you consider that attending these festivals contribute with the overall experience of living here? How come?
- Do you feel that is easier to interact with locals (cuencanos) in the festivals? Why do you feel so? Can you tell me any experience that you had about interacting with cuencanos or Ecuadorians in a festival?
- Do you feel safe when you are attending to these festivals? How important for you is safety in these context?
- How would you evaluate the performance and the organization of the events in the festivals you attended?