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**La *fiesta* del pueblo: Reflections on migration,
rituals and identities in a Mexican migrant
community**

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*Para ti, que vives aquí y allá,
que viajas con la mente,
que articulas frases en otra lengua;
a ti que sabes que hay algo más de lo que conoces
quien no tiene miedo de tener un sentido más amplio de casa y
talvez, sintiendo que cada pieza no encaja bien.*

*For you who live here and there,
who travel with the mind,
who articulates phrases in another language;
For you who know that there is something more than what you know,
who has no fear of having a broader sense of home and
maybe, feeling that every piece does not fit along.*

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List of Acronyms

CICY	Center for Scientific Research of Yucatan
CONAPO	National Council of Population
CONEVAL	National Council of Evaluation for Social Development Policy
INDEMAYA	Institute for the Development of Mayan Culture in the The State of Yucatan
INEGI	National Institute of Statistics and Geography
INM	National Institute of Migration
IOM	International Organization of Migration
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
UADY	Autonomous University of Yucatan
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

Abstract

This paper analyzes the dynamics of visiting migrants and the local community, based on their daily interaction, through rituals, in their hometown of Cenotillo during the festivity of Patron Saint Clare of Assisi. The *fiesta of Santa Clara de Asis* is celebrated every year, the second week of August. Yucatan, Mexico has particular communities with high index of migrant population who live in the United States and regularly try to visit home. Through formal and informal interviews and conversations and observations, this study analyze the impact of rituals on both, local people and migrants through which women and men produce and reproduce feelings of home, belonging and cultural identity. Although the study is mainly interested in the adjustment of the peoples' identities based on the phenomenon of migration during the festivity, discussions and interviews will not be confined to return migrants only, it will include a wide range of female and male from different backgrounds, who have returned especially for the patron saint festivity of Cenotillo and those people who are currently living in the community. This study explores women and men migrants' self-defined identities, who visit their hometown and compare to those people who stay and adapt their lives during those days of celebration. Questions about 'belonging' and 'home' will be focused at as a way of understanding the rituals and identity formation among such populations.

Relevance in Development studies

This research contributes to development studies, based on migration effects in cultural identities, addressing the relevance of the *fiesta* rituals through the construction of dynamics between migrants and locals in a Mexican migrant community.

Keywords

Migration, Yucatan, Cenotillo, *Fiesta*, Rituals, Identities, Religion and Community.

Chapter 1. What, why and how?

This chapter comprises the relevance of the research topic, describing the relevance of the international migration in Mexico and Yucatan to the United States. Focusing attention on how the role of migration has influenced many local environments, addressing a particular context in a small community, called Cenotillo, generally known in Yucatan, as a ghost town. This chapter presents a social problem of inequality in the community, remarked by the festivity of the saint of the town, *Clara de Asis*.

1.1 Defining the research topic

I was born in San Bernardino, California, United States, I lived twenty-six years in Mérida, Yucatan, Mexico, and since 2015, I have been pursuing a Masters in The Netherlands. Through the years I have learned migration is a daily, lived phenomenon whose effects differ according to the context. While I was getting awareness about the local, national and international mobilization of people around the world, I began to wonder about the changing process of identity and belonging considering different environments, and the role of rituals like the Santa Clara de Asis festival that takes place in my hometown every August. As a woman who grew up in Yucatan, I have seen the importance of migration in my context, seeing how many members of my extended family come and go between the United States and Mexico. This experience made me realize the solid connections people construct through rituals like this annual *fiesta* with their place and people of origin, even when they no longer live there.

I carried out fieldwork in Cenotillo, a small community of Yucatan, Mexico, where my grandparents grew up, focusing in the patron saint festivity of the town, Santa Clara of Assisi.¹ I chose an ethnographic approach, with participatory observation and semi-structured interviews, before, during and after the celebration. This research focuses attention on the feeling of identity, home and belonging as the core of the analytical information.

1.2. Background: Mexico, Yucatan, Cenotillo

People live in constant motion as a manner to coexist in the world, crossing borders from one country to another might result from reactions of survival. International migration is a phenomenon with multiple effects, considering risks and costs, as Black, Natali and Skinner (2005: 1) mentioned in Migration and Inequality World Development Reports. Over the years, many authors consider relevant to study the impact of migration on various levels; for many decades, economists such as Michael Lipton demanded there are other causes than just inequality of people moving from rural to urban areas; remittances and returning migrants are some other consequences (1980: 1). Have a tendency to increase “interpersonal and inter-household” inequality within and between villages (Black et al. 2005: 1).

¹ “La *fiesta* de Santa Clara de Asis” is the expression in Spanish, referring to the Festivity of the Patron Saint of Clare of Assisi. In this research, it is used the Spanish translation.

In the last five decades, Mexico has experienced a continuous process of international migration, United States specifically. The second half of the twentieth century was the scenario where people, particularly men, leave their home and seek new ways of gaining the attractive amount of money to improve their living conditions, and in many cases, send remittances to their communities. In recent years, women have become part of this huge wave of international migration, some of them following their partners or relatives as daughters and sons. In 2006, the Directorate for Employment, Labor and Social Affairs of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), declared in a Policy note of Mexico and International Migration, “Latin American people conformed 78% of the unauthorized migration, Mexicans in particular. Per year, 850K is estimated for the total number of annual entries, considering the population of Mexicans in the United States, both authorized and unauthorized, has grown by an estimated 500K per year over the past decade. It is estimated that 80 to 85% of Mexicans in the United States for less than 10 years are unauthorized” (OECD 2006: 2).

Yucatan is one of the thirty two federal states of Mexico, located in the south of the country (*see map 1*). This state is composed of 106 communities, and some of them are characterized by a high index of local, national and international migration. Migration has become a relevant study subject in recent years in Yucatan, based on social inequalities, gender, ethnic groups, among others. This paper is shaped by international and national researcher approaches on migration contributions. Grasmuck and Pessar argue the resource of mobilization and support from the household is relevant to allocate remittances in order to consume and produce among their members (as cited in Weinstein 2002:200). National and local research are contributions are also relevant to understand the scope of migration issues in Yucatan, particularly from the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatan (UADY, Autonomous University of Yucatan). Through its Regional Research Center ‘Dr. Hideyo Noguchi’, the UADY has been able to produce information about migrants’ political participation, the migration impact into the households, community’s festivities, the local and national economy, social representation between diverse actors in and out of communities of origin, among others (Echeverría et al. 2011). Health is also a relevant topic for some studies of local researchers, such as Rocío Quintal and Ligia Vera (2014) who have had focus attention to the recurrence risk of acquiring HIV or others AIDS, from the national and international migration action, in which, particularly man, got infected and then they return to their homes and infects their respective partners, During the last decade, few studies centers in Yucatan, as the ‘Dr. Hideyo Noguchi’ and the Centro de Investigación Científica de Yucatan (CICY, Center for Scientific Research of Yucatan) have contributed to the literature of the migration phenomenon in cooperation with researchers from the UADY. Therefore, some references listed in this document are from local precedence.

In sum, migration is a continuous subject of study in Yucatan in many fields of work, such as health services, anthropological and social approaches. Several studies, as the previous ones, have contributed on the visualization about migration matters, however action implementation are also important to complement the ‘package’. National and local project, such as ‘Welcome

*Paisano*² and '*Paisano Program*'³ have been implemented in Mexico and Yucatan, through the Instituto Nacional de Migración (INM, National Institute of Migration), which contribute to matters of sociodemographic migrant's profile, destination cities and remittances. This variety of governmental programs are important to maintain contact with the needs of people who leave the country and people who stayed, corresponding the case of Cenotillo.

A *ghost town*, is the common expression use to describe Cenotillo in Yucatan, due to the fact that many people decided to cross the border between Mexico and the United States in the decades of sixties and seventies, seeking better job opportunities, and leaving the community with less and fewer people living there. According to official informs of the Consejo Nacional de Población (CONAPO, National Council of Population) of 2010, Cenotillo is categorized with a high index of migration intensity, positioning it in the third place of 106 on the list of municipalities in Yucatan, migrating to the U.S. Migration to the U.S. has become part of one the characteristics that distinguish to Cenotillo. However, this phenomenon of migration might be seen as a consequence of issues related to the community, particularly the lack of job opportunities or payment of low wages. Whatever the reason is to migrate to the U.S., it is clear that Cenotillo has a different dynamic from the rest of the municipalities in Yucatan.

1.3 Research Problem and Relevance

Yucatan was not always the Mexican state with a high rate of international out-migration. However, in recent years, there have been studies suggesting that the increase of people who migrated to the United States out of Yucatan from the 1990s onwards, started to increase rapidly. According to the CONAPO (2015), the main destination of international migration in Yucatan is the United States of America. This out-migration has played an important role in the growth of the local economy through remittances, and has changed the distribution of the population on the basis of sex and age.

Migration in Yucatan, as many other places, is strongly related to seeking better economic opportunities. According to the Report of Poverty and Evaluation of the Yucatan state, done in 2012 by the Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social (CONEVAL, National Council of Evaluation for Social Development Policy) Yucatán is in the 15 national entities with high index of poverty of the entire country of Mexico, and occupied the eleventh place in the scale of extreme poverty. Marginalization lived in Yucatan has made more and more residents of the municipalities within the state join the migration phenomenon in all its aspects, as part of their survival strategy: internal migration (within the state), regional (within the Yucatan peninsula), national (Yucatan to other states of Mexico) and international (where the main destination is the United States). From the perspective of migrants and their families, this is an alternative way out of poverty in which they find themselves.

² The term *Paisanos* is used in this research, referring to people who live in the U.S but originally are from Cenotillo.

³*Paisano program*, see: <http://www.gob.mx/inm/acciones-y-programas/programa-paisano-del-inm>

Research question

What role do the *fiesta*⁴ rituals play in recreating identities of visiting migrants and local people in Cenotillo?

Sub-questions

Every sub-question is addressed in different chapters engaging with the literature and the data information.

1. How can the relationship between identities and rituals be theorized?
2. What is the context of the Santa Clara de Asis *fiesta* in Cenotillo? Why is it considered an important ritual by migrants and local people?
3. What are the dynamics between visiting migrants and villagers during the Santa Clara de Asis *fiesta*?
4. How do the rituals of the *fiesta* influence how locals and visiting migrants see themselves and their identities?

1.4 Methods of data collection

This research contains information about visible actions, descriptive and made by different actors participating in the festivity of Cenotillo, which represents their traditions and rituals. I had formal and informal conversations with an ethnographic approach with different actors of the festivity and government officials. I interviewed a total of twenty-one persons, eleven females, and ten males, all of them with a semi-structured interview. The categories of the interviews are: *visiting migrants*, referring to people who are visiting Cenotillo only for the festivity; *locals*, people who are currently living in the community; *government officials*, who has a position to make decisions; and *other actors*, such as, the priest of the community and the cameraman. I interviewed six visiting migrants, eleven locals⁵, two government officials and two other resources persons, the camera man and the priest from the town.

First of all, I identified people who currently are living in Cenotillo and never leave the community, this approach of the villagers helped me to identify visiting migrants for the festivity and currently they reside in the U.S. I contacted them one by one, and asked if they want to be interviewed by me, explaining them the objective of the research. For each interview, there was a particular environmental context, according to on the person comfort, where every woman and men described and point out each action that they do during the festivity while they are in Cenotillo. These interviews were semi-structured, letting the people talk openly about their daily life practices during the festivity, focusing attention on their migration status. Every person was asked about their perception of the '*Fiesta del Pueblo*' (town festivity) and how did they perceive themselves during the festivity, concentrating their responses to notions of home and belonging. This project was based on an Ethnographic approach, considering, this methodology, beyond the application of tools, but also,

⁴ *Fiesta* means festivity. In this research, this concept is used in its Spanish form.

⁵ Between local's interviews, there is a returned women migrant who arrived to the community in April 2016, after living in the U.S. for 22 years.

focusing on cultural systems grounded on ontological and epistemological lenses. Through this methodology, observations and descriptions made by returning migrants and the community people, and the researcher, will encourage to explore profoundly the socio-cultural context, processes, but moreover meanings in the cultural system into the community before, during and after the festivity.

Considering this research as part of a series of events during one specific celebration, having an ethnographic approach remarking the awareness of producing knowledge from a holistic lane. This methodology procured to discover in order to produce understanding from inferences, letting me expose to different stimulus, allowing me to interpret, reflect and construct and reconstruct pieces from the women and men who participated, without forgetting the open positionality the research is playing during the festivity. Conveniently, hand to hand with ethnographic methodology, I took field notes as part of a daily journal, before, during and after the festivity, concentrating observations of a context with comparable scenarios. These observations were mainly divided by events of religion, dances and entertainment activities. I considered the application of ethnography to be accurate for the purpose of this research, bearing in mind observations, descriptions, and reflections, by the people and researcher. The information is analyzed based on similarities and differences between answers, divided by categories of functionality in the festivity, and pointing out the key element of migration and its varieties of home and belonging.

1.5 Challenges and Limitations.

As can be seen in previous descriptions, this research is made during a specific event, making time the principal limitation, because of the official festivity lasts one week, but like many activities occur outside the official day of the ceremony, that allowed me to make observations before, during and after the *fiesta*. Considering my familiarity with the community and the festivity, some observations might have some assumptions based on my previous experience going frequently to Cenotillo. Another limitation, is at the time, based on the observation that this festivity is full of collective and familiar events, and people were very excited to be with their relatives and friends. Considering the previous, this situation made me be persuasive to ask them for an interview. Some of them invite me to stay in their home and eat something, and others stopped what they were doing and talked with me.

During the process, and the lack of time, my participation tried to be 'casual', this situation was helped by the biggest advantage of the familiarity that I have with the town. In many ways, I used information that my parents and relatives told me beforehand about the people who I interviewed, allowing them to be more confident about who am I. This helped me to introduce myself to them, more easily, letting them know their participation in this research was very important. In some ways, people were interviewed while they were doing daily life activities, allowing me to have a 'chat' while they do their own practices, such as, cooking, walking at the park, sailing things, being in the church, among others.

This chapter highlight the *fiesta* as an essential place for develop and performing dynamics between migrants and locals; because every group experimented different feelings about home and belonging to outline their identities. The methodology, previous presented, describe how this research it is conducted in order to achieve the main research question, moderated by a theoretical framework formulated in chapter two.

Chapter 2. Elements of individual and collective dynamics.

2.1 Introduction: Celebration as a way of identification

In everyday life, people experienced a series of events that make them part of a process in which identity is constructed, consciously or unconsciously. "Thanks to my father and God, who have given me a musical inheritance for life..." (August 2016)⁶ these are the words of Don José, the member of the associations of musicians in Cenotillo; who has been playing the trumpet over the last twenty years. His *fiesta* is about music and he said his responsibility is to play in the *gremios*⁷ of musicians every august during the festivity of St. Clare of Assisi. As part of the objective of the current study, this chapter approaches the relevance of notions about festivities, rituals, and identities, answering the interrogation of how can the relationship between identities and rituals be theorized? Considering the question, this chapter is divided into four subcategories, festivities-rituals; identities; space, place and glocalities; and community.

2.2 Festivities and Rituals

The existence of the human being is accompanied by many important and representative moments in life. As a natural form to coexist in society, man and women of all times and places have felt the necessity to create and celebrate the festivities, establishing them, as a way of breaking the everyday routine (Becerra and Machado 2000: 1). A festivity commemorates something, having a cyclical process, ends a stage and start another with rituals and unusual activities. A festivity is an opportunity to express rhythm, manifestation of color and music, social interaction, and sometimes, expression of depravity (Becerra and Machado 2000).

Monica Lacarrieu a social anthropologist from Buenos Aires, states that "festivals, celebrations, and rituals are cultural expressions symbolically marked, sometimes separates from the routine or simply identified as worthy of attention"(2006: 13). A festivity is a great element of understanding a part of the nature of a society; conforming a privileged occasion, in which it is visibly expressed the religion and other aspects of the culture. Through festivities, it can be observable how a community is organized, according to its economic productivity, social groups, social mobility, formal and informal associations, individualisms, family, values, beliefs, etcetera.

Jaime Urrutia (as cited in Casanova 2009: 37) mentions, possibly from the origin of the humanity, "festivities are a gregarious expression, a ritual act of social cohesion, a group identity, a collective reference; in other words, festivity is a basic reference for national, regional and local identities. So, festivity ritual

⁶ Interview with Jose (3 August 2016).

⁷ *Gremios* is a Spanish term referring to professional associations. In this research the term is used in the Spanish form.

and identity are intertwined concepts”. Antonio Ariño defines the *fiesta* as a foundation with a complex nature, which has a direct interaction with daily life, and it's characterized by the intensive emotional interactions with the environment, cultivating the “paradox mixed in a synthesis of ritual and play, fun and ceremony, respect for tradition and spontaneity, the spiritual and the corporal, the intimate and the public” (cited in Casanova 2009: 37)⁸ Ariño recognizes the ritual as an integral element of the *fiesta*, an “instrument of communication, including elements of spontaneous moments, unconsciously generated, which include the body sensitiveness as an expression with a high range of symbolic representations” (cited in Steingress 2006: 55) In this paper, festivity it is approached under the elements of actions and rituals.

To refer about rituals, it is necessary to underline what is and which elements conformed it. Based on Cambridge Dictionary⁹ (2016) “ritual is a set of fixed actions and sometimes words performed regularly, especially in a ceremony”, in Oxford Dictionaries¹⁰ (2016) ritual is defined as a “religious or solemn ceremony consisting of a series of actions performed according to a prescriber order”. This two resource compiles similar elements as, ceremony, actions, and performance, however, one of them pointed out a religious component. Religion plays a key role in this research as part of the origin of the festivity in Cenotillo. In the same line Harvey Whitehouse argue “ritual meaning is not intrinsic to the ritual actions themselves” (2004: 91) but what does this mean? Rituals are actions, and actions could be performed with a special meaning or not, corresponding to Humphrey and Laidlaw who refer to ritual as a constituted group of actions “that lack intrinsic intentional meaning” (as cited in Whitehouse 2004: 91). In this set of ideas, rituals are seen as a group of actions produce, reproduce and performed by actors, consciously or not, about their meanings. Therefore, this paper, festivity (*fiesta*) is analyzed through actions representing rituals performed by visiting migrants and locals, which therefore, contribute to describe their identities through the feeling of home and belonging.

2.3 Identities: reflecting on ‘home’ and ‘belonging’

Identity plays an important role in this document, helping in the process to understand the meaning of the rituals generated by the dynamics between visiting migrants and locals in Cenotillo. Considering the influence of these dynamics, this research is interested in identity, as a collective thought, referring to people’s *identities* as part of a group, all related to the *fiesta*. This section contributes to frame what is understand as identities in this research, and how this is related to feelings of home and belonging.

Jose del Val (2004) pointed out, in his book Mexico: Identity and Nation, different notions of identity, which three of them are consider in this paper. First, “there is no individual or human group that is not involved in the process of identity; identity is about belonging, therefore, exclusion”; Identity is “about belonging, therefore, exclusion” (stating, belonging and exclusion are

⁸ Translated from original in Spanish by the author.

⁹ Cambridge Dictionary, Online version (see reference list).

¹⁰ Oxford Dictionaries, Online Version (see reference list).

conditionals of any social existence); and lastly, any individual, in any culture, participates in multiple associations giving him or her specific identities” (Del Val 2004: 50). In previous statements, identity is surrounded by key elements, such as culture, a group of people and belonging. Taking into account these elements, this paper focuses on the nature of identities as part of a culture, formed by common backgrounds and sharing similar feelings about home and belonging. In this study, in order to understand *identities*, I use the Yuval-Davis identity definition: “a process of ‘narratives, stories that people tell themselves and others about who they are, and who they are not’” (2006: 202). Yuval Davis sees identity narratives as individual or collective, in the same path that Jose Del Val presents his notions of identity. Although, identities, can be produced from generation to generation, they are always carried out in a selective path, meaning that every generation experienced different social changes but remaining a common cultural element, in this case, Cenotillo. In this idea of changing, this author mentions “identity narratives can shift and change, be contested and multiple, related to the past, to a myth of origin; it can be aimed at explaining the present and, probably above all, they function as a projection of a future trajectory” (Yuval-Davis 2006: 200). Through this statement, it is clear the history plays an important role in the process of identities, particularly in this paper in which visiting migrants have memories about their life while they were living in Cenotillo, before the move to the U.S.

Considering identities as part of a process in the history, a feeling of home and belonging are relevant to provide a profound meaning from the narratives. Thinking about home, is to give meaning to elements considered familiar to every person, such as a metaphor made by Anne Varley in her book *Housing and belonging in Latin America*, referring to “internal and external power, and the other” (2015: 277). Therefore, home is seen as a combination of individual meanings and social representations, corresponding to a process, which is consolidated in a place where every person feels ‘secure’. Teresa de Leuratis states in her work *Eccentric subjects: Feminist Theory and Historical Consciousness*, referring to home as a safe place, and leaving it “physically, emotionally, linguistically, epistemologically, for another place that is unknown and risky” (1990: 138). However, the house does not only represent a place, it also represents identity itself without a place, like Geraldine Pratt describes as two separate entities but remains interconnected (1999: 164). This connection, between home, place and identity is understood in this study with the feeling of belonging.

Belonging has a strong connotation in order to understand home. According to Floya Anthias belonging is understood based on an “emotionally charged social location” (2006: 21). This author gives to this meaning a direct relation to three elements, relation exclusion-inclusion, the nature of belonging referring to experiences and constructed social places. Considering these three aspects, belonging in this study is analyzed based on the feelings generated by practices and experiences from locals and visiting migrants in Cenotillo, underlining the *fiesta* as the particular place in which they interact.

This study analyzes individual narratives, including the conception of Identities, home and belonging, describing feelings produced by the execution of actions from visiting migrants and locals, allowing them to live different

experiences during the *fiesta* based on cultural elements, such as dances, food and costumes. All these components contribute to describing peoples' identities, considering the importance of the specific place and space.

2.4 Spaces, places and glocalities

People always ask me, where is Cenotillo? When I reply, I usually start saying “it is a little community in the Southeast of Mexico, in the state of Yucatan”. And even people that do not know anything about it, they ask me what is happening there, and I described it based on my own experiences. This section pretends to explore links of spaces, places and glocalities in order to settle a basis to understand and analyse the data obtained from the *fiesta*. Therefore, debates between places and spaces are not part of this framing.

The first step to understand space and places is based on a geographical description, just like John Agnew addressed Space and Place as two complex concepts which need to be examined together rather than separately” (2011: 1). He analyzed the conception made by the Italian geographer Franco Farinelli referring the meaning of place as “part of the terrestrial surface that is not equivalent to any other, that cannot be exchanged with any other without everything changing” (as cited in Agnew 2011: 2). Based on the previous concept, John Agnew pointed out, places have their own qualities, and space does not have it (2011: 2). Considering this differentiation, Patricia Price (2004: xiii) addressed place as “a layered, shifting reality that is constituted, lived, and contested, in part, through narrative”, this author contributes to the geographer’s notion about place, giving importance to the meaning created by people interaction. Therefore, place can be contemplated as a smaller part of space, framed by the experiences over the people interactions, giving them specific meanings.

David Chidester and Edward Linenthal state "when space or place becomes sacred, spatially scarce resources are transformed into a surplus of signification. As an arena of signs and symbols, a sacred place is not a fixed point in space, but a point of departure for an endless multiplication of meaning" (1995: 18). Wendy Harcourt and Arturo Escobar, explain place as part of an origin, in which all come from a place, everyone lives in a place (2007: 29). Places are connected based on people interactions, which indicate that any contact is built under different cultural spaces. So, global is local and local is global? That is a question which many researchers have been struggling with. And before moving beyond, it is necessary to clarify some immediate ideas about what is global and what is local. Harcourt and Escobar also stand out, the importance of peoples’ relations in place in order to protect and conserve traditions, improving or transforming cultures, resist or build change, and additionally concerning to this study, the creation of connections with other places (2007: 214).

Place connects meanings and experiences on different levels, “the body, the household, the community, national, and global arenas” (Harcourt and Escobar 2002: 8). The globalization has played a relevant role maintaining a link between people, countries, cultures and economies, producing an examination between the local and the global. Thinking about these two terms, is considered different standpoints, from people who see this relation based on a hierarchical

association or a power relation, just as (2002: 34) mentioned about “realists people see the world as taken over by global capitalism, referring to the *new empire*”. How these feminist economist geographers, conceived this link as a process, in which global is a “force” and local is a “the field of play” (Gibson-Graham 2002: 27). Such as Harcourt, states that “nothing is purely local or global” (Harcourt and Escobar 2007: 262), referring to glocalities, how the local incorporate the local and the local incorporate the global. Harcourt and Escobar in their work about Women and Politics of Place (2007) conceive glocalities “potentially strategic” (2007: 13), therefore, these authors also state, “nowadays, no place is constituted wholly by local and global factors” and seen glocal spaces as strategically correspond “a new assimilation of transformative politics and identities” (Harcourt and Escobar 2007: 13).

Joshua Meyrowitz adapts an evolutionary link between “communication and travel, with an interconnected global environment over local’s perspectives” (2005: 23), pointed out the importance of using the term of glocalities to explain this bidirectional relation. In this research, glocalities, help to explain the dynamics generated by the interaction of visiting migrants and locals from Cenotillo. In this set of ideas, space, place and glocalities contribute to the literature in order to understand Cenotillo as the space in which locals live and visiting migrants used to live before the move away; the *fiesta* referring to the place in which locals and visiting migrants interact and create their own dynamics; and glocalities as conceptual framing in which is understood the importance of migrant’s temporary return to Cenotillo during the *fiesta* season. In direction to understand the *fiesta* as a whole, filled of dynamics, is necessary to look at the last element of analysis, the community.

2.5 Community

Individuals are part of the collective, and the collective is formed by individuals, this a very usual expression I read when some authors refer to the study of societies. The relevance of dynamics generated by social, cultural and economic alliances is unquestionable. Talking about communities often involves referring to symbolic elements, such as Anthony Cohen (2013) highlight in his book Symbolic Construction of Community. The community is also a relevant element for the “recreation of identities” (Ballesteros and Ramirez 2007: 677).

Based on previous paragraphs in this chapter, spaces and places play a significant role in the construction of community identities, such as in the work of Marc Augé who linked collective identities to “life spaces” or Anderson refers to “imagined spaces” (as cited in Ballesteros and Ramirez 2007: 677). According to Ballesteros and Ramirez (2007), the link between identity, space, place and community is ambiguous, under a “social and political functioning”. According to Steffen Jensen (2004: 182), community is a key social elemental, that needs continuously to be “defined and stabilized”. In the previous set of ideas, the basis of understand community reside on representative elements generated by social, cultural or political collective perceptions, in order to identify as part of a group, sharing values and traditions. In this study, the importance giving to the cultural link to the identity help to understand the notion of community based on the rituals performed during the festivity. Is relevant to reinforce the premise in which this paper seeks to understand the *phenomenon* of the *fiesta*, as the place

in which is generated a collective sense of community, considering different elements from performed rituals to construct different identities, in order to clarify a migratory or religious status.

In summary, chapter two, addressed notions about festivities, rituals, identity, space, places, glocalities and community, in order to examine narratives and observations from locals and visiting migrants. This section seeks to respond to the question of how the relationship between identities and rituals can be theorized? Identities and rituals can be theorized, as a continuous process of performing actions, based on interaction from cultural and social practices between locals and visiting migrants as part of an interconnected dynamism in Cenotillo during the *annual fiesta of Santa Clara de Asis*.

Chapter 3. ‘Vamos a Cenotillo’: *Fiesta* Rituals

3.1 Introduction

This chapter offers to the reader a general vision of Cenotillo *fiesta*, describing the context and dynamics of Santa Clara de Asis festivity. This section presents different scenarios, based on observations and narratives by different actors, explaining the context of Cenotillo and the importance of the festivity. In this chapter, will respond the questions: what is the context of the Santa Clara de Asis *fiesta* in Cenotillo? Why is it considered an important ritual by migrants and local people?

3.2 Cenotillo

Cenotillo has its name based on the diminutive of the word *Cenote*¹¹. The municipality of Cenotillo is located in the eastern region of the Yucatan State in Mexico¹², as part of an ancient Spanish cologne. Cenotillo, as many other localities, lived the transition of Yucatan, when this one was declared independent from the Spanish kingdom and it was annexed to the rest of the Mexican republic on January, 1886 (INAFED 2016). As part of this process, Cenotillo acquired the title of town by decree, which is previously repealed thirty-six years later to return to the category of village, however, according to the characteristics of Cenotillo and the official definitions of Villages¹³ and Town¹⁴, this research it refers to this community as a town.

The out-migration, particularly to the U.S. has left Cenotillo in this region under-populated, a phenomenon that has increased over the last decades. This has made Cenotillo a place where the majority of the population are either children or the elderly, who wait for relatives to send remittances so they can pay for their essential services (health, education, transport, clothing and even food). Cenotillo has the diversity of religious, Pentecostalism, Jehovah's' witnesses, Presbyterianism and Evangelism. However, most of the population professes Catholic religion, which is part of an ancient tradition that venerates a particular virgin, Santa Clara de Asis (St. Clare of Assisi).

¹¹*Cenote*: Natural freshwater pond supplied by an underground river that is formed in numerous places of the Yucatan peninsula by soil erosion, and to which the Maya gave a sacred use (Oxford Dictionaries 2016).

¹² See location of Cenotillo in Map 2.

¹³ *Village*: a group of houses and other buildings that is smaller than a town, usually in the countryside (Cambridge Dictionary 2016).

¹⁴*Town*: a place where people live and work, containing many houses, shops, places of work, places of entertainment, etc., and usually larger than a village but smaller than a city (Cambridge Dictionary 2016).

3.3 La *Fiesta* del Pueblo

As the majority of places around the world, Cenotillo has its very special festivity, the *Fiesta* of Santa Clara de Asis, taking place once every year in August. As every other saint in different communities in Yucatan has her own festivity celebration, Santa Clara de Asis is celebrated every second week of August.

The *Fiesta* is a very significant event that brings families in the community together once a year. It formally lasts for a week every year, from seven until the fourteen of August, but preparations start several weeks before this period. These involve migrants sending remittances so that parks, walls, streets are repaired and the town painted. In addition, flowers are planted and the whole town is ‘revitalized’ prior to the festivities.



Figure 1: Every year a ‘*Fiesta* Queen’ is chosen – in 2016 it was the woman in the middle, with the crown.

In Figure 1 the first day of the *Fiesta* is depicted, a ‘Queen’ leading the procession in the main square, – the plaza in Cenotillo town center. In some years, the woman chosen alternates between a local resident and a migrant woman visiting the community – mostly from California and Colorado. Many migrants from that community still going for the saint patron festivity every August and they send money to the community, in order to contribute to the celebration. Cenotillo *fiesta* is a series of elements, making a structured celebration over two weeks, combining three elements, religious activities, dances and bull exposition, and fights.

Religion and cultural activities, start in the first week of August. The principal and most relevant activity is a catholic mass on August third, when a group of people takes down the virgin from the altar, and they take her around on the main plaza.



Figure 2. The descent of the virgin.

As part of the religious celebrations, the virgin Clare of Assisi, the patron saint of Cenotillo, is considered by many people as the protector of the town. The virgin is represented in many spaces around the town, the principal spot is the main entrance of the town, where a picture can be seen of her with a cross on the top.



Figure 3. The principal entrance of the town, with the virgin altar.

Gremios, another significant element in the Catholic religion, are organized, professional association, relevant to *fiesta* tradition. These local groups of the Catholic Church, participate in special holidays and other particular religious celebrations. Most of them are organized by trade, gender, age, occupations, or any other topic the people wanted to gather for (Quiroz and

Escalante 2006: 387)¹⁵. In Cenotillo it is traditional to see, guilds of musicians, kids, farmers, among others, but the special one is the migrant association. In Cenotillo since the first day of August, the first *gremio* makes a celebration, this consist of taking some flags with the virgin images on them and make a procession to someone's house who previous offers his or her home as celebration place. The host is responsible for welcoming the people in the house and give them food and drinks.

The second element in the *fiesta* of Cenotillo are the dances: it is common to hear a variety of music at different events during the festivity, there are traditional and modern ones. The first one is the *vaquería*¹⁶, celebrated every August 7th. Is one of the most important traditions in Yucatan, which is a cultural event where people wear the typical gown, men wear the Yucatecan *Guayabera*, and the women wear the *Terno*. In the *vaqueria*, people performed the *Jarana*¹⁷, the traditional dance in Yucatan. This compilation of dances last about three hours, where a group of musicians played Yucatecan traditional songs at the *kiosk*¹⁸ of the main plaza, and couples are dancing around them. Beside of the *vaqueria*, there are formal dances for adults and informal ones, called *Luz y Sonido*¹⁹ (light and sound) for adolescents and young people. In the first one, is common to hear the song with cumbia style played by local and national musical groups. In the *Luz y Sonido*, the DJ plays worldwide popular songs, such as pop, reggaeton, electronic, among other styles.

The third element conforming the *fiesta* are the “*corridos*” (bullfights), considered as one of the main attractions for many women and men of all ages. In order to this event happened, several weeks before, people build a wooden structure in a circular shape, in an empty space next to the principal catholic church. This infrastructure consists of three levels, where people can, easily, see the performance between the bull and the bullfighter. The *corrida* is performed during the afternoon, every day, over the complete week of the festivity and last four hours. This event has a very particular ritual, which consists that a group of people, mostly man, take the virgin out of the church, and carry the virgin around the bullfight arena, while another group of people is carrying a bullfighter sheet, and people throw money at it. It can be seen people making religious signs while the virgin is on the bullfight field. At the end, before the virgin is taken out of the field, all the people clap and make ovation for her.

The *fiesta* is a compilation of events, filled with symbolic elements, with meanings under different perspectives. As it mentioned in previous paragraphs, Cenotillo *fiesta* has its own particularity based on the migration element. Every spectator and actor play a role in the community dynamics during this event.

¹⁵ Translated from Spanish by the author.

¹⁶ *Vaqueria*: Traditional Yucatecan celebration formed with particular songs and steps.

¹⁷ *Jarana*: dance, composed with descriptive lyrics about Yucatecan landscapes, food, tradition, people, among others elements that distinguished the state.

¹⁸ *Kiosk*: “A small structure in a public area used for providing information or displaying advertisements, often incorporating an interactive display screen or screens” (Oxford Dictionaries 2016)

¹⁹ *Luz y Sonido* is a Spanish term referring to the informal dances aimed to young people.

3.4 Cenotillo after the *fiesta*

While I was waiting for the bus to Cenotillo at the central station of Merida, a lady asked me where I was going, I said, Cenotillo, and she immediately reply, "the town of the migrants". Perceptions are really relevant in social sciences, and the approach of each subject needs to be defined in order to understand the objective of every research. This paper, focusing attention in the *Fiesta* of the Cenotillo, a particular place determined by cultural and traditional elements. However, Cenotillo is not all the time filled with paper crafts at the main plaza, or with fancy parked cars; Cenotillo is a quiet town, with its own routine, people ride their bikes to go to the ranch; other people peel corn to make and sell tortillas; others arrive at the market of the town to sell or buy. Children and young people go to school by walking or by bike, others who goes to high school or college await the bus at the entrance of the town because they go every day to school in a different place because Cenotillo does not have any university.



Figure 4. The municipal palace at the main plaza.

Everything in the town seems to have its particular routine, however, there is common sense in the town during the year, in which many people ask each other about their relatives "*allá lejos*" (far away). The people majority has a brother, sister, daughter, son, mother, dad, boyfriend, girlfriend or friend who is living in the U.S. and they wait for the time when they return to the town. In general, Cenotillo remain as a quiet place to live, illustrated in the Figure 4, showing the normal condition of the common streets in Cenotillo a really silent place.

The *fiesta* is a place constituted with different events, described in this section, as part of a group of rituals, helping to address the question of this chapter three, about, what is the context of the Santa Clara de Asis *fiesta* in Cenotillo? And why is it considered an important ritual by migrants and local people? Elements about traditional and cultural elements as dances, food, and practices, such as the bullfights, helped to understand the importance of the *fiesta* in visiting migrants and locals. The context is relevant to understand the interaction between the groups of people, and as part of the general research question. The next chapter addressed the dynamics between visiting migrants and locals and their process to converge their own needs.

Chapter 4. The voices of the *Fiesta*

"The festivity is for migrants; the religion is for locals"

- *Gabriel, camera man of the town.*

4.1 Introduction

This research contains voices from different perspectives of the actors participating in the Cenotillo *fiesta*. This chapter addressed some expressions made by the visiting migrants, community members and *third*²⁰ voices from people who knows the context in Cenotillo and government officials, in order to respond to the interrogation: What are the dynamics between visiting migrants and villagers from Cenotillo? Based on observations and interviews, in this section findings will be described, pointing out some of the expressions and statements made by different actors.

4.2 Observation of Ritual Narratives

It was eleven o'clock on the morning of August third, I was standing in the middle of the main plaza in Cenotillo, when the bells of the church started to ring, announcing that the mass was about to start. This mass was particularly special, it was the descent of the virgin, and this religious performance symbolizes the beginning of the *fiesta*. After the mass of the descent of the virgin finalized, a group of men took the virgin out of the church, and while they were carrying her, a huge group of people made a procession behind them. When this march reaches the municipal palace, the group of men put the virgin in a table (previously prepared) in the middle of the palace and followed by instructions of the priest, all the people start to pray. After the praying was over, the virgin was taken again to the church and there she remained in the middle, in front of the altar, and subsequently people made a line in front of her, waiting their turn to touch her, to make a praying, leaving money in a basket next to her and passing flowers or other items over her and taking them with them. After the mass finished, people were invited to assist to the *kermés*²¹, celebrated in that moment next to the church. This event has the objective to announce the queen of the Catholic Church, who was an eight years old girl. Another objective of this *kermés* was to sail food and drinks to save money to the church. After the *kermés* was over, I walked in the surroundings, I noticed in front of the principal park, people were starting to install a metal infrastructure, I asked a woman what that was about it, and she replied to me: "Is for the tonight event, the *Paisanos* welcoming and the coronation of the queen of the *fiesta*" (Field notes 2016).

After many weeks of preparation, the *fiesta* officially begins, and the streets were filled with cars and trucks, many of them with the US plates and some others with plates from states nearby. There are specific dates of the *fiesta*

²⁰ Third voices refer to the people who is not categorized in the group of visiting migrants or community member but has an active role in the *fiesta*.

²¹ *Kermés*: Popular outdoor party in which there are fair and amusements, sometimes organized for charitable purposes. (Oxford Dictionaries 2016)

which many people are excited about, and August seventh it is one of those. Everyone seems to prepare for the great night of the *vaqueria*; is eleven o'clock in the night and before the orchestra starts to play, the first *Jarana* of the night, the president of the town give a speech standing at the kiosk, in the middle of the principal square:

“Welcome everyone to the *fiesta*, especially to the paisanos, who come from too far to enjoy the *fiesta* and the family” (Field notes 2016).

Women, men, and children seem very excited and happy wearing the traditional gowns, it was possible to see people saying hello each other, asking how is the family. All night long, people were taking pictures of the main plaza, the dances, but most of them were taking pictures with their families. In front of the palace there were many tables and chairs, and periodically over the night people were sitting according to their families. I heard someone say: "There is the Nuñez family, and there the Castro Family”.

With the first day over, people know there were more days to go, and the town seemed to have its own dynamic. However, through observations, it was perceptible to distinguish who were visiting and who were community members. Visiting migrants usually were seen in huge trucks, wearing brand clothes such as *Nike and Adidas*, particularly in shoes, T-shirts, and hats. Some of the locals seem to stick with the regular dynamic, going to the market, to the church, but they must adjust their time with their visiting relatives. Ismael says it is a little difficult when his relatives go to the *fiesta* because he needs to combine the time between work and spending time with them, especially because he has to attend them, prepare meal for them, going to dances with them, he says is exhausting. During the festivity, it was common to see traffic between cars, *moto-taxis*²² and people who transported with horses. Some of this previous observations were clearly stated by Pilar, a community member of the town who is a Jehovah's witness:

"The party is a tradition where people had fun in their own ways, many of them are dedicated to drinking, that's when accidents happen, many enter to the bullfight arena mounted on a horse and they fall off because they are drunk, like this year, there is one man that fell off and opened his throat, my niece told me that, because she goes to those things" (Pilar August 2016).

Based on some observations and statements and testimonies from different actors of the festivity, next findings will be addressed from perspectives according to categories of visiting migrants, community members, resource persons and official governments.

4.3 Visiting migrants: ‘*Paisanos*’

A large community from the United States goes to Cenotillo every year for the *Fiesta*. This is the case for Irene, Raymundo, Cleotilde, Norma and Alegría.

²² *Moto-taxis* is a new of transportation in the town, where a person incorporate a structure in his or her motorcycle to offer a service of transportation to others.

Based on their testimonies, visiting migrants have perspectives similar to Cenotillo and its festivity. The *fiesta*, is the only moment when they can see their relatives and friends, considering Cenotillo their ‘origin place’. Alegría, has been going to the *fiesta* in the last 25 years ago, her traditions motivated her to go, enjoying the tranquillity and peace, feeling proud of being Cenotillense²³, because everyone knows each other. Some visiting migrants expressed that their visit to Cenotillo is also about making a promise to the virgin Santa Clara. This is the situation of Pepe, a visiting migrant who expressed, he and his wife, make a promise to the virgin every year, if they have a good year, economically and healthy speaking, they will go to visit her to the *fiesta*. Pepe as other many visiting migrants, expressed that Cenotillo is the place when they feel free and relaxed. Some people use ‘paradise’ to describe the town, because, is the place where they really feel free. Alegría, said there is not a comparable feeling of being free while she is in the town; Irene feels that the time stops in Cenotillo, having a sense of quietness. As part of the festivity, visiting migrants feel the *fiesta* as a place to be part of their tradition and the culture. Norma goes every year with her husband because they want to spend time with the family, be at the traditional ceremonies, mass, *gremios*, the Santa Clara celebrations and bull fights. Many visiting migrants mentioned the St. Clare of Assisi, as a motive to go to the *fiesta*. Irene, considered the *fiesta* season as a place when she enjoys to cook, spend time in the kitchen making traditional dishes, knowing she can have every ingredient available in the store, or in her backyard, where she can walk just a few steps, and she can grab them on her own. As Irene, other visiting migrants consider the element of food, as a way to feel at home again, the smell, the taste, the textures, which is incomparable to the food they have in the U.S.

Visiting migrants described different elements, such as religion and food, as part of their dynamic with the sense of home and belonging. Cleotilde seemed very excited talking about his past, telling me he left the town when he was 18 years old, and in a particular storytelling style, he expressed he did not decide to leave, it was the destiny, because he had a very good life in the town before he left, in his words “not rich, but very comfortable” (Cleotilde August 2016). At some point of the interview, he started to cry, expressing he felt very nostalgic when he remembers his past because he left his family for many years and that makes him feel sad, complemented with feelings of guilt about his mother, his grandmother, brothers, sisters and friends.

4.4 Locals

The *fiesta* has different looks, and definitely, the members of the community have perspectives from different points of view. I interviewed community members in different contexts, some of them their own business other in the main plaza. Community members said the *fiesta* is for the encounter between families. They said they need to adjust their time to spend time with the relatives who go to the *fiesta*, expressing migrants are those who made the *fiesta* alive, bringing money to the town. Narciso, states the *fiesta* is about the migrants, because they spend their money there, making the *fiesta* alive. Locals are around, seeing how migrants drive huge cars, and as Narciso described, if some people

²³ Cenotillense is an expression referring to people who identify from Cenotillo, living there or not.

living in the U.S cannot go to the *fiesta*, they send money so their relatives in the town can have fun during the festivity. For some community members, the *fiesta* is about to make more money in their local businesses and offering services. Narciso never wanted to leave Cenotillo to migrate to the U.S., he expressed he has good and bad times, and when the *fiesta* is approaching he knows he has to work more. He paints some houses, kills more animals to sell and in this way he saves more money during the *fiesta*. For Pedro, an owner of a food business, the *fiesta* is about selling more products, sleeping fewer hours because the period of working is larger, all night long until five in the morning., and at the next day waking up at ten in the morning. and start all over again. Natalia, sells *atole*²⁴ and *tamales*²⁵ for more than fifteen years, during the *fiesta* in the same spot. She wakes up earlier than usual, to make larger quantities of food. Everybody knows her, because after every “*baile*²⁶” people go to buy atole and tamales.

For some locals, the *fiesta* is not inclusive, it is just for the catholic ones. For Pilar, a Jehovah’s Witness, the *fiesta* does not represent an attraction, because for her, God is the only religious figure who must be celebrated, not a virgin like the St. Clare of Assisi. Maira, a Pentecostal woman, does not go out during the *fiesta*, for her everything is the same, she does not feel attract to the things at the park or to the *bailes* or *luz y sonidos*. For Reina, an evangelic returning migrant since April 2016, the *fiesta* is about noise, she does not like it, she prefers being outside of the center of the plaza to avoid the bustle. They also feel relief the *fiesta* is over, Pilar said: “as Jehovah’s Witnesses I feel relief when the *fiesta* ends, because there is a lot of noise, the images of virgins and saints are everywhere, many flying crackers annoy me, and I cannot walk in peace on the streets” (August 2016). Also, Ismael, one of the locals, associated ethnicity with economic status saying that, “there are not, anymore, many indigenous people living in the town because their living conditions had improved, Mayan culture and language are not common nowadays, due to the influence of people who migrate to the U.S and coming back bringing other traditions and bringing the English language” (August 2016).

Other locals expressed that the *fiesta* is too expensive compared to festivities of other towns, for a local person it is difficult because the money earned in the town is not enough, in some cases, migrants who cannot go to the *fiesta*, send money to their families. For locals, the *fiesta* is about migrants and religion. People from the community, especially for catholic ones, are waiting for this *fiesta* because of the virgin. The religion has a larger influence in the *fiesta*, after all, the main reason is the patron saint Clare of Assisi, everybody to go to Cenotillo during the *fiesta*, get to know the image of the saint because in every section of the town has altars showing the image of the virgin. Some locals are waiting for this dates to prepare everything to celebrate the saint, many of them, participate in the masses in the church, others are part of the *gremios*. These *gremios* are a very important part of the festivity, particularly for locals, because are professional associations which commemorate the virgin according to their occupations. Musicians, merchants, women, kids, among others, gather together and make a celebration in different houses, motivated by keeping these

²⁴ Traditional Mexican drink made with corn.

²⁵ Mexican food made with corn

²⁶ *Baile* refers to every dance event occurring during the week of the *fiesta*, apart from the *Luz y Sonido*.

traditions alive. In conclusion for locals, the *fiesta* is the encounter where all the families gather together, migrants go to the community, spend money, make the town more economically prosperous and leaving again leaving the town in peace again.

4.5 Resource persons

During the field work, I noticed two particular actors participating in the *fiesta*, the priest, and the cameraman. They are not part of the dynamics between the visiting migrants and the locals, but they know very well this context, and they perceive the *fiesta* through a different point of view. It was really interesting to hear from them, that the *fiesta* is for migrants, and religion is for the members of the community. The *fiesta* is about migrants living money in the town and the church. Gabriel, the cameraman, expressed the *fiesta* of Cenotillo, first, is a festivity that is made for the migrants because they are the ones, who can pay all the attractions that the *fiesta* offers. However, that does not mean that local cannot participate, visiting migrants are the guest of the locals, and as their guests, migrants paid all expenses, making everyone to participate. He pointed out one of the general thoughts about the dances (*bailes*) in Cenotillo, that they are really expensive, making them out of the budget of the locals. During the interview with the cameraman, he said the town people prepare for their *fiesta* and the migrants are the guests, that makes everyone participate. The cameraman also mentioned the distinction of visiting migrants who born in Cenotillo and leave the town, and the second generation, who were not born in Cenotillo, but they have the traditions of going to the *fiesta* because their parents educated them to go and participated with the traditions. Based on the occupation of the cameraman, filming events in the town, he can perceive the religion as the main element in the *fiesta*, stating that: *The festivity is for migrants; the religion is for locals*” (Gabriel August 2016).

In a different environment, but playing the same role as a third voice, the priest is a relevant figure in the town, particularly for the catholic community. During the *fiesta*, it is common to see the doors of the church open, more than usual, because many people go to visit the virgin. On one occasion, while I was talking with a woman in the church, the priest approach to us, and with a good and intriguing mood, he asked me why I was interviewing the woman. I explained the purpose of my work and I asked him if I could interview him. At the beginning, he was not sure about it because he said he was not from Cenotillo, but then I explain to him that it would be interesting to hear his point of view of the *fiesta*. As the second *fiesta* he is participating in, he perceives the *fiesta* is about receiving migrants, serving them, and make sure they have a good time at the *pueblo*²⁷. He also, considers the *fiesta* is expensive compared to others, and locals cannot pay for everything, creating a dynamic in which “locals receive the migrants, and these ones pay locals their expenses during the festivity”. The priest also expressed, migrants make the town rich during the festivity, also the church has money to make some refurbishment from the money collected during the *fiesta*.

²⁷ *Pueblo*: Spanish word to refer to town. Many people interviewed refer Cenotillo as “mi pueblo” or “el pueblo” (my town or the town).

4.6 Government officials

This study is complemented by comments made by government officials working in the Instituto para el Desarrollo de la Cultura Maya del Estado de Yucatan, (INDEMAYA, Institute for the Development of Mayan Culture in the State of Yucatan). This institute has a particular department for migration affairs. I made an appointment with the subdirector of the Migrants Attention Department, and he accepted to be interviewed by me. He has been working in this department for eight years, and he expressed, international migration in Yucatan to the U.S. is not that old compared to other states of Mexico. However, he highlighted notorious municipalities of Yucatan, as Cenotillo, with the high index of people migrating to the U.S. and one of the oldest doing it, over thirty years. He mentioned, Cenotillo also has particular destination places in the U.S. -Los Angeles and San Bernardino in California, and Denver, Colorado-.

“Since the crisis of 2008 in the U. S, the laws, anti-migrants are more severe” (Angel August 2016).

According to him and the director of the Institute, Paulina, every year, since 2010, people hesitate to go to the U.S. People in Yucatan try to cross the border, but they realized about the risks, in particular, the organized crime groups guarding the border, and failed in their attempt to cross. Migration is the distinctive element making this *fiesta* different from the majority of localities in the state, identified in this chapter from actors’ motivations and expectations. The next tables present categories obtained from the previous descriptions of interviews and observations by locals and visiting migrants.

Table 1. Expectations and motivations by visiting migrants.

Visiting Migrants identity elements.	Actions	Expectations and Motivations
<i>Communication</i>	Few months before the <i>fiesta</i> starts: visiting migrants let their relatives, in Cenotillo to know they are going.	Talk with their relatives and go to visit to their family, expressing is the only chance in the year they have to do it.
<i>Religion</i>	Catholic believers see the <i>fiesta</i> as their own, and non-Catholic community members do not feel part of the festivity.	Some visiting migrants participate in the activities of the church <i>gremios</i> and the masses, in order to keep the promise of visiting the virgin.
<i>Money</i>	They send money to their relatives in function to make some refurbishments to their places in Cenotillo before they go.	Visiting migrants expressed they feel happy when they can share the money with their families in Cenotillo.

Table 2. Expectations and motivations by locals.

Locals identity elements.	Actions	Expectations and motivations
<i>Communication:</i>	Locals prepare beforehand, saving and/or borrow money, buying new clothes, painting the streets, building new houses, among other things. Community members see the <i>fiesta</i> as a way to entrance money to Cenotillo.	Expending time with their relatives who live in the U.S. after not seeing them over a year or more.
<i>Religion:</i>	Catholic locals prepare two or three months before the <i>fiesta</i> start, organizing the chorus at the church, the <i>gremios</i> , the masses, etc. For non-Catholic people, the <i>fiesta</i> means full of noise and fight crackers all over the town, representing religious images which they do not believe on.	For catholic locals, <i>fiesta</i> contribute to enhance their identity as catholic community, conforming the larger religious group in the town. For non-Catholic, <i>fiesta</i> is synonym of accidents, drunk people and noise.
<i>Money:</i>	Locals receive money before the <i>fiesta</i> to buy clothes, food and to make some improvements in their home to receive their relatives.	For locals, <i>fiesta</i> is about making more money in their business, is also about seeing the town in different conditions in which they are used to, with expensive cars, new clothes with renowned brands and much food and drinks.

In summary, during the *fiesta*, the town changed its shape completely: it seems the ghost town is gone, providing part of the answer of the main question in this chapter about, why is so special the context and the dynamics of St. Clare of Assisi *fiesta* in Cenotillo? The interaction between visiting migrants and community members makes this celebration special and unique, forming a well-structured dynamic according to previous arrangements. Both sides know exactly what were the responsibilities for each one, its migrations history makes the Cenotillo *fiesta* very remarkable compare to other communities. However, in order to give a meaning to these findings, chapter 5 helps to frame a meaning to these particular dynamics amongst the actors in the *fiesta* of St. Clare of Assisi.

Chapter 5. Temporary realities or imaginary places.

“All meanings, we know, depend on the key of interpretation”

- *George Eliot.*

5.1 Introduction

Words are the piece of thoughts generated by the mind in order to shape an own philosophy, however, is relevant to take into account the influence of the environment in our thoughts, and vice versa, just like Peter Kuznick said “history is a matter of interpretations, but you have to start with certain facts”. This chapter analyze findings based on narratives and evidence by of the actors in the festivity, complemented with observations obtained before, during and after the festivity, trying to respond some interrogations such as: How do the rituals of the *fiesta* influence how locals and visiting migrants see themselves and their identities? This interrogation will be analyzed under the scopes of rituals, space, places, identity, and community.

5.2 Rituals and identities

The *fiesta* of Cenotillo is a place where many objects and actions came alive with symbolic meanings. Eating together at the same table and at the same time, cooking together, going to the church, praying at an altar of the house, wearing the traditional gowns, are some of the scenarios seen during the *fiesta*.

Whitehouse and Laidlaw (2004) analyzed rituals as performed acts, people give them specific meanings; visiting migrants and locals, during the *fiesta*, know exactly what they are going to do. This is the case of Narciso is a local who is part of the men’s group who carry the virgin during the special celebration on August 12th, that is the special day of the St. Clare Assisi Virgin. He said is not going to the church often, but this action is part of a promise he does with the virgin every year, to be thankful to her for having work. Also, Marta, a local from Cenotillo, is a catholic teacher and also part of the chorus of the church, she is doing this for almost thirteen years. She said, two months before the *fiesta* start, all the teachers prepare the songs for the virgin celebration. She teaches to her students, the songs and they practice them at least two months before the celebration start.

Pilar is the woman who converted to a Jehovah witness fifteen years ago. For her, the *fiesta* is a time when many people get drunk and have fun in different ways; also the time where it has many noises because there several groups using fireworks in order to celebrate the virgin. She said there are many religious altars in the town with the image of the virgin representing each sector of Cenotillo. She knows at what times she should not pass through a specific street in order to avoid the noise. Alegría is a visiting migrant that, like many other people from the United States, visit Cenotillo with the intention of having a relaxing time,

and try to be with the family. During her visit, she said she needs to visit the virgin to the church, at least one time during her staying, otherwise, she would feel very bad about herself.

Considering previous perspectives, Saint Clare of Assisi virgin has symbolic meanings for everyone in Cenotillo during the *fiesta*, visiting migrants, locals, and also for people who are catholic and non-Catholic. Representing different desires, concerns, responsibilities or fears on people life's, each behavior has its origin from one symbol, the virgin. As was mentioned previously (chapter 2), Oxford Dictionaries (2016) describes a ritual with elements of ceremony, religion and performed by someone. Narciso, Martha and Pilar, as, among other people during the *fiesta*, have their own specific routine, composed with explicit rituals. The *fiesta* of Cenotillo, acquire meanings based on different rituals, primarily with the image of the virgin. This inevitable converted it, in a religious matter. Religion plays a relevant role in the nature of the festivity, and between the interaction of the actors related to the celebration.

Catholicism is a key contributor to the creation of the *fiesta*, mainly because the celebration is the virgin. However, seems fascinating, how people who do not consider themselves as a catholic, are also part of different activities of the catholic church, such as the *gremios*. These could be defined as the second symbol in the *fiesta* that defines a great part of the festivity. Even the *gremios* are not a tangible element like the virgin is, every professional association represents a specific occupation, for example, the musicians, the teachers, the migrants (the most relevant at the *fiesta*), among others. In this event, people have particular rituals: a group of men starts to blow fireworks to announce the *gremios* is about to start. This celebration starts when the people pick some flags with the image of the virgin at the church, and then they make a parade going straight to the person's house who offer to receive that *gremio*. This event seems to have different meanings for each person, primarily is an event from the catholic church, but there are some people who don't participate in masses in the church, but every year they participate in the *gremios* because is relevant for them, many of them because they feel connected with the cause. Many people contributed with money, knowing that this money goes to the church. *Gremio* is composed by ceremony and fun, defined by Antonio Aruño (2002) when he describes the *fiesta*. This combination made people identify with the *fiesta* through a ritual in which they participated. A musician playing to the virgin it would be considered part of a religious ritual and a promise to the saint or his self. This is also a dynamic created between individuals and their own commitments, their own rituals, their own traditions.

These *gremios* are significantly important during the *fiesta* season, this means before and during the *fiesta*. As it mentioned previously in chapter 2, *gremios* are one of the ancient activities in Cenotillo. This is a tradition where people gather together according to their similarities and their own affinities. Every professional association identifies themselves as part of a group. In this way, *gremios* are a crucial part of the *fiesta*, considering this tradition a very ancient ritual as part of the catholic church. However, it results from very fascinating a statement made by the Jose, a young man of 27 years, who is part of the musician *gremios*, who play his guitar in the events, but he does not consider his self as a Catholic, he said he is not religious, but he likes to play his guitar and be part of

these events during the *fiesta*. In this section, about rituals, the virgin is the major target catholic symbol of the *fiesta*; however, other non-Catholic rituals are part of the analysis as well, which are expressed as part of cultural tradition. Food and dances represented embedded elements in the festivity connecting ideologies and traditions.

When I arrived at Irene's house in Cenotillo to interview her, the first thing she told me was: "I am sorry for the messy look, I just finished cooking the *chocolomo*²⁸ for the meal, you are invited of course" (August 2016). It is common during these days, many families prepare meals based on beef, this is because there is a huge amount of beef sold after the bullfights the where the bulls are killed. During the festivity, there are particular moments remarked by food, that is the clear case where early in the morning, at five in the morning, Natalia arrived with her tricycle in the corner of the marketplace of the town and she starts to sell *tamales* and *atole*, many people stop by to eat there or buying to take away. I heard people saying that they are the first thing they do during the day during the *fiesta* every day. Usually, one hour later, six in the morning, people get into the market with a huge laminated box with *Cochinita*²⁹, this could define one of the most expected moments based on the quantity of people who are standing in a line expecting the food arrives.³⁰

In summary, rituals in Cenotillo are actions with symbolic elements that allow people to identify with and specific social group, this might include religion, social activities, and food. These rituals are performed in private and public spheres in Cenotillo, getting people out from their normal routine. In consequence, it can be explained, the *fiesta* for many people, locals, and visiting migrants represent a complex dynamic of performing rituals filled with symbolic elements of the town, contributing to create their own routine in the *fiesta* season.

In order to analyze identities in this research, the dynamics amongst people in the festivity will be studied using Jose Del Val's notion of identity referred to in Chapter 2. First, "there is no individual or human group that is not involved in the process of identity; identity is about belonging, therefore, exclusion" (Del Val 2004: 50). In this research paper Everyone participated in the construction of identity: In this research, can be distinguished a "temporary" identity that is activated particularly by the *fiesta* effects. And I mentioned effects, because it not only refers to the *fiesta* itself, it also concerns the dynamic generated in the town month before the *fiesta* started. When people start to communicate in order to arrange things concerning the festivity. In this sense, every single person constructs an identity related to their roles.

Identities are about belonging: Del Val (2004:50) stated, "belonging and exclusion are conditionals of any social existence", nowadays is inevitable not to think the *fiesta* of Cenotillo without the participation of the migrants. The essence of this *fiesta* is the migrants like Gabriel (cameraman) and Pedro (priest) said. Their feeling of home and belonging move to migrants to go every year to

²⁸ *Chocolomo* is the name of a soap in Yucatan, made by beef.

²⁹ *Cochinita* is one of the most traditional food in Yucatan made by pork and cooked under the ground.

³⁰ There is a traditional expression in Yucatan that goes like this: "A *Cochinita* sandwich and a very cold coca cola to start a happy morning".

the *fiesta*. It would easy questioning, what if every dollar they save to travel to Mexico would spend in another thing or to travel to other destinations? But it seems, the *fiesta* is a place where visiting migrants “recharges batteries”, knowing this community is a place where they always can return and feel it as their home because they build their earlier memories there. But these identities of belonging to Cenotillo, is not only seems to remain in the town during the *fiesta*, because many visiting migrants who I interviewed, expresses that even the only place where they feel in their ‘original home’ is in Cenotillo, admitting they try to be in touch with many *Cenotillenses* who live in California or Colorado, so, in this way, they can feel there is a little part of Cenotillo in the place they are living. And as Del Val refer that “any individual, in any culture, participates in multiple associations giving him or her specific identities” (2004: 50) this is the case of visiting migrants, remaining their identities of being *Cenotillense* in every given place when they are, in the U.S or/and Mexico.

Elements of communication, religion and money (see table 1 and 2), pointed out two identity groups, visiting migrant’s identity and local’s identity, contributing to create a notion of cultural identity in the town during the *fiesta*. Visiting migrant’s identity is based on the idea to come back for a few weeks, spending money they earn during the past months in order to share this “special” festivity whit their relatives who stayed in the town. Locals identity is based on the idea of receiving their relatives who live in the U.S, knowing they change their daily routine to assisting them in every need they have. And, overall, bearing in mind the religion plays an unquestionable role between these dynamics, highlighting the process in which people who are non-Catholic identify themselves during the *fiesta*. Such as Nickie Charles and Helen Hintjens, accurately argue that “a recognition of contradictions within minority communities, as within any society, makes possible an understanding that their members may experience conflicting loyalties and fragmented identities” (2002: 15).

Octavio Paz, a Mexican writer, expressed in his book *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, that “time is no longer succession, and become what it originally was and is: the present in which past and future are reconciled” (Paz 1985: 48). Paz explains Mexican celebrations at the only time in which the Mexican recovers her or his center that was lost in the Spanish conquest. He also expressed the role many people performed about prosperity, even they do not have it, they supposed to pretend they have money to spend. On the same line, bringing money to the town by visiting migrants, may be perceived by locals as a role of “saviors” of the town.

5.3 Space, place and glocalities

As part of the meaning of the *fiesta*, spaces and places represent a fundamental scope of analysis in this paper. But what does it mean, these performances in specific space and places? This paper focuses its attention on a topic that might be overlooked in different scopes, most of them through anthropological lenses, however, this study has its relevance more in the meaning of the dynamics between people and the symbolic representation than just of the significance of the *fiesta* itself. These dynamics, let Harcourt and Escobar conceptual work of

the nature of globalization, be a starting point to analyse elements of space, place, and identity in this research.

A mixed with social, cultural and political elements have made many places consider no longer pure, this means, “places are no longer isolated, taking away their unique essence; places are clearly made and affected by their encounters with global processes” (Harcourt and Escobar 2002: 8). Based on the previous statement, the *fiesta* of Cenotillo can be considered as a place of global and local mixed elements, creating an encounter sense of international culture with local traditions. This fusion might give the feeling of being in a global place, without the need of leaving the town. This is the case of Narciso, who had never thought about leaving Cenotillo to seek the job in other cities in Mexico or cross the border to the U.S. He said visiting migrants gave to Cenotillo a sense of opportunities for locals, considering visiting migrants people who bring money and ostentatious cars, clothes or electronic device. For he is like having a “mini” United States in the town, is the way how he imagines to be in the U.S, surrounded by technology and money. “Space represents, and is represented by, disturbing images of the real determinations of social relations” (Keith and Pile, 2005: 2).

La fiesta de Cenotillo (The *fiesta* of Cenotillo) is a very specific scenario where many conductive patron behaviors repeat every year. Since this research concerns mainly between two groups, visiting migrants, and locals, identity is defined in function over the dynamics between them. Who are the locals when visiting migrants go to the Cenotillo and who are the visiting migrants when they go during the *fiesta*? Many locals declare they feel part responsible for the welcoming of the visiting migrants in order to set up everything to make them feel comfortable. Locals are people who live in the community all their life, very few have had the chance to visit their relatives in the U.S., but the majority have never had the opportunity to go to the U.S. In this matter, many locals express they wait for their relatives because they bring them clothes, shoes or toys, knowing the *fiesta* is the place where they can wear them. This phenomenon is a clear dynamic between these two groups, where is very notorious different brands are also part of the festivity, this can be seen in cars, hats, shirts and even toys. That could signify also a status among local people, in which it could be a difference between those who have family in the U.S. and also people who do not have any. Locals who do not expect any relatives. However, in this paper, it relevant to pointing out, that other interviewed locals are merchants, who see the *fiesta* as a way to increase their incomes. So for them, visiting migrants help them to reinforce their economies, and in consequence, increase the local economy.

Visiting migrants and locals, expressed they feel the *fiesta* as an imaginary baseline in their life, as a period in which they could measure their year, setting an end and a beginning. That is the case of Norma and Felipe, a married couple who go to the *fiesta* every year, but they start to save money for the *fiesta* since the month of January. So, it can be determined, their identity as a migrant in the U.S is in function to remember the *fiesta* and they hope to come back every year, and with the illusion to return and live again in Cenotillo.

Analyzing at space and place is relevant in this study, to distinguish elements as food and dances to understand identities per every group, especially for migrants. Migrants experienced excitement when they know they will visit Cenotillo, and this feeling reminds of the question, made by Mazzucato, Kabki and Smith (2006) in their work about Transnational Migration and the economy of Funerals in Ghana, “Why are migrants interested in gaining respect from their home community when they are living so far away?” Many migrants in the research expressed they feel proud and happy with themselves knowing they can send money to their relatives in Cenotillo, giving them a feeling of ‘provider’. The majority of the people who I interview, expressed they desire to return to Cenotillo to live when they retired from their work or when they decide ‘is time’. This feeling, this is similar in the statements of Okyame, one of the people interviewed in the study of Mazzucato, Kabki and Smith, refer about migrant’s decisions: “when you are young, nobody wants to live in the village, but when you are old, everybody comes back there” (interview, Amsterdam, 13 December 2003 as cited in Mazzucato et al. 2006: 1061). Similar to the testimony from Norma and Felipe, a married couple who left Cenotillo looking for better job opportunities, however they expressed are planning to stay few more years in Los Angeles, until they save more money and move back to Cenotillo, because is the place they would like to die.

Previous asseverations, highlighted the importance of migration in development studies, bearing in mind the current fluctuation of people around the world. The necessity of being in touch with their home communities is part of the process of reframing their identities in different places, considering their local conception into their global atmosphere.

5.4. Community

In order to respond to the interrogation of this chapter, first this was analyzed in terms of the meaning of the rituals, subsequently by the meaning of place and space to understand the identity of visiting migrants and locals. Now is the moment to analyze the sense of community performed during the *fiesta* between all the people involved in this festivity, taking into account, also, the role of the cameraman and the relevance of the priest.

As Rogaly and Taylor suggested in their work, “a constructed and relational nature of community may be seen as part of the wider problematizing on the link between society and place” (2009: 20). However, considering the relevance of identity in this paper, it is necessary to take into account the perspectives in which visiting migrants and locals consider themselves as part of this ‘binary function’ complemented by external resources. Many authors have used different elements to analyze the phenomenon of community in a society. Such as Wright refer to collective identity as a “selective process of memory, framing the mind of a group of people, helping them to recognize memories from a common past” (as cited in Morley and Robins 2002: 46). This is also presented by Schlesinger, through a developed view between “identity and the role of social groups trying to set their own boundaries” (as cited in Morley and Robins 2002: 46) From this perspective, then, national identity is a specific form of collective identity: All identities are constituted within a system of social relations and require the reciprocal recognition of others.

Considering the previous literature review, analyzing a sense of community in this paper needs to be framed under the elements, emotional attachment and the social dynamics developed during the *fiesta*. This will help to understand the meaning of the individual and collective actions in order to define themselves during the festivity. In order to analyse the emotional attachments, is necessary to make the distinction between visiting migrants, community, local community and the interaction of these two groups, creating a Cenotillo community. Emotional attachment of visiting migrant's community, reside in the feeling of being '*tranquilos*' (a sense of being relaxed), as one of the most resonant answers about why they go to the *fiesta*. This feeling is important in this study, because many visiting migrants and locals refer this sensation associated with the - there are other recent studies about this feeling made by Deanna Barenboim (2016) who set down some baselines about "*tranquilidad*"³¹ -. In this scope, it is necessary to point out this feeling is a fundamental element in order to analyze visiting migrant's identity while they are in Cenotillo.

At the same time, results from the how the local's community was from a contradictory perspective, they feel disturbed when the *fiesta* happens, when the visiting migrants arrived. It seems, their dynamic change as a local community, that is the case of Pilar, the woman who is a Jehovah witness, saying that during the *fiesta* she change her dynamic, instead going house from house preaching about her religion, she does little talks in a particular place, because she knows during that period everyone is busy. Also for Natalia, who need to start earlier her routine in order to make more food to sell; or Pedro the man who has his own spot on food service in the main plaza during the *fiesta*, is the only time when he set down his little place in the plaza, otherwise he sell food in his house far away from the center. These cases are examples in which many people change their routine in order to obtain something, some prefer to maintain distance from the noise and other take advantages of the season to sell more. Now that community is explained as part of a social group according to their role in the festivity, is time to focus attention on the social phenomenon of a collective interaction, between visiting migrants, locals and resource persons. During the *fiesta*, the community senses it can be defined the interaction between people, based on the feeling of home and belonging. Even some visiting migrants may not conceive Cenotillo as their home, but they feel they belong there, and locals expressed Cenotillo is their home, and they belong there. At the same time, the scenario of the *fiesta* also includes the influence of the priest, who help to organize all the activities in church during the *fiesta* and many people consider him a relevant figure in the town. And considering the bidirectional dynamic, between visiting migrants and locals, it can also be highlighted, as Kees Biekart pointed out "the relevance to establish *strategic alliances*" (2005: 28), in his work about Policies of European NGOs for Latin America: Recent Trends and Perspectives. This could mean, the people as a community produce and reproduce strategies in order to keep "*animated*", the town through the rituals during the *fiesta*.

Gupta and Ferguson (1992: 10), defined community, based on "a common history, experience or culture of a group's belongings; and also about how

³¹ See related article: "The Specter of Surveillance: Navigating "Illegality" and Indigeneity among Maya Migrants in the San Francisco Bay Area. By Deanna Barenboim (2016).

people are attached to places, imagined or real". In this paper, the community can be understood as a system of intersections of religions and different social groups with a sense of belonging attached to a place having specific spaces of interactions. Based on this idea, the *fiesta* of Cenotillo is a singular event, happening in a structured space and in a determined period of time, this festivity performs a "Role playing" in which every actor knows the function of each "character". This phenomenon, can be part of the notion of a "collective imagined community", that only lives in the mind of the people, and it comes alive every august, particularly enhance by the actions performed from visiting migrants during the *fiesta*, in order to maintain their identity of being "Cenotillense", based on their memories while they were living in Cenotillo. On the other hand, locals participate in this "Role playing", also as *sceneshifter*³², having the responsibility of "setting the stage" beforehand, waiting for the show to start. So, this phenomenon, may represent a "temporary reality" or an "imaginary place" in which visiting migrants and locals contribute to endorse an individual and collective identity.

In summary, in order to respond to the central question of this chapter about, What role do *fiesta* rituals play in recreating identities of visiting migrants and local people in Cenotillo? I conclude rituals are symbolic actions with different meanings for the people who are performing them, motivated by a feeling of belonging attached by the place, expressing a high sense of emotional attachment during the space of the *fiesta*. As a community, people celebrating the *fiesta* in Cenotillo develop a collective sense of bidirectional functionality, locals helping visiting migrants to preserve their identities as "Cenotillense" and visiting migrant helping locals to keep contact to global spaces. The *fiesta* of Cenotillo visualizes the dynamic created by people whose life are influenced by a mixed of global and local elements, performed in a specific place filled of rituals and traditions, helping them to preserve their identity as part of a community.

³² *Sceneshifter*: A person who moves the scenery on a stage between the scenes of a play. (Oxford Dictionaries 2016).

Chapter 6. Conclusions

Thinking about the world as a homogenous space is almost impossible; international migration has permitted the integration of cultures and languages creating an extensive mixed of dynamics. These dynamics represent symbolic actions filled with meanings, with different paradigms and assumptions, generating an identity as an individual and as part of a community. This paper engages the importance of the dynamic between two different social groups, defined by a migration status, and ‘belonging’ from a town called Cenotillo. Visiting migrants (living in the United States) and locals from the town share a feeling of belonging to a place, attributing importance to the place of the festivity in which everyone has a particular role in order to create a functional dynamic.

First of all, in this research, theorizing identities and rituals in the festivities were a key point to explain the dynamics between the people participating in the *fiesta*. Rituals were seen as a continuous system of symbolic action, performed particularly in the *fiesta* season. At the same time, identity was studied as a scheme of complex relations, developed by a determined role during the *fiesta*. In this sense, identity for visiting migrants consists of being aware of them providing money to the community and it was complemented by the same perception from the locals, that migrants leave money to the town after the *fiesta*. Locals, on the other hand, agree that during the *fiesta* they change their routine, knowing their role was about to create an adequate environment to receive the migrants. In summary, visiting migrants play the role of providers, and locals performed the role of receivers. If I consider to describe this in a more romantic way, visiting migrants may be playing the role of the “saviors” providing money to the town, making sure locals play a role of “protectors” of the town. In this sense, the dynamic between these two groups allows the town to preserve their own identity in order to people do not lose theirs.

Secondly, contextualizing the *fiesta* in chapter 3, allows us to understand different spaces where many of the dynamics take place. Many of them in cultural activities, particularly dances; others in religious spaces, such as the church and *gremios*; and other spaces, such as the bullfights. Originally they don’t have a religious basis, but symbolic representations are also part of this event. Subsequently, in order to ‘pull together all the pieces of the puzzle’, analyzing community in this research helped to understand the role of each person during the *fiesta*. Based on a specific place, people behave in order to satisfy the needs of others, and in consequence have a benefit from each other. This general perception contributes to establishing an identity of the community to preserve their own identity as part of the functional dynamic during the *fiesta*. This does not mean, every group, visiting migrants, and locals, take up these specific roles in the whole year.

Rituals literature helps to understand the process of human beings to identify with “something” in order to feel part of a community or a history. This paper considers as a ritual any action made by a person or a group of people in relation to a symbolic meaning. Narratives of people analyzed based on their description from their daily performances in the *fiesta*, reflected a solid sense of community according to their dynamics and the function of everyone, having a shared sense of place and space, Cenotillo in the *fiesta*.

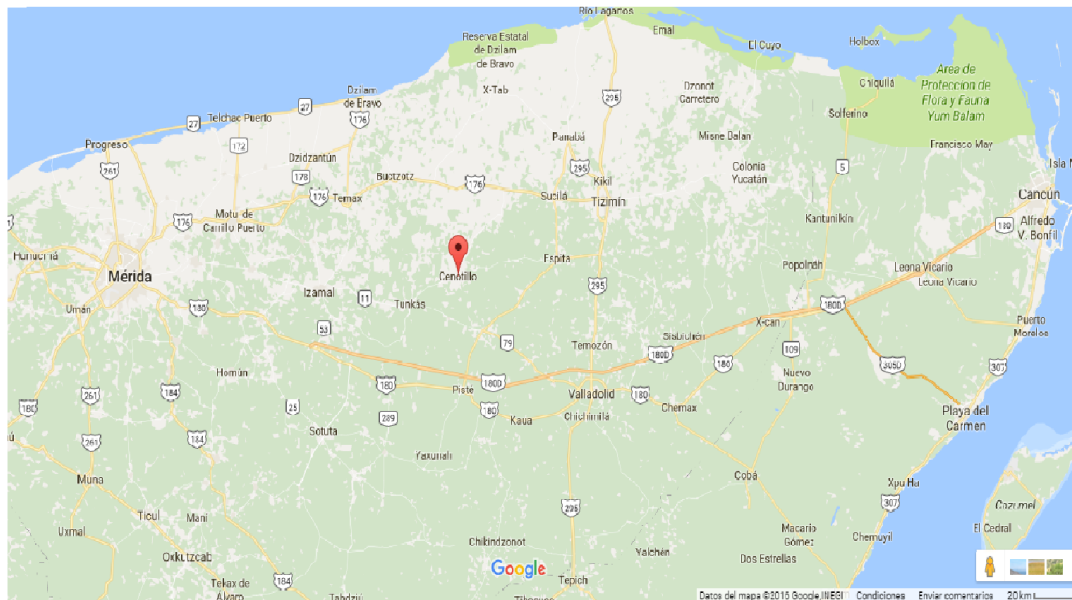
This research starts with the notion about Cenotillo as a ‘ghost town’, but this does not make sense during the *fiesta*, and visiting migrants have a different view about Cenotillo. Furthermore, this study also argues about the relevance of the combination of space and place, Cenotillo and the *fiesta*, which is the perfect combination to reinforce the feeling of a community, but due to this season has an expiration date, the *fiesta* ends, and the community remains as a town without noise and more relevant, without migrants. Therefore, the sense of the community changes, everything goes back to the normal routine, starting to count down the months and dates until the next *fiesta* start.

In conclusion, the *fiesta* of the patron St. Clare of Assisi means for visiting migrants and locals, a place in which they benefit from one another. Visiting migrants look at the *fiesta* as a place in which they can “feed” their feeling of belonging to Cenotillo; and locals at the same time, playing a role of the “instrument” to help visiting migrants to preserve that feeling. This sensation is relevant for the people who live in the U.S because the season of the *fiesta* is the only time when they actively experience their own traditions of cooking regional food, performing local dances and the time where they remember histories about their life while they used to live in Cenotillo.

Map 1. Location of Yucatan in Mexico



Map 2. Location of Cenotillo in Yucatan



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Appendix 1. List of participants

No.	Name	Age	Current location	Religion	Years living abroad	Status	Date
1	Alegría	60	Los Angeles	Catholic	38	Visiting migrant	13 August 2016
2	Angel	56	Mérida	-	-	Government official.	18 August 2016
3	Cleotilde	70	Los Angeles	Catholic	53	Visiting migrant	21 August 2016
4	Felipe	54	Los Angeles	Catholic	29	Visiting migrant.	12 August 2016
5	Gabriel	50	Cenotillo	Catholic	-	Resources persons	21 August 2016
6	Irene	72	Los Angeles	Catholic	14	Visiting migrant	3 August 2016
7	Ismael	48	Cenotillo	Catholic	-	Local	24 August 2016
8	José	62	Cenotillo	Catholic	-	Local	3 August 2016
9	Lizette Queen of the <i>fiesta</i>	19	Cenotillo	Catholic	-	Local	3 August 2016
10	Mayra	29	Cenotillo	Pentecostal	-	Local	24 August 2016
11	Marta	38	Cenotillo	Catholic	-	Local	8 August 2016
12	Narciso	61	Cenotillo	Catholic	-	Local	August 21.
13	Norma	57	Los Angeles	Catholic	29	Visiting migrant	12 August 2016
14	Paulina	61	Merida	-	-	Government	26 August 2016
15	Pedro 1	46	Cenotillo	Christian	-	Local	13 August 2016

16	Pedro 2	48	Cenotillo	Catholic	-	Resource person	8 August 2016
17	Pilar	57	Cenotillo	Jehovah witness	-	Local	21 August 2016
18	Raymundo	54	Los Angeles	Catholic	31	Visiting migrant	12 August 2016
19	Reina	46	Cenotillo	Evangelic	22	Local/ Return migrant. ³³	3 August 2016
20	Rosario	65	Cenotillo	Catholic	-	Local	21 August 2016
21	Valentina	66	Cenotillo	Evangelic	-	Local	21 August 2016

³³ Reina is a woman who returned to Cenotillo to live since April 2016.

Appendix 2: Reflections on the Research Process and Ethics

What is the role of the researchers in doing development, doing the traveling, and constitutes the meaning of people and places? The previous question was raised by Wendy Harcourt and Roy Huijsmans in one of the sessions of Making of Development course during the master. Before I did the research fieldwork, I prepared documents and notebooks with the organized schedule, and when I arrived at the field doing the work in the community I had an idea about what the study it was supposed to be about, but turned out that my scope change during the process.

When I interviewed the first women, I had many assumptions around in my mind. While I was talking to her, she literally said, “I returned to Cenotillo but I don’t like the *fiesta*, in fact, to be honest, I prefer to go to my mom’s house that is far from the center, otherwise I hear so much noise and I don’t like it”. At that moment, one of my first assumptions went down, and I knew the fieldwork, it was going to be more difficult than I thought.

The time in the community was passing by like it was a story with blank spaces in my notebook that I was supposed to fill with descriptions, perceptions, and meanings. I was very disoriented sometimes because even it was a familiar celebration to me, I was looking at through different eyes. I was trying to understand what was all about development studies, and as I just described at the beginning of this paper, at the same time I was wondering what I was representing or what was the meaning for me, being a woman studying in the Netherlands, coming from Mexico and doing fieldwork in a place that, even I am familiar with, I had never lived there and I was trying to study a phenomenon that I experienced every year since I was a kid.

During the process of fieldwork, I saw the celebration in two perspectives, as part of a complex group of elements and as isolated group events. That was the process where I confirmed that celebrations, related to anything, saints, dead or alive people, animals or whatever would be, is a space of expression, a space in which people performed beliefs and share the same place and space with other persons, creating a sense of community. However, the *fiesta* of Cenotillo, as it is being pointed out in this paper has its own particularities, visiting migrants awaits this season to come back to the town, and according to many of them, fear, uncertainty, doubt, frustration, are some of the feelings that experience when they decide to leave, moved by different reasons; but at the same time, motivated by the feeling of the hope, capable to make every person to continue seeking other perspectives of life.

Appendix 3. Video ‘La *fiesta* del pueblo’

The research paper is illustrated by a video³⁴ visualizing key elements of the study creating an approachable sense to the *fiesta*.

See link below:

< <https://youtu.be/TsXbVwfsmpY> >

³⁴ Some of the shots videos are from *Provision*, the company of Gabriel Correa Azueta, Cameraman of Cenotillo.