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expressions of cultural heritage among senior citizen immigrants, recovered from early memories from their homelands, but also from those experiences gained during the migration process, may also play a positive role in overcoming migration homesickness.

The present paper wishes to open a debate on the role of cultural heritage as a healing experience to increase the quality of life for aging immigrants and refugees, taking as an example Chilean refugees entering retirement in Sweden.

Chile, 11 September 1973

On 11 September 1973, General Pinochet launched an armed attack against the democratically elected Chilean government of President Allende. The new regime was characterized by the systematic suppression of political parties to an extent that has been described as “political genocide”: torture and detention practices were used on a national scale as a tool for political control by state authorities (The Rettig Commission 1991; The Valech Commission 2004). Another strategy to redraw Chile’s political map was by way of expulsion, resulting in the forced exile of at least 200,000 Chileans (about 2% of Chile’s 1973 population; AUNHCR 2000; Montupli 1993). Additionally, hundreds of thousands left the country in the wake of the economic crises that followed the military coup during the 1980s. It is estimated that more than 30,000 Chilean refugees arrived in Sweden (Moore 1993). In 1990, democracy was restored; many exiles finally returned to their homeland after 17 years. However, the return was not always as successful as dreamed. Not all refugees were able to confront another process of migration re-adaptation (and re-acculturation) to Chile after 17 years, and many returned to the land of their exile, which suddenly became the closest to their *homeland*. From the mid-1990s, a lot of the Chilean refugees returned to Sweden. In Sweden, Chileans in exile turned to a vivid life with extensive political and cultural activities that united them in a strong community. Today, Chileans are considered the largest socially and politically well-organized, and best-integrated group of immigrants in Swedish society (Montupil 1993).

Memory, homesickness and identities associated with exile and *desexilio*

Exile, which turns out to be the only way of surviving for political refugees, also means a traumatic journey. Exile involves a break in people’s life plan, the loss of family space, social and cultural context, and the impossibility of any rite of farewell. It includes a forced adaptation to a new environment never before imagined or desired. Like any other refugee, Chileans in Sweden also had problems with adaptation when they had to adjust to cultural and lifestyle differences (van Tilburg and Vingerhoets 2005). In most cases, there was a feeling of homesickness (Fig. 1) over what was acutely left behind, nourished by two subsequent circumstances. First, during the first years of exile, most Chilean refugees denied their condition, arguing that it was going to be just transitory: Pinochet will soon be defeated and the democracy will be reinstalled, so they will be able to return to their previous life. Secondly, once it was clear that return would not be possible, most exiles went through a mixture of different psychological conditions, which most of the time reinforced homesickness. From the beginning, the Chilean exile was marked by the constant tension between the need to accommodate their reality to the host society as immigrant, and the tendency to remain attached to the homeland as refugee (Luján Leiva 1999, 2002; Olsson 2009; Camacho 2011; *Tan lejos, tan cerca* 2002).

The term *desexilio* was coined by the Uruguayan writer Mario Benedetti in 1982 to express the contradictory emotions of those who returned home after exile, when democracy was restored to Uruguay, Argentina and Chile. Since then, it has been used to describe the new exile encountered on return to the homeland, the impossibility of adapting oneself to the different (even foreign) country that their original homeland has turned out to be after the period of exile. Consequently, those who returned home again felt the sense of estrangement that characterizes migration, and the again the need of emigrant’s adaptation. Consequently, homesickness occurred again, but now the immigrant misses not just a place, but a memory: something that it is in the past, something that is remembered, reminisced

over, and performed, but is just attached to their personal memories and not necessarily to what is found in their homeland now.

On the other hand, the construction of an exile identity among the Chilean refugees has been based on a mixture and juxtaposition of both the re-creation of homeland through memory, and the re-construction of the unknown new reality of the host country into a familiar landscape (Luján Leiva 1999, 2002). Homeland in memory, from little everyday routines to nationalistic epic episodes, acquires a profound significance in evoking their past identity in Chile, but also serving as both a refuge in the face of difficulties in Sweden, and a way to redefine the self while assuming their new identity as immigrant in Sweden (Luján Leiva 1999). In practical terms, this process has produced a lot of tangible and intangible heritage: theatre plays, poetry, prose, visual art, gastronomic encounters, dance clubs, music, political actions, etc. Parallel to this is another process of self-dislocation and relocation, to allow the building of new emotional bonds to Sweden. We may name it the deconstruction and reconstruction of the Swedish urban and natural landscape according to the exiles' perceptions, in order for the host country to be understood and appreciated (after Luján Leiva 1999). The final result is the integration of oneself to the host country: the exiled person not only became an immigrant (the post-exile condition), but slowly, a Swedish citizen.



Fig. 1: Naming exile and desexilio. Associated identity conditions.

We may argue that this long process of perpetual remembering, dislocating and locating the emotional bond to the place and culture of both origin and exile, has finally (re)created another identity, that of Chileans in Sweden. Similarly, we have the dialogue/confrontation with the Swedish cultural reality that concludes with a *different* Swedish cultural identity, different in the sense that it embodies particular significant attachments to Swedish *places*,

objects and attitudes according to the Chilean refugee/immigrant perspective. Thus, the cultural identity of these Swedish Chileans may be a mix of everything that has relevance in creating a sense of belonging rooted into their refugee condition in Sweden. Similarly, the homesickness of migration is related to places, things, and realities that no longer exist in Chile, except in the memory of the refugees and immigrants: a frozen memory that has been performed and re-interpreted in Sweden as part of the immigrant longing and cultural survival process. A rescued memory, though, that turns out to be the actual tangible and intangible heritage of *Chile* of those Chileans in Sweden. In heritage terms, the nature of the bi-cultural identity of the Chileans in Sweden has expressions of spaces, places, artefacts, and intangible elements that testify to this particular cultural identity of the Chileans in exile in Sweden since 1973.

Getting older in Sweden as an immigrant

Old age is often a time to review and to search for the meaning of life. Older people tend to imbue local space with personal memories and social meanings, all of which may produce strong emotional attachments to the home environment (Rubinstein and Parmelee 1992). Thus, the elderly handle transitions to later life by seeking solace and guidance from cultural heritage with an increased interest in their cultural history, community identity, and attachment to place. However, it cannot be taken for granted that older immigrants have this strong emotional attachment to place in their current daily life in their host countries: their personal identity memories, those attached to childhood, are from far away and have no mirrored connection to their present landscapes. It is in this sense that they are facing retirement in a known but nonetheless “foreign” country.

The first Chilean refugees are now in their 60s and approaching Swedish retirement age. It is accordingly assumed that they may start not only to review their lives but also to adjust their age condition to the Swedish context. This process will go along with the fact that they are immigrants with an exile past. In this process of life reviewing, the relationship between homeland and host country will obviously be examined (consciously or unconsciously) in terms of immigrant identity and emotional attachments. In this sense, questions arise:

- How much of their community story as Chilean immigrants in Sweden is reflected in and projected into their current environment so that they may be emotionally attached to it?
- How much of the Swedish cultural context echoes their identity so that they may feel part of the community?
- Are they emotionally attached to the landscape, artefacts, performances and traditions that define Swedish cultural heritage?

If the answers to these questions are negative, they may feel displaced, accelerating the sense of homesickness, loss, loneliness and displacement. They may also feel a certain degree of personal vulnerability and insecurity that characterize both old age and the migration condition. Such a development entails a risk of detachment from their present context and from successful aging.

In order to amend this situation, it is believed that cultural heritage may have an important role in both enhancing the quality of life for the elderly and rooting immigrants to their land of retirement, if heritage practices are performed from a bi-cultural perspective. Moreover, it is assumed that heritage is considered valuable and is assessed in terms of identity construction and social integration.

In terms of cultural heritage, it is expected that the community of senior immigrants will assign particular and different significance to specific elements, so that their collective identities will define and evoke a particular sense of belonging. Therefore, it will be necessary to listen, understand and assess what tangible and intangible cultural items (memories, reminiscences, places, artefacts, images and performances) are relevant to aging Chileans/Swedish immigrants. The cultural items that must be particularly understood

are those that make sense to and are valued by Chileans in the context of their refugee condition in Sweden and, consequently, can be transformed into actual meaningful Swedish cultural heritage. To assess the value of specific cultural items introducing elements of discussion about elderly immigrants' past lives through the form of story-telling and workshops of personal life-histories also acts as a generative mental activity for these older adults, as well as establishing an oral history on the cultural identity of these Swedish Chileans. Done in an active participative process, it will probably both reinforce their personal and collective Chilean-Swedish bi-cultural identity, and strengthen a sense of belonging to their place of residence while providing an active therapeutic role to improve their well-being as elderly citizens. Finally, by transforming Chilean-Swedish places, artefacts, and collective life-stories into expressions of cultural heritage, we may also enrich local heritage with new tangible and intangible elements of (multi)cultural heritage. This process will be meaningful not only for the elderly immigrants, but will also have an increased significance for their Swedish grandchildren, who will find in this new local heritage the voice of their cultural background.

Becoming old today means being retired as a healthy and active citizen, capable of actively participating (not just observing) in life-long learning and community cultural activities. Different projects across Europe, but especially in Scandinavia, have shown that cultural heritage acts as a tool for improving senior citizens' connection to heritage and quality of life, including particular active and creative engagements with the historic environment, folk traditions, archives, and archaeological/historical museums and collections (see Chatterjee et al. 2009; Zipsane 2011). Extending these issues and approaches to the senior refugee community, it may contribute to active ageing, while helping them to overcome homesickness related to their bi-cultural identity.

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