The London School of Economics
and Political Science

Engaging with Nostalgia:
Reception, Social Imaginaries, and Young Audiences

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Declaration

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Abstract

In this thesis, I analyse how young audiences engage with nostalgic media texts. In recent years, from remakes or reboots to media texts set in previous decades, nostalgia has become a key ingredient of recent media production. Hence, I address two specific research questions: 1) how do young audiences interpret the past represented in nostalgic media texts; and 2) how do the national context and social identities of young audiences mediate their engagement with nostalgic media texts?

For this, I conducted a media consumption habits survey, 13 focus group discussions, and 35 paired interviews in one private and one public secondary education school in Costa Rica. My intention is to explore the reception of nostalgic media texts in a nation of the Global South in which the past has recently generated political and social tensions.

Thus, I first argue that these young audiences interpret the past represented in nostalgic media texts through an aestheticisation of the past and by employing a particular nostalgic social imaginary. Following textual cues and national discourses, these young people idealise the styles of the past but exhibit a critical awareness in terms of some social tensions of previous decades.

Then, I argue that nostalgia is a structure of feeling which emerges from an unsatisfying present. By exploring the social identities of the participants, I discuss how nostalgia is differently articulated depending on the social position of these young people. I identify how the students from the private school experience an aesthetic nostalgia, based on the romanticisation of the styles of the past but characterised by an optimistic appraisal of the future, and how the students from the public school experience a material nostalgia, an idealisation of the past derived from daily experiences of economic deprivation and the expectation of a precarious future.

This thesis is dedicated to the kindness of strangers and teachers,
who are often the same.

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"Yo imaginaba ver aquello a través de los recuerdos de mi madre; de su nostalgia, entre retazos de suspiros. Siempre vivió ella suspirando por Comala, por el retorno; pero jamás volvió. Ahora yo vengo en su lugar. Traigo los ojos con que ella miró estas cosas, porque me dio sus ojos para ver".

Juan Rulfo. *Pedro Páramo*

"Although the ideological power of contemporary cultural forms is enormous, indeed sometimes even frightening, that power is not yet all-pervasive, totally vigilant, or complete. Interstices still exist within the social fabric where opposition is carried on by people who are not satisfied by their place within it or by the restricted material and emotional rewards that accompany it".

Janice Radway. *Reading the Romance*

"I have an idea that some men are born out of their due place. Accident has cast them amid certain surroundings, but they have always a nostalgia for a home they know not. They are strangers in their birthplace, and the leafy lanes they have known from childhood or the populous streets in which they have played, remain but a place of passage. They may spend their whole lives aliens among their kindred and remain aloof among the only scenes they have ever known. Perhaps it is this sense of strangeness that sends men far and wide in the search for something permanent, to which they may attach themselves".

W. Somerset Maugham. *The Moon and Sixpence*

"If you have ghosts, you have everything".

Roky Erickson. *If You Have Ghosts*

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Stranger Things on a School Day

On 27 April 2019, I arrived at St. Mary High School in the morning and I was certainly surprised: the students were wearing clothes from the 1980s. Their uniform, which was a light blue polo shirt with the school's insignia stamped on the right side of the chest and dark blue trousers, had been changed for high-waisted jeans, Led Zeppelin t-shirts and denim or leather jackets. As I would notice later, not all of them were dressed in a similar manner; yet all of them were wearing some kind of costume. That day, I would be applying surveys to the students in the 10th grade. I was administering the surveys in their computer classes; thus, as soon as the first group of young people arrived, I inquired about their peculiar apparel. They explained to me that the student government had organised a contest in which every class would dress based on a popular TV series or film. The winning class would get special prizes. The 10th grade had chosen *Stranger Things* (2016) as their inspiration. And these students had done their duty: they had devotedly followed the styles of the 1980s as represented in this Netflix original production. "I even brought my Dad's old bike", I was told by Tomás, a student who was proud of his class's efforts to win. However, as they expressed, they were facing fierce competition from the people in the 9th grade, who had selected *That 70's Show* (1998) as their theme.

My initial surprise derived from the fact that I was beginning fieldwork the aim of which was to investigate how young audiences engage with nostalgic media texts. Without any provocation on my part, these students demonstrated to me that my research interests were not far-fetched: first, nostalgic representations of the past are an important part of the contemporary mediascape, and second, they are interpreted and appropriated by audiences in the Global South, specifically in Costa Rica.

Nostalgia is a specific way of remembering the past which entails an idealisation of a previous period of time (Boym, 2001). A sensation or understanding of a present that is lacking and unsatisfying compels a desire for a lost time which is materialised in some sort of cultural product or goal (Al-Ghazzi, 2018); in this respect, a point of origin – located in the past – is mystified and might be taken

as a blueprint for the present or the future (Pickering & Keightley, 2006; Tannock, 1995). Nostalgia, then, can emerge from personal experiences, but it can also flourish from different mediations, such as certain modes of representing the past (Keightley & Pickering, 2012; Landsberg, 2004). Indeed, contemporary mediascapes are marked by nostalgia (Cross, 2015; Holdsworth, 2011; Niemeyer & Keightley, 2020). From reboots, remakes, sequels and revivals to period dramas, the past is adapted and represented in a variety of forms, genres, platforms and industries (Ewen, 2020; Niemeyer, 2014). For instance, *Stranger Things* (2016) is a TV series which is set in the 1980s and, in its first season, narrates the story of a boy who disappears in a small town in the United States; its extensive success is palpable not only in the way in which young audiences – amongst many – enthusiastically engage with it, as illustrated above, but in a diversity of media texts and products, also based on the 1980s, that have spread from it, from videogames to makeup (McCarthy, 2019).

This salient place of nostalgia in culture and society is not something new; in fact, nostalgia has been identified as an engine of Western popular culture since the end of the twentieth century (Davis, 1977; Jameson, 1991). Nevertheless, in recent years, it has turned into one of the main principles and logics of media production, from streaming platforms to cinema (Gandini, 2020; Hassler-Forest, 2020). Furthermore, nostalgia is a regular ingredient in current social and political dynamics, especially in populist movements that promise to bring back the 'good old days' (Elçi, 2021); let us think, for instance, of how Donald Trump's 'Make America Great Again' locates the source of wellbeing in the past, with an emphasis on traditional family and gender roles (Banet-Weiser, 2018). My concern stems from the place nostalgia occupies in contemporary society, from politics to economics – a point to which I return shortly – marking how we conceive the relation between past, present and future. Indeed, sometimes it is inevitable to think that we are living in an age of nostalgia.

In this thesis, I explore the reception of nostalgic media texts by Costa Rican young audiences. My intention is to grasp how young audiences make sense of nostalgic representations about the 1970s and 1980s, taking into account that they were not alive during those decades. My analysis is focused on their engagement with *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), two media texts that I regard as nostalgic inasmuch they present polished and refined visions of previous eras through the use of certain textual and aesthetic devices (Eco, 1979, pp. 23-25; Hall, 2013; Livingstone, 1998b). In addition, I examine how the national context and social identities of young audiences mediate these engagements, acknowledging how their own positionalities configure different

modes of conceiving the past, the present and the future. To this end, I developed fieldwork with an ethnographic sensibility (Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016; Radway, 1988; Staiger, 2005) which I conducted in two schools, anonymised under the names of St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School. The former is a private school which attracts a middle- and upper-class population of students and is located in Alajuela City, one of the major urban centres in Costa Rica, whilst the latter is a public technical school located in La Carpio, an area of San José, the capital of the country, characterised by its Nicaraguan migrant population and high level of poverty. At these schools, I applied a media consumption habits survey which sought to gather demographic information about the participants' backgrounds; moreover, I conducted focus-group discussions and qualitative paired interviews with the intention of analysing the reception of nostalgic media texts, understanding reception as an engagement with concrete narrative and aesthetic features of a text which is anchored in an interplay of distinct social and cultural dynamics (Hall, 1980b; Livingstone, 1998b; Livingstone & Das, 2013). As I will discuss in Chapter 3, this research is primarily based on the qualitative data collected during my fieldwork.

In what follows, I lay out the background to this audience study. First, I examine the commodification and meaning-making processes that converge around nostalgia, forming what I call a nostalgia economy and diverse nostalgia cultures. This is essential for comprehending the distinct forces that interact in the production and reception of nostalgic media texts. After this, I turn my attention towards Costa Rica as the place where I conducted my research activities. Recently, this country experienced presidential elections marked by the rise of conservative voices that deployed a series of nostalgic discourses. With this in mind, I describe how the hegemonic cultural identity of this Central American nation is enacted around the idea of an exceptional past and how it has been operationalised nostalgically following recent situations of rising socio-economic inequalities. Hence, I outline the historic events that led the country to face diverse difficulties in recent times. Furthermore, I discuss the transnational and geopolitical relationships established around Costa Rica's media system. Then, I detail the puzzle of young audiences, nostalgic media texts and media reception that characterise the concerns that gave rise to this research. Finally, I provide the overview of this thesis, underscoring the research questions I am pursuing and the main contributions I seek to put forth.

1.2 The Nostalgia Economy and Nostalgia Cultures

In recent years, there has been an explosion of media texts and products that are considered 'nostalgic' given that they portray the past romantically and with aesthetic finesse (Hamilton & Wagner, 2014; Singh, Sharma & Kumar, 2020). This explosion has been called a 'nostalgia wave' or a 'nostalgic boom' (Ewen, 2020; Lowenthal, 2015; Niemeyer, 2014) and has been deemed to be the outcome of a 'nostalgia market' (Cross, 2015) or a 'nostalgia industry' (Hassler-Forest, 2020). For Holdsworth (2011, p. 97), nostalgia makes "economic good sense" inasmuch it can be used to attract audiences and consumers by alluding to previous happy experiences of consumption. Indeed, there is a vast literature which explores how nostalgia can be utilised successfully by marketers as a tool to foster loyalty and satisfaction for diverse brands and products (Cui, 2015; Grębosz-Krawczyk, 2019; Kessous, Roux, & Chandon, 2015; Loveland, Smeesters, & Mandel, 2010; Marchegiani & Phau, 2010; Wen, Tong, & Liu, 2019).

The commodification and marketisation of nostalgic media texts and other kinds of products, I contend, is the consequence of a *nostalgia economy*. I prefer to conceptualise a nostalgia economy instead of a 'market' or 'industry' in order to distinguish the sophisticated and complex interconnections established in the process of producing, distributing and consuming diverse sorts of nostalgias, and the close relations between 'surrounding' marketplaces that stimulate and propel this economic dynamic. Let us take again the example of *Stranger Things* (2016). This TV series did not only have an impact on the video streaming market, but it also motivated clothing retailers to launch collections based on a 1980s aesthetic and encouraged special screenings of classic films from the decade at movie theatres, amongst other commercial activities in diverse fields and markets (Hassler-Forest, 2020; McCarthy, 2019). In this case, it is not a matter of just developing television inspired by a whole decade, but of connected marketplaces that continue to generate new products – and profits – from the interactions and transactions of others.

My conception of a nostalgia economy is not metaphoric; rather, I aim to point out concrete economic relations deployed around nostalgia as a commodity. In this regard, in her discussion of gender and an economy of visibility, Banet-Weiser (2018) provides masterful cues to apprehend how an economy works around an object which has different articulations:

> An economy relies on a space wherein forces of supply and demand operate, where buyers and sellers interact to trade or buy goods, where the value of products is deliberated, where consumers are identified, and where specific forms of labour and production occur (Banet-Weiser, 2018, p. 27).

With this in mind, it is possible to delineate how the economisation of nostalgia operates. As Banet-Weiser (2018, p. 28) suggests, within economies there are markets and industries dedicated to the production, distribution and advertisement of particular products. They configure marketplaces wherein the economic exchange between buyers and sellers happens: a consumer purchases a product from a seller following an exchange-value system often concretised in the use of a common currency (Krugman & Wells, 2015). The nostalgia economy gathers a variety of markets that can be assessed from different points of view. We could talk about a general 'media market' which would encompass TV, cinema, music, videogames and so forth. Nonetheless, we could also talk about the 'TV market', which would take into account private and public networks, video streaming platforms and independent producers, amongst other actors (Hallinan & Striphas, 2016). What is pivotal here is the networked character of the multiple markets that interact amongst each other in a nostalgia economy through the 'nodes' of media products, outlets and platforms; moreover, it is crucial to underscore how its spaces of supply and demand are highly mediated and mediatised (Ampuja, Koivisto & Väliverronen, 2020; Livingstone, 2009; Silverstone, 2005). Thus, consumers can shift from one marketplace to another following a nostalgic orientation which secures profits for distinct actors in distinct terrains[1] (Schindler & Holbrook, 2003; Sierra & McQuitty, 2007).

Now, my understanding of a nostalgia economy points to different processes of marketisation, commodification and commercialisation through which nostalgia can be materialised. I am not suggesting, though, that this is the only sphere in which nostalgia can emerge; differently put, its creation, reproduction, transformation, and even demise, go from the instantaneous and spontaneous to the structural in social and economic terms (Keightley & Pickering, 2012, p. 113). By this token, I argue, along the operation of a nostalgia economy there are *nostalgia cultures* which are crucial in the articulation of nostalgia. I draw from the work of Radstone (2000, p. 8) and Hassler-Forest (2020, p. 178) to

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[1] In this context, several market-research firms forecasted that nostalgia would continue to prevail as a trend in multiple sectors, at least until 2021 (Velasquez, 2019). Nevertheless, if we take into account all the remakes, reboots, spin-offs, prequels/sequels and homages that are currently being developed for recently launched streaming platforms, this period could be longer, e.g., the 2021 reunion special of the sitcom *Friends* (1994) recently released on HBO Max.

propose that there are cultural modes of understanding the past that favour nostalgic assessments of the past, the present and future, and that might work in tandem with the economisation of nostalgia at a larger scale. Otherwise stated, a nostalgia economy interacts with specific nostalgia cultures to foster the presence of nostalgia in society. I agree with Sewell (2005) in his definition of culture as the "network of semiotic relations cast across society" (p. 166). In this sense, a culture encompasses the active dynamics of meaning-making practices of specific actors in the social world, i.e., it is characterised by a productive interaction of "pressures and limits" (Williams, 1977, p. 110). Thus, culture can be understood as:

> a dialectic of system and practice, as a dimension of social life autonomous from other such dimensions both in its logic and in its spatial configuration, and as possessing a real but thin coherence that is continually put at risk in practice and therefore subject to transformation (Sewell, 2005, p. 169).

A nostalgia culture, then, consists of a network of semiotic relations which idealises the past of a region, a nation, a continent, etc., by providing discursive frameworks to evaluate the present as unsatisfactory; these frameworks are rooted in historically constituted social imaginaries (Taylor, 2004) which bring together multiple discourses, tropes and ideas actualised in everyday life through social actions and different media – a point to which I will return in Chapter 5. I talk of 'nostalgia cultures', in the plural, to differentiate distinct worlds of meaning that might be present in different social spaces or even societies. On this, I take up Sewell's (2005, pp. 169-172) caution that cultures are contradictory, loosely integrated, contested, subject to constant change and weakly bound in order to avoid the idea that they might be totemic unities of meaning.

1.2.1 The Circuit of Culture and Reception

The relationship between economy and culture is an area of key debate in media and communications (Babe, 2009; Hesmondhalgh, 2018; Morley, 2015). The classic account of the Frankfurt School suggests that mass media is characterised by a culture industry which creates contents and products under the principles of standardisation and the rationalisation of distribution techniques, tailoring consumption for diverse audiences (Adorno, 1991, p. 98). Under this view, there is a correspondence between the production of media texts and specific ideologies which maintains the production of certain commodities and provides symbolic frameworks for social relations and interactions (Babe, 2009, p. 24). In this case, in order to understand the ties between the nostalgia economy and

certain nostalgia cultures, I want to escape deterministic notions of subordination of one to the other or direct connections between modes of production and ideological dispositions. Instead, I prefer to make more complex this relationship, comprehending it as formed by interlinked moments or processes. Du Gay et al.'s (2013, p. xxxi) circuit of culture suggests that cultural texts or artefacts go through processes of production, consumption, representation, identity and regulation. This circuit is a way to grasp how the relationship between economy and culture is also crisscrossed by other political, social, interpersonal and individual dynamics (Champ, 2008). Thus, I argue, both the nostalgic economy and different nostalgia cultures are ultimately inscribed in the circuit of culture, comprising economic principles and culturally sanctioned nostalgic social imaginaries that play a role in the social life of nostalgic media texts and products.

One of the processes of the circuit of culture is consumption, entailing the myriad modes in which audiences interpret, appropriate and make sense of cultural texts (du Gay et al., 2013, p. 79). In this thesis, I will talk of reception to refer to the meaning-making dynamics that take place in the engagement between an actual audience and a media text. Although they have many similarities, these two terms are connected to traditions in audience research with different goals and objects of study (Livingstone, 1998b; Napoli, 2012; Staiger, 2005; Webster, 2014). An emphasis on media reception brings about a focus on the diverse ways in which audiences make sense of media texts based on social experiences, interpersonal interactions, cultural frameworks and structural conditions (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998; Ang, 1985; Livingstone, 2019; Radway, 1988; Wu & Bergman, 2019). Reception, I claim, is fundamental for analysing nostalgia as it permits us to comprehend the meanings, values and rationales that are enacted in the engagement with media texts or products created with a nostalgic sensibility. Hence, it allows for the exploration of how actual people interact with products from the nostalgia economy and discursive frameworks anchored in a specific nostalgia culture.

This last point leads me to clarify what I mean by 'nostalgic media text'. A media text, I claim, is not automatically nostalgic simply by having some kind of reference to the past. Yet, it is undeniable that certain media texts are constructed with a preferred set of meanings (Eco, 1979; Hall, 1980b) which seeks to portray nostalgic visions of the past and to stimulate nostalgic engagements. As Schrey (2014, p. 29) remarks, media can establish the precondition for a nostalgic perspective on the past and the present, a perspective that can be found in the

content or style of the representation of a time period.[2] I will explore in more detail in Chapter 4 how the aestheticisation of the past leads young audiences to elaborate nostalgic meanings; for now, I propose to understand *nostalgic media texts* as textual arrangements whose semiotic structure deploys distinct narrative and stylistic resources in order to depict a polished and refined past. With this, I imply that we need to corroborate empirically if there is a nostalgic engagement between an actual audience and a media text to consider it 'nostalgic'.

The nostalgia economy and a specific nostalgia culture configure the broader background against which this reception study takes place. The discussion above is essential for my argument as it highlights how nostalgic media texts are part of a circuit of culture which mobilises the operation of the nostalgia economy and nostalgia cultures. At this point, I must state a cautionary reminder. In this thesis, my analytical focus is not localised on the commodification of nostalgia as such, nor is it my intention to examine closely specific economic exchanges enacted around a nostalgic product. In addition, it is not my aim to examine the constitution, operation or transformation of a particular nostalgia culture as a whole. My goal is to analyse the *reception practices* that emerge from the engagement between Costa Rican young audiences and nostalgic media texts.

1.3 National Nostalgias: The Case of Costa Rica

As the political scientist Benedict Anderson (2006) considers, the sense of belonging to a country is often defined by narratives about a mythic or exceptional past. This exceptional past emphasises aspects of a cultural identity that are operationalised as unique or special (Sandoval, 2004). In this regard, in periods of social change or turmoil, the past is usually seen nostalgically in order to make sense of transformations that are happening in the present (Skey, 2011). Understanding an 'exceptional past' through a nostalgic lens has marked the recent political life of Costa Rica.

On 1 April 2018, Carlos Alvarado Quesada was elected president of the Republic of Costa Rica with a decisive majority. The liberal candidate of the ruling *Partido de Acción Ciudadana* (Citizens' Action Party) obtained 60.8% of the vote against 39.2% for Fabricio Alvarado Muñoz, an evangelical preacher and member of the populist *Partido Restauración Nacional* (National Restoration Party) (Henley, 2018). That night, one part of the country was cheering a supporter of progressive values and human rights whilst the other was lamenting the defeat of a defender

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[2] It is important to point out that media can also become an object of nostalgia. As Schrey (2014) observes, in this case, "the sentiment can be directed towards their specific medial constitution, their materiality, the aesthetics resulting from these factors, or all these combined" (p. 29).

of traditional values and Christian morality. This result was the culmination of an electoral campaign marked by extreme polarisation. After a ruling, on January 2018, by the Inter-American Human Rights Court backing same-sex marriage in almost all the countries of the region (BBC, 2018), an ultra-conservative spark burst into full fire in Costa Rica. Issues such as infrastructure, fiscal responsibility and economic growth were replaced by discussions on LGBTIQ+ rights, sex education and religion.

Alvarado Muñoz, a candidate who until then had only a 3% support according to the latest polls (CIEP, 2017), promised to pull the country out from the Latin American Human Rights Convention in order to disobey the ruling, a vow which gained international attention given that the convention is named the 'San José Pact' after the capital of Costa Rica, the host nation (Margolis, 2018, ¶ 6). With this promise, he took first place in the general elections, held on 4 February 2018, with 24.9% of the vote. Hence, Fabricio Alvarado Muñoz would face Carlos Alvarado Quesada – who secured second place with 21.6% – in an electoral second round, given that neither candidate reached the obligatory 40% set by the Constitution (Grosser, 2018).

The reversal of the vote in favour of Alvarado Quesada, a journalist, political scientist, successful novelist and former Minister of Labour, was based on a rejection of right-wing and ultra-conservative ideals (Buckwalter-Poza, 2018). The populist rhetoric of Fabricio Alvarado Muñoz was perceived as a threat to the democratic tradition of Costa Rica; for instance, his stances regarding the role of religion in politics raised red flags for voters, who turned out in larger numbers than usual (*Economist*, 2018). Despite being praised as an "admirable resistance to demagoguery" (*Washington Post*, 2018, ¶ 2), this victory does not erase the role that nostalgic visions of the past played during these elections: Fabricio Alvarado Muñoz's discourse regularly constructed the past as a place where a sense of morality, being absent from the present, could be found.

In the case of this Central American nation, the rise of conservatism corresponds with anxieties that are the product of neoliberal policies that have transformed the country in the last four decades, exacerbating diverse socio-economic inequalities (Robles, 2014; Solís, 2018). Previously, I argued that a nostalgia culture entails social imaginaries that, through different discourses, tropes, and ideas, idealise the past of a specific place. In Costa Rica, there are clear cultural modes of understanding the country's past as exceptional vis-à-vis Latin-America (Jiménez, 2015; Molina, 2002). Conservative religious movements have

taken advantage of these discourses to point out a necessity of 'returning' to the roots of the country as a solution to current maladies.

In this section, I describe Costa Rica as the place where I investigated how young audiences engage with nostalgic media texts. My goal is to underline the modes in which the relationship between the past and the present is regularly constructed in the country. Furthermore, I aim to characterise the mediascape in which Costa Rican audiences are immersed. I first examine how the country's cultural identity is built around ideas of an exceptional past; second, I dissect the historical changes that have been taking place in this Central American nation during the last decades; and, finally, I discuss the geopolitical relationship between Costa Rica and the United States, and how it is embodied in its media system.

1.3.1 An 'Exceptional' Past

The period between 1870 and 1914 represents a crucial time of transformation for Costa Rica as it encompassed the birth of the ideals upon which the country's national and cultural identity would be based (Molina & Palmer, 2017). Known as the *Liberal Period*, it entailed different processes of political change influenced by the Enlightenment and European notions of democracy (Molina, 2002). After gaining its independence from Spain in 1821, Costa Rica – one of the poorest colonies of the Empire – went through different armed conflicts which marked the first years of autonomous life; after a turbulent cycle, the educated middle and higher classes started to control the government, promoting modern visions in areas such as education, economics and the management of the State (Molina, 2016).

The Liberal Period was grounded in an ideological project whose aim was to modernise Costa Rica and, subsequently, to establish a concrete cultural identity (Jiménez, 2015; Molina, 2002). The new statesmen intended to create a system of values that would support their liberal views; for this, they needed a narrative for cementing their goals with a sense of belonging. Being a relatively young nation, Costa Rica lacked a repertoire of historical events; thus, diverse intellectuals recurred to invoking the colonial past – i.e., the time of Spanish rule – in order to suggest a special destiny shared by the population. This destiny was derived from the belief that Costa Rica's roots were completely European, or, in other words, that the population was mostly white.[3]

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[3] This devotion to the Spanish roots of the population was highly unusual in Latin America. The common ideological trend in the region was, on the contrary, a fervent independentist feeling which sought a complete separation from Spain's legacy, a feeling embodied by the ideas of

The idea of an almost 'European population' led the intellectuals and statesmen of the Liberal Period to ignore all the Indigenous, mestizo and Afro-descendant populations. This invisibilisation consisted in denying the Aboriginal past, claiming that the Indigenous groups were few in number – an idea which did not reflect reality.[4] Indeed, this belief in a reduced Indigenous population was used as an explanation to account for the difference between Costa Rica and the rest of Central America, creating a sense of *exceptionalism* as part of the national identity (Molina & Palmer, 2017). In addition, as Molina (2002) explains, the Afro-descendant immigrants – who came from Jamaica and the Caribbean to work for the United Fruit Company in the last two decades of the nineteenth century – a population which started to settle on the Atlantic coast, were regarded as a menace for the purity of the 'Costa Rican race'. Ironically, the national identity of a country named 'Rich Coast' was forged by denying the people who inhabited its actual coastal regions (Harvey-Kattou, 2019).

Despite numerous historical events, this constructed national identity endured the test of time and was further elaborated in a new era. After a stage of civil war in 1948, a new constitution was drafted in 1949, creating a social democratic State which introduced new social reforms such as the abolition of the armed forces and the universalisation of public education and healthcare (Molina, 2008). During this moment of national reconstruction, the project of national identity, which began with the liberals from the previous century, was continued, i.e., it became the basis for the *Second Republic*, as this period is known. Differently put, the process of rebuilding the country did not question the meanings and values carried from the past; they were not disputed but officialised and formalised.

The philosopher Alexánder Jiménez (2015) calls this project of national identity *metaphysic ethnic nationalism,* a project which intended to describe and characterise Costa Rica, and wove a historical past with a perennial raison d'être.

Simón Bolivar, a military and political leader crucial in the emancipatory process of South America (Jiménez, 2015).

[4] Morera-Brenes and Barrantes (1995, p. 46) assess the ethnic composition of the country in 1801 and determine that the population consisted of Spaniards (9,4%), Indigenous groups (15,8%), mestizos and ladinos (57,8%), and Black individuals or *pardos* (17%). Here, let us remember that a *mestizo* refers to a child born from a Spanish father and an Indigenous mother, or vice versa. A *ladino* was a mestizo whose mother tongue was Spanish; a *pardo*, on the other hand, refers to a child whose parents are black and Indigenous. Although located at the beginning of the nineteenth century, this description totally contradicts the idea of a purely white population; in fact, it highlights a process of high hybridisation which still continues to this day. According to Salzano and Sans (2014, p. 156), the ethnic heritage of contemporary Costa Rica is European (58-67%), Indigenous (29-38%) and African (4%).

Its principal feature entails the identification of a 'Costa Rican essence', marking an important difference vis-á-vis the Liberal period. The Costa Rican liberals had a teleological vision in which the special destiny of the nation followed a process where European colonisers had brought progress and civility. Conversely, the intelligentsia of the beginnings of the Second Republic, in an almost Platonic fashion, proposed that the Costa Rican being was perpetual. As Jiménez (2015) observes with surprise, the intellectuals behind the metaphysic ethnic nationalism seem to have written about and discussed a country which never existed, an impossible country confined to social imaginaries rather than to actual realities. In short, metaphysical ethnic nationalism was an effort to sociologise an ideology.

My intention is not to propose that coordinated ideological efforts created ex nihilo a national identity. As both Molina (2002) and Jiménez (2015) expose, it cannot be inferred that all populations accepted these ideas without resistance. However, although the metaphysic ethnic nationalism started to be questioned and critiqued from the 1980s onwards, its legacy – in concrete political terms – still continues. For instance, it was not until 1991 that the Costa Rican government recognised the different Indigenous groups who lived across all the country as citizens;[5] before this decision, they were pariahs with no official homeland, without access to public education or healthcare (Molina & Palmer, 2017). The notion of an exceptional past, and an almost perennial being, currently persists in diverse social spheres in Costa Rica, being found throughout the educational apparatus, political discourses and everyday life (Molina, 2008, 2016).

Costa Rica has a nostalgia culture, I submit, inasmuch an 'exceptional' past is systematically idealised in multiple forms by diverse institutional and official discourses (Contreras, 2012). The hegemonic cultural identity of Costa Rica is enacted around the idea of a population which is white, Catholic (or Christian), urban and adhering to patriarchal values and social rules (Harvey-Kattou, 2019, p. 13). This cultural identity finds a nostalgic underpinning when it is operationalised as something lost. Recent economic, social and cultural developments have confronted images of a perfect – or traditional – 'Costa Rican being' (Solís, 2006). In this respect, nostalgia flourishes when the present is

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[5] This was possible thanks to the creation of Law N° 7225, which intended to end the political exclusion against the Aboriginal populations whose ancestors had lived in the country for centuries even before colonial times. The fact that legislative means were necessary to guarantee citizenship to Indigenous groups points to the high-level of abandonment exerted by prior governments.

contrasted with the past, i.e., when a perceived lack of some sort is located in a previous era.

In the next subsection, I turn my attention towards those events and situations that have compromised the images of a pristine Costa Rica and have sowed the seeds of a nostalgic desire for a past which is considered vanished.

1.3.2 From a 'Golden Age' to a Lost Paradise

After the 1948 civil war, Costa Rica experienced a series of transformations, in terms of socio-economic development, thanks to specific policies devised by the victorious side of the conflict, José Figueres Ferrer and his *Partido de Liberación Nacional* (National Liberation Party) (Contreras, 2012; Molina & Palmer, 2017). These policies were social democratic in nature and implied an active role of the State in creating new industries and markets, especially with the nationalisation of the banking and finance sectors (Solís, 2006). In addition, other measures, such as the universalisation of healthcare and education, propelled rapid growth of urban areas and the middle class (Molina, 2008). Therefore, from 1950 to 1980, Costa Rica became a different country. For instance, the number of households living under the poverty line were reduced from 51% in 1961 to 39% in 1971; later on, in 1977, this percentage was reduced to 25% (Molina, 2002, p. 93).

The diverse socio-economic developments of Costa Rica during this period were shared across all income groups. The outcomes of this 'national welfare' can be appreciated in how, in 1980, "life expectancy at birth was almost 73 years, higher than in the United States and other high-income countries" (Martínez & Sánchez-Ancochea, 2013, p. 13). At this point, I must state that my intention is not to picture these decades as an actual 'golden age' of peace and prosperity – a trope to which I will return in Chapter 5. During these years, Costa Rica was part of the geopolitical tensions that were the consequence of the Cold War in Latin America, especially considering its geographic proximity to Nicaragua, a nation which would go through the Sandinista revolution by the end of the 1970s (Molina & Palmer, 2017). Moreover, as I highlighted previously, the hegemonic cultural identity of Costa Rica is exclusionary, bringing about marginalisation and discrimination against certain social groups such as women, the LGBTIQ+ community and the Afro-Caribbean population (Harvey-Kattou, 2019, pp. 54-55).

But a new decade brought the end of an era. At the beginning of the 1980s, Costa Rica "confronted its worst economic crisis in recent history, one associated with increases in the price of petroleum and the external debt as well as a fall in

production and an increase in unemployment" (Martínez & Sánchez-Ancochea, 2013, p. 16). Several sectors started critiquing the role of the State within the economy, blaming it for the precarious situation that brought an increase in households living under the poverty line: 34% in 1983 (Molina, 2002, p. 93; Solís, 2006). During this decade, the United States exerted its geopolitical influence in the Latin American region through the 'Washington Consensus', a series of fiscal and economic policies that promoted the privatisation of public institutions and the liberalisation of diverse markets (Robles, 2014, p. 40). Thus, the solution to the crisis was based on neoliberal ideological orientations; following agreements with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, Costa Rica implemented structural adjustment programmes in 1985, 1989 and 1995 (Robles, 2010, pp. 99-100).

The economic route of Costa Rica, then, shifted and the country started seeking foreign direct investment through tax incentives, liberalising trade and signing free trade agreements (Martínez & Sánchez-Ancochea, 2013, p. 137). This route had as its outcome, during the 1990s and early 2000s, the arrival of Intel and other high technology services that diversified and upgraded the country's exports, changing it from a historic reliance on coffee and bananas to microchips and other technological items; in addition, several free-trade zones were established, entailing the creation of thousands of specialised jobs with high wages (Robles, 2010; Solís, 2018). Thus, the nation experienced the expansion of a robust information and communication technologies (ICTs) industry, generating an environment of innovation which has been compared to Silicon Valley in California (Ciravegna, 2012; Siles, Espinoza, & Méndez, 2016).

Nevertheless, this time neoliberalism did not bring development to all income groups. In the last four decades, structural heterogeneity and the growth of informality have increased in Costa Rica (Sandoval, 2020; Solís, 2018). For the political scientists Juliana Martínez and Diego Sánchez-Ancochea (2013, p. 138), Costa Rica's strategy of attracting foreign direct investment and expanding specific sectors, such as technology and tourism, has been deployed with limited connections with the rest of the economy; in this respect, whilst this type of economic upgrading helped the country to overcome its dependence on low-skilled activities, it has failed to translate its benefits across society. According to the World Bank (2021), and notwithstanding some imprecise data for the 1980s, the Gini index for Costa Rica in 1986 was 36.4; nonetheless, for 1989 it was 46.7, reaching its peak in 2002 with a 51.8. At the time of writing these lines, Costa Rica is the twentieth most unequal country in the world, with a Gini index

of 48.2 (World Bank, 2021). Moreover, it is the most unequal member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2021).

Added to this unequal economic growth, Costa Rica has been experiencing a fiscal crisis since 2008. A decrease in revenues and the impact of the global economic crisis led to an increase in government debt, between 2008 and 2019, from 26% to 58% of the GDP (PEN, 2020, p. 53). Thus, several austerity measures have been implemented. In turn, this creates a vicious cycle in which policies necessary to mitigate the effects of distinct socio-economic disparities cannot be implemented – or formulated – thanks to the deterioration of public finances (PEN, 2020, p. 54). The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated this situation. For instance, in July 2020, the percentage of households living under the poverty line was 26.2%, the highest number recorded in the last 28 years – in 1992, this number was 29.4% (INEC, 2020). In order to counteract the repercussions of the global pandemic, the government of Carlos Alvarado Quesada is set to sign in 2021, after congressional approval, an agreement once again with the International Monetary Fund which consists of different policies that will be enacted in the next three years; these policies are aimed primarily at reducing government spending (IMF, 2021).

This context became a fertile ground for the rise of evangelical neo-charismatic movements in Costa Rica and Central America. This is not a contemporary phenomenon; on the contrary, since the 1970s these movements have spread rapidly within the Latin American region[6] (Pignarato & Treminio, 2019). Their agendas, which are influenced by diverse conservative groups in the United States (Banet-Weiser, 2012, p. 167), are centred on traditionalist views of gender and family life and they are fiercely opposed to same-sex marriage and abortion (Arguedas, 2020). A key characteristic is their aim of gaining political control. In recent years, throughout Central America, multiple political candidates, from the local to the national level, commune with evangelical ideologies. The most successful figures have been Jimmy Morales, a comedian and self-described evangelical Christian who was the president of Guatemala from 2015 to 2020 (Partlow, 2015), and Nayib Bukele, current president of El Salvador and an authoritarian figure who has been publicly operationalised with Christian

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[6] In the case of Costa Rica, a survey conducted by the University of Costa Rica (Murillo, 2018) right after the first round of presidential elections in 2018 showed that 52% of the population is Roman Catholic, the lowest percentage for this religion ever recorded in a quantitative study in the history of the country. In the last survey conducted in November 2016, 72% of the surveyed participants expressed to profess the Catholic faith. Conversely, Evangelical denominations increased 10% in the period between the two studies; thus, in 2018, 22% of the population was openly Evangelical.

overtones (Jiménez, 2021). I agree with the migration and media scholar Carlos Sandoval (2020) in his assessment that evangelical churches are replacing and occupying the role of the State and public institutions following the deterioration of the latter in Central America. This assessment is essential for understanding the reasons behind the support that Fabricio Alvarado Muñoz received in Costa Rica. It is in a context of high levels of inequality and uncertainty that ideas of 'restoring' the past become alluring for voters, or at least offer a sense of tangibility often missing from political life.

1.3.3 Media Flows and Geopolitics in Costa Rica

The Costa Rican mediascape is situated within an extremely privatised system. In terms of TV and radio, Costa Rica utilises a model of concessions, in which private actors lease a public frequency for their own purposes (Garro, Monge & Solís, 2020, p. 57). Currently, only two legislations regulate the process: the 1954 Radio Law (N° 1758) and the 2007 General Telecommunications Law (N° 8642). The former stipulates the phases and fares of the concessions whereas the latter is concerned with administrative issues (Ochoa, 2018, p. 140). This legal framework favours the private sector, which pays ridiculously low fees, according to the cost of living in 1954, and generates important revenues from advertisement rates.[7] Indeed, this legislative frame is outdated; nonetheless, despite many pressures on the current government by different social movements, there has been little interest in changing the law.

As Robles and Voorend (2012) expose, the Costa Rican mediascape is characterised by a dependency on international content and a concentration of property, caused mainly by a sharp profit-driven orientation. With a population of around 5 million persons, Costa Rica represents a small market in the Latin American region (Sinclair, 1999). Its limited size brings a situation in which local producers experience difficulties regarding the financing of their contents; even for commercially successful outlets, it is not guaranteed that national productions will generate revenues. Thus, the main tendency is to import foreign productions from the United States – TV series and films – and other places in Latin America, such as Mexico, Colombia and Brazil – telenovelas and variety shows.

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[7] Public media has a weak presence in Costa Rica. It is comprised of three entities in charge of administering 14 frequencies of TV and radio: the *Sistema Nacional de Radio y Televisión* (National Radio and Television System, SINART), the University of Costa Rica (UCR), and the *Instituto Costarricense de Enseñanza Radiofónica* (Costa Rican Institute of Radio Education, ICER) (Ochoa, 2018, p. 149). Notwithstanding the quantity of managed frequencies, the public sector cannot compete with its commercial counterparts due to a limited and anaemic budget.

The Costa Rican media system, therefore, is characterised by commercial interests and a reliance on transnational content, especially U.S. productions. In this respect, the cultural critic Anabelle Contreras (2012, p. 177) contends that Costa Rica's media system reflects a geopolitical relationship oriented towards an 'American' hegemony. Since the 1960s, Costa Rica has experienced an increase in imports from the United States, from sitcoms broadcast in a new medium called television to fashion and home appliances (Molina, 2002, pp. 98-99). For Harvey-Kattou (2019), the intense presence of U.S. mass-produced goods provided the basis for a popular aspiration to a lifestyle based on material culture, "with many people favourably comparing Costa Rican ways of life with U.S. consumerism" (p. 17). The impact of the United States in Costa Rica is substantial: although it has not witnessed direct political interventions, or attempts at such intervention, like its neighbours Panama and Nicaragua, the country was a satellite for the United States during the Cold War in the conflictive Central American isthmus and continues to be a loyal ally (Cupples & Larios, 2010).

In recent years, U.S.-based digital media have become prominent in the Costa Rican mediascape (Pérez, 2016). For instance, platforms such as Netflix (Siles, Espinoza-Rojas, Naranjo & Tristán, 2019) and Spotify (Siles, Segura-Castillo, Solís & Sancho, 2020) play an important part in the media diets of the Costa Rican population, especially amongst the youth. The case of Netflix illustrates how an 'American' media outlet arrives and is appropriated within Costa Rican society. Netflix started operations in Costa Rica on 12 September 2011, with an initial cost of $7.99[8] (Fonseca, 2011a). The arrival was part of the company's strategy to expand its services to Latin America, specifically in countries such as Brazil, Mexico and the rest of Central America (Fonseca, 2011b). The popularity of the platform in the country has been growing since then; for instance, according to the market and consumer database Statista, Netflix had 166,000 subscribers in 2018 and it is expected to have 249,000 by 2024 (Stoll, 2021b). Since 2017, the video streaming service has been including Costa Rican films in its catalogue[9] (Sánchez, 2017), and this is considered an important catalyst for an emerging cinema industry which often struggles to find distribution networks and

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[8] The price of the video streaming service has been increasing since it arrived in the country. Currently, subscribers pay $8.90 for a basic plan. This number puts Costa Rica as the most expensive country in Latin America in terms of costs, along with Panama and Uruguay (Stoll, 2021a).

[9] The first Costa Rican film to be featured on Netflix was *Presos* (2015). Since then, other titles have been available in its catalogue such as *Hombre de fe* (2017) and *Buscando a Marcos Ramírez* (2017). Nonetheless, at the moment of writing these lines, the Costa Rican Netflix catalogue does not have a national film.

access to international markets (Cortés, 2016; Fonseca, 2009). Fiscal authorities took notice of the popularity and the role of Netflix as a service of common consumption amongst the middle and upper classes and created a 13% tax on this platform and other digital services that has been charged to users since October 2020 (Lara, 2020).

Thus, a key characteristic of Costa Rican audiences is that they regularly engage more with transnational media texts than with national productions. Following the audience researcher Adrian Athique (2014), they tend to be non-resident audiences, i.e., audiences whose media diets are marked by media texts in which "the diegetic world cannot reasonably be claimed to be 'about here and about us'" (p. 10). With this, I do not intend to adopt an internalist and nationalist framework for understanding media engagements; rather, my goal is to highlight how media production and reception in Costa Rica are tied to specific geopolitical relationships and unfold upon an interaction of specific internal and external media flows (Athique, 2016; Georgiou, 2012; Lobato, 2019; Schlesinger, 2000; Straubhaar, 2015). In this research, my analytical focus is not concerned with the modes in which multiple, and often overlapping, identities define the guidelines for the consumption of transnational media texts within a context of globalisation (Mirrlees, 2013; Rixon, 2006; Sinclair; 1999; Straubhaar, 2007, p. 225). In the following chapters, I will explore how Costa Rican young audiences engage with nostalgic media texts which are transnational in nature; my analysis will be focused on reception practices derived from engagements with particular representations of the past.

1.4 A Puzzle of Young Audiences, Nostalgic Media Texts and Media Reception

It is within the context described above that my interest in young people arises. In Costa Rica, 49.8% of voters are aged below 40 years (Ruiz, 2017). Being relatively young, this sector will likely experience the consequences of the contemporary situation of the nation. The youth, therefore, are immersed in a political and social landscape where traditions still play an important part, where the past is a cherished idyllic desire. If we turn our attention to teenagers, to young people who are still receiving their secondary education, this scenario becomes more problematic: considering that they are not old enough to vote – i.e., they are under 18 – they can engage with political processes, but their voices will not have a direct impact on electoral results. How do these young people feel about this lack of political agency? What are their aspirations? What are their desires for their country? These are fundamental questions to comprehend young people not only as future citizens, but as individuals who are involved –

notwithstanding differences in degree and intensity – in a society (Cammaerts, Bruter, Banaji, Harrison & Anstead, 2016).

Indeed, Costa Rican young people regularly encounter nostalgic discourses about their country's past in their daily lives, from social studies textbooks at their schools to the celebration of national holidays (Jiménez, 2015). In addition, as young audiences, they participate in the nostalgia economy, engaging with diverse sets of nostalgic media texts. As the episode at the beginning of this chapter illustrates, the popularity of certain nostalgic media texts can be translated to a wide range of activities, e.g., a costume contest in the case of St. Mary High School. In this respect, the cultural impact of nostalgic media texts such as *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) can be found in box office numbers, merchandising and the production of more TV seasons and other related media products;[10] in short, their impact becomes concrete in the mode in which they mobilise several marketplaces of the nostalgia economy. At the outset, it is easy to understand why these young audiences enjoy this kind of media text. *Stranger Things* (2016) portrays the 1980s, and its pop culture, through a repertoire of vintage fashion, trippy neon lights and catchy pop songs. Nonetheless, this decade was far from harmonious, being marked by the rise of neo-conservatism in the United States and the United Kingdom, and diverse geopolitical conflicts across the world (Ryan & Kellner, 1988). This is also the case of *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), a film which narrates the life of Freddie Mercury and depicts the 1970s as a period which, including the counter-cultural movements and social struggles that were taking place, was a golden age of rock n' roll and youth expression.

Despite the tensions and frictions that were occurring during the 1970s, 1980s and even 1990s, these decades seem to be the focus of diverse nostalgic media texts (Ewen, 2020; Niemeyer, 2014). On this, it is possible to speculate about the reasons for the spatiotemporal framing of contemporary nostalgia. For instance, it could be proposed that Western popular culture goes through 'nostalgia cycles' linked to the nostalgic feelings of media producers who reminisce about their childhood or teenage years in their creations (Jameson, 1991, pp. 19-20). Yet, what is relevant entails the longing for the past, the search for a lost quality conceived as missing from the present (Schrey, 2014). Perhaps there is a connection between the challenges faced by contemporary societies, from socio-

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[10] For instance, after *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) was released in movie theatres, the song 'Bohemian Rhapsody' and the film's soundtrack occupied first place on several musical charts around the world (Bukszpan, 2018).

economic inequalities to the climate crisis, and the yearning for a previous era (Boym, 2001; Keightley & Pickering, 2012, p. 115). In the end, the past is tangible and concrete, its traces can be found in everyday life, whereas the future is uncertain, and it can be hard to imagine (Al-Ghazzi, 2018; Lizardi, 2015; Sweeney, 2020).

As audiences, young people in Costa Rica are part of an environment of high connectivity. The last Global Kids Online survey conducted in this nation suggests that 78.8% of children and teenagers use the Internet several times per day; in addition, 73.9% of them have access to online services through different means (Pérez, 2019, p. 9). These young people live in a globalised world marked by transnational media flows (Athique, 2016; Banaji, Livingstone, Nandi, & Stoilova, 2018; Livingstone, 2002). Their youth culture is enacted through practices that take place on social media, streaming platforms and traditional media, amongst many more outlets (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020). The crux of the matter here is not the variety of media texts that compose their media diets; rather, it is the relationship between their identities and their media engagements (Hall, 1996; Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016). In media reception, audiences affirm their identities inasmuch their engagements are tied to structural constraints but are also characterised by individual preferences and creative choices (Georgiou, 2012; Liebes & Katz, 1993; Radway, 1988). Hence, when audiences engage with the media, they are not just deciphering a message; on the contrary, they are producing meaning in interpretative operations through which distinct social, political, and economic dynamics converge (Staiger, 2005; Wu & Bergman, 2019). Taking this into account, why are teenagers attracted to nostalgic media texts? What is happening when they engage with *Stranger Things* (2016) or *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018)?

In the case of the 1970s and 1980s, it is obvious to think that nostalgic media texts would attract audiences who lived during those decades. And they probably do. But what is going on when a teenager plays *Stranger Things* (2016) on Netflix? What kind of meanings are mobilised when young people interpret nostalgic representations of decades they did not experience? When we localise these questions in Costa Rica, other lines of inquiry enter the stage: How do Costa Rican young audiences make sense of nostalgic representations of transnational pasts? Do they employ 'local' resources to understand a past which is foreign? Do their social identities play a role in these interpretations?

All of these concerns form a puzzle of young audiences, nostalgic media texts and media reception. In this thesis, my intention is to analyse how Costa Rican

young people interpret nostalgic media texts and how their national context and social identities mediate this engagement. This endeavour will help me to tackle some of the main questions in this puzzle. My tone is cautious here, for media reception is complex and ever evolving; moreover, instead of aspiring to discover final answers, it is my desire for this research to become an invitation to keep studying nostalgia, audiences and the relationship between contemporary society and the media.

1.5 Overview

In this research, I explore the engagement between Costa Rican young audiences and nostalgic media texts. For this, I conducted fieldwork with an ethnographic sensibility at two secondary education schools (see Appendix 1 for a detailed description of their locations) which allowed me to analyse media reception as a complex interaction of diverse individual, interpersonal and socio-cultural processes (Liebes & Katz, 1993; Livingstone, 2019; Livingstone & Das, 2013; Staiger, 2005). In this respect, the general research question of this project is:

- GRQ: Why do contemporary young audiences engage with nostalgic meanings in relation to mass media texts?

My aim is to examine how the engagement with nostalgic media texts is marked not only by textual cues, but by broader cultural logics for understanding the national past, critical assessments of the present and different senses of uncertainty towards the future. From this concern, I will pursue the next research questions in the following chapters:

- o RQ1: How do young audiences interpret the past represented in nostalgic media texts?
- o RQ2: How do the national context and the social identities of young audiences mediate their engagement with nostalgic media texts?

In terms of theoretical contributions, I seek to examine nostalgia as a specific articulation of memory which is enacted socially; in other words, my goal is to analyse how nostalgia emerges from particular social conditions. Hence, in Chapter 2 I will discuss nostalgia as a structure of feeling, based on Williams's (1965, 1977) use of the term, articulated around certain emotions, meanings and materialities that catalyse a yearning and idealisation of the past. Furthermore, I aim to analyse how when audiences engage with the media, they are also engaging with society and culture at large. In terms of empirical contributions, I explore concrete reception practices through the participants' discursive

reflections on their general media practices and evaluations of their country's social and political life (see Chapter 3). Thus, I empirically analyse engagements with nostalgic representations of the past and with nostalgia at large, a gap often found in the literature on memory (Keightley & Pickering, 2012, p. 110). My intention of examining nostalgia vis-á-vis young people highlights the role of the media in providing images, sounds and textures to previous decades and periods of time, but it also stresses the importance of taking into account other social dynamics. This brings about the possibility of understanding nostalgia as an actual social practice rooted in certain spatiotemporal relationships.

With this in mind, let me outline the structure of this thesis. In Chapter 2, I review how memory is a social practice constructed by diverse mediations. As I demonstrate, this is essential to understanding nostalgia, especially as it implies remembering something which is perceived to be absent from the past. After exploring different approaches to analysing nostalgia, I propose to consider nostalgia in the plural, focusing on the specific articulations of emotions, meanings, and materialities that generate a longing for a previous period. This helps me to define nostalgia as a structure of feeling articulated around a temporal and spatial distance, a sense of displacement, and a perceived absence.

In Chapter 3, I detail the methodological considerations that guided this investigation. I discuss the rationale behind conducting an audience study with an ethnographic sensibility, describing my intention of operationalising media audiences as active social agents in the production of meaning. I delineate my fieldwork in Costa Rica, providing a general picture of the social spaces of St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School. Following these points, I explain the principles and procedures that guided the data collection and analysis methods I employed at these two schools. Finally, I clarify the quality measures I took to guarantee the methodological value of this research and I reflect on its limitations.

A discussion of my empirical data and findings begins in Chapter 4. In this chapter, I analyse the reception of *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), with an emphasis on how the participants engage with the stylised representations of fashion, music, technology and lifestyles featured in the TV series and film. Through their reception practices, I identify a nostalgic structure of feeling that underpins the engagement between these Costa Rican young audiences and nostalgic media texts. Then, I claim that this nostalgic structure of feeling entails a positive assessment of the past based on a sense of a lacking and unsatisfying present.

But this nostalgic structure of feeling does not arise from the direct interpretation of nostalgic media texts by an audience; rather, it is produced socially and culturally. Therefore, in Chapter 5 I explore a nostalgic social imaginary, derived from the Costa Rican nostalgia culture discussed before, which provides distinct discourses, tropes and ideas about the past. This chapter is based on a creative exercise I conducted during the focus group discussions in which the students from both schools imagine how *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) would have been had they occurred in their country.

In Chapter 6, I examine how the national context and the participants' social identities mediate their engagements with nostalgic media texts. I argue that, depending on their positionalities, two kinds of articulations of nostalgic structures of feeling emerge: aesthetic and material nostalgia. I finish this chapter by underlining that media texts such as *Stranger Things* (2016) or *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) do not cause a nostalgic response in these young audiences by themselves; rather, they are part of complex processes of media production and socio-political developments in which certain ways of feeling and grasping the present are constituted and emphasised.

In Chapter 7, I present the conclusions of this thesis. I summarise the main findings and insights from my empirical analysis, and I point out their connections with the relevant literature on audiences, nostalgia, and memory. Then, I proceed to discuss the implications of this research in five areas: the study of nostalgia as a transnational and transcultural social phenomenon, the empirical analysis of memory and nostalgia, the understanding of mediated structures of feeling, the analysis of reception practices and media engagements, and finally, the role of power in media flows, social position, and youth identity. After this, I recapitulate the theoretical and methodological limitations and drawbacks that characterise this study and I discuss issues for further research. I conclude this thesis with some final thoughts on the relationship between youth, nostalgia and audiences.

Chapter 2
Memory, Nostalgia and Structures of Feeling

2.1. Remembering the Past

When I arrived at St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School, I was certainly intrigued. I had planned my fieldwork expecting some kind of resistance from my participants in terms of joining the research activities I would be developing at their schools. I assumed that these activities would be alien, or at least unfamiliar, to these young people. After all, I was an outsider who wanted to "talk about different stuff", as I once overheard one young woman describe a focus group to a friend. Yet, as soon as I told these students that I would be conducting discussions about *Stranger Things* (2016), I had their complete attention. At both schools, I never had to be worried about issues of participation. As I discovered, they felt attracted to the 1970s and the 1980s. For them, the present was deemed unfulfilling whereas the fashion, music and styles of other decades were grasped as more authentic, original and even safer. I will closely analyse these engagements in upcoming chapters, but, before this, I need to develop a theoretical framework to discuss how and why nostalgia emerges in different social spheres.

For Boym (2007), "the twentieth century began with utopia and ended with nostalgia. Optimistic belief in the future became outmoded, while nostalgia, for better or worse, never went out of fashion, remaining uncannily contemporary" (p. 7). Although it revives 'superseded' tendencies, the presence of nostalgia is palpable in contemporary society. From media texts to populist movements, the past is constantly summoned in public discourse as a way to make sense of current problems and social issues (Ana, 2020; Cross, 2015; Davis, 1977; Holdsworth, 2011; Lammers & Baldwin, 2020). A dissatisfaction and frustration towards the present signal distinct causes, effects and mediations. Nostalgia comprises a set of complex phenomena which intersect with the arena of social reality; it gathers interactions between individuals, groups, institutions and ideologies (Kennedy-Karpat; 2020; Ladino, 2004; Niemeyer, 2014; Sweeney, 2020). Western culture has 'suffered' the nostalgic pathos even before the term was coined in 1688, from Hamlet and his dilemma of avenging his father to Don Quixote aspiring to recover the time of knights and princesses.

In order to understand nostalgia, it is crucial, first, to grasp the social nature of memory. The yearning for the past comprises the action of remembering something which is perceived to be absent from the present; in addition, it implies an object which is idealised based on this sense of loss. Differently put, and as I argue in the following sections, nostalgia is a particular articulation of memory. In this chapter, I problematise nostalgia as a point of contact between the individual and the social, being a relationship that might be anchored in certain contexts and circumstances that generate and activate a *nostalgic structure of feeling*. My purpose is twofold. First, I review diverse modes of studying memory and nostalgia in order to acknowledge the benefits and pitfalls of these approaches. Second, from this, I aim to develop theoretical tools that will aide me in the analysis of the reception of nostalgic media texts by young audiences.

Thus, I begin my discussion by exploring how memory is a complex social practice that brings together individual experiences with social mediations. I then turn my attention to the authenticity of remembering, exploring how different communities and the mass media produce postmemories and prosthetic memories that do not necessarily require a first-hand recollection. After this, I discuss how the past can be expressed in certain 'sites of memory', entailing an articulation of emotions, meanings and materialities. This discussion on memory allows me to proceed to investigate nostalgia as a longing for the past, being a particular articulation of memory. Hence, I assess two approaches to understanding nostalgia: the hermeneutics of suspicion and the therapeutics of nostalgia. Taking into account their strengths and weaknesses, I propose an analytics of nostalgia, a perspective that considers nostalgia in the plural and is concerned with the particularities and articulations that generate a yearning for a previous period. With this in mind, I define nostalgia as a structure of feeling which conveys a sense of loss based on the evaluation of a lacking present that catalyses a yearning for the past. Finally, I explore how nostalgia is articulated around a temporal and spatial distance, a sense of displacement and a perceived absence.

2.2 Memory as Social Practice

Memory, as Terdiman (1993) proposes, is "the modality of our relation to the past" (p. 7); indeed, the term points out an ability to understand what has happened. Following Jedlowski (2001, pp. 29-30), memory can be bluntly defined as the capacity – enacted by a living or artificial being – to respond to certain events based on already stored information. However, this capacity brings about diverse means and actions in which the past invests the present; that is why

Terdiman (1993) considers memory to be "the present past" (p. 8). Otherwise stated, memory unravels around complex social practices that traverse individual and social dynamics, generating overlaps, correspondences and even contradictions in distinct dimensions, levels and modes (Erll, 2008).

In this section, I theorise the relationship between the individual and the social – and its middle grounds – in the act of remembering the past. In order to achieve this, I have drawn from the main ideas of *memory studies*, an academic area that reunites diverse sociological, anthropological and philosophical accounts of how memory operates, and what it is. My discussion is based mainly on the arguments advanced by the philosopher Paul Ricoeur, the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs and the social historian Pierre Nora, and the subsequent developments they have received. By bringing different traditions together, I aim to situate memory as a social practice produced and reproduced by diverse agents and institutions in the social world.

2.2.1 The Social Mediations of Memory

Paul Ricoeur (2004) problematises memory from a phenomenological perspective by considering the past as an absence, as something which is brought back following specific intentions and circumstances. Under this view, memory consists in an *operation* of retrieving some incidence that already happened by distinct individuals, groups or institutions. For Ricoeur (2004), there is a substantial difference between *simple memory* and the effort to recall something. The former implies a spontaneous grasp of some object, event or figure rooted in the past; that is to say, a memory which instantly appears following a quotidian trigger. The latter, on the contrary, implies an intention to remember which is not involuntary nor unconscious. This differentiation is based on the work of Aristotle (1908, p. 451a), who distinguishes between *mnēmē*, or the individual emotionality upon which simple memory rests, and *anamnēsis*, or the active search proper to *recollection*.[11] The separation between simple memory and recollection draws a line between the biological ability to remember the past – which is essential for the everyday of any person – and more pronounced and directed purposes of retrieving something that has already happened (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 18). Hence, the return of some aspect of the past involves a complicated dynamic fragmented in differentiated practices.

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[11] As Whitehead (2009, pp. 15-27) exposes, the classical accounts of memory pit Plato against Aristotle. Given that, as it would be expected, Plato discusses memory as a way to uncover a pre-natal world of Ideas, I have followed Aristotle's conception for it allows me to connect individual and social instances of remembering the past.

Following this line of thought, the anthropologist Paul Connerton (1989) proposes that memories are performative in the sense that they have ritualistic features (Couldry, 2003). From commemorative practices, such as national festivities and holidays, to embodied practices, e.g., an activity such as playing an instrument or singing a national anthem,[12] memories are pragmatic to the extent that they are symbolically or materially executed. Memories, then, are not caged within a person's mind; rather, they unravel within distinct interpretative and material frameworks. As Olick & Robbins (1998, p. 106) remark, memory has an individual beginning, i.e., it is primarily experienced by an individual; nonetheless, this experience is overdetermined, it passes through different and changing mediations which vary in scope and nature. These mediations occur simultaneously in two different – yet associated – moments: the *act of remembering* and the *object of remembering* (Olick, 1999). The former implies the action as such, being enacted by a person, a collective or a society through different means; the latter, on the other hand, entails what is being remembered and how, from meanings to material forms. Between the two, there is a dialectic which is not entirely fixed. This dialectic is crucial for understanding nostalgia as it links an interpretative action derived from specific social conditions to a repertoire of objects, events and even decades, tied to specific meanings. The operation of this dialectic is always open to change; however, certain social frameworks might help to stabilise it and even to naturalise it as part of a country's cultural life (Künzler, 2020; Wellen, 2021).

Following the ideas of Émile Durkheim, the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1992) problematises memory as a social practice, from a functionalist perspective, by distinguishing the different frameworks which operate in the conception and materialisation of the act of remembering. By considering memory as collective, it is possible to grasp how the past is preserved, recalled and enacted in certain groups and cultures as a whole. For Halbwachs (1992), "no memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections" (p. 43); time, thus, is understood through the lens of mediations that emerge from social rules, habits and conventions, but also from contemporary changes, exigencies and dispositions. *Collective memory* implies a shared background and a common understanding that establishes specific forms of remembering; in this regard, a personal remembrance stands in dialogue with certain ratified memories. These 'official' memories emanate from cultural and power processes that select certain

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[12] Connerton (1989, p. 34) polemises against the idea of separating certain habitual practices from the study of memory. In his performative approach, memories are enacted through a wide range of actions. The fact that certain habits are not entirely voluntary does not erase the trace of remembering their execution or application.

meanings and shape others. Memory is a site of struggle, of constant limits and pressures that are predicated on a fundamental malleability (Clark & Gibbs, 2020; Whitehead, 2009).

Now, the collective nature of memory needs a more discriminatory lens to discern the fields in which several mediations operate. For Olick & Robbins (1998), the concept of collective memory overemphasises the role of group dynamics and forgets the function that other broader social processes might have.[13] In their view, it is more productive to study a *social memory* than a collective one for this conception aims to capture the whole range of processes that mediate memory at a specific time and space. This differentiation may be useful in identifying particular domains of study – the micro, the mezzo and the macro; nonetheless, the social fields in which memory operates continue to be missing. For this reason, Assmann (2008) identifies institutional and non-institutional frames of memory. The former involves the organisational bodies and symbolic devices which arrange how time is perceived and understood, i.e., how the past is remembered.[14] The latter, on the contrary, "it is not supported by any institutions of learning, transmission, and interpretation; it is not cultivated by specialists and is not summoned or celebrated on special occasions; it is not formalised and stabilised by any forms of material symbolisation" (Assmann, 2008, p. 111). Hence, it encompasses the everyday interactions that have some sort of traces from the past. This *communicative memory* embodies genres of communication, thematisation and emotions that bind together distinct groups, from families to generations. By distinguishing a communicative memory, Assmann (2008) unites the performativity and habitual nature of memories examined by Connerton (1989) with the collective mediations and dynamics identified by Halbwachs (1992).

With this in mind, I would like to recapitulate the previous discussion in order to make sense of memory as a social practice. Memories have an individual beginning, being experienced by a person based on his or her life. Nevertheless, multiple social mediations pose interpretative frameworks to the modes in which the past is recalled: several memories are possessed by groups, regions or nations. In this regard, memory has a ritual nature for it is enacted as a communicative

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[13] Halbwachs's (1992) analysis is focused on the operation of collective memory in the family, religion and social classes. Indeed, the focus is located at an intermediate level between the individual and society. Although there are several hints in his work, wider institutional and symbolic dynamics are not considered as relevant in the formation of memory.

[14] Assmann (2008) calls this institutional frame *cultural memory*. However, I will utilise the conceptualisation advanced by Olick & Robbins (1998) – i.e., social memory – due to its goal of highlighting the different mediations that come together in the formation of memory.

genre in everyday life, as a form of a living past – or "present past", as Terdiman (1993) proposes – performed in quotidian actions, habits and conventions. In addition, memory also has an institutional nature, being captured in traditions, organisations and even myths. In short, the act of remembering is intrinsically mediated.

2.2.2 Sites of Memory

So far, I have focused my discussion on the act of remembering and the social and cultural mediations that occur around it. Following the dialectic formulated by Olick (1999), I will now concentrate on the object of remembering, i.e., the relationship between the past and the present embodied within a concrete item, event or period.

The social historian Pierre Nora (2008) examines this process of embodiment by signalling the tension between memory and history; in his perspective, memory was traditionally a lived *experience* in which the past was enacted and regenerated in different instances of social life. Nonetheless, modern history, as an academic discipline and institutionalised practice, has transformed memory into a purely archival *representation*, losing its polysemic and open nature. Thus, for Nora (1989, p. 12), this tension has as its outcome the creation of *lieux de mémoire* – or 'sites of memory' – in which a society acknowledges its past through official or non-official means, a past that was once existent and alive for a generation of people that is long gone.

Indeed, Nora's (1989, 2008) assessment of memory and history is pessimistic and dichotomic (Carrier, 2000; Whitehead, 2009). His argument has a strong nostalgic sensibility for it appears to make a claim for the return of a Homeric time in which history was orally transmitted in rhapsodies. As Taylor (2003) critiques, this polarisation of history and memory as binary opposites "does not differentiate amongst forms of transmission (embodied or archival) or amongst different kinds of publics and communities", falling into a "temporal before and after, a rift between past (traditional, authentic, now lost) and present (generalised as modern, global, and 'mass' culture)" (p. 22). Furthermore, and notwithstanding the critiques of history as discipline (Foucault, 1980), this difference becomes diffuse when memory is taken as an informational source for a specific period; for instance, Ricoeur (2004) underscores that memory is an essential component of historic reconstruction. Although it does not provide a precise depiction, memory can be a trace which might show how a historical event or happening is still perceived and felt (Conway, 2010; Jakubowicz & Hądzelek, 2013).

In order to supersede this contradiction and polarisation between the two, I define the relation between memory and history as one that unfolds upon concrete manifestations. In this regard, I understand memory as anchored in a socio-historic conjuncture crisscrossed by different mediations, from the individual to the social. With a dialogic account between the two, I argue, sites of memory can be grasped as intersections of memory and history, materialisations of some circumstances from the past. They can be sites – i.e., proper locations – objects, documents or audio-visual material, amongst other possibilities; they become a site of memory by bridging the gap between two temporalities through socially sanctioned discourses and institutions, but also everyday interactions (Gryta, 2020; Radstone, 2000; Sendyka, 2016).

Nora (1989, pp. 18-19) considers that these sites are made out of coexisting material, symbolic and functional aspects. Hence, a site of memory entails a material form which is symbolically invested with a particular meaning through a functional and pragmatic social practice. For instance, a commemorative minute of silence brings together a symbolic and material action, with a performance deployed in a specific situation.[15] In this regard, the creation of sites of memory is marked by a will to remember and by a positioning of meaning. Any social entity has the potential of becoming one; nevertheless, for Nora (1989), it is the act of *symbolic investment* which truly confirms the emergence of a site of memory. This process is open, for it might imply institutional, interpersonal, and even spontaneous moments that lead to the forging of a site of memory (Nora, 1989, p. 23).

Rather than a clear-cut difference, the temporal division of past, present and future is actually fragile, for past experiences foster the ground upon which the understanding of the present and future flourishes; in parallel, the past is grasped based on frameworks proper to contemporary times (Burke, 2019; Cui, 2012; Hepworth, 2019; Lavabre, 2012; Schwartz, 1991). Memory, history and the past are embodied in sites of memory. They entail a dynamic of simultaneous material, symbolic and functional aspects and practices. Indeed, in this complex dynamic, tradition and change meet each other, weaving a dialectic instead of a linear remembering.

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[15] In terms of the ontology of sites of memory, Nora (1989, p. 19) also considers that they can be material (e.g., a specific site or a concrete archive), symbolic (e.g., the aforementioned commemorative minute of silence) and functional (e.g., a veteran's reunion or a classroom manual). Again, it is crucial to mention that these aspects might coexist at the same time.

Both the acts and the objects of remembering bring about diverse mediations and dialectics. Just as they point to tensions grounded in factual events and happenings (Assmann, 2018; Terdiman, 1993; Whitehead, 2009), they can also unfold around imagined narratives, notions and ideas about the past.[16] With this observation, I am signalling how the symbolic investment that characterises the creation of a site of memory can follow other logics besides one of objectivity and historical accuracy. It is imperative, then, to explore the nature, authenticity and appropriation of these sites of memory. I explore this relationship in the next subsection

2.2.3 From Post to Prosthetic Memories

A memory stands in relation to something which is recalled; the nature of this relationship is social, as I discussed above, and open to changes (Conway, 2010; Pohrib, 2019; Weaver, 2020). A question arises, then, regarding how a certain memory is grasped, i.e., the way in which it can be appropriated and by whom. The mediated nature of memories signals issues regarding the authenticity of remembrance: could someone who did not live a certain event have a recollection of it?

The literary scholar Marianne Hirsch (2008) problematises the transmission of traumatic events – e.g., the Holocaust – from the original group who suffered them to a second generation, an act which comprises the interpretation and preservation of a troubled past. This indirect knowledge about an arduous happening entails a dynamic of continuity and rupture: an event is expected to be remembered in order to avoid its repetition. And yet, these memories were not originally lived by the new members of the community, by the new citizens of a nation. Hirsch (2008) calls these recollections *postmemories* in order to recognise how the generation after those who witnessed or endured a cultural trauma come to terms with those "experiences that they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviours amongst which they grew up" (p. 106). Postmemories are not literal reminiscences, but they are almost identical, they approximate memory in its *emotional force*.

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[16] For Keightley & Pickering (2012), there is an essential connection between remembering and imagination. They call *mnemonic imagination* the "active synthesis of remembering and imagining which is essential to our understanding of the relationship between past, present, and future" (p. 5). In this respect, the engagement with the past is enacted through an interplay of interactive dualities; for instance, the link between experience and expectation, or the relations between lived first-hand experience and mediated or inherited second-hand experience. In this thesis, my focus is not located on the mnemonic imagination as a social process. Nevertheless, I must highlight the crucial theoretical and analytical purchase this concept has and the potential it might have for future research concerned with the reception of representations of the past.

Following my discussion of the previous subsection, the concept of postmemories helps us to understand Nora's (1989, 2008) polemic of memory against history. It is through the transmission and re-enactment of memories, by one generation to another, that a specific event can be fully grasped in its emotional dimension. The possibility of having postmemories, as proposed by Hirsch (2008), helps us to understand the danger of conceiving memory and history as diametrically opposed. In fact, it is with the establishment of sites of memory that some populations can continue remembering certain events. Sites of memory signal an uneven situation in terms of power: certain groups need to materialise their (post)memories in some form in order to avoid their disappearance. In the act of transmission and reception of postmemories, the dynamic of mediation recurs to sources and materials from the original period, dramatized forms, replicas, approximate renderings, amongst other possibilities (Hirsch, 2001, p. 9). For instance, some museums might commemorate a specific historical occurrence, whilst some films might depict it (Crooke, 2019; Rauch, 2018). This mediated nature destabilises the sensation of a unique and exclusive communion between the senders and receivers of postmemories for its materialisation in some sort of medium implies that outsiders can appropriate them as well. What happens, then, when memories are allocated to other social groups for different reasons? What happens when memories are commodified?

Hirsch's (2001, 2008) conceptualisation of postmemory employs the same analytical logic advanced by Halbwachs (1992) in order to explain how memory works within a relatively closed group; its collective underpinning, in this case, is seen as an issue of communication, a relationship between original and new beholders of the past. However, the dialectic nature of memory – i.e., the relationship between the act and the object of remembering – opens a possibility of attachment between a postmemory and any kind of person; in other words, the past does not necessarily need to have been lived in order to be remembered. The memory scholar Alison Landsberg (2004) attends this critique and analyses the connection between a person and a historical narrative of the past. In her view, in the contemporary cultural economy, global flows disrupt the notion of stable social frameworks for memories; modernity, with its inherent development of new media and technologies, has sponsored the generation of commodified forms of memories, forms that can be consumed easily by anyone. These *prosthetic memories* "are thus neither essentialist nor socially constructed in any straightforward way: they derive from a person's mass-mediated experience of a traumatic event of the past" (Landsberg, 2004, p. 19). They are called 'prosthetic' because they are not 'organic', i.e., a product of a lived or hereditary experience; rather, they emerge from the engagement between an audience and a mediated

representation. In addition, they are interchangeable and exchangeable due to their commodified form (Bertens & Polak, 2019; Keene, 2010)

Their 'prosthetic' nature, I argue, goes beyond the traumatic and can be found in any kind of representation of the past, any recollection of something lost (Keightley & Pickering, 2012, p. 92). Therefore, mediation meets mediatisation (Ampuja, Koivisto & Väliverronen, 2020; Couldry & Hepp, 2013; Livingstone, 2009; Silverstone, 2005) in a process in which the passage of time is captured as a commodity, a media text with meanings ready to be unpacked and engaged with. Indeed, this last point leads Landsberg (2004) to avoid an apocalyptic assessment of prosthetic memories (Nora, 1989, p. 14) for their commodified forms "are not capsules of meaning that spectators swallow wholesale but are the grounds on which social meanings are negotiated, contested, and sometimes constructed" (p. 21). In this regard, they have a political potential for they can conjure a sense of the past which would be alien to outsiders of an 'original' community (Verovšek, 2020, p. 217). The crux of the matter lies in the way in which these memories are operationalised: remembering might be used to dispel doubts about history in order to seek a better future, or it might become an aspiration, a yearning for an irretrievable past.

Memories, then, do not need to be 'authentic' to be experienced in multiple forms and variations. This is why Nora (1989, 2008) emphasises that sites of memory appear when they are endowed with some kind of *meaning*. What matters is not the origin, but the symbolic investment. However, there is a crucial element missing from this conceptualisation: the emotional dimension of memories. Indeed, as I discussed above, the emotional force is what bridges memories and postmemories (Hirsch, 2008; Landsberg, 2004), and, I claim, it is essential in the engagement with the past. Therefore, sites of memory are also felt and experienced; this happens in diverse ways and for different reasons, because the past is flexible in terms of how it can be emotionally perceived. At this point, it is possible for me to reformulate Nora's (1989, p. 19) account of the nature of the sites of (post)memory: they are *emotional*, *symbolic* and *material*. I have chosen to leave aside the functional aspect from this new elaboration as I consider it intrinsic to all of these dimensions.

This reformulation of Nora's (1989) conception allows me to problematise how memory, as social practice, can have diverse trajectories, crossing and going beyond social, cultural, and even geographic boundaries. Indeed, if memory can be prosthetic (Landsberg, 2004), this brings about the possibility of appropriations in multiple spatial and temporal dimensions. In the next section, I

delve into the way in which memory can be enacted transnationally and transculturally.

2.2.4 Transnational and Transcultural Memories

At this point in my argument, I have highlighted how memory, as a social practice, is mediated. Indeed, it entails an active relationship between the individual and broader socio-cultural dynamics and structures. With this in mind, I need to address its location within the social space; or, otherwise stated, the role of memory in specific geographic limits, from the regional to the global (Amine & Beschea-Fache, 2012; Assmann, & Conrad, 2010; Keightley & Pickering, 2017). As Erll (2011a) points out, the first formulations of memory as an object of social inquiry had a national bias: memories were considered to be part of a well-defined society, being an important mark of membership for individuals. This notion is derived from the ideas of the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder who, in the eighteenth century, proposed that memories were crucial components of a culture, with a status similar to folklore: they are the product of the cultural conditions of a national space (Brunow, 2015, p. 29; Welsch, 1999). This "container-culture" approach became the leading premise in classic sociological and historical studies of memory (Erll, 2011a, p. 7). Not for nothing, Halbwach's (1992) theory of collective memory and Nora's (1989, 2008) conception of sites of memory start from social groups tied to the dynamics of particular national societies – e.g., the family and France respectively.

The analytical association between a set of memories and the cultural conditions of a nation provided essentialist frameworks for the examination of memory (Carrier & Kabalek, 2014, p. 51). This blind spot became problematic as empirical studies started to delve into the broader and complex dynamics that are enacted in dynamics of memory transmission, creation, and reception (Törnquist-Plewa, Andersen & Erll, 2017). For instance, the Holocaust, as a historic event, has been explored as a referent to the past that is not exclusive of the Jewish community; on the contrary, and fuelled by multiple media representations, it has been appropriated across cultural and spatial borders as a moment of global memory (Rothberg, 2014; Törnquist-Plewa, 2018). It is the study of the different appropriations of the Holocaust in different contexts that leads Rothberg (2009) to propose that memory is multidirectional; for him, memory operates as a dynamic transfer which is established based on the interaction between social certain identities and conditions (Rothberg, 2009, p. 11). His understanding is similar to Landsberg's (2004) definition of prosthetic memories, as outlined above. The key distinction, nevertheless, resides in the transnational dimension

emphasised by Rothberg (2009): we can have second-hand experiences of the past, but memory also traverses the constraints of national territories.

In terms of location, then, memory is enacted in complex dynamics that pinpoint its multi-scalarity (de Cesari & Rigney, 2014, p. 5). Over the last two decades, the preoccupation for comprehending the diverse scales, moments, and modalities in which memory is enacted has entailed *transnational and transcultural turns* in memory studies (Bond & Rapson, 2014; Erll, 2011b; Pfoser & Keightley, 2021). These turns bring together multiple approaches whose concern is the analysis of memory as co-constructed in dynamics that are not epistemologically and methodologically lassoed to the framework of the nation-state (Assmann, 2010; Brunow, 2015). As Radstone (2011) proposes, an emphasis on the transnational and the transcultural implies that memory is not viewed as a cultural product but as a process with constantly evolving nuances; in short, it conjures research projects focused "on the locatedness of engagements with memories on the move" (Radstone, 2011, p. 111).

Now, exploring transnational and transcultural memories entails important coincidences in terms of analytical tools and objects of study, but also crucial dissimilarities that must be highlighted (Rothberg, 2014, p. 130). The literature often distinguishes between the two. I follow Pfoser & Keightley (2021) to define them for the purposes of the present work: transnational memory brings about acts of remembering "across geopolitical borders of nation-states" (p.126); on the other hand, transcultural memory encompasses "hybridised or cosmopolitan memories forming new imaginations of community and belonging" (p. 127). As Törnquist-Plewa (2018, p. 302) observes, transnational memories are produced in dynamics of remembering shared across national limits whereas transcultural memories might be the result of meaningful transformative experiences in transcultural encounters or the result of long cultural contacts. Simply put, although not all transnational memories are transcultural in nature, they have the potential to be it. Here, my intention is not to provide clear-cut definitions for, as I will show shortly, research on both concepts tend to overlap and to suggest a productive tension between the two (Bond & Rapson, 2014; Erll & Rigney, 2009).

A focus on transnational memories involves a processual perspective in which they are considered the consequence of ongoing cultural practices and unequal encounters and a generative one in which they are assessed as responsible for the creation of stories and new social relations instead of being simple preservatives of national legacies (De Cesari & Rigney, 2014, p. 20; Pfoser & Keightley, 2021,

p. 129). Thus, the study of transnational memory seeks to grasp how remembering is regularly operationalised in co-constitutive social practices linked to diverse cultural spaces (Ebron, 2014; Immler, 2009). At this point, I must underscore that this approach does not deny or neglect the existence of national borders (Erll, 2011b; Radstone, 2011). Although the analytical scope is put on the socio-cultural dynamics and processes through which memory is shared across territories, national borders still play a crucial role in contemporary geopolitical relations (Athique, 2019; Vertovec, 2009). The point of contrast vis-á-vis "ethnified notions of memory" (Moses & Rothberg, 2014, p. 32) dwells in the problematisation of spatial borders as dialectic (De Cesari & Rigney, 2014); in other words, memory is understood as an inherently unstable and, therefore, constantly changing social activity that occurs in the circulation of cultural practices between regional, national, and international borders (Amine & Beschea-Fache 2012).

The transnational approach in memory studies seeks to explore how remembering is enacted in globalised times (Törnquist-Plewa, 2018). For Reading (2016), contemporary memory is characterised by "globital" practices. The term "globital" designates dynamics of memory assemblages and articulations that might happen in diverse places of the planet thanks to the possibilities afforded by processes of digitalisation and mediatisation (Reading, 2016, p. 48). In this regard, a common point of studies within this transnational approach is the recognition of the role different kinds of media texts and outlets play in the tensions and transitions that surround particular memory practices (Assmann, 2010). The main tendency of works that examine transnational memories is to analyse the modes in which representations of historical events and periods are appropriated across social groups and national limits (Cheskin, 2012; Ebron, 2014; Kirn, 2014; Platt, 2013; Schwenkel, 2014). Hence, a central concern for this literature is the identification of the trajectories of memories from an 'original' community, region, or country to other kinds of social groups with an emphasis on the mediations and appropriations that are ensued in these dynamics (De Cesari & Rigney, 2014; Erll, 2011a).

Let me now turn my attention towards the focus on transcultural memories. This approach intends to problematise remembering as a process of translation and adaptation that occurs across nations, regions, and the globe (Bond & Rapson, 2014; Törnquist-Plewa, Andersen & Erll, 2017). As Brunow (2015) eloquently puts it, "transculturality is defined by the routes, not the roots of cultural memory" (p. 99). Hence, there is an explicit interest in examining the modes in which foreign or previously unknown memories – being captured and elaborated,

for instance, in media representations – can impact and interact with the identities and social practices of myriad individuals, groups, and even societies (Carrier & Kabalek, 2014; Jones, 2017). As Moses & Rothberg (2014) consider, the transcultural turn "draws attention to the palimpsestic overlays, the hybrid assemblages, the non-linear interactions, and the fuzzy edges of group belonging" (p. 32). Once again, I must signal that this approach does not advocate an erasure of the local (Radstone, 2011 p. 117); rather, it brings to the fore its relevance by underscoring the mutual encounters and frictions that flourish when 'alien' memories are enacted in new localities.

The transcultural approach in memory studies has found fertile ground in analyses preoccupied with experiences of migration (Goncharova, 2016). Hence, remembering is explored in diasporic communities in which different generations and individuals negotiate cultural practices from 'old' and 'new' homelands. In these cases, social identities are problematised as dynamic constructions in which the past and the present intersect; memory is considered as a meeting point of diverse personal and structural factors – from intimate family stories to national mythologies – that provide migrant groups with resources to make sense of their contemporary life (Kandasamy, 2021; Pfoser, 2014; Spadaro, 2018). Moreover, in this approach there is a concern for investigating the ways in which the remembrance of distinct historical events is enacted in multiple cultures, i.e., the mediations that take place when something 'foreign' is translated to 'local' conditions (Heimo, 2017; Koenig, 2014; Rapson, 2014).

Both transnational and transcultural conceptualisations of memory provide crucial insights for understanding how remembering entails complex social practices that are enacted across and beyond national boundaries (Brunow, 2015; Erll & Rigney, 2009). Nonetheless, a common feature shared by the empirical studies based on these two approaches involves an emphasis on global memories or large-scale historical events; simply put, they are focused on directions from the global to the local, leaving aside myriad practices of transnational and transcultural remembering located in everyday spheres (Amine & Beschea-Fache, 2012; Pfoser & Keightley, 2021). Indeed, as I have described in the preceding lines, media representations of the past are considered pivotal engines of transnational and transcultural practices of memory (Bond, 2014; Erll, 2011b). Despite this acknowledgement, media reception studies are scarce in the literature (Gudehus, Anderson & Keller, 2010; Rauch, 2018). Writing at the beginning of this century, Kansteiner (2002) proposed that, in order to examine the nuances of memory as social practice, it was necessary to notice "how often media representations are ignored or read against the grain of their intended or

intrinsic messages" (p. 192), obliging scholars to design novel ways of comprehending media reception in terms of the production of memories. This claim easily fits Bisht's (2013) contention that both the transnational and transcultural turns in memory studies have left uninspected the everyday dimension of remembering, having a debt in terms of "empirical examination[s] of the limits, contestations and inequalities" (p. 14) that characterise quotidian interactions. Keightley & Pickering (2017) wrap all of these concerns up by recognising the need of reception studies in the analysis of transnational and transcultural memory; yet, under their view, interpretative practices must be explored not only in engagements with public forms of memory, but as "local and localised processes through which remembering is performed in everyday experience" (p. 7).

The literature on transnational and transcultural memory, then, has a deficiency concerning the empirical analysis of actual engagements with mediated representations of the past. Nonetheless, in audience and reception studies there is an approach that problematises encounters and interpretations with transnational media texts. This approach, I submit, can provide important analytical and methodological avenues to the study of memory in transnational and transcultural contexts. In the next subsection, I review the main contributions of works that explore transnational audiences for the analysis of memory and I position this thesis vis-á-vis their perspective.

2.2.4.1 Understanding Transnational Audiences for the Analysis of Memory

Granted, the transnational and transcultural turns in memory studies have a debt concerning the empirical study of audiences (Keightley & Pickering, 2012, pp. 187-188). Yet, there is a long-standing tradition that explores the dynamics that take place between transnational media flows and local audiences (Athique, 2016; Chin & Morimoto, 2013; Haugerud, Mahoney & Ference, 2012). The study of transnational audiences encompasses a problematisation of globalisation as a multi-layered process in which historical, social, cultural, economic, and political dynamics intersect; in terms of media reception, this brings about complex engagements between local and global meanings (Athique, 2014; Banaji, 2006; Martín-Barbero, 1991; Orozco, 1993). Initially, the focus on the transnational aspect of media production and interpretation derived from a concern on what was considered a unidirectional – and consequently hegemonic – flow of media texts and products from colonial powers to the rest of the world (Lobato, 2019; Straubhaar, 1991). Amid the context of the Cold War, claims of cultural imperialism became a prime mover of studies that critiqued the inequalities of certain countries vis-á-vis the media production power of the

United States and Europe, studies that, despite their political commitment, were not based on empirical examinations of actual audiences (Dorfman & Mattelart, 1991; Tomlinson, 1991).

These transnational engagements started to be empirically analysed, especially during the 1990s, showing that media reception across cultures is regularly enacted through nuanced dynamics of translation, negotiation, and hybridisation (Ang, 1996; Hepp & Couldry, 2009; Hermes, 1995; Okome, 2007). A key preoccupation of the literature on transnational audiences entails the modes in which national audiences may or may not choose to engage with foreign or local media texts (Athique, 2005; Rixon, 2006). The work of media scholar Joseph D. Straubhaar (1991, 2007) is foundational in this respect, proposing the concept of cultural proximity as an analytical tool to examine the reception of transnational media texts. The theory of *cultural proximity* suggests that audiences will tend to prefer media "that are closest, most proximate or most directly relevant to them in cultural and linguistic terms" (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005, p. 273). Under this view, language and local or national cultures are the main factors that play a role in audience preferences; from there, other aspects such as genre, in terms of the media text, and economic and cultural capital, in terms of social dynamics, shape multiple layers of proximity (Berg, 2017; Straubhaar, 2007). Summed to this, this process is complemented and enhanced by the ways in which media texts are culturally shareable, i.e., texts that have values, images, archetypes, and themes common across diverse cultures (Singhal & Udornpim, 1997, p. 186).

Although the majority of works that draw on the theory of cultural proximity acknowledge multiple spatial and cultural proximities and several limitations – e.g., the limited media production infrastructure of certain countries – (La Pastina, 2004; Straubhaar, 2007), they have an important weakness that I must highlight. By proposing different layers in the cultural proximity between audiences and transnational media texts, this approach hierarchises distinct elements that compose the process of reception. Thus, this analytical perspective seems to have a functionalist bias that proposes a structured dynamic of media interpretation (Couldry, 2003). Further empirical studies that have employed this theory to explore transnational engagements underscore how the relationship between local audiences and foreign media is marked by contextual and contingent conditions; hence, on some occasions, language might be a crucial factor for this kind of engagements, whilst, in different instances, other issues might take prominence in this process (Berg, 2017, p. 3428). Iwabuchi (2002) offers a solution to this problem by proposing to consider cultural proximity a dynamic process derived from specific historical and social conditions. In

addition, he warns against identifying cultural proximity as a predetermined attribute of media texts; on the contrary, it should be conceived, he argues, as a dialectical relation between distinct cultural forces articulated around the audiences' agency and individual background, media text structures, and particular contexts (Iwabuchi, 2002, p. 134).

The literature on transnational audiences provides essential insights for the transnational and transcultural turns in memory studies. First, these studies exhibit how reception is a complex process that must be explored taking into account diverse symbolic and material issues. Concerning the representation of the past in transnational media texts, this involves an attention towards the convergence of personal and structural elements in their interpretation; otherwise stated, it comprises a focus that grasps memory as mediated and enacted in everyday experience (Bisht, 2013; Keightley & Pickering, 2017). Second, empirical works that explore transnational audiences highlight how specific contextual conditions provide cultural coordinates for engagements with foreign media. Regarding the study of memory, this insight problematises how the transmission and representation of historical events and memories are constantly evolving dynamics tied to the specificities of social spaces, obliging an analysis of the modes in which the past is actualised depending on distinct circumstances and possibilities (Gudehus, Anderson & Keller, 2010; Rauch, 2018). Finally, studies of transnational audiences show how meaning-making dynamics are always localised, i.e., reception practices are enacted from the social positionality of audiences. This point is pivotal for comprehending the relationship between transnational and transcultural remembering as it encompasses an analytical focus on the actual ways in which media texts are appropriated by specific audiences in specific situations and places. This focus allows to examine whether certain transnational media flows entail reception processes characterised by transcultural practices of remembering (Chin & Morimoto, 2013; Hepp & Couldry, 2009; Rothberg, 2014).

As I outlined in Chapter 1, this research analyses how young people in the Global South engage with foreign representations of the past in media texts. Its emphasis, therefore, is not located in the ways in which these representations are transmitted transnationally, but rather on how they are interpreted in reception practices and how they mediate these young audience's mode of imagining the past, understanding the present, and envisioning the future. In other words, I do not investigate how Costa Rican young people make sense of having transnational media diets; rather, I analyse how depictions of a foreign past are actualised in *localised meaning-making dynamics*. For instance, in Chapter 4, I

propose to understand stylised representations of the past as spatiotemporal bridges that Costa Rican young audiences utilise to imagine how both foreign and national previous decades were and looked and to comprehend the relationship between the past, the present, and the future. With this, I analyse a mode in which a transnational process of media production is transformed into reception practices grounded in a specific context; in other words, my interest dwells in the relationship between the transnational and the transcultural. Despite this difference in scope, studies of transnational audiences – and specially the theory of cultural proximity – provides a valuable analytical framework for comprehending the background, in terms of politico-economic processes of media production, upon which engagements with *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) occur.

Now, this discussion on the complexities of transnational and transcultural memories vis-á-vis media reception compels me to direct my analytical focus towards the ways in which *nostalgia* appears, merging memory with devotion, measuring the present with the scale of the past. Indeed, be it biographic or collective, communitarian or prosthetic, remembering can become an aspiration, a 'lost paradise' that summons emotions of longing and desire. For Halbwachs (1992, p. 49), this is something essential about a nostalgic sensibility: the idea that some aspect of social reality was better in a previous time. But what distinguishes memory from nostalgia? Are not they a reminiscence of something lost? Indeed, both entail a recollection from a previous period; the dissimilarity, nonetheless, is located in the relationship between the act and the object of remembering. Thus, I contend, it is not the same just to recall an object or event as to *yearn* for it. Nostalgia is a social practice which brings together three temporal dimensions: it presupposes that the present is incomplete, deficient, creating then the necessity or 'hunger' for recovering something which has been lost in order to restore the future – or to make sense of it (Göpffarth, 2020; Ladino, 2004; Lammers & Baldwin, 2020; Niemeyer & Wentz, 2014; Tannock, 1995).

The present discussion of memory as social practice allows me to analyse nostalgia by providing three main insights concerning the dialectic between the act and the object of remembering (Olick, 1999). First, it highlights how memory is constructed and established through *different mediations*; in other words, memory is generated and transformed following contextual and circumstantial conditions that can be transnational and transcultural. Second, it exhibits how memory is *articulated*. Through my examination and re-elaboration of Pierre Nora's (1989, 2008) conceptualisation of 'sites of memory, I have been able to

discern how remembering is instantiated in institutional and non-institutional events, objects, narratives and so forth. This is crucial as I contend that the articulation of nostalgia differs from other practices of memory. Finally, it shows the *complexity of memory as a social experience*. Indeed, the concepts of postmemories (Hirsch, 2001, 2008) and prosthetic memories (Landsberg, 2004) bring to the fore multiple ways of engaging with the past, from the transmission of cultural traumas from one generation to another, to 'witnessing' a historical period through a film.

Nostalgia implies a recollection, yet not all memories are nostalgic (Keightley & Pickering, 2012, p. 116). Any sourness of the past is forgotten in exchange for an aspirational account. Nostalgia, just as memory, is embroiled within a network of social mediations; nonetheless, it is structured and constituted based on an idealised past and a feeling of deficiency. With this in mind, in the next section, I explore the concept of nostalgia with more detail and how it operates within society and culture.

2.3 The Concept of Nostalgia

As I discussed in Chapter 1, *Stranger Things* (2016) is a Netflix original production that has been called 'nostalgic' thanks to its tributes and homages to different aspects of the popular culture of the decade of the 1980s (McCarthy, 2019). Yet, as I highlighted above, a memory as such does not necessarily bring about nostalgia. What, then, is the difference?

In a nutshell, nostalgia implies a desire for a lost time, a yearning for the past (Adie & de Bernardi, 2020; Atia & Davies, 2010; Berliner 2012; Farrar, 2011; Kennedy-Karpat, 2020). As a concept, it embodies diverse emotional constructions, symbolic repertoires and material expressions that are experienced by different people, social groups and societies (Pickering & Keightley, 2006). In this section, I review different approaches to understanding the concept of nostalgia and its consequences. I will do this before providing my own elaboration in order to delineate the origins of the term and the theoretical tools available to grasp it. Nevertheless, I will take, as starting point, the definition provided by the memory and media scholars Katharina Niemeyer and Emily Keightley (2020) as a way to highlight the complex, and often contradictory, nature of nostalgia:

> Located between remembrance and forgetting, idealisation and creativity, nostalgia is a recollection of times and places that are no more, no longer accessible or perhaps never were. It can also refer to a desire for a return

> to a past time that we never experienced or the regret for a past that never was, but that could have been, or for a future that never will be (p. 1141).

Indeed, nostalgia might derive from multiple and overlapping causes and be enacted at different social levels, with different objects of longing; differently put, there can be a difference between what generates nostalgia and the images and feelings that comprise the experience (Davis, 1977, p. 416; Gupta & Medappa, 2020). As Al-Ghazzi (2018) points out, the force of nostalgia, "whether instigating sentiments of pleasure or sorrow, is intensified by finding and nurturing the connections between the personal and the collective, and the private and the public" (p. 56).

The Swiss doctor Johannes Hofer brought to life the concept of nostalgia in 1688 with the study of the pain that is the consequence of the desire to return to a person's home (Cross, 2015; Gandini, 2020; Natali, 2004, p. 10). The term was a combination of the Greek words *nostos*, meaning 'return home', and *algos*, meaning a painful condition (Boym, 2001; Lizardi, 2015; Pickering & Keightley, 2006). In its inception, nostalgia was a medical manifestation of homesickness, having an evolution towards social and cultural conceptions (Davis, 1977; Lowenthal, 2015). Berliner (2012) defines the concept as "a specific posture vis-à-vis the past seen as irreversible, a set of publicly displayed discourses, practices, and emotions where the ancient is somehow glorified, without necessarily implying the experience of first-hand nostalgic memories" (p. 770). The practice of nostalgia stands against a sense of linear history focused on human achievements and advancements, with possible consequences in different political, economic and social spheres (Georgiou, 2012; Scanlan, 2004). In this regard, Holdsworth (2011) considers that, even though it can idealise the past and offer an escape from the present, nostalgia "can also be invoked to reaffirm a belief in the progress of the present, and whilst nostalgia is always about loss, recovery is not the objective and the return home is not always welcome" (p. 103).

Following the last point, it is possible to identify two main approaches upon which nostalgia can be analysed, as the literary scholar Nicholas Dames (2010) suggests. The first position in the study of nostalgia can be labelled a *hermeneutics of suspicion*. Under this view, the nostalgic subject is problematised with scepticism, with the intention of detecting the mechanisms of power that lay behind the longing for a disappearing time. Nostalgia, then, is considered a cultural illness which has to be diagnosed: the analytical method par excellence is the identification of nostalgic contents throughout the social spectrum, just as the medical discourse proposed in the early days of the term.

For Radstone (2010, p. 188), this approach takes nostalgia as a discourse on knowledge, associated with conservative responses to contemporary uncertainties and with the existential devices needed to tolerate a sense of irreversible change (Kalinina & Menke, 2016; Menke, 2017).

Natali (2004) considers that the roots of the critique of nostalgia as conservative is the product of three influential philosophers. First, Immanuel Kant argued that the study of the past demonstrates that humanity is constantly progressing; in other words, he proposed that the human species exhibits a general tendency towards improvement in diverse areas. Thus, "the work of uncovering these tendencies was seen by Kant as the fundamental obligation of the philosopher" (Natali, 2004, p. 12). Second, a little less optimistic but holding the same principle, Georg W. F. Hegel maintained that human beings are primordially ruled by violent and natural impulses, most of which contradicted freedom and civility; nonetheless, these instincts can be domesticated gradually by consciousness. This 'impulse of perfectibility', according to Hegel, could be verified with factual historical research (Natali, 2004, p. 12). Finally, Karl Marx gave a political spin to Hegel's ideas: the yearning for the past was considered a political problem, an obstruction to social change. Marx proposed that the world is moving towards higher standards of individual freedom and scientific development, and more just societies; under this optic, nostalgia is a regression, an obstacle to real progress (Natali, 2004, p. 13). This validation of an unstoppable future was also promoted by liberal thinkers, who shared the faith in historical progress with an emphasis on economic and social growth. Nevertheless, this tendency did not agree with Marx's proposal for radical and revolutionary change (Natali, 2004, p. 15).

The hermeneutics of suspicion towards nostalgia is also found in critiques of 'unauthentic' representations, and engagements with the past. This position can be exemplified by the cultural theorist Fredric Jameson's (1991) analysis of contemporary popular culture in which he pinpoints a nostalgic sensibility towards certain decades in the media – specifically cinema. For him, this sensibility operates through an idealisation of certain elements; thus, a historicist deficiency, or a lack of factual accuracy, is replaced by a "mesmerised fascination in lavish images of specific generational pasts" (p. 296). In this case, Jameson (1991, p. 292) is referring to portrayals of the 1960s that emphasise schizophrenic, drug-cultural lifestyles and countercultures but ignore the politics of the decade. Under his view, this nostalgic sensibility breaks a temporal continuum and fosters a synthetic recreation of an ideal form, i.e., what is craved is an altered picture, open to diverse interpretations, a self-image of a covered or

uncovered artificial landscape. The result, then, is *pastiche*, an unthinking imitation without a clear objective in terms of message construction; in other words, an audio-visual form amputated and devoid of critical potential (Cantone, Cova, & Testa, 2020; DeFalco, 2004; Lizardi, 2015).

Dames (2010) considers that this diagnostic ethos, or "the act of detecting in another (thing, person, phenomenon) the disease of nostalgia" (p. 271), has been the usual tendency in the nostalgia scholarship. For Ladino (2004), these anti-nostalgic arguments only take into account the detrimental effects of the past and turn nostalgia into a totalising, romantic and over-simplified narrative, forgetting that nostalgia can be read in multiples ways. In this regard, the critique of the concept as conservative reveals an almost dogmatic view of progress, without interrogating the achievements and spirit of the past (Niemeyer, 2014; Sweeney, 2020). Furthermore, Pickering & Keightley (2006) expose that this approach is defeatist, for it poses a blind confidence in a future that it is not already here, and it is still open to diverse outcomes.

The second approach in the study of nostalgia can be called *therapeutics of nostalgia[17]*, for it intends to heal a social phenomenon by treating it as an active practice and not as a disease (Dames, 2010, p. 273); differently put, it involves a progressive critique focused on the paradoxes of nostalgia. Turner (1987) highlights the ambivalent role of nostalgia in social life: "by converting the past into a Utopian homestead, nostalgia may lay the foundations for a radical critique of the modern as a departure from authenticity" (p. 154). The polysemy of nostalgia points to more reflexive assessment of the term, one that is concerned with its uses and practices. As Pickering & Keightley (2006) observe:

> Nostalgia in popular culture doesn't necessarily operate with the dichotomous before/after scenario we have seen associated with classical sociology and critical theory. More commonly, it is manifest in an ambiguous relation to the past and present, as for instance in the music of migrants, where a sense of loss associated with the past coexists with a sense of longing associated with the future (p. 936).

Indeed, nostalgia might have a positive side: a dialogue with the past and a recognition of certain continuities (Ana, 2020; Chopra-Gant, 2016; Malek, 2019; Nash, 2012). Furthermore, "it can be valued as potentially democratic, opening

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[17] This therapeutic sense is shared by media theorist Marshall McLuhan (McLuhan & Fiore, 2008) in his less known and less discussed expression 'the medium is the massage'. For him, the media should have some sort of therapeutic control exerted by the audience, opening questions about participation, engagement and active reading.

new spaces for the articulation of the past and acting as a mode of assimilating this to the rapidly changing modern environment" (Pickering & Keightley, 2006, p. 923). This approach tries to question the inherent negativity attributed to distinct nostalgic sensibilities by underscoring their interpretative nature. An important example of this position regards environmental efforts to make use of nostalgia as a tool to promote different practices of sustainability; thus, this *green nostalgia* consists in deploying a sensibility which conjures a nostalgia for those natural landscapes and fauna that might disappear – or have disappeared! – due to the threat of the climate crisis or for the future – i.e., a future that might not happen – with the intention of explaining and advocating the value of ecological values and ideas to diverse audiences and stakeholders (Davies, 2010; Le, 2020; Wang, Tian, Sarigöllü, & Xu, 2020; Wu et al., 2020).

This last case demonstrates the complexity of nostalgia as a sensibility. As Niemeyer and Keightley (2020) point out, the main object of nostalgia is a time, a place, an object or an event, which is not accessible due to some sort of condition – or something that never was. I will elaborate the sense of loss as the starting point of nostalgia in section 2.5; for now, suffice it to emphasise that the past is the common spatiotemporal frame of nostalgic sensibilities. Otherwise stated, the longing or yearning, which is the base of nostalgia, entails experiencing certain aspects of social reality as part of the past, i.e., as already gone. In the example of green nostalgia, the future, although it has not occurred, is constructed as lost; paradoxically speaking, it is understood as a past that might be unrecoverable. Here, I must note that I understand nostalgia's object as chronotopic, i.e., as an intrinsically connected conjunction of time and space (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84). In my upcoming empirical analysis (Chapters, 4, 5 and 6) the emphasis is on the temporal frame of nostalgia; nonetheless, it will become evident that this cannot be separated from spatial considerations.

The hermeneutics of suspicion and the therapeutics of nostalgia mark two approaches upon which nostalgia has been comprehended (Dames, 2010). These approaches signal contrasting analytical frameworks, but they also point to the porous and multi-layered nature of nostalgia (Farrar, 2011, p. 731). Indeed, there are myriad ways of classifying nostalgia. It can be categorised as a mood and a mode (Grainge, 2000), restorative and reflexive (Boym, 2001), retreat and retrieval (Tannock, 1995), content and reading (Do Rozario, 2004), historicity and historicalness (Peleggi, 2005), temporal and atemporal nostalgia (Higson, 2014), endo-nostalgia and exo-nostalgia (Berliner, 2012), long-standing nostalgia and first-time nostalgia (Kessous & Roux, 2008), historical and personal nostalgia (Stern, 1992), and reactionary and progressive nostalgia

(Smith & Campbell, 2017). Or it can also be defined by contrasting it with other social phenomena; for instance, it has been explained by differentiating it from amnesia (Farrar, 2011), melancholia and utopia (Pickering & Keightley, 2006), and irony (Hutcheon, 1998).

My intention is not to adopt a strict stance based on these perspectives and definitions; rather, I intend to develop a nuanced analysis of concrete nostalgic sensibilities. I agree with Niemeyer (2014) in her assessment that "it might be more useful to grant nostalgia its plural meanings by using the notion of *nostalgias*; especially when it comes to the question of media, where different nostalgias interact" (p. 6; original emphasis). I want to escape a taxonomy that might miss the manifold ambivalences, contradictions and overdeterminations of nostalgic sensibilities. My intention is to put forward an *analytics of nostalgia*. Borrowed and adapted from the definitions of Chouliaraki (2006b, p. 157) and Flyvbjerg (2001, pp. 131-132), an 'analytics' seeks to understand the way in which particular social practices are articulated and structured in specific times and places and how they are linked to broader social processes. Then, an analytics of nostalgia encompasses a detailed description of an articulation of nostalgic practices and sensibilities, taking into account the diverse textual, social, cultural, political, and economic factors that play a role in its construction. By developing an analytics of nostalgia I aim to explore the relationship between media engagements, cultural frameworks and social identities, recognising the social nature of nostalgia in two spheres: the school and the community, and the nation (see Chapter 3).

In the preceding lines, I have reviewed approaches to analysing and classifying nostalgia. Based on them, I have decided to treat nostalgia in the plural as a way of accepting its varying nature and concentrating my analysis on the manifold manifestations that it might take. This flexible character opens up questions concerning nostalgia's role within society and culture; that is why, in the next section, I propose to consider nostalgia as a structure of feeling.

2.4 Nostalgia as Structure of Feeling

Up to now, I have been referring to nostalgia as a 'sensibility'. It is undeniable that a yearning for the past carries a sense of loss that is emotionally charged. Nevertheless, nostalgia brings together individual recollections and figurations of a vanished era with social imaginaries and symbolic repertoires that are expressed in some sort of material form – or are represented by one or more; simply put, nostalgia involves a connection of individual experiences with wider social and cultural processes and dynamics. In order to make sense of this multi-

layered nature, and following Grainge (2000) and Hassler-Forest (2020), I propose to understand nostalgia as a *structure of feeling*, borrowing the term from the cultural theorist Raymond Williams (1965, 1977).

In what follows, I trace the evolution of the concept of structure of feeling and I examine how it has been operationalised in social research. After this, I define nostalgia as a structure of feeling which emerges from the articulation of emotions, meanings and materialities.

2.4.1 Understanding Structures of Feeling

For Filmer (2003, p. 202), the concept of structure of feeling has three moments in the history of Raymond Williams's work: 1) an initial formulation in which the concept is used to "articulate ineffable qualities of experience" (p. 203); 2) a moment of refinement which allows him to apply the concept analytically; and 3) a theoretical consolidation which brings forward new dimensions to the concept. Let us examinate this evolution in the following lines.

Williams originally coined the concept structure of feeling in his book *Preface to Film*, first published in 1954 and co-written with documentary filmmaker Michael Orrom (Highmore, 2016; Milner, 1994, p. 48). Although it remained underdeveloped during this first usage, the concept was intended to pinpoint how dramatic forms are part of a broader social totality, suggesting an emphasis on "the living experience of the time every element was in solution, an inseparable part of a complex whole" (Williams & Orrom, quoted in Highmore, 2016, p. 149). Under this view, a structure of feeling entails experiencing a whole period through a work of art. The crux of the matter, though, does not concern the artwork as such, but the action of experiencing a cultural product as whole way of life – an action which operates as a sort of social synecdoche. In short, and following Highmore (2016), this first version of the concept intended to underscore the historicity of an artwork and "its role as documentary evidence of 'the native's point of view' (so to say), for a particular community, at a particular time" (p. 149). At this moment of conceptual evolution, as Milner (1994, p. 48) observes, structures of feeling were not considered to be class specific – more on this anon.

With the publication of *The Long Revolution*, Williams (1965) was able to refine the concept and show the analytical purchase it can have. In this second moment of evolution, he points out how structures of feeling typify "the culture of a period: [they are] the particular living result of all the elements in the general organisation" (p. 64). Therefore, they are 'recorded' in the material formations

of culture, from architecture to literature, representing "the actual life that the whole organisation is there to express" (p. 65).[18] In this book, Williams applies the concept in two instances. First, he studies how British literature of the 1840s is constructed on structures of feeling that comprise ethical and social principles common during that decade, pointing out the way in which the "real relations within the whole culture" (p. 84) were enacted. Second, he examines the structures of feeling of "Britain in the 1960s", as the last part of the book is titled; for this, his analysis is directed towards "the meanings and values which are lived in works and relationships" (p. 319), i.e., he focuses on the changing interactions between labour relations, social institutions and everyday life.

In this second moment, Williams reasserts his initial formulation regarding the experiential relationship between a cultural product and the social structures in which it is produced. Nonetheless, he opens the analytical scope of the concept in terms of its object – i.e., we are not dealing only with artworks anymore – and its role within society. In short, structures of feeling start to be grasped as symbolic repertoires that are actively lived and felt, being part of interactions with several institutions and social groups (Middleton, 2020; Wind, 2019).

The final moment of conceptual development came with the publication of *Marxism and Literature* and entails a socio-political understanding of structures of feeling. In this book, Williams (1977, p. 128) critiques the fact that society is often studied in the past tense, when it should be examined as a complex of forming and formative relationships. For him, structures of feeling are momentary instances that traverse the personal and the collective and set impulses, restraints and tones, in the way cultural objects are produced and experienced. These structures can be defined as "social experiences in *solution*" (p. 133; original emphasis), structured with internal relations, and interlocked and in tension with society as actuality. In other words, "not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity" (p. 132). As Milner (1994) points out, the conceptual discussions carried out before are retained in this elaboration. Nevertheless, Williams stops contemplating structures of feeling as the 'culture' of a period; instead, he sees them as "those particular elements within the more

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[18] Let us think of the frequency with which men cry in the Homeric epics. For instance, in *The Iliad*, Achilles breaks his stalemate with king Agamemnon after discovering that his dear companion Patroclus has died at the hands of Hector; this event fills with sorrow and tears not only Achilles, but the rest of the Greeks, becoming the main motivation for finally sacking the city of Troy. Following Williams (1965), it can be argued that this representation of the act of crying is a structure of feeling which suggests how masculinity was performed in the times of Homer. It is really rare, on the other hand, to find a contemporary hero of popular culture who would display such levels of deep affection for another male companion.

general culture which most actively anticipate subsequent mutations in the general culture itself" (Milner, 1994, p. 55). Structures of feeling, then, are not perennial, universal or transnational; on the contrary, they emerge from a specific time and place (Filmer, 2003, p. 209). Under this vision, structures of feeling can be found in cultural objects or products, being the outcome of the relationship between specific experiences and society at large; in addition, they can also be located in pre-emergent qualities, qualities that might be counter hegemonic in nature. In this respect, the concept of structure of feeling ceases to signal a direct link between social structures, cultural production and social experience, and begins to indicate a complex mode of engaging with social reality rooted in the social position of individuals and the articulation of diverse contextual conditions and cultural frameworks.

Indeed, the evolution of the concept brings about analytical possibilities for exploring how society is lived and felt. Milner (1994, p. 55) proposes that structures of feeling, throughout Raymond Williams's oeuvre, are employed to convey, first, generationally specific aspects of the artistic process; that is to say, textual and aesthetic devices that record how a certain social order was experienced. Second, it is the immediately experiential, i.e., a mode of engaging with a present reality which takes shape in diverse interpersonal and institutional relationships and cultural products. And finally, a structure of feeling is a sense of cultural emergence which might imply transformations that are taking place in society. In this research, my emphasis is on the first and second modes of defining the concept. Hence, understanding nostalgia as a structure of feeling, I submit, is a way of acknowledging it as a point of contact between diverse social contexts which also entails meaning-making practices derived from engagements with media texts and other material forms (Harris, Nowicki & Brickell, 2019; Spronk, 2020).

2.4.2 Analysing Structures of Feeling

The study of structures of feeling brings to the fore the examination of the "concretely experiential quality of [social] structures" (Milner, 1994, p. 66). For Filmer (2001), structures of feeling are generated through interactional and intersectional social and cultural practices, "practices of reflexive communication of experience which are at the root of the stability of and changes in human societies" (p. 201). They organise otherwise disparate feelings into patterns and catalyse the formation of connections with different social issues and between different individuals and groups (Curtis, 2020; Gao, 2017; Papacharissi, 2015). As Banet-Weiser (2012) remarks, they are "an ethos of intangible qualities that resonate in different ways with varied communities" (p.

9). Structures of feelings, then, can be grasped as contingent links between worldviews and social ideologies or perspectives, for they bridge an immediate sensibility with broader modes of grasping the social world.

Structures of feeling, then, can be found in *social and cultural practices*. This implies diverse analytical and methodological possibilities in terms of scope and scale. As Highmore (2016, pp. 145-146) suggests, the operation of structures of feeling can be explored in the dominant feelings of an age, a historically specific emergent set of concerns, or even in more concrete instances of everyday life such as fashion (see Chapter 4). With this in mind, let me provide some examples.

The classic approach of analysing structures of feeling on a wider scale is taken by Lee (2007), who examines the idea of love in modern China by conducting a genealogical study that identifies particular structures of feeling in the literary, intellectual and social discourses of the first half of the twentieth century. Other kind of studies focus on concrete historical situations or a particular social issue within a defined geographical space and a shorter timeframe. This is the case of Spronk (2020), who investigates, through ethnographic methods, how diverse structures of feeling in the middle classes in Ghana changed during colonial, post-colonial and post-Cold War periods. Harris, Nowicki & Brickell (2019) also follow this approach in their study of the structures of feeling derived from the experiences of the housing crisis and urban precarity amongst residents of London. Another case is Bonfiglioli's (2020) analysis of a gendered structure of feeling, created by the process of socialist industrialisation amongst female garment workers in Croatia, and its transformations following contemporary political and economic changes in the country.

As I discussed above, Williams (1965) initially utilised the concept to investigate how certain textual devices display wider social experiences. This perspective has been carried out by examining specific aesthetic and stylistic features of texts through the lens of social and cultural events or transformations. For instance, Wind (2019) identifies a melancholic structure of feeling in the novella *Soul* by Andrey Platonov and the novel *Pedro Páramo* by Juan Rulfo by showing how both works use the figures of the spirit and the spectre to critically reflect on the aftermath of the Russian and Mexican revolutions respectively, and the new order after those upheavals. Also following this perspective, Curtis (2020) examines the emergent structures of feeling that characterised the 2008 Obama campaign by conducting a genealogical study of how the funk song 'Yes We Can Can' echoed a key campaign slogan and chant. Another example is Aston's (2018) close reading of the plays *Posh* by Laura Wade and *Wish List* by Katherine Soper,

which demonstrates how a critical awareness of class divisions in the United Kingdom is built through drama.

In this research, my goal is to analyse how young audiences engage with nostalgic media texts by exploring a reception process which takes place in contemporary Costa Rica. For this, two studies provide fundamental insights concerning the relationship between audiences and structures of feeling. First, Papacharissi (2015) explores contemporary modalities of civic engagement by proposing that diverse 'soft' structures of feeling form the texture and words of online expression and connection in social media such as Twitter. For her, diverse kinds of engagements take place within structures of feeling found in an online environment; this dynamic facilitates the creation of affective publics, "networked public formations that are mobilised and connected or disconnected through expressions of sentiment" (p. 125). In short, her work makes evident how media engagement can be marked by structures of feeling that catalyse particular ways of grasping the social world. Second, in her classic analysis of the reception of *Dallas* (1978), Ang (1985, pp. 79-81) exposes how different elements of this TV series – e.g., its narrative, characters and production design – shape a tragic nostalgic structure of feeling which is recognised and actualised by the audience when it interacts with a melodramatic imagination rooted in social and cultural frameworks. I will discuss in more detail Ang's (1985) ideas in Chapter 5; for now, I must highlight how her work points out a dynamic in which a specific structure of feeling emerges from a repertoire of textual devices, and social discourses and tropes.

Analysing nostalgia as a structure of feeling, I claim, permits us to analyse how it performs the function of a shared emotionality, uniting groups of people that have common feelings towards something lost in the past. But this shared emotionality is not entirely free, travelling around society as a loose agent. Williams (1977) asserts that a structure of feeling is not merely flux; rather, it is a formation because

> it is at the very edge of semantic availability, has many characteristics of a pre-formation, until specific articulations – new semantic figures – are discovered in material practice: often, as it happens, in relatively isolated ways, which are only later seen to compose a significant (often in fact minority) generation; this often, in turn, the generation that substantially connects to its successors (p.134).

Thus, structures of feeling are always in transit, incubating meanings and values that may take a material shape, at some moment, or remain latent. Here, I need

to acknowledge an analytical problem regarding the study of structures of feeling which is crucial for my subsequent empirical analysis. Indeed, the operationalisation of a structure of feeling is regularly defined by theoretical vagueness or cursory identifications of current sensibilities in a certain space (Dirksmeier, 2016; Franks, 2014; Szablewicz, 2014). Huehls (2010, p. 420) suggests that this difficulty derives from their liminal and transitory nature, as proposed by Williams (1977). An example of this can be found in the fragment quoted above; indeed, in methodological terms, it is hard to examine a formation located at the "very edge of semantic availability". Although Williams (1977) considers that a structure of feeling can be articulated in material practices and connected to others, the origins of this articulation are contingent and there is no guarantee that a certain structure of feeling will take shape as it expresses a "socio-cultural tension between dialectical energies in a society at any given moment, including the co-presence of residual and emergent tendencies" (Hassler-Forest, 2020, p. 177).

In this regard, for Huehls (2010), two analytical paths can be adopted. The first is to maintain fluidity as the main engine of the analysis and look for possible directions or forms that may appear in society. This approach has the disadvantage of sacrificing the examination of the internal relations of the structures, as they are considered temporary, in order to achieve conceptual fidelity. The second is to 'precipitate' a structure of feeling in a quasi-stable form to grasp a contingent interlacing of tensions and interactions. This approach is concerned with specific manifestations, rather than with broader socio-cultural processes. For this research, I will develop a third option. In a dialectical move, my approach is a sort of synthesis of the two approaches conceptualised by Huehls (2010). I will analyse structures of feelings as quasi-stable forms that are present within a given society and are manifested in different arrangements of emotions, discourses, and cultural products, from media texts to monuments. I will problematise them as structurally coherent – that is, contingently coherent, or having a "thin coherence" (Sewell, 2005, p. 166) – and as linked to wider social, cultural, political, and economic dynamics. In other words, and taking a cue from Banet-Weiser (2012, p. 172), I understand them as a "coproduction of culture" between actual people and social structures, logics and historical processes. My focus, then, is focused on the *articulation* of structures of feeling; I will come back to this point shortly.

Nostalgia as a structure of feeling points out to contemporary frictions in which the present is deemed as unsatisfactory. The origin of this disenchantment can be located in diverse socio-historic, cultural, and economic developments and

conditions. It is unfolded upon a relation between diverse emotional elements that create and activate a nostalgic sensibility – there is, then, an emotional investment just as there is a symbolic one in terms of Nora (1989). In addition, it is grasped through discourses that represent fantasies, ironies and progressive reflections, amongst other possibilities, and it is materialised in objects, media texts or other diverse commodities.

2.4.3 The Articulation of Nostalgia

Nostalgia, I argue, is a structure of feeling which emerges from the articulation of diverse elements. This articulation entails the connection of often contradictory and ambivalent elements upon which the present is evaluated and experienced (Keightley & Pickering, 2012, p. 137). Indeed, nostalgia might be operationalised as a populist rhetoric that targets minorities – think of Donald Trump's 'Make America Great Again' (Göpffarth, 2020; Lammers & Baldwin, 2020) – or as an incisive critique of the national past – e.g., the musical *Hamilton* (2015) in which a Latinx and African American cast performs the roles of the founding fathers of the United States (Silva & Inayatulla, 2017). As a structure of feeling, nostalgia bridges the personal and the social, it points to a mode of making sense of the social world.

I understand an articulation, based on the cultural theorist Stuart Hall's conceptualisation of the term, as the conjunction of diverse social, cultural, political and economic elements, being a consequence of specific conditions (Grossberg, 1986, p. 53). Hence, an articulation is

> a connection or link which is not necessarily given in all cases, as a law or a fact of life, but which requires particular conditions of existence to appear at all, which has to be positively sustained by specific processes, which is not 'eternal' but has constantly to be renewed, which can under some circumstances disappear or be overthrown, leading to the old linkages being dissolved and new connections – re-articulations – being forged (Hall, 1985, p. 113).

In this regard, articulations have lines of force, openings and closures, that constrain, shape and channel certain tendencies (Hall, 1985, p. 96). That is to say, they do not operate independently; rather, they are part of historical and social dynamics that set their orientation and limit their possibilities of stasis or transformation. In subsection 2.2.3, I differentiated memory from nostalgia based on the act of yearning for the past. Now, I would like to advance this differentiation by proposing that nostalgia is a structure of feeling derived from a specific articulation of memory; in other words, this yearning is the outcome of

an articulatory practice. I will draw from my re-elaboration of Nora's (1989, 2008) sites of memory to suggest that nostalgia is an articulation of emotional, symbolic and material dimensions.

First, nostalgia brings about a repertoire of emotions associated with the loss of some aspect localised in the past (Nash, 2012). This emotional dimension is a sine qua none of a nostalgic structure of feeling, being a crucial differentiator from other practices of memory (Keightley & Pickering, 2012, p. 116; Saramifar, 2019; Vasudevan, 2020). Second, nostalgia is expressed through a repertoire of meanings which construct a 'golden age' of some kind, or attempts to recover the past, by making use of certain discourses and symbolic devices (Boym, 2001; Elçi, 2021; Hartmann & Brunk, 2019). Finally, nostalgia is materialised in objects, places, media texts and other cultural products, i.e., the structure of feeling is concretised in some material form (Al-Ghazzi, 2018; Cross, 2015; Ochonicky, 2020; Prayag & Del Chiappa, 2021). This articulation is complex, for it brings together social processes and dynamics enacted at the micro, mezzo, and macro level. Moreover, I need to clarify that, for me, there is no preponderance in terms of the elements of a nostalgic articulation; differently put, all the emotions, meanings and materialities that are linked are equally important in fostering nostalgia, in building the contingent line of force that guides the articulation (Grossberg, 1986; Hall, 1985).

Let me continue with the example of *Stranger Things* (2016), as discussed in Chapter 1, to examine nostalgia as an articulation. This Netflix original production is set during the 1980s and contains visual and narrative elements that are tributes to the popular culture of that decade; in sum, it enacts an intertextual relationship with a determined period of time. With these features, it becomes nostalgic when, as a media text, with a concrete materiality, certain emotions and meanings – related to the spectrum of longing – are attached to it by an actual audience. I will discuss this case in more detail in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. For now, I must underscore that this articulation is not only derived from a simple interpretation of a media text by an audience; rather, it is the outcome of an interaction between other social and cultural mediations that provide symbolic repertoires, and individual and collective assessments of the present.

The dilemma of analysing nostalgia dwells in its flexible nature. It is not static; it is constantly changing. This is why I believe an *analytics of nostalgia* is a more productive approach. Nostalgia cannot be generalised, for it will always appear following different social conditions, contexts and actors. Additionally, nostalgia does not follow a straight line of development. Nostalgic structures of feeling

appear under certain circumstances; nonetheless, they are not perennial. Rather, they signal specific values and ways of dealing with the past, the present and the future. By defining nostalgia as a structure of feeling which consists in an articulation of different emotions, meanings and materialities, I am distinguishing its particular pragmatic and operative nature, and accepting its plural nature. This articulation constructs a frame based on a temporal and spatial distance, a sense of displacement, and a material absence. I turn my attention to this frame in the next section.

2.5 What Is (Not) Nostalgia?

So far, I have examined the ways in which nostalgia can be studied and I have proposed to understand nostalgia as a structure of feeling that emerges from the articulation of distinct emotions, meanings and materialities. Now, I must return to the promise I made at the beginning of section 2.3 and give my own definition of nostalgia. For this, I will adopt an apophatic stance, taking a cue from Ivan Illich (Hoinacki, 2002); that is to say, I will define nostalgia against what it is not, specifically against common practices of memory, i.e., plain remembering. This differentiation will help me to identify three common conditions upon which diverse nostalgias are articulated: a temporal and spatial distance, a sense of displacement, and a perceived absence.

A crucial aspect of nostalgia is the idealisation of the past – or the idealisation of a non-existent period of time which is discerned as possibly or already gone. This action is the outcome of a reconstruction which poses the past as pristine and almost perfect (see Chapter 5). In this regard, with nostalgia, the object of longing is not entirely real: it has a degree of artificiality inasmuch it is not factually problematised. A nostalgic reconstruction does not take into account the many struggles, contradictions and 'imperfections' of a specific time period. As Nash (2012) outlines, "by constructing a version of what the past was like, people can sharpen and define meanings that they want to make important in the present" (p. 592). By this token, and as I will explore in Chapter 4, a nostalgic structure of feeling brings about an emphasis on certain features of the past, whilst others are ignored; differently put, it encompasses a dynamic in which the past is imagined (Anderson, 2006; Davis, 1977, p. 417; Gandini, 2020; Lowenthal, 2015).

I have argued that the difference between memory and nostalgia resides in the way certain dimensions are articulated. Evidently, these emotional, symbolic and material dimensions are also present in other recollections of the past – based on my re-elaboration of Nora's (1989, 2008) sites of memory. Nonetheless, I submit, the key difference is the mode in which this articulation is linked vis-á-vis a

spatiotemporal frame. For Keightley & Pickering (2012), nostalgia is configured around a composite framing of loss, lack, and longing; accordingly, "while longing is an orientation to the past from the perspective of the present, lack is oriented to the present and an absence within it. By contrast, loss is longitudinal as it involves a movement or transition from the past to the present" (p. 117). Following this, nostalgia comprises an evaluation of the present that leads to an idealisation of the past and might generate the conception of a particular future (Niemeyer & Keightley, 2020; Radstone, 2000; Wellen, 2021). Nostalgia, therefore, is articulated around three *co-existing* and usually *simultaneous* conditions.

First, it embodies a temporal and spatial *distance* which allows a first moment of recollection that will later evolve into nostalgia as such, and which sets the coordinates where the yearned element is located. Certain nostalgic meanings are invested in specific elements. As I will explore in Chapter 4, this distance, in addition, is key for the nostalgic rationale given that it abolishes – or bedims – the negative aspects of the past and opens up the possibility of idealised conceptions. Pickering and Keightley (2014) call this process 'retrotyping', consisting in a "distinctive manner of remembering which depends on a purposive selectiveness of recall that celebrates certain aspects of a past period and discards others that would compromise the celebratory process" (p. 88). In terms of distance, it implies a considerable spatial and temporal division which permits the assessment of something as nostalgic based on the difference between past and present. It is difficult to establish a precise number for this distance; as Lizardi (2015) observes based on contemporary media, "the window between when something occurs and when it should be regarded with nostalgia has shrunk, and a form of instant nostalgia is constructed as valid" (p. 9). For this research, I will consider the passing of either eight or ten years after the release of a media text as the threshold for nostalgia to effectively occur at a more collective level. This number must be backed by more empirical verifications; for now, it can be a watermark upon which my analysis can be pursued.

Second, nostalgia comprises a sense of *displacement* in the present, a feeling or an emotion of uncertainty or lack which calls for a solution found in some previous object, event or period (Cross, 2015, p. 7). As Nash (2012) suggests, "when people perceive threats and obstacles to constructing and maintaining coherent and consistent senses of self, they can shore up their identities through remembering, recalling, reminiscing, and having other emotional experiences associated with doing an imagined past" (p. 592). I would extend this statement to social groups as well as societies and cultures at large. As I will examine in

Chapter 5, there are social imaginaries about the past which build discursive frameworks that can be appropriated by people to make sense of a difficult or unpredictable present.

Finally, nostalgia requires a perceived *absence* of some element – from a concrete item to a whole state of affairs – which propels the sensibility of longing for a 'golden age'. According to the symbolic repertoire upon which it might be unravelled, other tropes could be present, e.g., the conspiracy plot that poses some sort of enemy, or scapegoat, as cause of the absence (Boym, 2001). For instance, Ewen (2020) considers that current generation disparities in terms of living standards, income and wealth help to explain the popularity of a TV series such as *Friends* (1994) amongst young audiences "because it is an unattainable fantasy of young adult companionship relatively free of stress" (p. 576). I turn my attention to the ways in which an unsatisfying present and a precarious future are understood, by young people, through the lens of a nostalgic vision of the past in Chapter 6. As I hope to demonstrate, in my empirical analysis all of these conditions are present simultaneously. However, the accent of my analysis will sometimes be localised in order to highlight how they operate with more specificity.

To summarise, I define nostalgia as a structure of feeling which conveys a sense of loss, being based on the assessment of an unsatisfactory and unfulfilling present that catalyses a longing for the past – or a period of time considered gone or irretrievable (Keightley & Pickering, 2012; Niemeyer & Keightley, 2020). This structure of feeling is derived from an articulation of diverse emotions, meanings and materialities. In this regard, a nostalgic articulation is constructed based on a temporal and spatial distance, a sense of displacement and a perceived absence.

2.6 Conclusions

As I argued at the beginning of this chapter, in order to understand nostalgia, it is essential, first, to explore the social nature of memory. The yearning for the past brings about the action of remembering something which is perceived to be absent from the present; moreover, it implies an object which is idealised based on this sense of loss. Hence, I started my argument by reviewing the main insights derived from memory studies, an academic area that links different traditions and analytical lenses; more specifically, I examined the works of the philosopher Paul Ricoeur (2004), the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1992) and the social historian Pierre Nora (1989, 2008), and the developments their ideas have received, to flesh out how memory is a social practice, being enacted in diverse

kinds of mediations. In this regard, I discussed how memory is captured in the traditions, organisations, and myths of a society and culture.

But stating that memory is a social practice is not enough to comprehend how the acts and the objects of remembering are instantiated. Nora's (1989, 2008) conceptualisation of 'sites of memory' helps us to grasp memory as an arrangement of different dimensions. A place of memory implies the embodiment of the past and an intention to remember it. In this respect, there is a complex relationship between an individual, or a social group, and something which is recollected. In simple terms, remembering might carry out the possibility of experiencing the past without having lived it. With this in mind, I explored the 'authenticity' of memories by detailing how certain groups transmit postmemories, i.e., recollections of a traumatic past that was not experienced on a first-hand basis (Hirsch, 2001, 2008). This led me to discuss how the mass media creates prosthetic memories by representing periods of time, alien to many audiences, on a larger scale (Landsberg, 2004).

After this, I explored how remembering has been problematised as a dynamic that can be enacted in transnational and transcultural instances. I reviewed how this literature has a crucial blind spot in terms of analysing media reception practices of representations of the past (Kansteiner, 2002; Keightley & Pickering, 2017) and how empirical studies of transnational audiences (Iwabuchi, 2002; La Pastina, & Straubhaar, 2005) suggest that an examination of the interpretation of foreign media texts must take into account local and contextual circumstances. I argued, then, that memory, as social practice, can be appropriated by diverse groups and individuals in diverse ways (Keightley & Pickering, 2012, p. 81). This open and mediated nature suggests that the past is materialised and sanctioned socially.

The concepts of postmemories and prosthetic memories imply that the acts and the objects of remembering are enacted around distinct social dynamics (Hirsch, 2001, 2008; Landsberg, 2004). This insight helped me to turn my attention towards the yearning for a lost past. Therefore, I discussed how nostalgia can be studied under two approaches: the hermeneutics of suspicion and the therapeutics of nostalgia. Considering their benefits and disadvantages, I decided to propose an *analytics of nostalgia*, a perspective that considers nostalgia in the plural and focuses on the articulations that generate a yearning for a previous period. Thus, I defined nostalgia as a structure of feeling which conveys a sense of loss based on the evaluation of a lacking and unfulfilling present that propels a longing for the past. As a structure of feeling, I submitted, nostalgia operates as an

articulation of distinct emotions, meanings and materialities, being articulated around a temporal and spatial distance, a sense of displacement, and a perceived absence. In short, I understand nostalgia as a multi-material articulation of memory which is instantiated in a specific time and space and mobilises various purposes.

In the next chapters, I will detail the methodological considerations that guided my fieldwork in Costa Rica, and I will put the theoretical considerations expressed thus far to action in my analysis of the reception of nostalgic media texts by young audiences.

Chapter 3
Methodology

3.1 Setting the Stage

Classes at St. Mary High School start at 6:50 a.m. and finish at 1:50 p.m., although there are myriad extracurricular activities that make students stay longer. Following my exchanges with the participants from this school, I could see that they had busy lives. As Marco, a 10th-grade student, told me, "You come home late, but you still have to do your homework". Added to this, several of them attend other private classes and activities; for instance, Marco took dance lessons that demanded many hours of rehearsals.

On the other hand, classes at Virilla Vocational High School start at 7:00 a.m. and finish at 4:30 p.m. The vocational nature of this institution obliges students to receive specialised content that stresses their time at school. Some students take additional English courses – paid by a foundation whose name the teaching and the administrative staff did not reveal to me – on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. However, the majority of them, after finishing their school day, go home to help their families in some respect. In La Carpio, it is usual for young people to work in part-time jobs or doing their household shores – e.g., taking care of younger siblings. For instance, Marta, a 12th-grade student, expressed how she has to work during the weekends at a retail store in San José to help her family, giving her "little time to watch TV series or films".

An important portion of the participants' quotidian environments occurs in their respective schools. As can be inferred, they inhabit different social worlds, different realities rooted in specific social positions. During my fieldwork, it became clear to me that they have passions, desires and dreams; they are discovering their identities, even though they already have a foundation for their selves, an idea of who they are. As Costa Rican young people, they are part of a society tied to external geopolitical relationships and to internal historical processes.

In what follows, I discuss the methodological considerations I took to analyse how these young people engage with nostalgic media texts. In Chapter 2, I defined nostalgia as a structure of feeling articulated around diverse emotions, meanings and materialities, which catalyses a yearning for the past. My interest, in this research, is located in the meaning-making dynamics that occur in this articulation; specifically, I aim to analyse the *reception practices* enacted by these young audiences. For this, I conducted fieldwork in Costa Rica following an ethnographic sensibility in order to comprehend reception as an intertextual process in which diverse social processes converge; that is to say, by developing an ethnographic sensibility I sought to examine the engagement with specific media texts as a complex interaction of diverse individual, collective and cultural logics and frameworks. Thus, the general research question of this project is:

- GRQ: Why do contemporary young audiences engage with nostalgic meanings in relation to mass media texts?

In this regard, I intend to problematise how specific nostalgic structures of feeling emerge from an interplay of social imaginaries that provide frameworks for understanding the national past, critical assessments of the present and different senses of uncertainty towards the future. From this concern, two research questions will be pursued in the subsequent chapters:

- RQ1: How do young audiences interpret the past represented in nostalgic media texts?
- RQ2: How do the national context and the social identities of young audiences mediate their engagement with nostalgic media texts?

In this chapter, I begin my discussion explaining my approach for conducting a reception study with an ethnographic sensibility; with this, I lay out how my analysis is based on an understanding of audiences as active social agents involved in the production and reproduction of meaning in their culture and society. Then, I explore the rationale behind the selection of the educational institutions where I conducted my fieldwork in Costa Rica: St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School. They are a private and a public school, respectively, that exhibit two faces of the country. The former captures a population of middle- and upper-class students whereas the latter is located in La Carpio, a marginal area in San José, the capital of Costa Rica, known for its migrant Nicaraguan population. With this in mind, I detail the ethnographic sensibility I developed during my fieldwork and how it is tied to the ethical

considerations that guided my research activities. In addition, I also examine the main issues of reflexivity that marked my relationship with the participants.

After fleshing out the mode in which I operationalised the main theoretical and methodological categories of this research, I turn my attention towards the data collection methods I utilised. Data, in this case, was gathered using three methods: a media consumption habits survey, focus group discussions and qualitative paired interviews. My fieldwork resulted in 495 pages of transcribed data. After outlining my data collection methods, I proceed to discuss my approach to analysing this material: thematic analysis. Thus, I clarify how I used thematic analysis to work through a thick and rich data and find common patterns of meaning; moreover, I specify the analytical procedure I took to execute my analysis. I finish this chapter by indicating the quality measures I took in order to guarantee the methodological value of this research and by reflecting on its limitations.

3.2 Methodological Rationale: Analysing Reception with an Ethnographic Sensibility

The present research is an in-depth qualitative study concerned with the ways in which certain nostalgic structures of feeling are constructed in the "constellations of practices, values, and imaginaries" (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020, p. 13) enacted around the engagement of nostalgic media texts by young audiences. In other words, the primary focus entails the discursive relationship between an audience and the semiotic arrangements of specific media texts. By this, I am not ignoring or neglecting the emotional and material dimensions that comprise nostalgia as an articulation of memory – following my argument in Chapter 2. My intention, rather, is to foreground the *production of meaning* through *reception practices* as the primary line of enquiry for this study.

This research has as its primary focus the reception of nostalgic media texts by young audiences. This analytical focus brings together a contingent, cumulative and historically localised relationship between these texts as arrangements of different semiotic resources and the social identities and conditions of a group of spectators (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998; Livingstone & Das, 2013). My analytical focus is primarily located on audiences being understood as "individuals making meaning" (Staiger, 2005, p. 9). Thus, I deliberately use the concept of 'reception' to signify an interpretative action derived from an engagement with concrete narrative and aesthetic features of a text which emerges from an interplay of different social and cultural dynamics (Bødker, 2016; Eco, 1979; Iser, 1978; Livingstone, 1998b).

Parsing nostalgia through the activity and practices of audiences permits the comprehensive and integral identification of the interactions between individuals and social groups, the textual dispositions of the media, and broader cultural conditions (Livingstone, 2005; Papacharissi, 2015; Wu & Bergman, 2019). In this regard, the emphasis on audiences vis-à-vis nostalgia seeks to problematise not only the consumption of certain media products, but the cultural and social logics that underpin particular moments and modes of reception.

Hence, this study follows a *critical cultural studies* tradition of audience research (Hall, 1980a; Hebdige, 1979; Morley, 1992), a tradition concerned with the unevenness and disparities, in terms of symbolic power, between audiences and media institutions, but also with the multiple possibilities of resistance, negotiation, complicity and collusion that might arise in these exchanges (du Gay et al., 2013; Silverstone, 2002). My purpose in working within this approach is to accept a clear imbalance in terms of media production: whilst the mainstream creation of media texts is generated by certain sectors and actors, and tends to follow a commercial logic, the audience's engagement occurs in a variable interaction where diverse social, cultural and geopolitical dynamics intersect (Athique, 2008; Liebes, 1997; Livingstone & Das, 2013). For instance, to use the case of the platform where *Stranger Things* (2016) is streamed, Netflix as an organisation is known for its extremely secretive stance regarding production strategies or the sharing of audience data; nevertheless, the users of this streaming service perform certain actions – such as tweeting or recommending the series, amongst many more possibilities – that invest the media text with specific meanings (Jenkins, 2006; Lobato, 2019). My theoretical and methodological area of interest dwells in the latter.

For this, I have followed an *ethnographic sensibility* to problematise how the interaction between a repertoire of meanings and a specific audience transcends the individual terrain – or rather, starts from it contingently – and is unfolded upon certain circumstances and contexts. Ethnography, as methodology, comprises a diverse repertoire of data collection and data analysis methods under a rationale which aims to apprehend, in a holistic manner, the actions and situations that characterise a defined group of people (Atkinson, Coffey & Delamont, 1999; Brewer, 2000; Cordelois, 2010, p. 446). This approach has a rich history of uses and applications within the qualitative traditions of audience research, being employed to explore the relationships between meaning-making processes, social life, identity and media reception (Hermes, 1995; Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016; Radway, 1984; Stacey, 1994).

An ethnographic approach proposes the study of a culture, and its people, through a participatory research process which involves a 'thick description' of the detected social dynamics and interactions (Geertz, 2000). The emphasis is posed, therefore, on the ways in which individuals act within a social space and how they make sense of it. Although ethnography has become an umbrella term which gathers different disciplines and an ever-growing stockpile of data collection methods (Altheide, 1987; Gans, 1999), the traditional perspective advocates mechanisms that allow a satisfactory 'entry point' to the quotidian reality of specific groups (Hammersley, 2018); in this regard, participant observation is the traditional data collection method of this approach (Shah, 2017). Taking this into consideration, I conducted the present research under an ethnographic sensibility by applying a media consumption habits survey in the selected educational settings (see Section 3.8.2) and utilising the qualitative data collection methods of focus group discussions and paired interviews (see Sections 3.8.3 and 3.8.4).

I call this procedure 'sensibility' as it follows the principal concerns and operative guidelines of a strictly ethnographic approach. Following Pinsky (2015, p. 289), during my fieldwork I developed practices of *incidental ethnography* to enrich my contextual and everyday knowledge about the participants and to foster rapport with them (see Section 3.4). These practices encompass those often-spontaneous interactions that happen after or before the action of conducting a research activity. Thus, I maintained close and direct contact with the participants in the spatial limits of their educational institutions. Although this research is not founded upon the method of participant observation, it is therefore based on the concern to understand audiences as active social agents involved in the production and reproduction of meaning in their culture and society.

3.3 Selecting the Schools

For this research, I selected the social space of the educational institution as the main setting of my fieldwork. Over the last decades, the education system in Costa Rica has been experiencing important transformations and challenges (Garbanzo & Orozco, 2007; Molina, 2016). One of them is the gap between certain public and private schools. On this matter, the differences are nuanced; that is to say, it is not possible to suggest that all private institutions perform better, in terms of academics and infrastructure, than their public counterparts, or vice versa. The point is that there can be some stark disparities between one type of school and the other – I will provide concrete examples of this shortly. Consequently, I decided to develop my fieldwork in a private school and a public

one. Even though I was searching for relative consistency in terms of identity, I also wanted to explore differences of social experiences and positions, i.e., dissimilar modes of being young in Costa Rica.

Initially, I chose a small group of private and public schools as potential candidates for my research. Despite receiving an open and positive answer from most of these institutions, I decided that St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School were ideal spaces for this research thanks to their contrasting realities and different histories. With these contrasts, my goal was to look for obvious disparities, but also for unexpected commonalities. In addition, the schools are located in the provinces of Alajuela and San José respectively and I wanted to explore the urban areas of Costa Rica as complex spaces in which diverse hierarchies and distinctions are enacted[19] (Okome, 2007; Saunders-Hastings, 2019; Wacquant, 2004a).

In addition, to this, St. Mary High School is the institution where I received my primary and secondary education. I was at first reluctant even to consider doing my fieldwork in the school where I studied for 13 years; nonetheless, as I kept reflecting on the possibilities of developing an ethnographic sensibility in the study of media audiences, I found it compelling to return as a social researcher to a place which is the regular object of my own personal nostalgia. This project is not an auto-ethnographic exploration; nevertheless, by developing part of my fieldwork in a 'known' space, I was able to confront more directly issues of reflexivity in the design and application of my data collection methods (see Section 3.6).

3.3.1 Saint Mary High School

St. Mary High School is a private institution founded in 1967, located in Alajuela City, one of the largest urban centres in Costa Rica and part of the province of Alajuela. Its academic offer ranges from the kindergarten to the 11th grade, and it is usual for some students to spend all their primary and secondary education there[20] – as was my personal case. During my fieldwork, the secondary education section of St. Mary High School had 373 students. This is a religious school which follows the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church; in this regard, it is administered by a religious community of 'Brothers of St. Mary' which was

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[19] The Great Metropolitan Area of Costa Rica is the main urban centre of the country and comprises the provinces of San José, Alajuela, Heredia and Cartago.
[20] In Spanish, the word *escuela* is frequently used to denote a primary school, whereas *colegio* or *liceo* are used to describe a secondary school. In Costa Rica and other parts of Latin America, when an institution offers both modalities it regularly adopts *colegio* as the title of the school. Thus, St. Mary High School is *Colegio Santa María*.

founded in France during the nineteenth century and whose founder has been canonised by the Vatican. In fact, the highest administrative hierarchy of this institution is shared between the Headmistress of the School, who is a laywoman in charge of the administrative affairs, and a Rector, a position occupied by a member of the religious community, who is in charge of the moral aspects of the school's life.

Being a private institution, it captures middle- and upper-class populations of students. In this regard, it is crucial to highlight that the monthly fee for studying in the school, during my fieldwork, was around £260, a sum which is low compared to other private high schools in Costa Rica; for instance, certain bilingual institutions located in San José can charge up to £800 per month (Salazar, 2016). The main point of attraction of St. Mary High School for parents entails its tradition of academic achievements. Illustrative of this is that this school has the highest average grade for being accepted at the University of Costa Rica amongst all the private secondary education institutions in the country. Being the most prestigious university in Costa Rica, its admission process consists in an exam of verbal and quantitative abilities similar to the SATs in the United States. The scores are based on a scale from 0 to 800 points. Hence, depending on the achieved grade, a student can be admitted to specific programmes and degrees. In the case of St. Mary High School, its students obtained an average grade of 660.64 as reported in the last analysis of data concerning admission to this university (Salazar, 2016).

This institution is located in a large property in which 9 main buildings contain classrooms, administrative offices, music rooms, bathrooms, an auditorium, computer rooms, scientific laboratories for the chemistry, biology, and physics classes, arts and crafts rooms, computer rooms, a medium-sized library, and a dance room. In addition to these buildings, St. Mary High School has five sports courts, one professional football field, a large gym which has a professional basketball court and a chapel. The academic offer is also complemented by different extracurricular activities. During my fieldwork, students could attend drama, dance, robotics or Christianity clubs. As I was reminded several times by the administrative staff, parents or guardians do not have to pay any extra fee for their children's involvement in these activities.

3.3.2 Virilla Vocational High School

Virilla Vocational High School is located in La Uruca district in the western area of San José, the capital of Costa Rica. At the time of conducting my research, the school had 308 students distributed from the 7th to the 12th grade. Here, I must

note that, in Costa Rica, secondary technical schools have one more academic grade – i.e., the 12th – than their academic counterparts. Moreover, having been recently founded, Virilla Vocational High School has fewer students than other public schools in the country. As part of their vocational instruction, the pupils there can choose between two areas of specialisation: accounting and international commerce.

This educational institution was created in 2016 in order to offer a secondary education to the community of La Carpio. It is important to highlight that this community has had a primary school since 1995; as Sandoval et al. (2010, p. 51) reveal, this primary school is a symbol in La Carpio as its foundation was marked by multiple dialogues between the local residents and the authorities, and it evolved from an institution located in precarious locations to having modern facilities. As diverse participants and teachers told me during my fieldwork, the absence of a high school in the area entailed multiple difficulties for the young people who wanted to continue their education given that they needed to attend education centres that were far away from their homes. Regularly, families could not pay for the transportation to these locations – that is to say, they could not afford a public bus fare that cost less than £1 – shattering the aspirations of many students.

At the moment of writing these lines, Virilla Vocational High School operates in a two-story shopping mall. According to the testimony of teachers and administrative staff, the Ministry of Education decided to first establish the institution in this facility as a momentary measure given that different terrains were being studied and evaluated for the construction of a proper campus. The decision, then, was to open this vocational school as soon as possible. This educational institution is located at an approximate distance of 3.8 kilometres from La Carpio. The students have a subsidised transportation system that allows them to attend classes every day. During my fieldwork, the school comprised the entire second floor of the shopping mall where it is located, and half of the first floor. In this regard, spaces that were originally built to shelter businesses or different kinds of shops had been adapted to fit entire classrooms. This created a situation in which students shared their educational environment with a catering service, a drugstore, a dentist, a law practice firm and other empty premises that were looking for a tenant.

It is not surprising, then, that these facilities do not suit the basic necessities of students, teachers and administrative staff. The main indicator of this was not the overcrowded classrooms, but the lack of drinking water. In this whole shopping

mall, there is only one small pipe from which it is possible to gather drinking water in a bottle or other containers. This pipe is almost outside the property, seemingly there to help the maintenance staff to irrigate a small green area that has a couple of trees. During my time at Virilla Vocational High School I witnessed long lines of people waiting for their turn to collect water. In fact, when I started my research activities in this school, and without knowing it, I filled my own bottle with water from the bathrooms. Immediately, I could taste an acid flavour and I checked its colour: it was brown. After I inquired about this to a group of students who were nearby, they explained to me the logistics that for them were an everyday matter.

3.4 Developing the Fieldwork in Costa Rica

The fieldwork for this project took place in Costa Rica between March and August 2019. As I explained in Chapter 1, Costa Rica is a country in which certain national and international geopolitical processes have begun recently to transform its culture and society. Rising inequality, the deterioration of different public institutions and the recent support for authoritarian and populist political figures are just some situations that signal 'tectonic' shifts in this small nation. Developing my research in Costa Rica was an opportunity to analyse reception practices in Central America, one of the most violent and vulnerable regions of the world (Sandoval, 2015), and one of the most neglected regions in media and communications (Waisbord, 2019).

All the research activities were conducted simultaneously in both schools, which signified for me intense and long working hours. The distance between the two educational institutions was 40 minutes, although this could vary depending on the traffic as I needed to navigate one of the country's main highways between Alajuela and La Carpio.

The *ethnographic sensibility* I adopted in this research was based on my involvement within the social spaces of St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School. In this regard, the design and organisation of the data collection methods followed the encounters, exchanges and conversations I had with the participants. In other words, as explained before, I utilised the practices of incidental ethnography that took place during my time at these educational institutions to feed my approach in terms of the analytical categories I was studying – i.e., the mode of operationalising them in the field – and of how to establish interpersonal relationships with the participants. I recorded these practices in different fieldnotes and spontaneous audio-recordings of exchanges with the participants and my own reflections and analyses. Therefore, even

though my analysis is focused primarily on the data collected from the research activities I conducted at these two schools, I consider these practices of incidental ethnography as sources of information concerning these young people's contextual background – think of the account of the students' everyday life at the beginning of this chapter. I will discuss the way in which my fieldwork was determined by my ethical considerations in the next section; for now, suffice it to mention that my modus operandi at the schools consisted of a constant negotiation between my role as a social researcher and the openness and participatory disposition of the students.

Hence, my approach, and my ethnographic sensibility, evolved throughout my fieldwork based on the peculiarities of the schools and the interactions I had with the participants. When I started working at these educational institutions, I had a methodological toolkit, derived from a general ethnographic approach to media audiences (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020; Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016; Radway, 1984), which I started to apply according to my involvement in the field. With this, I am not implying that I arrived at these schools without a plan. From the beginning, my intention was to conduct a survey, focus group discussions and paired interviews – as is evidenced in the Ethics Form I submitted to the LSE's Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix 2). However, I also considered other data collection methods – such as participant observations of young people's everyday lives. Although I developed rapport and positive relationships with the students from both schools, there were several boundaries, in terms of their personal lives, that I could not cross – more on this anon.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The present study was conducted with young people aged 15 to 18 years. Being the majority of them minors, this required diverse ethical considerations to be incorporated into my fieldwork (Vargas & Montoya, 2009). I see ethics not as a limitation for social research but as an opportunity to foster a respectful and assertive communication and engagement with the participants. My underlying goal for the present work was to take *seriously* into account the thoughts, preoccupations, aspirations and critiques of young audiences; in short, to *listen* to their voices. I assimilated this goal in my ethnographic sensibility by designing and conducting fieldwork that respected the integrity of the students from both schools, considering their interactions with myself as the main cue to always proceed with my research activities. The ethical framework of this project, then, is based on a concern for recognising and valuing the participants as individuals with their own identities and agency within the social world.

Guillemin & Gillam (2004) distinguish between two different dimensions of ethics in research: procedural ethics and 'ethics in practice'. The former "involves seeking approval from a relevant ethics committee to undertake research involving humans" (p. 263), whilst the latter encompasses the ethical issues that arise in the quotidian spheres of fieldwork. I developed both dimensions in this study. First, before beginning my fieldwork, I sought and obtained approval from the London School of Economics' Research Ethics Committee on 26 February 2019 (see Appendix 2). Regarding consent, I adapted the insights gained by Bryan and Burstow (2018, pp. 114-116) in their analysis of the ethical considerations and approaches taken in school-based research in England as ethical guidelines for my fieldwork. I operationalised these guidelines in 5 stages.

The first stage entails the *consent by the educational institutions* for the research to be conducted in their premises. As soon as I arrived in Costa Rica, I had meetings with the Heads of the Schools, and the administrative staff of St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School. During these meetings I explained my schedule, the data collection methods of the study and my ethical guidelines. After this, the relevant authorities from both schools signed a consent form allowing me to execute my activities in the institutions' facilities (for all the consent forms I used during my fieldwork, see Appendix 4). The second stage regards the *presence of the researcher at the school*. Before starting my research activities, I introduced myself to the students who would become the participants in this project. I visited them in their classrooms and I briefly described what I would be doing. At this moment, I handed out information sheets for them and for their parents detailing the nature and purpose of my research (see Appendix 3). In addition, I introduced myself to the teachers and relevant administrative staff of both schools with the intention of explaining my presence for the next months.

The third stage concerns the *parental permission* for the participants to join the research activities. As soon as I had the list of possible participants (see Section 3.8.1), I gave them a consent form for their parents or guardians. Hence, the essential prerequisite for the students to participate in the focus group discussions and the qualitative paired interviews was a signed consent form from their parents. The fourth stage involves the participants' *informed consent and their right to withdraw* from the research. Besides the parental consent, the students from both schools also had to sign a consent form affirming that they were aware of the goals and characteristics of the study. For this, before starting the focus group discussions, we had a space of approximately 5 minutes in which I

explained to them who I was and why I was doing this research; I also made very clear that they could withdraw from the project any time they wanted. The fifth, and final, stage implies *anonymising* the names of the participants. I have anonymised the identities of the students from both schools based on their names' origin; that is to say, depending if they had a Spanish or English name – e.g., Miguel or Brittany – I created a corresponding pseudonym with no resemblance to the original (see Appendix 5 for a list of the 'dramatis personae' of this research). In addition, I also anonymised the names of the participating schools.

The second dimension of ethics in research, as proposed by Guillemin & Gillam (2004, p. 265), comprises the minutiae of the fieldwork, the 'ethics in practice'. During my fieldwork, the enactment of this dimension was essential in developing the operationalisation of my data collection methods (Enosh & Ben-Ari, 2016; Finlay, 2002; Townsend & Cushion, 2020). Indeed, I tried to identify "ethically important moments" (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 262; Robinson, 2020) as a way of comprehending the limits and possibilities I had vis-à-vis the students. In sum, I deployed a 'heuristic of microethics' which consisted in actively requesting entrance to certain topics or personal and institutional spaces and looking for power imbalances – I will reflect with more detail on my personal relationship with one of the schools in Section 3.6.

A significant 'ethically important moment' that marked my fieldwork concerns my attempt to gain access to the participants' domestic and quotidian spheres. As I stated before, my original intention involved using the educational setting of young people as an entry point to their everyday lives. In order to achieve this crossing of fields, I intended to ask the participants to go to the cinema with me as a way of exploring their engagement with nostalgic media texts in other spaces. By the time I was conducting the focus group discussions, the remake of *The Lion King* (2019) had recently been released in Costa Rica. Thus, I invited them to watch this film at the end of these discussions; I offered to pay for the tickets, some snacks and their transportation. Every time I made this invitation to the students from both schools, it was clear that this was something odd for them. Their response was usually a polite, "We are very busy, let's see". On one occasion (Focus Group #2 of St. Mary High School), the participants, at first, were open to the idea; one of them even created a WhatsApp group to organise when they could go to the cinema with me. However, my messages were met with awkward silences. From this experience, I concluded that the participants were setting a boundary regarding my role as social researcher and their everyday lives. They were comfortable joining my research activities as long as they were in their school's environment. I decided, then, to respect this and continue

developing my fieldwork within their educational settings exclusively, complying with the terms they had established.

3.6 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is essential to problematise the role of the social researcher within the social worlds he or she is engaging with and how this is linked to the utilised data collection and analysis methods (McEvoy, Enright & MacPhail, 2017; Wacquant, 2004b, p. 398). In this regard, this study presents the results from different research activities I conducted with Costa Rican young people at two educational institutions. Nevertheless, considering that, as I have revealed before, I attended St. Mary High School for 13 years, it is essential for me to reflect introspectively[21] (Finlay, 2002, p. 215) about my relationship with my object of study before continuing with my discussion.

I shared with the students from St. Mary High School the same demographic background. This entailed that they and I had access to a similar repertoire of cultural, social and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1993; Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020, p. 64). This commonality in terms of resources and practices was fundamental to the mode in which my relationship with them flourished. They saw me with a less structured distance: I was not associated with the teachers or any other authority figure in the school. Since the beginning, they referred to me as 'Rodrigo', plainly, without any formal form of addressing me in Spanish such as *don* or *señor*. They viewed me as someone with their same background, establishing a different kind of distance between researcher and participants. Indeed, during my fieldwork, many students – even ones who were not participating in this project – approached me to tell me that they wanted to study abroad, asking for advice to achieve this. To use a Dickensian metaphor, for the students from St. Mary High School, I was the ghost of the yet to come. Though not in a completely conscious fashion, they were aware that their social positions – especially in terms of social class – bring forward prevalent paths of personal development and a specific architecture of social life.

At Virilla Vocational High School, I was considered a teacher by the students. From the beginning, they referred to me as *profe*, a mode of addressing teachers, in Costa Rica and other parts of Latin America, in a short and affective manner – being derived from the Spanish *profesor*. Although I always told them to call me by my name, they continued to use this form throughout my fieldwork.

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[21] Finlay (2002) offers a typology of five variants of reflexivity: 1) introspection; 2) intersubjective reflection; 3) mutual collaboration; 4) social critique; and 5) discursive deconstruction. In this section, I formulate a brief discussion of reflexivity as introspection.

Hence, I was associated with an authority figure. Although we had a really good relationship, and despite my efforts to nurture a horizontality in terms of communication, there was always a symbolic barrier between them and me. This barrier, I argue, is the outcome of an ostensible distinction of social positions. For these students, it was obvious that I was not a natural inhabitant of their day-to-day spheres. With this, I am not implying a sort of social class determinism. After all, our interactions were successful and were undertaken with high levels of reciprocity and courtesy. However, our positionalities within Costa Rican society generated a chasm that is difficult to reconcile. For instance, whilst for me – and for the students from St. Mary High School! – having a university education was something ordinary, for them, it was a fantasy, something that was hard to imagine (see Chapter 6). My response to this founding gap between social positions was to recognise them, to accept that I could not change this situation by myself and sharpen my analysis by making them a key component of it.

Notwithstanding my constant self-awareness during my fieldwork, I had to face important challenges in terms of reflexivity during the data analysis. The proximity I shared with the participants from the private school made several aspects of this educational setting 'natural'. Conversely, the social world of Virilla Vocational High School looked to me as an archaeological site to uncover. Hence, I wrote numerous drafts of chapters and sections of this thesis in which the research activities conducted at the public school, and La Carpio as a community, received much attention whilst diverse aspects of the ones conducted at St. Mary High School were usually left unexplored. This forced me to *decentre* my analysis, to take a step back and complexify what was familiar to me. With this, my aim was to achieve an analytical balance that brings together distinct social experiences through an examination of reception practices and the enactment of social identities and structures that shape those experiences.

This is not an auto-ethnography, as I have already said. This is a research project about young people who enjoy engaging with media texts and have the same aspirations and desires but occupy contrasting social positions that bound their involvement in social life. And yet, during my fieldwork, I regularly cried after conducting my research activities, or whilst transcribing the data: it was heart-breaking to compare the opposing realities lived by the students from both schools, to see how inequality curtails, for some, even the possibility of dreaming things that are a given for others. This research made me challenge the complexities of my personal nostalgia, but it also made palpable for me the institutional deterioration and the socio-economic crisis of Costa Rica, my own country.

3.7 Operationalisation

This research analyses how Costa Rican young people engage with nostalgic media texts, i.e., it is focused on how audiences construct meanings and take part in the social experience of engaging with the media (Georgiou, 2012; Livingstone, 2009; Wu & Bergman, 2019). For Fiske (1992, p. 350), audiences are not social categories, but social formations formed around a specific media text and a set of cultural interests, involving tactical alliances of diverse social conditions. In short, audiences are formed and dissolved more fluidly following contextual specificities whereas social categories – such as age, gender and social class – bring about structural constraints which are not easy for a single person to override (Bakhtin, 1981; Silverstone, 1994; Hall, 1980b).

In this respect, understanding audiences as changing social formations entails important methodological challenges (Fiske, 1992, p. 359; Radway, 1984). Indeed, similar, overlapping or contradictory patterns of taste, preference and media diets, configure diverse groups of audiences in terms of size, ranging from the individual to the massive (Athique, 2005; Huertas, 2006; Wayne, 2016). Considering this, I followed two main strategies to operationalise the participants as media audiences vis-à-vis my fieldwork. First, I chose to work with two social groups bound by the social space of an educational setting (see Section 3.3). Evidently, all the students have their own backgrounds and face different social situations; nevertheless, their regular attendance and symbolic attachments to a concrete space is a way of finding a relative demographic coherence. Added to this, the fact that these schools are tied to specific social positions guarantees common patterns of socialisation and identity dynamics that might be considered regular (Banaji, Livingstone, Nandi, & Stoilova, 2018; Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016).

Second, given the participatory nature of the fieldwork – i.e., the students voluntarily took part in the research activities I conducted at their schools – I needed to gauge situations in which some participants would already be regular audiences of nostalgic media texts whilst others would be engaging with them for the first time. For this, I followed Athique's (2008) conception of media audiences as "inhabitants of a 'cultural field' centred on [a] media product in question" (p. 34); in other words, he proposes to understand a cultural field as a site where audiences are comprehended as communities established through their engagement with a particular cultural artefact.[22] With this, my aim was to balance

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[22] Here, it is crucial to state that Athique's (2008) conceptualisation of "cultural field" is different from the use of the concept of field established by Bourdieu (1993). Whilst for Bourdieu (1993)

the relative consistency of the participants' social identity and their diverse media habits. My inquiry at the schools, then, started with the cultural fields of *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) (see Section 3.8.3). My selection of these nostalgic media texts, as starting points, was based on their economic and cultural impact; for instance, the TV series has been one of the main spearheads of a 1980s revival (Hassler-Forest, 2020) and the film won four Academy Awards (Dodgson, 2019). Taking into consideration that the participants could be neophyte viewers or strident haters, for instance, of these nostalgic media texts, all the conducted research activities were designed to include other cultural fields with the intention of problematising reception as an intertextual process in which audiences produce meaning. Hence, the development of especially the focus group discussions and qualitative paired interviews was characterised by debates, exchanges and conversations about these and other nostalgic media texts, products and other multiple situations.

In Chapter 2, I defined nostalgia as a structure of feeling which emerges from the articulation of emotions, meanings and materialities, generating a yearning for the past or a lost object (Cross, 2015; Niemeyer & Keightley, 2020; Sweeney, 2020). As I explained, based on the approaches advanced by Huehls (2010), my perspective for analysing structures of feeling entails problematising them as quasi-stable forms operating within a given society – that is, as structurally yet contingently coherent – and as linked to broader social, cultural, political and economic dynamics. Thus, my research activities were designed to grasp the presence and operation of nostalgic structures of feeling based on the interactions and reactions of young people to nostalgic media texts – in other words, through the modes in which the participants *discursively* reflect, discuss and talk about their engagements with nostalgic media texts (Lunt & Livingstone, 1994). This was done by devising data collection methods concerned with the textual qualities of nostalgic media texts, social situations and personal experiences related to nostalgia, and the assessment of the Costa Rican social reality (Ang, 1985; Williams, 1977). With this, I was able to connect diverse kinds of engagement with nostalgic media texts and the wider social conditions through which a nostalgic structure of feeling is (re)produced and nourished.

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the field of cultural production is an area of activity with its own internal logics and which stands in relation to other fields, Athique (2008) proposes to comprehend a cultural field as a dynamic site "constructed from the sum of participants understood as a body of diverse and mobile agents engaged in *particular* and *relative* forms of social imagination" (p. 38; original emphasis). Hence, he is proposing an analysis of a cultural artefact "which takes into account the varied social practices and environments where that artefact is materially or symbolically present" (p. 37).

In the next table, I summarise how I operationalised the research questions in this study, focusing on the key concepts employed and the aims of the data collection and analysis methods.

Table N.1
Operationalisation of Research Questions

Research Questions	Key Concepts	Aims of Data Collection and Analysis Methods
GRQ: Why do contemporary young audiences engage with nostalgic meanings in relation to mass media texts? **RQ1:** How do young audiences interpret the past represented in nostalgic media texts? **RQ2:** How do the national context and the social identities of young audiences mediate their engagement with nostalgic media texts?	**Media Engagement:** the practices and dynamics developed around the interpretation and consumption of media texts by Costa Rican young people. **Nostalgic Media Texts:** media texts that construct a representation of a previous time through diverse textual, narrative and aesthetic strategies that promote a nostalgic vision of the past. **Reception:** a contingent, cumulative and historically localised relationship between nostalgic media texts as arrangements of different textual and aesthetic devices and the social identities and conditions of Costa Rican young audiences. **Social Imaginaries:** a repertoire of discourses, tropes and ideas that fosters a sense of belonging to a nation by creating a common symbolic framework for comprehending the past, the present and the future.	**Media Consumption Habits Survey** (data collection): to gather information concerning the participants' demographic backgrounds and relationships with the media with the purpose of having an initial portrait of media practices and their social identities. **Focus Group Discussions** (data collection): to gather data, through collective exchanges and debates, on the way in which the participants interpret nostalgic media texts, with an emphasis on their understanding of mediated representations of the past and their evaluation of Costa Rica's political situation. **Qualitative Paired Interviews** (data collection): to gather data on the participant's opinions, perceptions, and ideas about being young in Costa Rica and their personal engagement with nostalgic media texts. **Thematic Analysis** (data analysis): to synthesise and find patterns of

	Social Identities and Social Positions: diverse distinct dynamics and instances – such as social class, gender, ethnicity, age or nationality – that are linked in the way in which a person understands and expresses his or her own self, builds interpersonal relationships and engages with social reality.	meaning-making practices across the data, with the intention of detecting the operation of nostalgic structures of feeling in the mode in which the participants discursively construct their engagements with nostalgic media texts and their own national culture.

3.8 Data Collection Methods

The ethnographic sensibility of this research was developed by applying a media consumption habits survey and conducting focus group discussions and qualitative paired interviews. With this, my aim was to capture the meaning-making processes enacted around the reception of nostalgic media texts and to explore how this engagement, in its diverse modes, was localised within wider social processes. In the next figure, I set forth the distribution and route of my fieldwork based on the dynamics that were being explored.

Figure N.1
Theoretical and Methodological Route
Fieldwork (March – August 2019)

March - April

Goals: To start working in the field and to build rapport with the schools and the participants.
Research activities:
• *Data Collection Method 1*: Application of media consumption habits survey.
• Interviews with teachers and administrative staff.

Media Consumption Habits and Engagement

May - July

Goals: To explore the interpretation and reception of nostalgic media texts by the participants, and to explore their engagement with their socio-political context and national culture.
Research activities:
• *Data Collection Method 2*: Focus group discussions.

Nostalgic Media Texts Reception and National Culture

July - August

Goals: To examine in more depth the dynamics, in terms of social identity and youth culture, in which the participants are involved.
Research activities:
• *Data Collection Method 3*: Paired Interviews.

Youth Culture and Social Identities

Evidently, the last figure only exhibits the main theoretical categories being explored during my fieldwork. As I demonstrate shortly, the research activities were designed in a nuanced fashion, analysing diverse social and cultural dynamics. Furthermore, I must note that I conducted qualitative interviews with teaching and administrative staff in both schools. I have not included them in my analysis as they provide more referential information than theoretical insights; nonetheless, I have taken into consideration their main points to build more precise descriptions of the schools' background both in this chapter and in other parts of the present work.

3.8.1 Sampling Strategies

The data for this project was *purposively* sampled. This strategy focuses on "formation-rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). In other words, the goals of the research trace the coordinates for the selection of populations, events or spaces that offer a theoretical or methodological value of some sort. This strategy was applied in the selection of the schools for the location for my research activities. More specifically, I deployed an approach of *systematic non-probabilistic sampling* for selecting the participants; as Mays & Pope (1995, p. 110) point out, this approach seeks to identify groups of people "who either possess characteristics or live in circumstances relevant to the social phenomenon being studied", allowing me to "deliberately include a wide range of types of informants and also to select key informants with access to important sources of knowledge". Let me explain this approach as follows.

During my fieldwork, I worked with students from the 10th and 11th grade at St. Mary High School and from the 10th, 11th and 12th grade at Virilla Vocational High School. Their ages ranged from 15 to 18 years. My intention to work with older students stemmed from my interest in exploring, amongst many issues, their aspirations for their country's future. Taking into account that they were in a threshold between secondary school and a university education or employment, I considered them ideal for these goals. This population of participants brings a mixture of distinct backgrounds, interests and personalities. As I have already noted, my aim was to explore contrasting social experiences within Costa Rican society. In this respect, I sought to achieve a balance not only in terms of social position, but also regarding the diversity of voices and identities proper to an educational environment.

During the first days at these institutions, I introduced myself and the objectives of my research. I handed out an information sheet about the project for them and for their parents (see Appendix 3). After this, I applied the media consumption

habits survey in both schools; during the application of the instrument (see Section 3.8.2), I passed around in the different classrooms an 'interest sheet' in which students interested in participating in this research wrote down their names. With this list, I randomly distributed the interested students in groups of 8; for this, my only criterion was their academic level, i.e., only young people from the 11th grade would be sorted out in a group. This was a tentative arrangement for I needed to wait if they would actually show up on the day of the activity. Then, with the permission from the respective teachers, I set up meetings with the students from the groups I had created during school time, and we convened the days for each focus group discussion. Evidently, not all the initial young people who expressed their interest in participating ended up attending the discussions, but almost the majority did.

Concerning the selection of participants for the qualitative paired interviews, I asked the students to pick a friend from amongst the people who had taken part in the discussions for these activities, in case they wanted to continue their involvement in the research. In order to avoid biases against introverts – in the end, I am also an introvert! – I was careful to maintain a balance between the more outgoing and the more silent young people. To this end, I kept constantly inviting all the students to take part in this research activity and I tried to organise the interviews based on a balance between different types of personality. With this, as I delineate in Section 3.8.4, I was looking to create a more friendly atmosphere and to generate rapport with these young people by letting them have some control over this research activity.

In what follows, I spell out the logic behind the selection of the data collection methods utilised in this study.

3.8.2 Media Consumption Habits Survey

I applied a survey in order to grasp the general aspects of the media consumption habits specific to the participants. My interest dwelled on their media diet and the basic demographic background of the students from both schools. With this method, I intended to comprehend the panorama of these young people's engagement with the media at large and to gain initial insights regarding their reception of nostalgic media texts.

I designed the instrument for this survey based on the quantitative toolkit elaborated by the Global Kids Online Project (GKO). This is an international research project which explores cross-national evidence about the ways in which children and young people use the Internet (Byrne, Kardefelt-Winther,

Livingstone & Stoilova, 2016). Although, my study and the Global Kids Online Project are different in terms of general goals their overlapping interests – e.g., media use and engagement by young audiences – their rigorous quantitative methodological guidelines provided an optimal base upon which my survey could be constructed (Global Kids Online, 2016). Hence, I adapted different questions from GKO's 2016-2019 survey regarding media access, opportunities and practices, identity and resources, and family to fit my objectives and create an instrument for the students from St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School. The majority of items were closed questions, although there were some open questions the intention of which was to ask the participants to enumerate preferences concerning their media engagement (see Appendix 6).

In order to guarantee that the design of my survey avoided ambiguity and followed a logical path (Bethlehem, 2000), I conducted a cognitive test for the instrument in order to assure that the participants would comprehend all the questions (Collins, 2003, p. 235). This test consisted in an assessment of each question of the survey; thus, one participant would sit next to me and I would read each item, inquiring over what he or she understood. The student would write his or her answers down without telling them to me. Given that I had limited time for the completion of my fieldwork, I conducted these tests with six 12th grade students from Virilla Vocational High School. Each cognitive test lasted around 25 minutes. The changes resulting from this exercise were minimal, being related to vocabulary or "difficult words". Because of this, I counted these students' completed instruments as valid and I excluded them when I applied the survey in their class.

At St. Mary High School, I applied the survey online during the participants' computer lessons. The school had two large computer rooms and I requested permission to conduct this part of my research at the beginning of the students' lessons. I used the Qualtrics software for quantitative analysis – licensed by the LSE – to collect this data. Conversely, at Virilla Vocational High School the application of the survey was paper based. This school had a small computer room with old equipment which ran in an irregular fashion. After being advised by the administrative staff to avoid using the school's computers for these purposes, I applied the instrument at the beginning of the Social Studies lessons – obviously after obtaining authorisation from the respective teachers. I provided the paper copies and a pen to the students. After finalising this stage, I transcribed all the surveys to the Qualtrics software to facilitate the subsequent analysis. I analysed the gathered data utilising the tools of descriptive statistics (Winkler, 2009); given that my goals could be achieved through simple mathematical

operations, I employed the Qualtrics software to organise and visualise this information. I have summarised the participation in this research activity in the next table:

Table N.2
Media Consumption Habits Survey

St. Mary High School	Virilla Vocational High School
Instrument: Online survey	*Instrument:* Paper-based survey
Total of Surveyed Students: 132 students	*Total of Surveyed Students:* 87 students
Academic Level: 10th grade: 61 students (46%) 11th grade: 71 students (54%)	*Academic Level:* 10th grade: 47 students (54%) 11th grade: 19 students (22%) 12th grade: 21 students (24%)
Gender: Female: 73 students (55%) Male: 58 students (44%) Other: 1 student (1%)	*Gender:* Female: 52 students (60%) Male: 35 students (40%)

This survey gave me relevant information concerning the participants' engagement with the media and their demographic background and served an important role during my fieldwork as an analytical and interpersonal entry point between myself and the participants. Indeed, it was an opportunity for the students to meet me and start asking questions about the project; moreover, it became a crucial part of my recruitment strategy as they signed up to participate in the project during its application. But, at the end, the theoretical purchase of the instrument was limited. As Galasiński & Kozłowska (2010, p. 271) highlight, surveys do not entirely capture the impressions, evaluations and attitudes of a given population for human expression and volition are nuanced and often ambivalent. In this case, it is difficult to grasp reception practices enacted around nostalgic media texts through closed questions; even though this method has the possibility of including open questions in the instrument, I was more interested in the participants' discursive and reflexive accounts of their engagements with the media and their social world.

Thus, my analysis in the upcoming chapters is mainly based on the focus group discussions and paired interviews given that these research activities allowed me to gain deeper insights into these young people's reception practices and to identify the operation of specific nostalgic structures of feeling in them. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, I will use the survey data to supply contextual information in my empirical analysis when it is relevant. In sum, the

survey was a crucial organisational milestone for my fieldwork; nevertheless, the richness and thickness of the collected data was obtained through my qualitative methods.

3.8.2.1 Main Findings

As I have explained above, the media consumption habits survey provided important information concerning the participant's demographic background. This information was essential during my fieldwork as it gave me initial coordinates to grasp the social worlds they were inhabiting. Although, as I have already discussed, this research is principally focused on the qualitative data I collected at both schools, the findings from the survey paint an important portrait of the students' lives, especially in terms of their media practices and their social positions. In what follows, I summarise these findings in order to provide a general picture of the participant's social realities and their modes of consuming and engaging with the media.

From the outset, the social life of the participants from both schools is highly mediatised and mediated (Couldry & Hepp, 2017; Livingstone, 2009). In the case of St. Mary High School, the students exhibit a high volume of online activity on an ordinary weekday: they express to spend on the Internet around 5 hours (22%), around 4 hours (21%), and around 3 hours (16%). In other words, it is possible to observe that 61% of the students from the private school spend between 3 and 5 hours on the Internet on an ordinary weekday. On the other hand, the students from Virilla Vocational High School show a varied volume of online activity on an ordinary weekday: they express to spend on the Internet little or no time (24%), about half an hour (17%), about 3 hours (15%), and about 7 hours or more (15%), being these the highest percentages. There is a tendency, then, of a low online activity on ordinary weekdays: 68% of the students from the public school express to spend on the Internet between little or no time and 3 hours. Despite, the differences between the two educational institutions, it is clear that the participants access the Internet several times throughout an ordinary day, participating in multiple online activities – more on this anon.

The smartphone is the most utilised device for navigating the web by the students from both schools. In the case of St. Mary High School, 40% of the students use a smartphone for navigating online. This percentage is higher (49%) in the participants from Virilla Vocational High School. These percentages become obvious when we interrogate these young people's access to smartphones: 98% of the students from the private school own a device of their own, whereas 86% of the students from La Carpio have a similar device for themselves. Even though

both percentages are high, I must emphasise how having a smartphone in St. Mary High School is almost universal, a fact that is a good starting point for comprehending the contrasts between the two schools.

In terms of social media, Instagram is the favourite site of the students from St. Mary High School (57%). The most cited reasons for preferring a certain social networking site over others are the platform's features of personal communication (25%), entertainment purposes (25%), and the multi-functionality offered by the social networking site (17%). Indeed, it is important to highlight that 2% of the participants mention concerns of privacy and safety as reasons for choosing a social networking site.

In the case of Virilla Vocational High School, Facebook is the favourite social networking site of the students (31%). Other three sites that have a high percentage of popularity are YouTube (21%), WhatsApp (21%), and Instagram (18%). The most common reasons for preferring a specific social networking site over others are the platform's features of personal communication (22%), entertainment purposes (21%), and the type of content offered by the social networking site (15%). Here, I must notice that 4% of the students mention "meeting new people" as a reason for choosing a social networking site. This might be problematic given that minors are often exposed to online threats and dangers such as grooming or sexting (Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016).

The students from both schools engage with diverse media texts, having practices that cross and combine genres, formats and traditional outlets or online platforms. In terms of favourite TV series, the students from St. Mary High School mention a total of 79 different media texts in an open-ended question of the survey. Amongst this selection, the most frequently cited TV series are *Grey's Anatomy* (8%), *Stranger Things* (5%), *Riverdale* (4%), *The Walking Dead* (3%), and *Game of Thrones* (3%). On the other hand, the surveyed students from Virilla Vocational High School mention a total of 65 different media texts. In this case, the most frequent TV shows are: *The Walking Dead* (4%), *The Simpsons* (3%), *Dragon Ball* (3%), *Gravity Falls* (3%), and *Pablo Escobar* (3%).

In terms of favourite films, the students from the private school indicate a total of 93 different media texts in an open-ended question of the survey. Amongst this selection, the most frequently cited film is *Avengers: Endgame* (7%), being the only film that attained a relatively high percentage of mentions. The students from the public school cited a total of 61 different films. The most frequently

mentioned films, in this case, are the sagas of the *Avengers* (12%) and the *Fast and the Furious* (5%).

As I have already stated, the findings from this survey provide crucial insights regarding the differences, in terms of social position, between the participants from both schools. Let me now turn my attention towards some sociological and demographic indicators that mark contrasts in the student's lives. The quantity of automobiles in the households of the students from St. Mary High School is high. In total, 65% of the surveyed students have two or more vehicles at home. Furthermore, a low percentage of young people (2%) express to have no automobiles in their domestic spheres. On the other hand, the quantity of automobiles in the households of the students from Virilla Vocational High School is low. In total, 57% of the surveyed students do not have any vehicles at home. In addition, a low percentage of young people (6%) express to have more than three automobiles in their domestic spheres. With this, it is possible to start comprehending the often radically different material realities experienced by the participants from both schools.

The differences persist in terms of access to technological devices in everyday experience. The students from St. Mary High School have a considerable quantity of TV sets in their households: 70% indicate to have more than three TV sets; furthermore, 92% of them have cable TV at home. In the case of Virilla Vocational High School, all the surveyed students indicate to have at least one TV set in their households. Hence, 53% of them affirm to have two TV sets at their homes. Moreover, 75% of the surveyed students express to have Cable TV in their domestic sphere. With this in mind, let me examine the access these young people have to the technological infrastructure necessary to navigate online. After all, they have heavily mediatised and mediated lives; nonetheless, there are important dissimilarities worth noting. In the case of St. Mary High School, 96% of the surveyed students confirm to have computers in their domestic sphere. In addition, they have a high level of Internet access in their households: 99% affirm to have Internet connection at home. Conversely, 74% of the participants from Virilla Vocational High School express to have computers in their households. In terms of Internet access in their homes, the percentage is 78%.

Granted, these numbers are not radically opposed; yet they signal specificities that, taken together, compose opposing social worlds. The divergences between the participant's social position become completely clear when the educational background of their families is explored. The families from the private school

have a high level of formal education: 86% of the students affirm that both of their parents finished high school. Concerning university education, again, 86% of these young people express to have at least one parent with a university degree. The panorama changes when we look at the families from Virilla Vocation High School. In this case, 56% of the surveyed students indicate that both of their parents *did not* finish high school. In terms of university education, 84% of these participant's parents *do not* have a university degree. On this point, I must highlight that none of the students from this public school express to have two parents with a university degree. Although the social and economic capital of the participants is not a concern of this research, these numbers point out an almost diametrically inversed situation which is structurally determined and will probably have important consequences in the future lives of these young people (Lareau, Evans & Yee, 2016; Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020). In Chapter 6, I will analyse with detail the differences regarding social position – with an emphasis on age and social class as social categories; for now, suffice it to pinpoint how the data from the survey paints a portrait of two groups of students who reside in two contrasting social realities: one with a relative and sufficient quantity of wealth, and the other defined by material limitations and scarcity.

The findings from the media consumption habits survey I conducted stresses how the participants' social life is characterised by a deep engagement with diverse media genres, formats, and platforms, being entangled with social structures that mediate their personal actions and everyday activities. As Costa Rican young people, they are part of a society tied to external geopolitical relationships and to internal historical processes. Indeed, as it can be inferred from the preceding lines, they inhabit different social worlds, different realities rooted in specific social positions. The upcoming chapters will flesh out these worlds through an analysis of localised practices and engagements with the media and other cultural discourses.

3.8.3 Focus Group Discussions

By conducting focus group discussions, I was interested in analysing the participants' engagement with nostalgic media texts and their national culture in a dynamic and active manner. With this, I mean that my interest resided in examining these engagements as seen through their interpretations and their interactions amongst themselves.

A focus group involves bringing together groups of people in order collectively to discuss a set of issues with the assistance of a moderator (Gilbert, 2017; Raby, 2010). Following Liebes & Katz (1993), this data collection method can be a

"catalyst for the individual expression of latent opinion, for the generation of group consensus, for free-associating to life and for analytic statements about art" (p. 28). As Radway (1984) suggests, a situation of common discussion amongst peers might allow the resurgence of thoughts or beliefs that otherwise would remain hidden or unformulated. Hence, this data collection method has the potential to reveal symbolic premises rooted in particular contexts and given experiences, deploying a perspective in which an "audience is seen, not as an aggregate of atomised opinions or attitudes, but as individuals located in concrete social groups who construct meaningful social action partly through the discursive interrogation of text" (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996, p. 85). This perspective was essential for identifying prevailing meaning-making patterns, in terms of the participants' engagement with nostalgic media texts, and the operation of nostalgic structures of feeling in their reception practices.

Hence, I conducted a total of 13 focus group discussions in both schools – eight in St. Mary High School and five in Virilla Vocational High School. As I shall explain in Chapter 6, this difference in quantity of research activities stems from the fact that, during my fieldwork, there were several teacher and student strikes that affected the normal operations of the public school.

In total, 90 students were part of this research activity – 55 in St. Mary High School and 35 in Virilla Vocational High School. At the private school, 31 of the participants were female (56%) and 24 were male (44%). At the public school, 21 of the participants were female (60%) and 14 were male (40%).

On average, each focus group discussion had seven participants in both schools. Due to the different conditions of these educational institutions, the discussions had an average duration of 2 hours in the private school and of 1 hour in the public school. At St. Mary High School, the focus groups were scheduled as an extra-curricular activity, i.e., students had to stay after their classes in order to participate. As a way of catching their attention, and considering that the discussions took place at 2:30 p.m., I offered them pizza and soft drinks, a strategy that paid its dividends with success. On the other hand, at Virilla Vocational High School, the administration allowed me to conduct the discussions in certain hours during the school day. As a mode of showing my gratitude to them, I provided assorted snacks and soft drinks for the participants. As can be inferred, the participants of the focus groups knew each other; in other words, they were classmates in their respective high schools. Even though these situations are liable to generate excited exchanges that end up in a crosstalk which is difficult to transcribe (Raby, 2010, p. 10), this common background was

beneficial to engendering scenarios similar to the students' everyday life, allowing a broader openness and trust in their responses (Hollander, 2004; Lunt & Livingstone, 1996).

Rothwell, Anderson & Botkin (2016, p. 735) propose a mode of this method called *deliberative discussion focus groups*. In this mode, participants are given information before the activity in order to foster a well-prepared discussion. This modality gives interesting insights for the organisation of the focus groups. In a project whose objective is to understand how nostalgic media texts are engaged by young audiences, it is essential to observe this process directly in the selected population. Thus, the focus group discussions started with the screening of the Netflix TV series *Stranger Things* (2016) or the film *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018). This action sought to synchronise the participants with a common set of meanings and to propel an immediate debate about issues of representation, the past and the social and political situation of Costa Rica. Initially, my intention was only to use the Netflix production as a starting point. Nevertheless, after the first two discussions, I decided to make use of another media text in order to problematise a dynamic that unfolded around a different medium and narrative – in this case, a fictionalised account of Freddie Mercury's life. I utilised this film to gain an analytical contrast concerning the interpretation of a nostalgic representation of the past. After observing that, despite minor differences, the discussions were following the same logics regardless of the media text, I maintained *Stranger Things* (2016) as the base of most of the focus groups, especially because the TV series became an important hook for the students to join these activities. I have summarised the organisation of the focus group discussions in the following table:

Table N.3
Focus Group Discussions
Organisation

Educational Institution	Group of Participants	Media Text
St. Mary High School	1. 10th grade students	Stranger Things
	2. 11th grade students	Stranger Things
	3. 10th grade students	Stranger Things
	4. 10th grade students	Stranger Things
	5. 11th grade students	Bohemian Rhapsody
	6. 10th grade students	Stranger Things
	7. 11th grade students	Bohemian Rhapsody
	8. 10th grade students	Stranger Things
Virilla Vocational High School	1. 11th grade students	Bohemian Rhapsody
	2. 11th grade students	Bohemian Rhapsody
	3. 12th grade students	Stranger Things

	4. 12th grade students	Stranger Things
	5. 12th grade students	Stranger Things

As stated above, there were diverse circumstances that meant I had to design two topic guides for the discussions (see Appendix 7). However, the sessions were based on the same conceptual framework. First, I started the focus groups by screening the videoclip of *Just Like Heaven*, by The Cure, as a warm-up activity, and also as a way of promoting a conversation about the participants' ideas about the 1980s – i.e., past decades – and popular culture. Second, I screened the first acts of the pilot episode of *Stranger Things* (2016) – namely, the first episode of the first season – or *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018). Narratively, and following the Aristotelian model of a three-act structure (Aristotle, 2013), the first act entails the set-up of the story; that is to say, the presentation and initial description of the relevant characters, scenarios and narrative threads. In simple terms, it marks the beginning of the 'adventure' (Chatman, 1978; Macdonald, 2013, p. 46). By showing the beginning of both *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), I was looking to include those participants who were new to the TV series and the film, and also to incentivise the students to think about a transnational past and a specific timeframe.

Third, after this I asked the participants questions about their interpretation of what they had just watched. Moreover, I compelled them to imagine how either *Stranger Things* (2016) or *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), would have been had they occurred in Costa Rica; this generated a fun activity in which the students created their own stories translating a mediated foreign past to their imagined conceptions of their country's past (see Chapter 5). Fourth, I formulated a discussion around the representation of the past in the media – specially TV and cinema – and their engagement with national and foreign media texts. Fifth, I promoted a dialogue set around nostalgia; in this regard, I invited the participants to write down media products with which they had felt nostalgic. Finally, I finalised the sessions with a discussion on Costa Rica, with an emphasis on the last presidential elections and the future of the country.

All the focus group discussions were audio-recorded. After I finished with all the 13 discussions, I heard some key parts of the recordings to design a semi-structured topic guide for the paired interviews. In the next subsection, I turn my attention to this phase of my research process.

3.8.4 Qualitative Paired Interviews

My goal with the focus group discussions was to examine the participants' engagement with specific media and broader social processes through their interaction amongst themselves. However, this kind of collective debate might block certain people from expressing their true feelings or thoughts in an honest and transparent manner (Cyr, 2016; Raby, 2010). Furthermore, I wanted to explore in a more incisive and detailed fashion the themes and dynamics the students from both schools had deliberated about. By conducting qualitative paired interviews, I localised my analysis at a more individual level – although with certain nuances, as I explain shortly. Arksey & Knight (1999) underscore that qualitative interviews are focused on a person's belief systems, personality and relationship with the social world. Differently put, this method is a mode of grasping meaning-making as produced and reproduced by certain individuals (Kvale, 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

A useful modality for this method is the *paired interview* – also known as joint, coupled or dyadic interview (Polak & Green, 2016). In simple words, using a paired interview entails a research activity in which "the two participants are interviewed at the same time, together" (Sakellariou, Boniface & Brown, 2013, p. 1563). By selecting this modality to interview the students from both schools, my objective was to analyse the participants' involvement with nostalgic media texts through a more intimate discussion with a peer (Wilson, Onwuegbuzie, & Manning, 2016).

The relational and interactional focus of paired interviews involve certain methodological benefits. For Polak & Green (2016), its advantages bring about the possibility of co-constructing specific experiences and knowledges; therefore, it is a powerful tool to investigate how a shared experience is understood through dynamics of socialisation (p. 1642). In addition, paired interviews help to find confirmatory, complementary and contradictory accounts that expose the similarities and disparities present in the interaction between the two participants (Polak & Green, 2016; Riley, 2014). Another advantage of this modality regards consent and anonymity: as Zarhin (2018, p. 845) suggests, paired interviews can infuse confidence and trust in one – or both – of the participants, creating a more affable disposition to participate in the study. In this sense, it becomes a mechanism to diffuse the barriers of shyness or uncertainty. As I explained in Section 3.8.1, I implemented this by asking the participants to choose a friend for this activity.

Here, I must emphasise that, although I was interested in investigating the individual level of certain media engagement practices, it is almost impossible to isolate these practices to a strictly personal degree. Indeed, media texts are intertextual, and audiences are situated in social structures maintained in and through interactions with other social agents and institutions (Couldry & Hepp, 2017; Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016). That is why I decided to balance the collective – to a lesser degree – with the personal in this research activity. Moreover, I was extremely careful in harmonising, in terms of participation, the two students whilst interviewing them (Zarhin, 2018).

I conducted 35 paired interviews in both schools – 20 in St. Mary High School and 15 in Virilla Vocational High School. In total, 70 students were part of this research activity – 40 in St. Mary High School and 30 in Virilla Vocational High School. At the private school, 22 of the participants were female (55%) and 18 were male (45%). At the public school, 17 of the participants were female (57%) and 13 were male (43%).

In the case of the private institution, the interviews took place during the class recesses. Taking into account that the students 'sacrificed' their resting time to join this activity, I provided hot drinks and sandwiches as a sign of gratitude. In the case of the public institution, the administration again allowed me to interview young people during school hours. I also gave students snacks and drinks as a way to thank them. At both schools, the paired interviews had an average duration of 25 minutes; all of them were audio-recorded.

I designed the qualitative paired interviews as *in-depth interviews*, i.e., instruments concerned with achieving a deep knowledge of the participants whilst combining structure and flexibility (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003, p. 141). In short, in-depth interviews dissect in a detailed manner the participant's worldview based on previously established points of inquiry and, simultaneously, on his or her own spontaneous responses. Now, in terms of execution, I devised the interviews as *semi-structured*: they consist in a set of open questions ordered following a topic guide (Gaskell, 2000; see Appendix 8). The topic guide was divided in 5 parts: 1) Consumption habits; 2) Media practices; 3) Past and memory; 4) Media texts and nostalgia; 5) Nationhood and nostalgia. Indeed, the questions followed the debates of the focus groups; nonetheless, the setting of the activity permitted me to gain more personal accounts. For instance, the participants were more open to discussing their relationship with Costa Rica's political life and their expectations about the future.

3.9 Data Analysis Method

After completing the focus group discussions and qualitative paired interviews, I transcribed all the recordings, producing 495 pages of data. Graphically, the data collection process I conducted in Costa Rica can be represented as follows:

Table N.4
Collected Data
Fieldwork (March – August 2019)

Educational Institution	Research Activity	Number of Activities Conducted	Number of Participants	Average Duration	Total of Transcribed Data
St. Mary High School	Media Habits Survey	132 surveys	132 students	N/A	N/A
	Focus Group Discussions	8 Discussions	55 students	2 hours	166 pages
	Paired Interviews	20 Interviews	40 students	25 minutes	137 pages
Virilla Vocational High School	Media Habits Survey	87 surveys	87 students	N/A	N/A
	Focus Group Discussions	5 Discussions	35 students	1 hour	73 pages
	Paired Interviews	15 Interviews	30 students	25 minutes	119 pages

I analysed the data using the method of *thematic analysis*. Before continuing with the specificities of this method, I would like to state that I coded all the transcriptions in Spanish, given that all the research activities were conducted in this language. I have translated to English the quotes and phrases presented in this work trying to keep the tones, emphases and lexica of the original sources. Obviously, and especially because many of these young people utilised a Costa Rican urban jargon, I have been obliged to find equivalent English expressions on many occasions; in these cases, I have bracketed in italics those terms that are difficult to translate.

3.9.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a method whose aim is the qualitative identification of patterns of meaning, the recognition of certain elements within a text that, taken together, compose an orientation of signification (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Conaway & Wardrope, 2010; Macnair & Frank 2017). With this method, I intended to grasp the common connectors within the data in order to delineate the general themes that structure the way in which the participants make sense of

their engagement with nostalgic media texts and their social world. In this case, my units of analysis were the conversations and discussions I had with the participants. As will become evident in the upcoming chapters, this method allowed me to examine the presence and operation of nostalgic structures of feeling in this engagement by signalling constant meanings enacted by the participants around particular media practices, social situations and contexts.

Thematic analysis might be executed through an inductive lens which, drawing from the principles of grounded theory, aspires to develop its main categories following the characteristics of the data, or through a deductive lens which establishes its focus drawing from pre-selected theoretical criteria (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 83; Eynon, O'Donnell & Williams, 2016). Based on Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), I developed a hybrid approach which brings together both inductive and deductive rationales in order to achieve a data-driven and theory-guided analysis. Hence, and as I explain shortly, I started with 40 deductive codes and, at later stages of the analysis, I complemented the coding scheme with 52 inductive codes.

I define themes as organised and constant sets of meanings contained within a specific data set (Rendón & Nicolas, 2012, p. 230). For the identification of themes, I created codes to mark the presence of relevant meanings within a data set. A code is a "label attached to a section of text to index it as relating to a theme or issue in the data" (King, 2004, p. 257). Therefore, for the coding process, I took into account sentences, paragraphs and even large portions of a conversation to assign them to a code. In addition, given that my exchanges with the participants were rich and nuanced, some fragments had more than one code.

After a process of synthesis and revision, certain themes are abstracted from groupings of codes that signal a pattern of meaning. There are distinct perspectives to design the phases of a thematic analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006); despite differences of terminology and sometimes of range, all of them share a logic of six steps aimed at the execution of a detailed analysis. For this research, I combined these perspectives in order to generate a design which benefits from the strengths of diverse methodological reflections. The goal with the development of a clear procedure for conducting a thematic analysis is to create an analytical system that will guide the analysis of the data (Harwood & Lin, 2000, p. 35). I will explain the phases of the present thematic analysis as follows:

The first step regards the *codification of the material*. In this phase, I devised the initial codebook, and I applied the coding scheme to the data set (Attride-Stirling, 2001, pp. 390-391; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Following Saldaña (2009, p. 52), I crafted an original codebook with 40 deductive codes defined with a label extracted from a preliminary reading of the transcriptions and the concepts designated in the topic guides of the focus group discussions and the qualitative paired interviews; each code had a brief description and an explanation of its application (see Appendix 9). The data set was analysed using the NVivo software package. The coding consisted in assigning fragments of the data to certain codes.

I began coding the data with the deductive codes in order to ascertain whether the exchanges and conversations arising from the focus group discussions and qualitative paired interviews had a thematic correspondence with the categories of the topic guides I had devised. After this, I identified inductive codes in order to identify patterns of meaning that fell outside the thematic parameters I had originally set in these research activities.

After a first coding of the data, I moved to the second phase: *identification of themes.* For this, I coded for a second time all the transcriptions in order to identify inductive codes. Thus, based on Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006, p. 87), I added 52 additional codes to the coding scheme that had not been previously established through a deductive lens, i.e., they were the product of 'spontaneous' patterns of meaning that emerged during the research activities. With a codebook which incorporated deductive and inductive codes, I coded the data for a third and final time. After this process, I began to recognise qualitative tendencies amongst all the codes.

Then, the third stage entails the *definitions of themes*. I reviewed all the deductive and inductive codes and grouped them together in basic themes, i.e., clusters of meanings that were constant throughout the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). These basic themes would be the basis of the thematic maps I devised later on.

After this, the fourth step encompasses the *construction of thematic maps[23]*. Attride-Stirling (2001, pp. 388-389) proposes a multi-level approach to the

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[23] Attride-Stirling (2001) proposes the creation of 'thematic networks' to exhibit the different levels that meaning-making processes have within a data set (p. 388). I prefer to talk about 'maps' in order to avoid a confusion vis-à-vis the theoretical and methodological tradition of social network analysis (Scott, 2000; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). I believe that the notion of map is better suited to detect hierarchies and relations amongst different types of themes. Given that I am working with nuanced and often ambivalent conversations and discussions as the base for my

understanding of themes. In her view, there are different thematic hierarchies within a data set based on relationships of prevalence, frequency and semantic importance. In this respect, three different kinds of themes can be recognised:

1. *Basic Themes:* a grouping of codes that communicates simple premises of the data.
2. *Organising Themes:* middle order clusters that summarise several assumptions of the data. They connect basic themes between each other.
3. *Global Themes:* guiding principles of meaning-making present throughout the data. They provide an account of the overall meanings.

Thus, from the already classified basic themes, I identified organising and global themes, an operation whose outcome was the creation of three thematic maps – these maps are the base of the empirical analysis of this work (see Appendix 10 for a detailed account of the coding process and the mode with which I constructed these thematic maps).

The fifth phase consists in the *summary of the thematic maps*. Herein, I visually represented the thematic maps in order to facilitate the understanding of the patterns of meaning contained within the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Finally, the sixth stage brings together the *interpretation of patterns* and the *production of the report*. In this last moment, I wrote an empirical analysis grounded on these thematic maps (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 394; Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). The following chapters exhibit the findings of this analytical process.

3.9.2 Thematic Structure of the Qualitative Data

During my fieldwork, I collected 495 pages of transcribed qualitative data from focus group discussions and paired interviews. Given the deliberative, interactive, and usually open of these methods, the thematic analysis of the data proved to be an arduous and detail-oriented task (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Macnair & Frank 2017). This richness was essential to conduct an analysis that allowed me to examined reception practices inscribed in specific social dynamics; nevertheless, it obliged me to carefully detect patterns of meaning present in different conversations, different participants, and different moments of my fieldwork (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010; Conaway & Wardrope, 2010).

In appendix 10, I provide a full account of my coding process; for the purposes of this subsection, I must highlight how, after coding the whole data set three

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empirical analysis, my aim is to identify and parse patterns of meanings and explore their *connections*.

times, I was able to distinguish general thematic structures that were constant and regular. By thematic structure, I mean a group of patterns of meanings that have a similar semiotic orientation; otherwise stated, it encompasses one of the main tendencies, in terms of meaning-making, upon which the data is organised – or what, in the preceding lines, I called global themes. After coding the data from the focus group discussions and the paired interviews, I identified three thematic structures which I visually represented in three thematic maps. Each of the following empirical analysis chapters are based on one of these maps. With this in mind, I would like to outline the thematic structure of the qualitative data I collected in my fieldwork.

The first thematic structure I was able to single out entails the engagement between the participants and nostalgic media texts. This structure follows themes of text structure, format and production, media practices, and personal engagements. In this respect, these are patters of meaning that point out the relationship between the modes in which the young people from both schools interpret the textual qualities nostalgic narratives of the past as enacted in specific media texts. Moreover, this first thematic structure is also concerned with aesthetic features and practices; hence, it brings to the fore stylistic elements present in media texts that build a sense of nostalgia and ways of engaging with these aesthetic constructions. In sum, as I will explore in Chapter 4, this thematic structure suggests the operation of a nostalgic structure of feeling present in the engagement of the students from both schools with *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018).

The second thematic structure identified in the qualitative data comprises how the participants engage with the represented past of nostalgic media texts and how they imagine their Costa Rica's past. Thus, this structure brings about idealisation and critiques enacted by the students from both schools towards representations of a foreign past, as depicted by *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), and their imaginary conceptions of their country during the 1970s and 1980s. With this, I could observe the interpretative tensions that arise when these young people engage with narrative events take place in the United States and the United Kingdom and with accounts about their nation's past mediated by social imaginaries. In Chapter 5, then, I analyse how this thematic structure suggests a nostalgic social imaginary which involves an idealisation of the past vis-á-vis the present, operating in tandem with a nostalgic structure of feeling.

Finally, the third thematic structure derived from the focus group discussions and paired interviews regards the participants' social experiences of being young in Costa Rica based on their social positions. The data, therefore, permits to observe two contrasting social realities that mediate the ways in which the students from both schools understand the past, the present, and the future. Therefore, depending on the middle/upper-class and working-class backgrounds of these young people, it is possible to recognise positive and negative assessments of their country's future. In Chapter 6, I analyse the modes in which these dissimilarities involve two contrasting structures of feeling that mark the experiences of being young for the students from St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School and their engagements with nostalgic media texts.

3.10 Evaluation and Limitations

According to Creswell & Miller (2000), a qualitative project achieves a higher grade of quality when it establishes a clear analytical framework and details meticulously all the followed procedures. Ólafsson, Livingstone & Haddon (2013, p. 18), drawing from the work of Egon Guba and Ivonna Lincoln, suggest that qualitative projects demand a different framework of evaluation for they entail difficulties derived from the changing nature of the social world; for instance, contextual factors might block the repetition of certain findings through the lens of surveys or experiments. For this, they propose specific *quality measures* for qualitative works as a way of considering the challenges and dilemmas of social research and the complexities and changes of social reality.

I have incorporated four quality measures[24] proposed by Ólafsson, Livingstone & Haddon (2013) in the methodological design of this study. First, *credibility*, understood as the proper use of scientific methods; for this, I have developed all the data collection and analysis methods following theoretical and methodological reflections vis-á-vis my object of study. In this regard, I designed all the utilised instruments and procedures of analysis based on insights gathered from literature on audience studies and the specificities of the field. Second, *dependability*, or the consistency in the application of the methodological tools. In terms of this measure, I conducted all the research activities of this study following instruments and topic guides that had been previously assessed by

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[24] Originally, Ólafsson, Livingstone & Haddon (2013) proposed five quality measures. The fifth and final measure of their framework involves a process of *members checking*; that is to say, the results are presented to the participants of the project in order to validate the analysis with their views on their own experiences. I will not comply with this given the organisational nature of my fieldwork, i.e., I returned to London to conduct the data analysis after finishing it.

members of my thesis committee; in addition, I applied and executed them meticulously and rigorously, taking into account contextual elements and circumstances, but following the research objectives.

Third, *transferability* encompasses a high degree of specificity in the establishment of research methods, analytic categories and the examination of social phenomena in order to trace comparisons within the data. As I have discussed in Section 3.9.1, I followed a precise procedure for the analysis of the collected data, permitting me to generate an analytical framework that brings together the theoretical concerns of this project with the peculiarities and orientations of the conversations I had with the students from St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School. Fourth, *confirmability* implies the auditing of the interpretations grounded in the data. To guarantee this quality measure I have taken a twofold approach: 1) in the next chapters, all my arguments, observations, and analyses are strictly based on empirical data, i.e., I provide quotes from the participants, or fragments of conversations and debates, to support all my points; 2) this work has gone through numerous processes of revisions and evaluation by my Thesis Committee and has benefitted from the feedback of many specialised colleagues at the LSE and at different universities in Costa Rica.

Despite these quality measures, the present research has several limitations that I must acknowledge. In terms of the fieldwork, I encountered challenges that compromised my research design. With this, I am pointing out how I could not conduct the same quantity of research activities at both schools. I had to struggle with circumstantial factors – e.g., the teacher and student strikes – that restricted my time at Virilla Vocational High School. Although, as I hope to demonstrate in the following chapters, this did not have consequences for my analysis, I would have liked to achieve a higher degree of methodological correspondence and fractality between the two educational settings where I worked. Furthermore, the media consumption habits survey I applied in both schools allowed me to have a first encounter with the participants, but its theoretical purchase, as I have indicated, was limited for the goals of this project. In operational terms, this research activity implicated for me an important effort in terms of execution and analysis, time that I could have spent trying other modes of gaining access to the students' quotidian spheres.

This last point signals how I, as a social researcher, got to know the participants in some ways but I did not receive their trust to enter their everyday lives – e.g., going to the cinema with them or visiting their homes. In this respect, my analysis

is based on their reactions to the material I screened during the focus group discussions and their discussions on topics I proposed to them during these activities and the paired interviews. Even though Liebes & Katz (1993) respond to the criticism of 'unnaturalness' directed at focus groups by observing that a discussion "of intimate acquaintances is more natural than a face-to-face interview between strangers" (p. 30) – such as it is this case – there are multiple social spaces and situations occupied and experienced by the students from both schools that are not examined in this project. Future research on young people – specially in Costa Rica – must employ the traditional ethnographic method of participant observation to obtain deep knowledge on their engagement with the media and other social structures.

I selected the schools to develop my fieldwork with the purpose of exploring contrasting social realities. Nonetheless, it would be difficult for me to suggest that St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School stand for all educational institutions in Costa Rica. Through my ethnographic sensibility, I sought to examine the *layers of meaning* in which two specific groups of social individuals are embedded, being historically and socially located (Reed, 2011, p. 110). From the outset, it is possible to predict different similarities between these two schools and the whole Costa Rican educational apparatus. However, each school entails a particular social world formed by dynamics and mechanisms that emerge from wider socio-historic processes (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020). The value of this project, I contend, resides in how it traces the operation of specific media engagement practices and how it demonstrates their connection with broader social and cultural logics. The analysis of these practices can be incorporated into the analytical repertoire of audience studies and be a referent for cases taking place either in Costa Rica or other parts of the planet. Specifically, this research aims modestly to point out how, when audiences engage with the media, they are also engaging with society at large.

Finally, I must concede that this research is lassoed to the urban realities of Costa Rica. As Harvey-Kattou (2019) remarks, there is a crucial symbolic and material difference between the Great Metropolitan Area – the central area of the country – and the coastal regions, i.e., the periphery. It would be interesting to conduct an analogous fieldwork at schools in Puntarenas, Guanacaste or Limón. An analysis of the engagement of young people with nostalgic discourses in these regions could provide provocative insights concerning the construction of social identities in Costa Rica, and how the past, the present and the future are grasped in places that fall outside the hegemonic cultural frameworks of the country.

Chapter 4:
The Reception of *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018)

4.1 Interpreting the Past

On 23 August 2019 I arrived at Virilla Vocational High School. It was a Friday, but it was not a normal one. As soon as I entered the building, I could appreciate that many students were wearing long skirts, high-waisted jeans, sunglasses, denim and leather jackets, amongst other 'retro' items. Days before, the students from the 12th grade had informed me that they would be celebrating *la fiesta de la alegría* with a theme of the 1950s and 1980s. In Costa Rica, the last day of school is known by this name – which translates as 'the party of joy' – and it usually entails a day full of games, music and food, celebrating the end of the school year. Being students at a vocational school, these students were finishing their academic year in August and given that they would embark shortly on a compulsory internship necessary to complete their secondary education. They invited me to come and I took advantage of this invitation to say goodbye to them – as I would be leaving the country soon – and to the teaching and administrative staff of the school. I followed their requirement of wearing something from those decades; so, I arrived dressed in a plaid shirt, with a Star Wars t-shirt underneath, jeans and Converse sneakers. This situation rendered me speechless for I could not stop remembering the almost identical experience I had had at St. Mary High School, as described in Chapter 1. My fieldwork was coming to an end with an incredible poetic consonance.

Days before, whilst conducting one of the final focus group discussions, the students had told me about this. Intrigued by the similarity with the conversation we were having – and with my research project! – I inquired further. They assured me that it was a coincidence given that the theme of the celebration had been selected prior to the beginning of my research activities. The next fragment, taken from that discussion, exhibits the appeal the participants feel towards the past:

> Rodrigo: Why did you chose this theme [the 1950s and the 1980s]?
> Rocío: We have always loved those times …
> Katty: It's because how they used to dress …
> Rocío: … it's because the way they used to dress, they used to dress really nice.
> Lola: Really cool.

> Rodrigo: And for you, what's the difference in the clothing of the '80s and the '50s?
> Katty: There are many.
> Josselyn: Yes, in the 50s women used to wear like skirts …
> Lola: … and in the 80s they used to wear shorts, and colours, a little bit crazier. But in the 50s it was more sober.
> Carmen: And denim was trending.
> Rodrigo: In the 80s?
> Rocío: Yes.

This episode shows an interpretative bricolage of styles in action. Indeed, ideas about clothing, fashion and colour palettes are meshed together by these young people to make sense of the past. But it also illustrates a common situation amongst the students from both schools: idealising certain aspects of the past based on its aestheticisation.

In this chapter, I explore the reception of nostalgic media texts by Costa Rican young people. My intention is to grasp how young audiences make sense of mediated representations about the 1970s and 1980s, considering that they did not live during those decades. I analyse their engagement with *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), two media texts that I consider nostalgic inasmuch they present a polished and refined view of a previous era through the use of diverse aesthetic constructions (Hall, 2013; Livingstone, 1998b; Silverstone, 2005). Thus, I aim to answer the following research question: *How do young audiences interpret the past represented in nostalgic media texts?* In what follows, my answer will be partial, for my emphasis is located specifically on the engagement between the participants with particular textual elements; I will be able to answer this question fully in the next chapter, after examining the social imaginaries that are part of this engagement.

My core interest in this chapter resides in reception practices; that is to say, in the meaning-making dynamics that occur in the engagement between young audiences and particular media texts. Throughout my argument, I emphasise how this engagement is not simply a matter of some spectators consuming a TV series or a film, but a complex interaction of distinct social and cultural processes. In sum, I analyse how reception is social (Das & Pavlíčková, 2014; Eco, 1989; Livingstone, 2005; Radway, 1988; Wu & Bergman, 2019).

Thus, I start my argument by discussing the aesthetic nature of reception. With this, I establish an analytical framework for examining how the participants engage with the aesthetic constructions of *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018). Then, I move on to analyse how these Costa Rican young

people make sense of these nostalgic media texts. To this end, I explore how they interpret the stylised representations of fashion, music, technology and lifestyles featured in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018). Although they are not the only stylised representations of these texts, they are, I argue, the most salient signifiers of the past as identified by the students from both schools. Hence, I spell out how they deploy an interpretative operation in which textual cues and other social dynamics – such as interpersonal interactions with parents or relatives – foster an image of the past. Throughout my investigation of the reception of nostalgic media texts, I also identify a structure of feeling that underpins the participants' interpretations and engagements. This nostalgic structure of feeling, I contend, mediates these interpretative dynamics by providing a symbolic framework upon which the past, the present and even the future, are experienced and grasped. I finish this chapter by discussing how the aestheticisation of the past, as built on *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), presents polished and clean visions of previous decades and how this aestheticisation works in tandem with a nostalgic structure of feeling.

4.2 The Aesthetics of Reception

As I outlined in Chapter 3, thematic analysis is an approach that allows us to pinpoint common patterns of meanings within a data set (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Macnair & Frank 2017). Thus, following the six phases of thematic analysis I devised (see Section 3.9.1), I was able to identify a thematic map in the data collected from the focus group discussions and qualitative paired interviews which allows me to examine how young people make sense of the past represented in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018). The next figure displays this thematic map:

Figure N.2
Thematic Map
Nostalgic Structure of Feeling
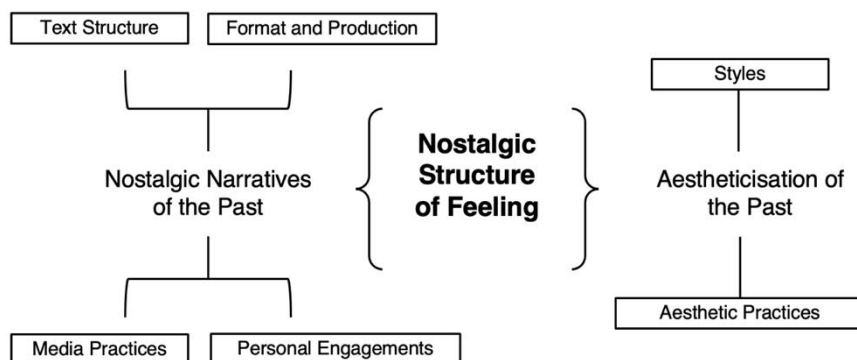
This thematic map shows how a specific nostalgic structure of feeling emerges from the interaction between nostalgic narratives of the past and the aestheticisation of the past (for a more detailed account of the coding process, see Appendix 10). Following Attride-Stirling (2001, pp. 388-389), this map is made up of organising themes – i.e., clusters that connect basic themes amongst themselves – that point out global themes, the guiding principles of meaning-making practices present throughout the data. In this case, two organising themes – i.e., 'nostalgic narratives of the past' and 'aestheticisation of the past' – point to the operation of a nostalgic structure of feeling, which is the global theme of the map. The first cluster of themes in the figure signal textual elements and reception practices enacted around nostalgic media texts: 'text structure', 'format and production', 'media practices', and 'personal engagements'. The second cluster exhibits specific modes of presenting the past stylistically, from media texts to fashion, combining textual devices and social practices; thus, the basic themes of 'styles' and 'aesthetic practices' form 'the aestheticisation of the past' as an organising theme.

The emphasis of my analysis in this chapter is on the aestheticisation of the past; however, as I will make evident, this aestheticisation is closely related to the nostalgic narratives portrayed in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018).

In what follows, I flesh out this thematic map; nonetheless, before doing this, I would like to clarify my emphasis on the aestheticisation of the past. As I will demonstrate shortly, the students from St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School engage with representations of the past through specific stylistic elements present in nostalgic media texts. By aestheticisation, I refer to a semiotic process in which different narrative, visual, and even historical elements, amongst many possibilities, are coherently tied together in a text following specific production objectives and creative patterns. In other words, as Ngai (2012) proposes, this process brings about an objectification of "our subjective feelings and the evaluations underpinned by them" (p. 65). This is crucial for comprehending the aesthetic nature of the reception of nostalgic media texts by Costa Rican young people. With this, I am going beyond an idea of the aesthetic as a plastic quality or as a personal or collective definition of what is beautiful or right (Hull & Nelson, 2009, p. 199; Valencia, 2014). The literary scholar Wolfgang Iser (1974, p. 274) calls the aesthetic "the realisation [of a text] accomplished by the reader". For him, the activity of reading implies "a sort of kaleidoscope of perspectives, preintentions, recollections" (p. 279); namely, his understanding of the aesthetic signals a dynamic which brings together implicit

and explicit ideas, judgements and experiences that are co-constructed socially (Athique, 2016; Das & Pavlíčková, 2014; Livingstone, 2019).

As Raymond Williams (1983, p. 32) describes, the aesthetic has often been associated with notions of visual appearance, categories of beauty and subjective sense-activity. My focus in this chapter, then, is on the social processes that coalesce around an aesthetic construction; or, otherwise stated, my interest resides in the mode in which an aesthetic is formed, reproduced and grasped in a specific space and time. With this in mind, I define the aesthetic as the social, cultural and historical construction of the values upon which media texts are created, transmitted and interpreted. These values might regard the visual display of a narrative universe, more abstract features of an audio-visual media text – such as the way of editing a particular scene or the camera techniques utilised in certain genres like murder mysteries and detective stories – or aspects of format for the transmission of the media product (think of the difference between listening music on mp3 or a long play format [Sterne, 2014]). At the same time, these values entail the myriad possibilities of engaging with a media text, bringing together individual expectations, collective knowledge, social conventions, economic dynamics and cultural frameworks (Butsch, 2000, p. 15; Hall, 1980; Livingstone & Das, 2013).

The aestheticisation of the past which takes place in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) entails the stylisation of diverse items, objects and devices that were part of a previous decade. In the context of mainstream popular culture and media industries, style can be understood as a mode of *composing* and *presenting* the parts that form a media text. In this regard, it is crucial to remember the semiotician Umberto Eco's (1989) definition of style: "a very personal, unrepeatable 'way of forming' – the recognisable trace that every artist leaves in his work and which coincides with the way the work is formed" (p. 165). Although Eco is speaking here within the terrain of art criticism, the Italian maestro misses, with this definition, the social nature of styles. Here, I am not following a Bourdieuian lens which seeks to examine the correspondence and evolution between specific styles and tastes with specific social positions and groups (Born, 2010; Bourdieu, 2010; Loesberg, 1993); nonetheless, I am interested in analysing how styles are connected to diverse social dynamics. As Hebdige (1979) observes, a style is a "coded response to changes affecting the entire community" (p. 80); or, simply put, styles are not created personally, but socially. This social aspect is the main focus of my inquiry in the following lines.

The students from St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School recognise 'signs' of the past in objects and ways of doing things; not for nothing, as Hebdige (1979) suggests, style is "pregnant with significance" (p. 18). As I explore in the next sections, styles function as *spatiotemporal bridges* for these young audiences (Bevan, 2019, p. 62). By spatiotemporal bridge, I am implying a way of understanding the relationship between the past and the present – and even the future – through aesthetic elements present in media texts. In simple terms, I am proposing to consider styles as connections between two distinct spatiotemporal dimensions. Thus, as I will exhibit shortly, when audiences interpret certain stylised elements featured in nostalgic narratives of the past, these elements act as signifiers of how past decades looked and were. In addition, I am signalling how the interpretation of styles occurs *intertextually*; in other words, they are read in relation to other internal semiotic elements found in the media text, but also with other media texts and multiple events and conditions that take place in the everyday life of the audience and social reality at large. At this point, Kristeva's (1984) definition of intertextuality as the "field of transpositions of various signifying systems" (p. 60) helps to highlight how distinct social and cultural elements converge in the reception of a media text. Styles provide a socio-historic base upon which nostalgic media texts are interpreted; in short, they map out "the social relations of viewing" (Chouliaraki, 2006b, p. 165).

Conceptualising styles as spatiotemporal bridges, I contend, is essential to analyse media engagements with portrayals of a foreign past. It permits to grasp how a transnational process of media production (Berg, 2017; Lobato, 2019; Straubhaar, 2015) is actualised in particular reception practices that are localised in a specific context. In this case, Costa Rican young people, by interpreting diverse stylisations of the past, create symbolic links that help them to negotiate the similarities and differences between fictional depictions of the 1970s and 1980s and the contemporary reality of their lives and country. In Chapter 7, I will discuss with more detail the implications of exploring the engagement of audiences from the Global South with representations about the past from the Global North; for now, suffice it to point out how the reception practices of the students from both schools are dynamics in which transnational memory is turned to transcultural remembering.

4.3 Making Sense of *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018)

I shall now proceed to analyse how the participants interpret the past of *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) following the thematic map presented above. In the next subsections, I highlight the way in which styles

operate as spatiotemporal bridges – or intertextual connections – by focusing on these young people's engagement with the stylisations of fashion, music, technology and lifestyles featured in these two nostalgic media texts (Pickering & Keightley, 2015, p. 180). Evidently, there are other stylisations done in these texts; nevertheless, the engagement with these textual and aesthetic elements are the most salient amongst the students from both schools. In the following lines, my purpose is to demonstrate that the reception and interpretation of media are complex social processes that are contingent upon multiple cultural, collective, and personal limits and pressures (Bakhtin, 1981; Chouliaraki, 2002; Das & Livingstone, 2013; Livingstone, 2002).

4.3.1 Experiencing the Past Through Fashion

A major tendency amongst the participants is the recognition of fashion as a key signifier of an era that is gone. Based on the general consensus displayed during the focus group discussions, it is clear that these two elements are the first marks that, for the students, set a media text within a specific temporality. After the screening of *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), Josselyn, an 11th-grade student from Virilla Vocational High School, explained this in a very precise manner:

> Josselyn: That's the first thing you see in a film; after all, you know a character by his clothes or the hairstyle he has.

Indeed, Josselyn's words point to the aesthetic construction of characters in an audio-visual media text: their design – in other words, how they look – shares a connection with the time frame of the story, or at least gives an approximate idea. Particular visual elements, then, and the mode in which they are presented, play a pivotal role in the engagement between an audience and a media text in terms of providing temporal frameworks for the narration as such. Indeed, for the participants, there is a close connection between specific fashion styles and specific decades. Let me continue with the discussion, in which Josselyn was involved, to demonstrate this; after asking these students what images the 1980s conjure in their minds, they replied:

> Josselyn: Bell-bottom jeans.
> Rocío: Or high-waisted jeans.
> Lola: Boys used to wear their pants up to their navels and also, they combined them with socks. Or Converse … Converse sneakers were really popular.
> Rocío: Yeah, with socks.
> Lola: They also used to dress with biker jackets.
> Jesús: Oh, yeah, those leather jackets!

This fragment exemplifies how the 1980s is imagined based on particular styles embodied in concrete items. Here, it is important to point out that these items might not be factually part of specific decades; rather, the participants associate them with a temporality without any concern for historical accuracy. This association emerges from the interpretation of certain aesthetic constructions, an interpretation that is enacted intertextually by these young people. In other words, when young audiences engage with nostalgic media texts such as *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), they employ tools taken from other engagements with the media and other social interactions.

In this respect, these styles are also grasped with resources from everyday life. The stories of both *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) take place in two decades in which the majority of the participants' parents were alive. In fact, as recalled by these young people, almost all their parents were teenagers or young adults during the 1970s and 1980s. As they expressed during my research activities, the students from both schools are acquainted with the fashion featured in these two media texts because they have seen them in old family pictures or one of their parents has told them something about them. The next fragment, taken from a focus group conducted at St. Mary High School, captures part of a discussion about the fashion of the 1980s. In this conversation, Pamela, an 11th-grade student, shares an experience she had with one of her mother's old garments. I have included the whole dialogue to illustrate, in its totality, the everyday link of the engagement between these young people and the stylistic constructions of *Stranger Things* (2016):

> Maricruz: I think 80s fashion is coming back; everybody is really into it.
> Aldo: Yeah, actually, today's fashion is really similar, there are things that're returning.
> Pamela: If you go to Forever [21], it's like being in the 80s.
> Aldo: Un-huh, you can buy flannel shirts or biker jackets there.
> Rodrigo: And why do you think the 80s are coming back?
> Pamela: Actually, it's really crazy because my dad lived during that time, and he'd bought a denim jacket for my mum, and my mum kept it in her closet for a long time. And recently, I was telling my mum that I wanted one of those jackets because my sister has one, and my mum was like: 'I have one in my wardrobe' [*en el baúl de los recuerdos*], and it's exactly the same as the ones that people are wearing now. And that grabbed my attention.
> Rodrigo: Did you take it?
> Pamela: Yeah, of course!

Pamela's experience describes the intertextual connection between the visual styles of *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), as signifiers of a temporal framework, and the everyday life of the participants. In this case, her mother is a mediatrix between her engagement with a nostalgic media text and the period of time represented in the text as such. Furthermore, this interaction – which emerged from the desire to have a 'retro' denim jacket – is played out against the backdrop of a fashion revival of the 1980s. Pamela's description of going to Forever 21, one of the most popular fast-fashion retailers in Costa Rica amongst young people, as "being in the 80s" points to a complex process of engagement which brings together aesthetic constructions present in a media text, quotidian interactions with relatives and broader politico-economic dynamics derived from different creative industries and markets – an engagement that occurs in the nostalgia economy, as I proposed in Chapter 1. The styles of *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) are not interpreted in isolation; rather, they are dynamically understood and experienced.

This last point provides a first clue to comprehending the engagement with certain styles as a mode of grasping the past. Dick Hebdige's (1979) classic work on the relationship between subculture and style can help us to analyse how these young people bridge different styles found in nostalgic media texts and other references about the past found in their social lives. Evidently, I am not examining a single subculture, or a group of subcultures; rather, this research focuses on two groups of young people characterised by diverse similarities – e.g., the consumption of Netflix[25] – and differences – e.g., their social positions. In short, I am dealing with two social worlds that sometimes diverge, but sometimes overlap. The operation of bricolage, as defined by Hebdige (1979, p. 103), highlights how styles, as semiotic codes, are capable of an almost infinite extension; that is to say, they are composed and re-arranged by different elements that can be combined in a variety of improvisations to generate new meanings within them. In this regard, styles, as bricolages, operate as "ad hoc responses to an environment, then serve to establish homologies and analogies between the ordering of nature and that of society, and so satisfactorily 'explain' the world and make it able to be lived in" (Hawkes, quoted in Hebdige, 1979, pp. 103-104).

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[25]According to the media consumption habits survey I applied during my fieldwork, the consumption of video streaming services amongst the students from St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School is high. In the case of the private school, 84% of the surveyed students acknowledges using these platforms. Netflix (31%) and YouTube (29%) are the most used video streaming services by the students at this institution. In the case of the public school, 83% of the surveyed students confirmed using these platforms. YouTube (43%) and Netflix (33%) are the most used video streaming services by the students at this public institution.

A bricolage is therefore a creative operation inasmuch it encompasses agency and reflectivity – in the act of interpreting a media text as such – but also contingency and structural constraints. In this case, the participants are not only engaging with the styles featured in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), but they are also interacting with other references to or manifestations from the past. The participants' interpretations of these two media texts are grounded in a bricolage of styles that respond to immediate textual elements, but are also contingent upon previous experiences and interactions. This bricolage, at the end, structures a global vision of the past made from diverse sources. In sum, the act of making sense of nostalgic media texts is also an act of understanding the past at large. Let us observe how this *interpretative bricolage* of styles works with the mode in which Violeta, an 11th-grade student from St. Mary High School, explains the return of the 80s to different media outlets:

> Violeta: It's not like someone came and said: "Well, let's go back to the 80s". It's like … I think everything is born from some source, and, at least, I think in this case it's thanks to Instagram because people are always trying to dress differently, and recently the trend is old clothing, and all that. So, reality imitates social media.

Violeta's explanation posits the cause of the stylistic return to the 80s on social media, specifically Instagram. Yet, she is also attributing this revival to people's desire to "dress differently" and the possibilities afforded by the platform to search for aesthetic inspiration. In her view, the hegemony of certain styles emerges from a convergence of specific dynamics of socialisation – i.e., the use of clothing as a sign of identity – and the almost infinite possibilities that can be found on Instagram and that subsequently influence young people's fashion choices – e.g., accounts dedicated to 80s or 90s nostalgia. Violeta, in other terms, is describing a bricolage of different styles that coalesces around the 1980s, i.e., diverse styles that are symbolically tied to the decade. Indeed, Violeta associates a certain type of apparel with a specific time. In order to do this, she needs to understand how the 1980s looked; and for this, she needs to have engaged with some sort of media texts from that time – or, as stated above, with oral accounts told by some relative. Differently put, Violeta is applying an understanding of the past, or of a particular decade, developed previously to make sense of a trend that she locates in fashion, but that is connected to other sources (e.g., films, TV series, music, etc.).

At this point, it is also possible to glimpse the operation of a particular structure of feeling. The excerpts quoted above – especially Pamela's and Violeta's words

– convey a sense of *attraction* towards the past. These students are talking about a desire to have something from the past – e.g, a denim jacket – or the way in which old fashion is influencing how young people dress. As I discussed in Chapter 2, for Williams (1977, p. 128), structures of feeling entail prospects of experiencing, understanding and living social reality. In this case, an affinity towards the past can be detected in the engagement between these young people and nostalgic media texts, an affinity found in personal decisions or the evaluation of fashion trends. I will flesh out this structure of feeling in the upcoming subsections; for now, suffice it to signal its presence in the participants' interpretations of the fashion styles of *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018).

To summarise, for the students from both schools, specific items of fashion are signifiers of the 1970s and 1980s. They comprehend the past through an interpretative bricolage which brings together different styles and other elements, taken from distinct social spheres and media outlets, and creates an association with this decade. In this case, nostalgic media texts such as *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) are employed, alongside other experiences from the participants' everyday lives, to construct a sense of how the past was and looked.

This interpretative bricolage occurs thanks to the interaction between different textual and socio-cultural factors. I will now turn my attention to music, as a style of the past, to continue the examination of this interaction.

4.3.2 Hearing the Past

During my fieldwork, I used to kick-off the focus group discussions by screening the music video of the song *Just Like Heaven* by The Cure, as a warm-up activity. I selected this music video, which was released in 1987, because of its aesthetics: the music has elements that could be associated with the 1980s, yet the dark visual style of the video contrasts with the bright colour palettes often attributed to the decade. And this selection paid off. Regularly, the participants could not identify correctly the date of the song. A typical comment was that it belonged to the 2000s because "it looks emo", as one student put it. The typical cause given for this answer, explored in the last subsection, was the clothes and hairstyles of the band, confirming the interpretative action of initially linking a temporal framework with garments and objects worn by the main characters in a media text.

But many students did identify the date of *Just Like Heaven*. There was an element that always situated these young people in the 1980s: the synthesisers featured in the song. This electronic instrument was frequently associated with the 'feel' of this decade. As Ignacio, an 11th-grade student from St. Mary High School, describes, the utilisation of this instrument in a musical composition marks a temporal distance between the past and the present:

> Ignacio: I find that time really interesting [the 1980s], because the song has a synthesiser, back then it was really fashionable to use the synthesiser. And it was the beginning of the technological revolution in music, to the point that nowadays synthesisers don't even look like a piano, everything's done in the studio with a computer.

Indeed, synthesisers were identified as representative of the 1980s. In the groups where I screened *Stranger Things* (2016), students from both schools often identified this instrument in the soundtrack of the TV series, associating its sound with the decade. The next exchange, which I had with Diego, an 11th-grade student from St. Mary High School, epitomises this connection between a specific timeframe and a repertoire of sounds. As Diego declares, he does not possess a technical knowledge of music; nonetheless, he is able to identify a musical spectrum linked to the 1980s:

> Rodrigo: Diego, you said before that certain instruments of the song [*Just Like Heaven*] remind you of Stranger Things. Why?
> Diego: I don't know, there's a guitar that's also like a keyboard, I don't know its name…
> Rodrigo: A keytar?
> Diego: Yeah! […] that instrument has something. I don't know anything about music, but it has a tone, a sound, that it's always in old movies, and it's definitely that instrument.

Indeed, certain kinds of music contribute to the aesthetics of a media text. In this respect, for the participants, particular visual and musical styles ground a media text within a bounded spatiotemporal dimension (Bevan, 2019, p. 161). As I have argued before, nostalgic media texts do not convey their full meaning to these young audiences by themselves (Eco, 1979; Livingstone, 2005). On the contrary, these styles are interpreted and understood as representative of the past following an intertextual process. Again, we find that these students make sense of these styles following a diverse array of discourses with which they might have interacted in different social arenas.

For instance, in the case of music, it is probable that they have seen other TV series and films set in the 1970s or 1980s, or produced during those decades, giving them a general idea about the music of that time. Or they might also know several kinds of 'old music' thanks to a relative. This was a general tendency amongst the students from both schools: parents and relatives are providers of stylistic benchmarks and guidelines of taste (Pickering & Keightley, 2015, p. 70). With this, I am suggesting that families play an important role by giving certain resources upon which these young people can construct an understanding of the past (Orozco, 1993, p. 41). We can observe this in the mode in which Harold, a 12th-grade student from Virilla Vocational High School, describes how his preference for "old rock" was originated:

> Harold: I really like listening to classic rock, and all that. Sometimes, when I'm listening to certain songs that have a really old style, I feel like a child, because I remember when I was little, and my grandfather or uncle were listening to that kind of music.
> Rodrigo: What kind of music are you referring to?
> Harold: Aerosmith, Guns n' Roses, and other bands like that.

In this case, Harold feels "like a child" – i.e., he experiences nostalgia – when he engages with music featured in *Stranger Things* (2016), and other nostalgic media texts, following his personal background. Evidently, he had not been born when these songs were originally released; however, he has interacted with them thanks to his grandfather and uncle. In short, these young people, as audiences, pick up and engage with aesthetic cues in an interpretative operation which also makes use of individual and quotidian situations to generate a sense of time.

The musical separation between the past and the present, as exemplified by the words of Ignacio and Diego quoted above, was a common topic the participants brought up during the focus groups. The majority of them find contemporary mainstream music unappealing, exhibiting a preference for old bands such as The Beatles, Queen, The Smiths and Iron Maiden. In the Costa Rican context, as described by the participants, the genres of hi-hop, trap and reggaeton are the most popular. Nonetheless, they keep listening to contemporary mainstream music thanks to its social function. As summarised by several students: "the music we listen to at parties isn't the same that we listen to when we're alone". In this regard, the consensus amongst the students from both schools suggests that, for them, old music is more authentic and original than recent iterations. For instance, Lucía, a 10th-grade student from St. Mary High School, explains how she conceives the distinction between old and new music, and how this changes her experience of enjoying it:

> Lucía: Obviously, reggaeton is cool and everything, but it's really repetitive, I mean. And its lyrics are really problematic [referring to sexist content]. On the other hand, I actually have a playlist called 'Old' [she says the word in English], and it has rock, like The Beatles, you know. And this playlist puts me in a better mood. Let's say, when I'm listening to reggaeton it's OK, but it's not the same.

Lucía's words reflect a common view expressed by the students from both schools. Regularly, they describe contemporary music as "empty"; on the contrary, for them, old music "tells a story" or was "written with passion". This perception can be exemplified with Zoé, an 11th-grade student from St. Mary High School, who clarifies what she sees as the problem in contemporary music:

> Zoé: I think music nowadays is more commercial. You can definitely tell if someone is singing with dedication and love, or if that person is just wearing a disguise, using a lot of makeup.

These common opinions are interesting for they point to an imaginary conception in which artists in the past were not constrained by economic imperatives. The key point, for them, entails an aesthetic and artistic integrity which is located in previous decades. Just as Zoé remarks, current music is deemed "commercial", i.e., a façade for hiding the "inauthentic" motive of generating profits. For the students from both schools, there is a gap between the past and the present which seems hard to reconcile.

As Banet-Weiser (2012) points out, authenticity is a symbolic construct which brings together diverse economic imperatives with cultural and social expectations. Thus, it is possible to identify how authenticity marks a temporal and spatial distance. As I argued in Chapter 2, this sense of spatiotemporal *distance* is an essential condition of nostalgia, establishing concrete coordinates where a yearned object is located. This yearned object, for the students from both schools, is immaterial, it implies a lost quality which was part of previous decades. They engage with specific musical styles to set a temporal framework, but they also assess them against contemporary iterations. Both *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) act as confirmations of this distance.

At this point, I must highlight how the engagement between these young people and nostalgic media texts is marked by social practices whose main goal is the expression of the self. Differently put, the stylisation of the past is appropriated as part of the participants' *youth culture*. The attraction the students feel towards distinct elements found in these media texts derives from an intension of asserting

their own identities. This becomes obvious in the way in which they make use of the fashion and music featured in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018). As the classic works of Hebdige (1979) and Willis (1977), and more recent research (Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016), demonstrate, the construction of identity through the mass media is a common characteristic of contemporary Western culture. In this case, the students from both schools employ media practices as strategies of socialisation – that is to say, as modes of fostering interpersonal relationships – and self-expression. As I will problematise further in Chapter 6, these young people face different symbolic and material barriers in their everyday lives; in other words, they are powerless in many social situations – e.g., they still cannot vote in political elections. Yet, it is clear that through the engagement with music and fashion from the past they are exerting a limited agency that allows them, at least, to discover who they are.

Let me come back to the structure of feeling I started to identify previously. I pointed out how young people convey a sense of attraction towards the past when they engage with the fashion styles represented in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018). When they engage with their music, again we see an interpretative bricolage which brings together diverse sounds and links them with specific decades. However, this interpretative operation implies a qualitative evaluation. As I have exhibited, the students from both schools consider contemporary music as void or unsatisfying. During my fieldwork, I found several participants who were comfortable with the genres of today; nevertheless, the large majority expressed a clear appreciation of and preference for "old music". This helps me to pinpoint a key feature of this structure of feeling: the sense of a *lacking present*. As I will show in the next subsections, this sense is not only confined to discussions on music, but is directed towards social reality at large.

In this subsection, I have analysed how the participants make sense of music, as a style attributed to the 1970s and 1980s, through an interpretative operation in which textual cues and everyday and individual dynamics converge. This operation works at the backdrop of a larger stylistic assessment of authenticity vis-à-vis the present. Otherwise stated, these young people enact, and are part of, an intertextual process in which nostalgic media texts such as *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) are just two pieces of many. Although my analytical focus starts from these media texts, their "actualisation", to use Eco's (1979) words, occurs in a multi-dimensional dynamic of reception.

In what follows, I explore how the representation of technology featured in nostalgic media texts is interpreted by the participants as a separation between past and present.

4.3.3 Old Technologies and Alluring Pasts

The students from both schools also identify the past based on the objects and items exhibited in nostalgic media texts. Hence, the 'materiality' of the past represented in TV series and films is key to understanding a temporal framework (Bevan, 2019, p. 135); differently put, for the participants, technology is also an indicator of a bygone era. By technology, I mean stylised representations of diverse artefacts with a social function, from cars to computers. For the participants, the past is characterised by a lack of technological features.

In the case of *Stranger Things* (2016), several young people mention the presence of certain types of bicycles, cars and walkie-talkies, as items that locate the TV series in the 1980s. Cars are also identified as 'markers of time' by the participants that discussed *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) during the focus groups; in the case of this film, microphones, recording devices and LP vinyl albums are the most usual objects recognised as clues for identifying the 1970s. For the participants, in these nostalgic media texts, stylised representations of technology make the past palpable by showing how certain devices were contextually used. For instance, Penélope, a 10th-grade student from St. Mary High School, describes the mode in which *Stranger Things* (2016) exhibits the evolution of technology:

> Penélope: The last season [of Stranger Things] was really amazing because they lived in a really cool era when technology was evolving. Let's say, they experienced the first phone, or things like that … if someone asks you for a phone, you would be like: 'Yeah, sure, I have an iPhone or a Samsung, whatever'. But it's really cool to see the reaction of the characters when something happens and they communicate through walkie-talkies, I think that's what they're called … so it's like really cool.

For Penélope, this Netflix original production depicts how certain technological features were once new. In this regard, *Stranger Things* (2016) defamiliarises, for these young audiences, what is normal by portraying how it was first received. In addition, these 'catalogues' of old technologies have an educational purpose for the participants. As Brian, a 12th-grade student from Virilla Vocational High School describes, watching *Stranger Things* (2016) made him realise how analogue photography used to work:

> Brian: I've heard about the dark rooms, and how printing pictures was really difficult, but I've never seen it until the episode where Jonathan [a character] develops some film at home.

As Brian's case exemplifies, for these young people, stylised representations of technology fixate a date for the narrative universe depicted in a media text. This dynamic is deployed for both media texts produced in another decade and contemporary media texts about the past. Helena, a 10th-grade student from St. Mary High School, explains how the presence of technological devices helps her to determine whether a film is new or old when she is watching it for the first time:

> Helena: Sometimes it has to do with … well, I see it in the way they are dressed [the characters] … but if I'm getting a different vibe, the first thing I do is look for mobile phones or smartphones because recently fashion is copying old styles. I mean, it's becoming really mixed and now I can never tell. So, if the clothing is not helping me, I start looking at the technology they're using.

Helena's words expose a tendency amongst the participants: for them, the presence of certain kinds of technology is part of a media product's aesthetic. Indeed, they correctly single out a creative process in which a narrative universe is designed by a production team (Bevan, 2019, p. 95). This aesthetic, then, gives a 'feel' to a TV series or film, setting temporal coordinates that localise the narrated events for an audience.

The stylisation of technology is grasped in relation to the way in which the 'life of the past' is portrayed. Indeed, the past is identified in terms of the absence of certain technological devices. In parallel, the present is assessed as having an excessive presence of technology. During my fieldwork, multiple students from both schools highlighted how, for them, technology was the source of different contemporary maladies (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020). In this regard, the past is evaluated following an idyllic logic: it is seen as freer and even more relaxed due to the absence of digital technologies. The following exchange I had with Katty, a 12th-grade student from Virilla Vocational High School, illustrates an ambivalent view of particular media technologies:

> Katty: I think nowadays everybody is so stuck on social media and with technology. For example, I don't need to go to a library to look for a book, I just look it up on my phone.
> Rodrigo: So, do you think that technology has changed us?

> Katty: I mean, it's changed us for better and worse. You can't deny that it helps us a lot, but it's also made us dumber.

This fragment is taken from a focus group in which I was discussing the past represented in *Stranger Things* (2016). Despite being heavy users of media technologies,[26] the participants consider that smartphones, especially, have taken a toll on their way of life. Thus, for these young people, the absence of technology sets a media text within a temporal framework, but it is also a signifier upon which the past is appraised as more positive. This evaluation is frequent amongst the students from both schools. The stylised representations of technology found in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) are signifiers of previous decades, signifiers that suggest an absence which is operationalised to assess the present. As I have examined in this subsection, these young people gauge their contemporary lives, in terms of the widespread presence of media technologies, making use of their parents' or other relatives' testimonies and oral accounts. When they engage with nostalgic media texts, I claim, they actualise them by seeing how a fictional character interacts with certain artefacts – as Brian and Penélope observed above – and how technology affected their fictional lives.

Let me come back to the structure of feeling I have been describing in this chapter. From my last analysis, it is possible to point out a *positive assessment* of the past based on a material absence – in this case, technology – which marks a temporal and spatial distance. Here, this absence and this distance are articulated in a mode in which the past has more positive attributes than the present. This articulation is mediated by specific textual and aesthetic cues found in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), and parents' and relatives' anecdotes and testimonies. This structure of feeling underpins the participant's engagement with these nostalgic media texts. However, as I will continue arguing in this and upcoming chapters, its origin is not located in this engagement as such; rather, it is socially and culturally produced.

The stylised representations of technology constructed in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) are not interpreted in isolation; rather, the participants understand all of these items and devices by making sense of how they are used contextually, i.e., how they were part of diverse lifestyles in the

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[26] For instance, according to the media consumption habits survey I conducted at both schools, the smartphone is the most utilised device for navigating the web by the students from both institutions. In the case of St. Mary High School, 40% of the students use this device for navigating online. This percentage is higher (49%) for the students from Virilla Vocational High School. The students from both schools share the same percentage of using laptops for navigating the Internet (22%).

past. With this in mind, I now turn my attention to the mode in which the participants engage with the lifestyles depicted in these nostalgic media texts.

4.3.4 Understanding the Lifestyles of the Past

So far, I have outlined how young audiences foster specific understandings of the past by engaging with particular styles represented in nostalgic media texts and with other social dynamics. But all of these styles do not work independently; rather, they are brought together in the lifestyles depicted in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018). For the participants, these lifestyles are the definitive aspect that 'transports' them to a previous age. This can be illustrated with the next fragment, taken from a focus group discussion with 11th-grade students from Virilla Vocational High School in which I screened *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018):

> Rodrigo: When you were watching this film, did you learn something new?
> All: Yes!
> Rodrigo: Like what?
> Nidia: The routines they had, how they used to live.
> Saúl: The trends that were popular at that time.
> Stephanie: And that they had more freedom.

In this case, lifestyles are identified as the representations of particular modes of living (Ziehe, 1994, p. 2). The sociologist David Chaney (1996) defines lifestyles as a way "of using certain goods, places and times that is characteristic of a group but is not the totality of their social experience" (p. 5). This definition matches how several participants describe the difference between the narrative universes of *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), and their own everyday lives. As Vanessa, a 10th-grade student from St. Mary High School, underscores, nostalgic media texts portray how a certain decade was experienced:

> Vanessa: Sometimes, I'd like to have lived during that time [the 1980s], just to know how it was to live in those years, to experience the mentality of the time, even to feel the security because you see that they [the characters of Stranger Things] were riding bikes without any worries. And also, I would have loved to live in another culture, because we're Latinos and the United States has a completely different culture.

In this case, Vanessa describes how, through the lifestyles rendered in *Stranger Things* (2016), she was able to see how it was "to live in those years" and how "the mentality of the time" was, generating in her the desire "to have lived" during the 1980's. Indeed, Vanessa's words almost coincide with Williams's

(1977) definition of structure of feeling by pointing out how certain values, meanings and activities were lived and felt, i.e., how the past was experienced through distinctive impulses, restraints and tones. In short, the represented lifestyles gave her an experiential reference of the decade, a reference made out of diverse social activities.

But lifestyles are more than 'modes of living', they also provide normative and aesthetic frameworks for the employment of specific styles (Chaney, 1996, pp. 128-129). Thus, the participants are aware that the lifestyles depicted in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) are connected with specific historical conditions – or with the representation of those conditions – discerning them as *factual*. Indeed, the students from both schools exhibit a perception of verisimilitude when they engage with these nostalgic media texts. After all, certain events represented in the TV series – such as the Cold War – and Freddie Mercury himself, did happen and exist historically.

Let us briefly examine how *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) was grasped as factual in a focus group discussion I had with 11th-grade students from St. Mary High School. The film starts with Freddie Mercury getting ready to perform in the Live Aid concert, a concert which was attended by thousands of people and was broadcast worldwide. Just as Mercury enters the stage, the story cuts to 1970, when he was Farrokh Bulsara, a baggage handler at Heathrow Airport in London. From there, the story follows his evolution as artist and his career with Queen. After screening this clip, different students started to point out how the Live Aid concert is a well-known event; moreover, almost all of them already knew the music of the band. Then, Larissa, a sharp participant, described how the film conveys a sense of reality:

> Larissa: I think it's really cool that the movie starts like that because obviously it's a story based on true events, and you know that Queen became Queen, so for me it's cool that it begins showing when they achieved success, in this super concert, and then you see how everything happened. The dude is in front of millions of people and then you see he used to work at the airport. That's shocking.

The factuality attributed to these media texts by the participants is not neutral. It operates as a way to idealise certain aspects of the past. It is worth observing how this process of romanticising the 1970s and 1980s takes place. The next excerpt, taken from a discussion conducted at Virilla Vocational High School after screening *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), exposes the link between conceiving a

mediated representation of the past as real and an initial yearning for the portrayed period of time.

> Pierce: Someone mentioned Hendrix before, and that dude was a mess … it was the golden years of rock. So, when Queen, or well, Freddie, mixed opera with rock it was a boom, nobody had ever done that.
> Rodrigo: So, you find it interesting that the film depicts something that happened?
> All: Yes!
> Lisa: That's what's most interesting because we are watching something that really happened, so you get really immersed in the movie.
> Pierce: At the beginning, when you see the stage, you can really appreciate that they were playing in front of thousands of people, even millions.

This excerpt exhibits how some participants localise the events portrayed in *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) as a 'golden age' (Boym, 2001; Cross, 2015; Ewen, 2020). This was a constant in the students from both schools, i.e., understanding the period of time represented in the film as more satisfying than their present. By the same token, the participants exhibit strong similarities in their assessment of the importance of the 'British lifestyle' of the 1970s in the film. For them, it was Freddie Mercury's lifestyle that allowed him to meet his future bandmates and, afterwards, gain international success. Several students remark that this rock-oriented lifestyle is gone as nowadays "hip-hop and pop are the kings". This sense of something 'already-gone' is prevalent in the participants' assessment of these lifestyles. As I discuss in the next section, this pristine and polished vision about the past emerges from an interaction between a textual process of aestheticisation and the everyday and social dynamics I have examined thus far.

At this point, I can finally define the structure of feeling I have been analysing in this chapter. The engagement between these Costa Rican young people and *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) – although I would extend this to other nostalgic media texts – is mobilised by a *nostalgic structure of feeling*. With this, I am not implying that this nostalgic structure of feeling is the only element that marks this engagement, for reception is a complex process in which diverse social, cultural, economic and political forces are assembled contingently and following peculiar historical conditions (Livingstone, 2019; Silverstone, 2002; Staiger, 2005). However, I contend, this nostalgic structure of feeling is a fundamental part of this engagement for it provides a symbolic framework for understanding and experiencing the past and the present, and even the future – as I will explore in Chapter 6. Although my emphasis here is located on the reception practices that occur around this nostalgic structure of feeling, it

has an internal logic based on an articulation of different emotions, meanings and materialities. This logic entails an attraction towards the past that flourishes from the sense of a lacking and unsatisfying present; this sense, in turn, brings about a positive assessment of the past in which previous decades are idealised. As stated before, this nostalgic structure of feeling is not generated exclusively when these young audiences engage with nostalgic media texts; rather, it is produced socially and culturally. Differently put, when they engage with these media texts, they are employing interpretative tools developed in diverse spheres and instances of the social world.

4.4 Aestheticising the Past and Nostalgic Structures of Feeling

Up until now, I have analysed how fashion, music, technological devices and specific representations of lifestyles ground the *aesthetic construction* of *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018). This aesthetic construction is done following 'ways of forming', modes of presenting how a narrative universe looks; in other words, by deploying certain styles. In different terms, the stylisation of the past in these nostalgic media texts follows a goal of creating a coherent narrative universe; moreover, as outlined above, these styles are created and presented in ways that facilitate intertextual connections. For instance, the aesthetics of *Stranger Things* (2016) follows certain stereotypes about the 1980s. Or, in the case of *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), the film only uses the most popular songs of Queen, not the entire catalogue of the band.

During my fieldwork, a few participants pointed out the constructed nature of the aesthetics of *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), being critical of portrayals that present just one perspective of a previous decade. One of these participants is Alonso, a 10th-grade student from St. Mary High School, who considers that the TV series offers a limited vision of what was going on during that time:

> Alonso: I think when we talk about the 80s, we are focusing on only one reality of the 80s. I mean, in Stranger Things you only listen to pop music that was conquering the charts at that time, or you have the classic bullies who listen to heavy metal, but that's all you get. I mean, they just show that part of the 80s: the Rubik's cube and the beginning of technology.

Alonso is signalling that the aesthetics of this Netflix original production recreates one way of looking at the 1980s. And he is right inasmuch as this construction offers a vision of an imagined past: specific styles are cherrypicked to create the appearance of a fictional world. In short, the aestheticisation of the past is *selective*. With this, I am not implying that the majority of participants

ignore the constructed nature of media texts; based on the interactions I had with them during my research activities, I can affirm that the students from both schools have a high media literacy, which is palpable most obviously in the vocabulary they used for discussing *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) – e.g., the use of the term 'cliff-hanger', in English, was common at the two schools to underscore what makes a good TV series. Nevertheless, as I have discussed in this chapter, a general tendency amongst the participants entails understanding the past represented in these two media texts as factual. Indeed, it is common for audiences to interpret mediated historical narratives as 'real' or 'authentic' (Gudehus, Anderson & Keller, 2010, p. 357). As Rauch (2018) suggests in her study of the reception of Holocaust films, "historical authenticity is constructed through a range of stylistic devices, aesthetics and genres" (pp. 168-169). The factuality attributed by the students from both schools to nostalgic media texts, I argue, emerges from an engagement with actual textual cues and strategies, and with other social dynamics – such as their parents' anecdotes.

The aesthetic construction of *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) emphasises – or *accentuates* – certain visual, musical, material and symbolic elements over others in order to create a polished and refined representation of the past. Although the narratives of these two media texts present difficult situations faced by the characters – e.g., Freddie Mercury being diagnosed with AIDS – their aesthetic constructions are pristine and organic. By this, I am implying that in an aestheticised past there is no room for unattractiveness or disfigurement. These aesthetic constructions are organic in the sense that they remain unitary throughout the TV series and the film. Even 'ugly' spaces – such as the netherworld known as 'the Upside-Down' in *Stranger Things* (2016) – are designed following aesthetic principles; in simple words, they do not look 'bad'. For Eco (2007, p. 19), it is possible to distinguish three manifestations of ugliness: 1) ugliness in itself, like "excrement, decomposing carrion, or someone covered in with sores who gives off a nauseating stench"; 2) formal ugliness, or "the lack of equilibrium in the organic relationship between the parts of a whole"; and 3) artistic ugliness, or the rendition of an unpleasant situation, event or physical feature under an artistic rationale. According to this view, the aesthetic constructions of these two media texts avoid any expression of 'natural' or formal ugliness; therefore, the factuality associated with an aestheticised past brings about the idealisation of previous decades. However, as I will analyse in Chapter 5, this interpretative operation is deployed in an ambivalent manner, for the participants do recognise some of the struggles and

conflicts that were taking place in the past, especially when they assess concrete conditions of their country.

The idealisation of the past, as enacted by these Costa Rican young people, has an aesthetic anchor. It does not only entail the stylisation of fashion, music, technology and lifestyles – amongst other elements that compose the aesthetic construction of these nostalgic media texts; rather, it entails *absences*. Following Alonso's words, as quoted above, "the Rubik's cube" idea of the 1980s is built into *Stranger Things* (2016) by avoiding the depiction of alternative realities or aesthetics. This operation is obviously intertextual, for it draws on mainstream notions of the decade. But the crux of the matter here concerns what is left out. In this case, the participants from both schools make sense of this aestheticisation by deploying a nostalgic structure of feeling to interpret the represented past of these media texts and the past at large.

A nostalgic structure of feeling mediates the engagement between Costa Rican young people and *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018). Nostalgic media texts, I contend, shape the *aesthetic scaffolding* of nostalgic structures of feeling. They provide images, sounds and depicted social interactions that create a symbolic repertoire. This repertoire converges with other economic, social, cultural and political dynamics that promote, either implicitly or explicitly, nostalgic visions of the past. In sum, the participants' sense of an unsatisfying present stems from their personal experiences and their everyday lives, but it is also formed by diverse discourses and images enacted in distinct social situations and spheres. Thus, an imagined past emerges from these aesthetic accents and absences. Not for nothing does Iser (1974, p. 281) suggest that the absences of a text are the catalyst for the reader's imagination.

In the next chapter, I will turn my attention towards the social imaginaries that support this nostalgic structure of feeling and the participants' engagement with nostalgic media texts. Here, I must signal that this nostalgic structure of feeling is not the same for all the participants. In Chapter 6, I will demonstrate how two contrasting nostalgic structures of feeling are experienced by the participants depending on their social identities and positions.

4.5 Conclusions

Let me round up what I have discussed in this chapter. I started my argument by proposing that styles are spatiotemporal bridges for audiences that are built from intertextual connections. In this regard, I pointed out how different stylistic elements inscribed in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018)

interact with broader social dynamics – from similar media texts to fashion trends to oral accounts by relatives – in the engagement of the participants with these nostalgic media texts. For these Costa Rican young people, making sense of the past occurs through an interpretative bricolage of different stylisations; that is to say, through the ordering of diverse semiotic codes featured in the media texts. I call this operation creative for it does not happen automatically or neutrally; rather, it is the product of putting together different 'pieces', taken from social reality, to create meaning out of a repertoire of textual cues. These young people, as I have shown, make use of their own experiences, relationships and opinions – in short, their own social identities – to interpret a representation of the past.

This interpretative bricolage of stylised representations of fashion, music, technology and lifestyles follows a sense of a lacking present and an idealisation of the past. Hence, as I have examined, the students from both schools take particular items of clothing and fashion, as featured in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), as signifiers of the 1970s and 1980s, employing them to construct a sense of how the past was and looked. Furthermore, when they engage with the music found in these nostalgic media texts, they link a repertoire of sounds with specific decades, but they also enact a stylistic assessment of the past: the participants consider the media production of previous decades as more authentic and original than contemporary iterations. This idealisation is crucial in the mode in which the students from both schools interpret the representations of technology presented in these nostalgic media texts, for they use them to forge the idea of a current technological overabundance, generating the appreciation that the past was freer. This appreciation is operationalised in the way in which the participants understand the lifestyles depicted in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018). For them, these lifestyles are factual accounts of the past, catalysing an idealisation based on the aestheticisation of the 1970s and 1980s, i.e., polished and refined visions of these decades that accentuate certain elements.

In this chapter, I have identified and analysed a nostalgic structure of feeling that underpins the engagement between these Costa Rican young audiences and nostalgic media texts. This nostalgic structure of feeling, I have claimed, provides a symbolic framework for experiencing and making sense of the present. In this respect, it structures a sense of a present that is lacking and unsatisfying, bringing about a positive assessment of the past. With this in mind, I can finally answer – although only partially for now – the research question I formulated at the beginning of this chapter: *How do young audiences interpret the past represented in nostalgic media texts?* When these Costa Rican young people engage with

Stranger Things (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), and other nostalgic media texts, they enact a reception process which brings together specific aesthetic and textual constructions with broader social dynamics and conditions. This process is marked by a nostalgic structure of feeling which affords a set of impulses, restraints and tones for living and feeling the relationship between the past, the present and the future. Hence, it does not emerge from the direct interpretation of these kinds of media texts by an audience; rather, it is produced socially and culturally.

In the next chapter, I turn my attention towards the social imaginaries that mediate these young people's engagement with nostalgic media texts. Thus, I analyse discursive frameworks that interact with this nostalgic structure of feeling.

Chapter 5:
Imagining the Past:
Young Audiences and Nostalgic Social Imaginaries

5.1 Conjuring the Past

During the focus group discussions I conducted at St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School, I asked the students to imagine how *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) would have been had they happened in Costa Rica. They created their own stories, adapting the elements they watched on the TV series and the film during our sessions to their own context – see Appendix 11 for a synopsis of the fragments screened in this activity. Let us start our argument here with an exchange in which the participants from the private school picture the landscape of the 1980s in their nation:

> Juliana: In our story, Will would work on a coffee plantation and he would get lost there, whilst his friends were playing with marbles and *cromos* [traditional Costa Rican game]. The houses would be made of mudbrick, Hopper would not have got to the police station late, and Will's mum wouldn't be so worried because *ticos* [Costa Ricans] are always late.
> Rodrigo: Why would Hopper not have arrived late?
> Marco: Because people, in the past, used to take their jobs more seriously.
> Maribel: Literally, at 6:00 a.m. they were already working.
> Marco: And all well-dressed!
> Juliana: And Will would have been kidnapped by goblins.
> Rodrigo: So, some goblins would have kidnapped Will?
> Juliana: I mean, Joyce would have thought that some goblins took her son because, during that time, you had this legend.
> Maribel: Yes, if a child went missing on the coffee plantation, everybody would think that the goblins took him, something like that.
> Juliana: Well, and Steve would be the son of the owners of the coffee plantations, and Nancy would be a peasant.
> Rodrigo: I find it interesting that you created the story of a forbidden love between a landowner and a peasant.
> (*Everybody laughs*).
> Juliana: Yes, straight out of a *[tele]novela*. And the letter that Steve sends to Nancy would say: 'I hope you are having a good morning [*espero que haya amanecido bien*]; I'll wait for you in the bathroom'.

Marco: 'I hope you is having a good morning' [*espero que haiga amanecido bien*].
(*Everybody laughs*).

This was a creative exercise that provided rich analytical purchase for comprehending how these young people conceive their country's past and, at the same time, how this is related to their engagement with their contemporary society. From the last conversation, it is possible to observe a whole conception of the past. First, these students imagine Costa Rica in the 1980s as characterised by rural environments such as coffee plantations. Second, for them, folklore was an important element in the everyday life of people; in this case, Maribel proposes that the disappearance of a boy would have been understood as the work of goblins, thanks to the superstitious beliefs of the population. Third, the figure of the peasant is prominent. The last exchange between Juliana and Marco is extremely representative of this aspect. Juliana proposes, in her group's story, that the Costa Rican Steve Harrington writes a letter with the message: "I hope you are having a good morning" [*espero que haya amanecido bien*]; immediately, Marco adds that the message would actually read: "I hope you is having a good morning" [*espero que haiga amanecido bien*]. In Spanish, '*haiga*' is the inappropriate form of the conjugated form of the verb '*haber*', and '*haya*' is the right conjugation in this case. With this, the student is pointing out a grammatical mistake often attributed to the rural populations – or less educated classes – in Costa Rica. Finally, these young people imagine that, during that time, some things were better: "people, in the past, used to take their jobs more seriously". In this respect, they consider that the present has lost qualities that were common in previous decades.

This conception of the past is quite common amongst the students from both schools. The participants recognise their present as lacking and unfulfilling and imagine the Costa Rica of the past as a safer and more peaceful place. In this chapter, I analyse the social imaginaries that supply discursive frameworks to the participants' interpretations of the past represented in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018). Specifically, I explore how a nostalgic social imaginary shapes a repertoire of discourses, tropes and ideas about the Costa Rican past, catalysing the articulation of nostalgic structures of feeling. With this, I intend finally to answer the research question formulated in the last chapter: *How do young audiences interpret the past represented in nostalgic media texts?* In what follows, I contend that the engagement between young audiences and nostalgic media texts is underpinned by a nostalgic structure of feeling which mediates the interpretation of the aesthetic and textual features found in these texts (see Chapter 4), and with a culturally sanctioned and historically determined

social imaginary that sets a discursive framework for understanding Costa Rica's past and present.

My analysis in this chapter draws principally on the creative exercises mentioned above, i.e., from the focus group discussions. Asking the participants to translate a mediated and fictional representation of the past to their own social realities, I claim, is a powerful way of detecting the operation of certain discourses and other semiotic devices *in action* (Keightley & Pickering, 2012, p. 58). As I hope to demonstrate in the following sections, these young people created stories charged with a spirit of invention and curiosity, displaying how media reception is a complex process in which audience activity can take myriad forms and unexpected detours (Livingstone, 2002, 2019; Radway, 1988; Staiger, 2005). Furthermore, I am following Athique's (2016, p. 12) observation that, in audience research, the exploration of any given imagination must "encompass representation as only part of a broader pattern of social communication"; hence, my purpose is to ground nostalgic media texts in the "communicative envelopments of various kinds" experienced and enacted by the participants; that is to say, their contexts of national culture and reception practices.

I start my argument by presenting the thematic map derived from the thematic analysis of the data from the focus group discussions; this leads me to discuss social imaginaries and their relationship with nostalgic structures of feeling. Then, I proceed to explore, first, the mode in which the participants imagine 1980s Costa Rica following the cue of *Stranger Things* (2016). With this, I discuss how these young people portray this decade by employing the discourses, tropes and ideas of a nostalgic social imaginary that poses their country as rural, freer and more peaceful than today. Moreover, I examine how these students make use of their national folklore to translate the mediated and fictional reality of this Netflix original production to their own imaginings of their country's past. After this, I turn my attention towards the mode in which *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) is adapted to a Costa Rican context. I discuss how the 1970s and the 1980s are grasped as a golden age for youth culture and I consider how this idealisation is undertaken despite certain ambivalences and contradictions. In this respect, I investigate how the participants use the figure of Freddie Mercury to evaluate marginal identities in Costa Rica. I finish this chapter by reviewing the role of nostalgic social imaginaries, and their relationship with nostalgic structures of feeling, in the students' interpretations of the past represented in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018).

5.2 Nostalgic Social Imaginaries

As I have indicated before, my analysis in this chapter draws mainly from data obtained during the focus group discussions I conducted at St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School. The thematic analysis of these activities reveals the presence of a specific social imaginary that catalyses the operation of nostalgic structures of feeling (for a more detailed description of the coding process see Appendix 10). The next figure displays the thematic map identified around the exercises of imagining how *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) would have been had they occurred in Costa Rica:

Figure N.3
Thematic Map
Nostalgic Social Imaginaries
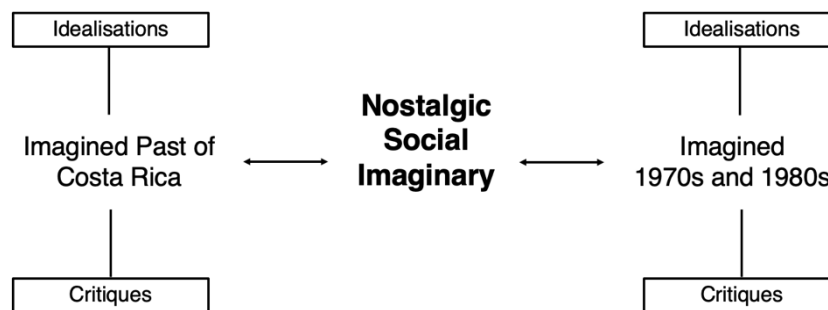
The first cluster on the map signals two basic themes, 'idealisations' and 'critiques', forming the organising theme of 'Imagined Past of Costa Rica'. This arrangement points out specific ways of conceiving and imagining the country's history. In this respect, although the discussions I had with the participants were focused on two defined decades, their accounts took into consideration other historical moments. The other cluster on the map exhibits the same basic themes building the organising theme of 'Imagined 1970s and 1980s'. Given that *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) portray a transnational past, this distribution of codes is composed by modes of engaging with the time periods featured in these nostalgic media texts. In sum, this thematic map shows how a certain nostalgic social imaginary emerges from two sometimes overlapping and sometimes contradictory imaginary accounts of the 1970s and 1980s, and the past of Costa Rica.

As I discuss in the following sections, these accounts are imaginary for they imply conceptions about periods of time that the participants did not experience, being formed by diverse discourses, tropes and ideas taken from media texts and

other cultural products and resources – e.g., anecdotes from their parents. These imaginary accounts signal an ambivalent interpretative operation in which certain aspects of the past are idealised and others are critiqued. I use the term 'imagine' in order to designate how the students from two different schools, in many aspects, share patterns of experiencing being part of a community (Anderson, 2006; Erdal, 2019; Sosa, 2019). In this case, belonging to a community implies belonging to Costa Rica as a nation defined by common foundational myths and notions about the past, the present and even the future (Contreras, 2012; Harvey-Kattou, 2019; Skey, 2011).

In her classic study of the reception of *Dallas* (1978), Ang (1985) observes that structures of feeling are inscribed in the meaning structure of media texts and, consequently, audiences make sense of them by deploying a particular imagination, i.e., "a certain cultural competence or orientation to understand and evaluate" a media text in a specific way (p. 79)[27]. Following my argument in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4, this definition of structures of feeling is problematic given that, as I have claimed, they are articulated following a complex interaction of personal experiences, aesthetic and textual devices, and broader social logics and dynamics. What I am trying to avoid is a textual determinism regarding the analysis of structures of feeling. Notwithstanding this caveat, Ang's (1985) analysis crucially points out the role of imagination in media reception. This competence or orientation, I contend, flourishes from particular social imaginaries composed by repertoires of diverse discursive frameworks. As Chouliaraki (2013) underlines, the realm of the imaginable is defined by "a socially instituted sphere of communicative practices that uses specific 'imaginal' cultures, with their own aesthetic possibilities, in order to regulate the production of particular moral imaginations at particular historical moments" (p. 44).

As I showed in Chapter 1, Costa Rica has a specific nostalgia culture which entails discursive frameworks that idealise the past; these frameworks are rooted in historically shaped social imaginaries that bring together distinct discourses, tropes and ideas. As Jiménez (2015), Harvey-Kattou (2019) and Molina (2002) suggest, mainstream discourses regarding the past and national history in Costa Rica are often constructed upon the trope of a 'golden age'. Thus, it is possible to recognise how a broader *social imaginary* serves as the basis for making sense

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[27] In her analysis, Ang (1985) examines how the tragic structure of feeling inscribed in *Dallas* (1978) works in tandem with a melodramatic imagination which entails "a psychological strategy to overcome the material meaninglessness of everyday existence, in which routine and habit prevail in human relationships as much as elsewhere" (p. 79).

of the past represented in nostalgic media texts. For the philosopher Charles Taylor (2004), a social imaginary is "that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy" (p. 23). To put it otherwise, it is the "ethos that enables people to make sense of developments in society" (Mansell, 2012, p. 32). Social imaginaries are complex inasmuch they include a sense of how social reality is and how it is carried out in common practices. They point to "a wider grasp of our whole predicament" (Taylor, 2004, p. 24), i.e., the *background* against which social reality happens, the background against which social life is fathomed and actualised (Orgad, 2012). This background entails a "largely unstructured and inarticulate understanding of our whole situation, within which particular features of our world show up for us in the sense they have" (Taylor, 2004, p. 25).

A social imaginary entails the mode in which ordinary people 'conceive' their social surroundings; that is to say, how they imagine their social existence, their relationships with others, and how things operate between them and their fellows, being "carried in images, stories and legends" (Taylor, 2002, p. 106). As Anderson (2006) points out, the sense of being part of a particular community brings about an act – based on diverse discursive frameworks found in a culture – which sets out boundaries and possibilities in terms of identity. With this, I am not suggesting the existence of a fixed repertoire of signifiers upon which ideas about the past are anchored. Rather, I am pinpointing the historicity of certain discursive frameworks that play a role in how people make sense of their social reality – in this case, how Costa Rican young people engage with their own national past. For instance, in section 5.3.2, I discuss how the participants include elements of folklore in their imaginings of the Costa Rica of the 1970s and 1980s.

In this chapter, I analyse how the students from both schools use distinct discursive frameworks from a nostalgic social imaginary to make sense of the past represented in nostalgic media texts. I use a singular form to signpost the existence of other social imaginaries that might operate in Costa Rican society and culture; differently put, my analysis is only concerned with a social imaginary that idealises the past – or that provides the elements to do it. With this in mind, what is the relationship between a nostalgic structure of feeling and a nostalgic social imaginary? As pointed out above, for Ang (1985) the interaction between the two is essential for the actualisation of specific meanings by a given audience. In Chapter 2, I defined nostalgia as a structure of feeling which emerges from the articulation of particular emotions, meanings and materialities. Social imaginaries, I argue, are one of the possible sources that provide culturally sanctioned meanings to this articulation. Appadurai (1996) helps us to understand

this relationship when he suggests that "macroevents, or cascades, work their way into highly *localised* structures of feeling by being drawn into the discourse and narratives of the locality" (p. 153; my emphasis). Following this logic, we can comprehend structures of feeling as conjunctural articulations that emerge from personal and collective experiences of more immediate social conditions and events, whereas social imaginaries are historically determined backgrounds that operate as an "implicit map of social space", as Taylor (2004, p. 26) eloquently puts it. As I demonstrate in the following lines, the participants' interpretations of the past represented in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) are underpinned by a nostalgic structure of feeling which is catalysed by the discursive frameworks of a particular nostalgic social imaginary present in Costa Rican society.

5.3 Imagining *Stranger Things* (2016) in Costa Rica

The first season of *Stranger Things* (2016) tells the story of Will Buyers, a boy who goes missing in the town of Hawkins, Indiana. This event prompts the unfolding of the rest of the narrative, showing the many lifestyles and social values of the United States in 1983. For instance, Joyce Buyers, the disappeared boy's mother, will have to face the laziness and incompetence of Jim Hopper, the chief of the Police Department, who initially minimises the incident. The audience also has the opportunity of witnessing the teen romance between Nancy Wheeler, an overambitious high school student, and Steve Harrington, a popular and overconfident boy. This Netflix original production represents a transnational past for Costa Rican young people. From the architecture of the town to diverse references to American media, the TV series portrays a time period that could be alien for a contemporary young person in Latin America. Nevertheless, the students from St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School interpret this foreign past by making use of a specific social imaginary about their country's past. Stated differently, when the participants engage with nostalgic media texts, they imagine how Costa Rica was during that time.

In what follows, I explore how the students from both schools conceive Costa Rica during the 1980s. By imagining *Stranger Things* (2016) occurring in their country, these young people employ a nostalgic social imaginary that mobilises a peculiar understanding of the past. When they translate the foreign past of this TV series to their own nation, they conjure discourses of a Costa Rica characterised by rural areas and the presence of folklore.

5.3.1 A Rural Costa Rica

The students from both schools regularly associate the Costa Rica of the 1980s with rural areas. Hence, their adaptations of *Stranger Things* (2016) take place on coffee plantations or farms. It is possible to observe this rural discourse in the way in which Harold, a 12th-grade student from Virilla Vocational High School, describes the background for his group's version of a Costa Rican *Stranger Things* (2016):

> Harold: Back then, almost everything was a rural zone, like in the countryside. I imagine that streets were made of stone, and instead of driving cars, people would use horses for transportation. So, the story would happen on some farms [*fincas*], and the characters would be humble people, peasants, children who would walk because they didn't have bikes, only little rubber boots, they wouldn't be at school because they would help their parents working on plantations. That was something normal during those times. The monster … well, they would think it would be a legend like *La Llorona*, *La Mona*, *La Segua*, etcetera.[28]

Harold's words do not deny the existence of urban areas, yet they describe the majority of the country as rural. His version of the TV series is constructed based on a dynamic of contrasts. In *Stranger Things* (2016), the characters drive cars and bicycles and have the commodities of a developed country whereas in Harold's narration they live in the countryside, ride horses and children even work with their parents – i.e., they do not receive a formal education. This mode of understanding Costa Rica in the 1980s is common in the students from both schools. For them, whilst the United States were technologically and economically advanced, their country had not caught up with the changes brought by the decade. Harold finishes his intervention by mentioning that people would think that the monster, or the creature that escapes from a laboratory at the

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[28] Here, Harold mentions three folktales – or *leyendas*, as they are known in Costa Rica. First, *La Llorona*, or 'Weeping Woman', is a very popular figure in Costa Rican folklore. According to the legend, she wanders along rivers looking for her lost child. Indeed, there are multiple versions of the story, but *"all center around a young woman who, against family wishes and community standards, had a child outside of marriage"* (Stark, 2013, ¶ 17). Second, *La Mona* – or the She-Monkey – is a folk figure from the province of Guanacaste. According to popular belief, there is a covenant of witches in this part of the country whose members take the shape of a monkey or ape at night. Up until this day, it is common to find stories about sightings of *La Mona* in the national tabloid press. Third, *La Segua*, as Stark (2013) points out, can be considered the Central American version of the Sirens. This folktale, which dates from colonial times, narrates how young men, riding home on their horse late at night, would encounter along the roadside a damsel in distress. They would offer her a ride home and then, as they would start off, they would become aware of foul odours and heft snorting from their passenger. As they would turn around, they would see that the damsel turned into *La Segua*, a monster with the head of a putrefied horse (Stark, 2013, ¶ 3-4).

beginning of *Stranger Things* (2016), is some character from national folklore – more on this anon.

Indeed, as Molina (2002) argues, Costa Rica was mostly a rural country before the 1948 revolution; after the conflict, the nation experienced a rapid urbanisation characterised by an important migration from the rural periphery to the industrial centre (see Appendix 1). Thus, by the 1970s and the 1980s, Costa Rica had relatively developed urban areas; in other words, its urban landscape was far from being a coffee plantation. What matters here is the association of the country's past with a rural discourse.

The everyday life of the participants often intersects with their renditions of the past. In this regard, several students from both schools make sense of the past by 'transporting' their quotidian experiences to the narrative structure of *Stranger Things* (2016). In this interpretative operation, these young people combine the narrative events just watched during the focus group discussions with an imaginary sense of how their more immediate circumstances would have been in the 1980s. In the next fragment, Jason and Claudia, two 12th-grade students from Virilla Vocational High School, describe their version of *Stranger Things* (2016) *á la* Costa Rica, exhibiting how their own realities impact their imagined accounts:

> Jason: Our story is titled *Chepe Things*.
> Rodrigo: Well, how would that story be?
> Jason: OK, so the dude would be in Carpio. During that time, there weren't many houses in Carpio, so there was a lot of green areas. In this case, instead of a boy, it would be a girl. Her family didn't have too much money, but they still had a small car. She had neighbours and Mike was one of them. She lived close to her school, which had an auditorium. So, the girl disappeared when she was in the garden.
> Rodrigo: Who did it?
> Jason: We didn't have time to finish, so it's a mystery for now.
> Claudia: But the mystery is that there is a small box.
> Jason: It's a small magic box, similar to the one Barney has. But, in this case, it would be designed by us.
> Rodrigo: So, the girl opens the box and disappears?
> Jason: Yeah, she disappears.

Jason and Claudia transport almost the entire first act of the episode watched during the focus group to a scenario which entails their imaginary depiction of La Carpio during the 1980s. The title of their story, *Chepe Things*, makes a reference to San José, the capital of Costa Rica and where La Carpio is located,

usually called 'Chepe' by the national population, since *Chepe* is a common nickname for people named José in the country and in other Spanish-speaking regions. Again, these young people conceive their neighbourhood in the past as less urban, with more green areas, coinciding with the notion of a rural Costa Rica examined above. Nonetheless, in this case, Jason and Claudia create a version similar to their own realities: being from La Carpio, this new missing-girl does not come from an affluent family, although she has some resources such as a "small car".

In this creative exercise, the participants imagine an 'old' Costa Rica which is rural. As Jiménez (2015) explains, the social imaginary of a rural country is a cornerstone of the country's mythology, being grounded in the trope of hard-working peasants and a peaceful society. Indeed, the participants conceive their country's past as a pastoral scenario characterised by a simple and peaceful lifestyle. As Raymond Williams (1973, p. 17) suggests, the imagining of a peaceful country life is a way of signalling the political disturbances of the present and the perceived chaos of an urban setting. With this, it is possible to detect a sense of *displacement* in the present; following my argument in Chapter 2, this sense is one of the conditions of nostalgia as a structure of feeling – I will discuss in more detail the reasons behind this sense of displacement in Chapter 6. In this respect, the participants' imaginings of the 1980s provide contrasts and continuities vis-à-vis the present: although they tend to imagine their cities and neighbourhoods as rural 40 years ago, they consider that this is lost scenario.

As Harold's words hinted above, the participants not only imagine the Costa Rica of the past as rural but marked by the presence of folklore. In the next subsection, I turn my attention to the role of folklore in the participant's conceptions of the 1970s and 1980s.

5.3.2 Locating Folklore in the Past

The presence of folklore was a regular element in these creative exercises. As the literary scholar Vladimir Propp (1984) considers, folklore actively shapes attitudes, beliefs and social values into narrative forms that are usually transmitted orally. In this regard, folklore has the characteristic of being flexible enough to be carried across generations and transformed following the requirements of new social situations and audiences (Correll, 2014; Guodong & Green, 2018; Noyes, 2018; Opie & Opie, 1959/2001; Schanoes, 2019; Zipes, 2019). In this case, the students from both schools draw upon local legends – or *leyendas* – that have existed since colonial times. The participants utilise these folk stories in a twofold manner: first, to provide a narrative element similar to

the supernatural characteristics of the TV series and, second, to explain how people in the past would have understood the happenings of odd events around them. These two possibilities of bringing folklore to the interpretative action of imagining the past are employed in different modes. Let me unpack them as follows.

The participants use their national folklore as a way to translate the science fiction and fantasy elements of *Stranger Things* (2016) to their own national context. The imagined difference between Costa Rica and the United States, then, entails an understanding of what kind of events can occur in the two countries. In the case of *Stranger Things* (2016), the TV series depicts how a creature spawns from experiments conducted at a scientific facility. In contrast, the participants imagine their country as not advanced enough to have a similar facility, recurring thus to the use of folklore to mimic the events portrayed in the Netflix original production. The following excerpt, taken from a focus group discussion conducted at Virilla Vocational High School, illustrates how the students incorporate folklore as a narrative guide for their conception of the 1980s:

> Josselyn: [Our characters] would be like Billy and Mandy.
> Rodrigo: Oh, like the Costa Rican version of Billy and Mandy?
> Josselyn: Yes, and the weird creature would be *El Cadejos*.
> Rodrigo: Interesting, I'd love to watch it.
> Josselyn: It would be the adventures of children, from the slums [*el precario*], who get involved in different Costa Rican legends. The boy would be Billy, the girl would be Mandy, and their evil friend would be *El Cadejos*, as their guide.
> Rocío: Their friend would lead them to different places, and they would investigate what's going on there.

In this case, Josselyn and Rocío take a broad 'artistic license' and combine *Stranger Things* (2016) with *The Grim Adventures of Billy and Mandy* (2001), an animated TV series initially broadcast by Cartoon Network during the 2000s. This animated TV series depicts the antics of two kids in supernatural worlds, being helped by a friendly Grim Reaper. These students adapt this media text to include Costa Rican folklore in order to make sense of the uncanny elements of both TV series. Instead of the Grim Reaper, they use *El Cadejos*, a mythical black dog – similar to the black dogs part of Anglo-Saxon folklore – which supposedly helps drunk people to find their home when they are wandering in the streets late at night. Furthermore, I must note that Josselyn and Rocío describe their characters as being "from the slums", a feature that resonates with their own lives: they are imagining two children with a similar background as someone from La Carpio. As I discussed in the last subsection, the participants regularly

translate their everyday lives to their imaginary framework of the 1980s as a way to gauge the past vis-à-vis the present.

The other way in which the participants incorporate folklore into their imaginings of a Costa Rican *Stranger Things* (2016) regards the beliefs that people had during the 1980s. For these young people, the population was superstitious, traditionalist and conservative, explaining odd phenomena with the tools of folklore. This understanding points to the present, for it considers that previous decades in the country were marked by traditions and conservative views. Here, it is possible to observe an interpretative operation that equals 'old beliefs' with a broader symbolic framework, i.e., society was understood with 'magical' – and 'outdated' – resources, according to the participants. Nonetheless, as I examine in the next section, for the students from both schools this does not imply that the past has been superseded; on the contrary, this exercise illustrates how they link certain social issues with two different temporalities. As can be observed in the next conversation, taken from a discussion conducted with 10th-grade students from St. Mary High School, folklore can be a tool to discuss social tensions:

> Verónica: For us, the villain would be *El Cadejos*, as the Demogorgon, who appears to drunk people at night, when it was really late, and *La Llorona* because she steals children. And the people from the lab would be the Nicaraguans, because there has always been a rivalry with them, which is weird …
> Teresa: … I mean, people classify them as rapists, murderers or those who come to the country to steal our jobs. So, I think that would be the perspective of the town at that moment … and specially because back then there wasn't enough information, so it would be easier to blame someone rather than to find who actually did something.
> Rodrigo: So, for you, Nicaraguans wouldn't be the villains, but they would be blamed as the villains?
> Verónica: Yes.
> Teresa: Yes, exactly. And the heroes would be the young people from that moment […] because, during that time, young people would be like our parents today, so they would have a different perception compared to our grandparents, who were more square.

Here, Verónica and Teresa create a story with an actual supernatural nature: *El Cadejos* and *La Llorona* are the villains who mobilise the narrative. However, these events, in 1980s Costa Rica, would have been attributed to the Nicaraguans thanks to the xenophobic stereotypes about them which are common in the country (Campos & Tristán, 2009; Sandoval, 2013; Sandoval et al., 2010). The cause of this, following these students' rationale, can be located in a lack of information that provokes conservative views in the adult population – I will

explore this further in the next chapter. For now, I must highlight how in an exercise about imagining the past, an otherness of the present is linked to previous decades. For these young women, folklore is a matter of yesterday; yet discrimination seems to be sempiternal, or, to put it in Verónica's words, "there has always been a rivalry with them".

Several students take a more 'realist' approach in their adaptations of *Stranger Things* (2016) to a Costa Rican context. In these cases, they adapt social conditions portrayed in the TV series – i.e., social dynamics from the United States – to their own reality, or to the possibilities afforded by the imagined past of their country. Thus, instead of using folklore to translate the fantastic elements of this Netflix original production, these young people homologise certain social institutions to achieve this. We can observe this operation in the next excerpt, taken from a discussion conducted with 10th-grade students from St. Mary High School, wherein Alonso provides the background for his group's story. His approach is to highlight the cultural circumstances that were relevant in his imagined perception of 1980s Costa Rica:

> Alonso: … in the 80s there was a crisis, an economic crisis, and we thought about that context to create our story … we thought about a context where children didn't play much inside their houses; instead they'd go out to play outside, football, and other outdoor games, even though it could be late. So, all the characters would have a nickname because our story takes place in Alajuela. And instead of having a laboratory … because they are different realities … the laboratory would be the Catholic Church, and, for us, the main problem would come from the Church at that time, not from a lab.

Alonso locates his group's story in the economic crisis that Costa Rica was experiencing during the 1980s (see Chapter 1). Before sharing his narration with the other participants, his group told me that they had googled information about the decade to create the background of their version of *Stranger Things* (2016). This young man sets the narrative in Alajuela, the town where he lives. Alajuela is known in Costa Rica for its inhabitants' sharp sense of humour, being materialised in their perceived ability for bantering and giving nicknames to their friends and acquaintances based on their physical appearance. Moreover, he poses that the laboratory featured in *Stranger Things* (2016), which acts as the source of trouble in the TV series, would be the Catholic Church in Costa Rica. Alonso and Penélope, a classmate who worked with him on this exercise, explain further their reasoning for considering a religious institution as the villain of their story in the next fragment:

> Rodrigo: So, you think that the Catholic Church has that role of …?
> Penélope: … of the laboratory in Hawkins?
> Rodrigo: Yes.
> Penélope: Of course, it has that role and many more!
> Alonso: It was a society which was more … I don't know if they were believers, but they were attached to certain principles. Let's say, you talk with your grandparents, who might have been adults during that time, and the big majority were devotees. So, if we're talking about Costa Rica, the story would have that.

For Penélope and Alonso, the role of the Catholic Church in Costa Rica is not a matter of the past, although it used to be more relevant during the 1980s – I will examine the role of religion in the following chapter. For now, suffice it to observe how these participants highlight its controlling nature in society. They do not only operationalise the Catholic Church in their story as some background element; rather, for them, it would be the main antagonist. Alonso states that people, in his imagined idea of the decade, were more conservative, a common view amongst the participants. Yet, he also describes that time as 'freer'. It is possible, then, to distinguish an ambivalence in the sense that certain characteristics of the past are highlighted as positive whilst others are simultaneously critiqued. Indeed, this ambivalence points to an imaginary difference between social values and youth aspiration – I discuss this ambivalence with more detail in the next section.

Let me summarise my argument so far. In my analysis of how the participants translate the period of time depicted in *Stranger Things* (2016) to their own national context, I have identified the role of rural zones and folklore in their imaginings of their country's past. These signifiers, I claim, are derived from, and help to reproduce, a nostalgic social imaginary which idealises certain aspects of the past; these aspects cannot be contrasted nor disproven given that these young people did not live through them, they can just *imagine* them. Although detecting the direct sources of this nostalgic social imaginary escapes the scope of this research, it is possible for me, based on the data I collected during my fieldwork, to signpost official discourses (Harvey-Kattou, 2019; Jiménez, 2015; Molina, 2002), family anecdotes, and national and transnational representations of the past as probable instances from which diverse discursive frameworks are taken to build this imaginary.

The participants' versions of a Costa Rican *Stranger Things* (2016) implicitly states that there has been a change in the country since the 1980s. Their stories make sense of different current social issues by adapting them to a previous time. Issues such as xenophobia and discrimination against marginal identities are re-

elaborated as part of the nation, according to the imagined assessment of the students from both schools. Nevertheless, they continue to feel attracted towards the aesthetics of the past, and its imagined idyllic atmosphere. I explore these ambivalences and contradictions in the next section, as they reveal the intersection between a nostalgic social imaginary and a mode of engaging with the present.

5.4 Imagining *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) in Costa Rica

Bohemian Rhapsody (2018) is a film about the life of Freddie Mercury, and his career with the rock band Queen. The story follows Mercury through the 1970s and 1980s, portraying the beginnings of the band, its success, the diverse problems and disputes that came with their rise to fame, and his death due to complications from AIDS. The film thereby shows the excesses associated with a 'rockstar lifestyle' and the youth culture that accompanied the career of Mercury and Queen. In this case, the actions take place mainly in the United Kingdom, depicting how life was during these decades in different British cities.

In the next subsections, I explore how the participants imagine Costa Rica during these periods of time, following the cue of *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018). In this exercise, they conceive the 1970s and 1980s as a lost golden age for youth culture. However, this is done in an abstract manner: when they start thinking about the conditions and circumstances of Costa Rica, these young people consider that Freddie Mercury would have been an 'Other' in their country.

5.4.1 A Lost Golden Age

These young people contrast past and present based on their sense of freedom and security. In both schools, there is a consensus concerning the risks young people face in contemporary society. Despite their differences in terms of social position, the participants consider that they do not possess the freedom their parents had when they were young (Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016, p. 24). This exercise allowed them to elaborate more on this perception for they employ the figure of Freddie Mercury – and the lifestyle he embodies – as a signifier to emphasise lost social conditions. At its core, it is a matter of personal freedom, i.e., the participants consider themselves less free than previous generations. Esteban, a 10th-grade student from St. Mary High School, explains the background of the story created by his group, emphasising a missing quality featured in the film and absent in his own reality:

> Esteban: Well, my mum and my dad have always told me that during that
> time there was more freedom to go out, because discos were a hit, and

people would go out dancing. It's different now, you have to be really careful when you go out because a lot of things can happen in the street. The economy of the country was weak, but it was different, money had a different meaning.

In this case, Esteban highlights the precarious situation Costa Rica was facing during the 1980s, yet he is keen to identify a crucial difference: young people had more freedom. Evidently, his assessment has an important imaginary nature. Notwithstanding the anecdotes of his parents, he is still a minor, which means that, under normal circumstances, he has not already gone to the clubs or discos he is mentioning – if he actually has had this kind of experience, it would be illegal. In other words, by imagining the past, Esteban is also assessing possible risks he will have to face when he becomes a young adult. The past is used as a tool to make sense of the diverse present and future challenges; in addition, it is employed as a scale to weigh what has been lost.

In their versions of a Costa Rican *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), the participants represent the 1970s and 1980s as the 'golden age' of youth culture. For some participants, the past remains an idyllic period at large, whereas the present is the terrain on which absences are felt and lived. In the next fragment, taken from a focus group discussion with 11th-grade students from Virilla Vocational High School, the possibilities of self-expression for young people are discerned as something completely lost, highlighting the qualities of yesterday's youth:

> Saúl: Well, for us, he [Freddie Mercury] would have an afro. Back then, people used to wear bell-bottoms and things with many colours, they would dress however they wanted, nobody would say anything to them about it. And their motto would be 'enjoy your life', because they used to seize the day, and spend a lot of time with their friends.
> Aarón: They used to do whatever they wanted, but without affecting anyone else, they were just inside their own world, that was it.
> Rodrigo: Do you think this is still possible in Costa Rica?
> Saúl: No. If you do what you want, everybody is going to criticise you … even though you may not be affecting anyone else, everybody will judge you and criticise you.
> Aarón: Yeah, everybody would criticise you.
> Rodrigo: And how would they criticise you?
> Aarón: People would say 'that dude dresses horribly', and they would bully you.

Saúl and Aarón build a discourse of a 'free' and 'relaxed' youth during the 1970s and 1980s. Nonetheless, for them, this is a long-gone situation. They also localise the impossibility of an 'unlimited' self-expression in dynamics of peer-pressure

and other social norms. In this exercise, the imagined past and present of Costa Rica is marked by contextual contrasts that, according to the participants, preclude some events portrayed in *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) from occuring in the country. This might be obvious for it is clear that these young people are aware of the differences between the circumstances of the United Kingdom and their own nation. Nevertheless, the contrasts and differences upon which their stories rest point to imaginary conceptions of their national past and understandings of their contemporary society.

The participants consider that the 1970s and 1980s were a time in which young people had more individuality but also enjoyed an intense collective life. This understanding is regularly found *abstractly* in the stories created by the students from both schools. However, when they apply this framework to a Costa Rican background, things start to change. For them, young people had more freedom in their inner circles; yet they were constantly clashing with the 'adult world'. As Nidia, a 11th-grade student from Virilla Vocational High School, remarks, the members of Queen, had they been born in Costa Rica, would have faced different criticisms:

> Nidia: Back then, people used to hang out a lot in groups, they were really close, they used to spend all their time with their friends. They had their own world. So, if this would have happened here [Costa Rica], I think people would have called them 'lazy' or treated them as people with nothing good to do, and etcetera. They wouldn't be able to do a lot of stuff.

Nidia coincides with Saúl and Aarón in their view that young people used to have "their own world". Nonetheless, this idea is located somewhere else, in the United States or the United Kingdom, following the events of the film. In the case of Costa Rica, Freddie Mercury and Queen would have had to overcome conservative views and would not have been appreciated. Again, it is possible to observe an ambivalence in the mode in which the participants construct a narrative combining an imaginary transnational and national past. The idea of a 'youth with more freedom' derives from a nostalgic social imaginary that describes the past as a moment with fewer risks and threats, and with more possibilities: this nostalgic social imaginary seems to propose that young people were living in a social environment in which diverse personal expressions were accepted. Nevertheless, when the participants contrast these ideas with their imagined understanding of the Costa Rican past, in terms of social norms and institutions, the discourse changes.

Indeed, this nostalgic social imaginary is enacted in an ambivalent and contradictory fashion by the participants. Following my point above, there is an idealisation of the past, in abstract terms, but a *critical assessment* in concrete terms. Let us now turn our attention to the critical assessment of the past. In what follows, I problematise how the imaginings of a Costa Rican Freddie Mercury reveal a specific understanding of otherness and marginal identities in this Central American nation.

5.4.2 Freddie Mercury, a Costa Rican Other

Up until now, I have been examining the ways in which a discourse of a fulfilled youth permeates the stories devised by the students from both schools almost in their entirety. Nonetheless, when these young people think about a situation in which Freddie Mercury was born in Costa Rica, their imaginings expose specific forms of otherness proper to their society (Harvey-Kattou, 2019; Sandoval, 2004). Namely, the participants point out social tensions, in terms of identity, that are enacted even in present times, when they imagine the life of a figure characterised by a flamboyant and quaint personality in Costa Rica, following the cues in the film.

In these exercises, the Costa Rican Freddie Mercury was often envisaged as a black person or as someone from the Pacific coast. This conceptualisation is crucial for it signals minority populations that have been historically discriminated against in the country, and a divide between centre and periphery (Contreras, 2012; Harvey-Kattou, 2019; Molina & Palmer, 2017). In short, through the figure of Freddie Mercury, the participants imagine a past in which contemporary social frictions were still happening. In one of the fragments quoted above, Saúl suggests that the singer of Queen would have had an "afro" had he been born in Costa Rica. This student from Virilla Vocational High School is pointing out a common physical and aesthetic feature in the Afro-descendent population of the country. Indeed, the association between Freddie Mercury and the province of Limón – located on the Caribbean coast and characterised by an Afro-Caribbean culture – was common amongst the students from both schools. The next conversation shows how 11th-grade students from St. Mary High School make this connection, explaining how they adapted the singer's background to their own context:

> Julio: Well, in our story, [Freddie Mercury] would be Jamaican, black, and gay …
> Luz: … like the people from Limón.
> Julio … so he would play calypso and songs about love and peace. He wouldn't regularly use guitars or drums; instead, he would use more

traditional percussion instruments. He would start his career playing in the street. He would become successful because his songs would be in Creole English; had they been in Spanish, he wouldn't have had an international success because that [language] is a barrier. He would be like a symbol to all the minorities he represents.
Rodrigo: It's interesting that your character is from Limón and is Afro-descendent.
Julio: Because Freddie Mercury was a 'paki', and all of that. Well, he was treated like a 'paki'.
Rodrigo: Do you know that there is a Limonese songwriter, Walter Ferguson, who is really famous all around the world?
All: No!

In his story, Julio signals to the Jamaican migration that occurred in Limón at the end of the nineteenth century, propelled by the banana plantations of the United Fruit Company (Molina & Palmer, 2017). He maintains the sexual orientation of the historical Freddie Mercury, but he changes his genre of music to calypso, the traditional music of the Caribbean region of Costa Rica. Furthermore, Julio proposes that this 'Costa Rican Freddie' would compose music in Creole English – also known as *Mekatelyu* (Herzfeld, & Moskowitz, 2004, p. 261) and this would be key to his international success. This characterisation, first, contemplates the geopolitical role of the country in the world. For this student, Spanish is a language that would make it difficult to gain access to a more global market; in other words, Julio describes a situation in which the majority of media production comes from English-speaking countries. Second, it directly translates the historical otherness of the singer in the United Kingdom to a Costa Rican context. As he explains, given that Freddie Mercury "was treated like a 'Paki'", this entails a narrative move in which the character must be black to have the 'right' correspondence in terms of being a minority in a specific country. During the conversation, I asked the students about Walter Ferguson in order to test their knowledge about Costa Rica's Afro-Caribbean culture. Ferguson is a calypsonian who has attracted the attention of several music scholars and enthusiasts from all over the world thanks to his laconic compositions and his commitment to the genre (Céspedes, 2018). Nevertheless, despite being recognised by 'foreigners' and experts, he remains quite an obscure figure in Costa Rican mainstream popular culture. My intention was to observe how Afro-Caribbean culture is neglected regularly in the country. Although I cannot generalise from the reaction of these students, it is possible to suggest that the majority of the population – i.e., those people who do not have an Afro-descendent background – would answer my question in a similar fashion.

With the figure of Freddie Mercury, the participants embody the otherness associated with the Caribbean coast and its culture. Following this logic, they also created stories in which this character was born on the other side of the country: the Pacific coast. Indeed, Costa Rica is a country marked by different divisions; in this regard, the coastal regions and the urban areas entail a stark difference in terms of infrastructure and socio-economic development (Molina, 2002). Grasping the figure of Freddie Mercury as a representation of 'the misfits', the participants exhibit a critical awareness of those Costa Rican 'others' when they imagine how *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) would have been in their country. In the next excerpt, Manrique and Larissa, two 11th-grade students from St. Mary High School, describe the character they created. In their story, Freddie Mercury is named 'Otto Corcovado', which has a reference to Corcovado National Park, a natural reserve located in the southwest Pacific coast:

> Manrique: Well, our film would be called *La Santa*, and the main character would be named Otto Corcovado. He would have been born in Santa Teresa or Montezuma. He would never forget his roots, so he would start playing in pubs like 'La Lora Amarilla', 'Chico's Bar', and 'La Concha' …
> Rodrigo: Why did you localise Otto Corcovado's birth in Montezuma [or Santa Teresa]?
> Larissa: Because the dude would be a hippie [*chancletudo*]. I mean, he wouldn't exactly have the vibe of Queen, he would be a hippie, and that's why he would be judged by his town, even though that's how he feels accepted.
> Rodrigo: And what would have been the people's reception of Otto Corcovado during that time?
> Manrique: As one of the riffraff [*chusma*].
> Larissa: Yeah, adults would have rejected him, but I think he would have had his followers and his own revolution.
> Rodrigo: So, he would be like …?
> Larissa: … like super bohemian.
> Manrique: Bohemian Rhapsody.
> (*Everybody laughs*).
> Rodrigo: How would that song have been titled?
> Larissa: It would be like 'Bohemian Ganja'.

In this case, Manrique and Larissa make an association between coastal life and being 'hippie' by suggesting that Otto Corcovado would have been born either in Santa Teresa or Montezuma, two beaches located in the northwest Pacific coast of Costa Rica. In other words, these students consider that a 'bohemian' identity belongs to an area which is not urban. By doing this, they are attaching certain ideas to a specific region: a person from the Pacific who would look 'hippie' and

play music that would reflect his reality – instead of the rock played by Queen. Again, we find the motif of rejection by the adult world. Manrique and Larissa's story exemplifies a common way of imagining youth by the participants: young people in the past were free to express themselves – having been able to explore and create their own aesthetics – yet they faced the judgment of adults and society at large. Perhaps, this is not something particular to Costa Rica. Indeed, in *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), the protagonist has to embrace the criticism of his parents. What matters for our purposes is the mode in which the students from both schools imagine the social challenges a Costa Rican Freddie Mercury would have faced.

With the cues from *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), the participants exhibit an imaginary conception of the past built upon several ambivalences and contradictions. For them, the 1970s and 1980s, as represented by the film, were the peak of youth self-expression and freedom. However, this golden age is depicted only at an abstract level, for it disappears when it is 'transported' to the Costa Rican context. That is to say, the idealisation of these decades is transformed when it goes through a critical lens that brings about several social conditions and limitations proper to the country. The students from both schools critically assess the specific circumstances of their nation. In this regard, for them, Freddie Mercury, had he been born in Costa Rica, would have faced the challenges of a conservative adult world and the difficulties of being part of a minority population. Nevertheless, in this imaginary understanding of the past, these abstract and critical levels coexist simultaneously. Returning to my above analysis of a 'Costa Rican *Stranger Things* (2016)', it is also possible to observe how, when these young people utilise the past to grasp their present, they recur to the abstract level, conjuring the idea of a golden age in which youth culture was marked by freedom and creativity. For them, this time is lost, being replaced by the risks and insecurities of their present – which I will explore in the next chapter.

Hence, the participants critically assess the social tensions of their country when they compare the represented transnational past of the film with their own national past. Their identification of otherness and minority populations signals an understanding of the social frictions of their contemporary society (Contreras, 2012; Sandoval, 2013). Indeed, as Jiménez (2015) and Harvey-Kattou (2019, p. 13) explain, the official Costa Rican identity entails an image of whiteness, a specific urban lifestyle, and a set of religious and gender values that construct marginal identities. In this regard, the participants, by reading a narrative based

on the life Freddie Mercury, translate his otherness to these local marginal identities (Harvey-Kattou, 2019, p. 63).

At this point, it is crucial to highlight that, throughout their adaptations, the students from both schools are not complying with these ideas of otherness; in other words, as I have exhibited, they are critical of them. For Stuart Hall (1996), identities are more the "product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity" (p. 4). In this regard, the participants accurately identify the otherness of their country's mainstream – and hegemonic – identity in the Pacific and Caribbean coasts; furthermore, they recognise how Nicaraguans can be seen as 'sources of evil and problems' – following the abovementioned cases of *Stranger Things* (2016) – describing the operation of identity barriers in an imagined past and in their contemporary society (Boym, 2001; Larkin, 2010; Onuoha, 2013). Namely, their imagined past entails an abstract golden age which, when it is inspected closely, is exclusionary.

5.5 Imagining a National Past

I have been analysing how the students from St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School imagine their own national past. This conception is marked by a nostalgic social imaginary about a rural, idyllic, safer, freer and more peaceful past. Let us see this in action one last time with a discussion I had with 12th-grade students from Virilla Vocational High School:

> Rodrigo: OK, let me ask you this: which is better? The present or the past?
> All: The past!
> Amrita: The past, definitely.
> Rodrigo: So, nobody prefers the present?
> Jason: I mean, there are good things … you could rescue some good things from the present, because now you can communicate with people who are far away, but at the same time you are more alienated now from those who are closer to you.
> Claudia: Well, if I have to choose between the past and the present, I'd really prefer the past for many reasons. First, there was more freedom in the country to walk without any worries, there were more flashy places where you could go with your family to spend a holiday. Today, even La Sabana [a metropolitan park] has lost all of that feeling because a lot of trees have been cut down. There are a lot of things that have lost their essence. And second, I love how people used to dress; I'd love to dress like that every day and feel comfortable. I can only say: 'That would be so cool', I would really like it.

For the participants, the present is empty and unfulfilling. As I have noted, this idealisation of the past is not total or general amongst the participants; rather, it is nuanced. With this, I am underscoring a tension between the present and the past, as exhibited by the students from both schools. As Jason expresses in the last fragment, the participants are aware of the progress that has been achieved in contemporary times. Nevertheless, their point of concern is located on a lost object. This concern does not emerge entirely from the engagement with nostalgic media texts such as *Stranger Things* (2016) or *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018). It is derived, I claim, from a complex interaction of cultural conditions, social events, politico-economic dynamics – e.g., different trends in the media industries – interpersonal relations and personal identities (Keightley & Pickering, 2012, p. 71). Social imaginaries are crucial in this interaction as they provide discursive frameworks for the articulation of nostalgic structures of feeling; in sum, they configure a cultural scaffolding of diverse discourses, tropes and ideas (Schmidt, & Yang, 2019; Vertovec, 2012).

Following Jiménez (2015) and Molina (2002), in Costa Rica a specific nostalgic social imaginary has been purposively created by official discourses based on a national project whose origins can be traced to the end of the nineteenth century, which sought to promote a particular identity. Tropes such as the hard-working peasant or a peaceful country life, for instance, can be found in different Costa Rican media, from novels to paintings (Molina, 2002, p. 44). With this, I am trying to underscore the fact that these young people have an official repertoire of narratives from which they can use certain 'tools' to interpret mediated representations of the past.

Anderson (2006) proposes that nations are derived from imagined communities based on a shared feeling of belonging and common discursive frameworks. In this regard, it is likewise possible to postulate that a sense of community also emerges from a common past, a past that is imagined as well (Skey, 2011, p. 157). This *imagined past* is not only constructed with a repertoire of discursive frameworks inherited from previous generations; rather, it is also built upon ways of engaging with contemporary social reality, for the past provides a sometimes-causal link to the present, explaining its state of affairs. Hence, new ideas, understandings and even narratives can be generated, i.e., contributing to the consolidation, destruction or creation of social imaginaries. In this case, the explored nostalgic social imaginary is not deployed by the participants innocently. On the contrary, this glorification of the past is brought forward as a way to criticise the present, conjuring, as Williams (1973) poignantly describes it, the "well-known habit of using the past, the 'good old days', as a stick to beat

the present" (p. 12). The students from both schools construe the present as unsatisfying; they imagine the past, conversely, as defined and ordered.

Social imaginaries do not operate without restriction or opposition (Taylor, 2002). Indeed, this "rural place attachment", as Smith (2002) calls it, and the idealisation of the 1970s and 1980s as an age of freedom and safety can be enacted along with other interpretative practices. As Orgad (2012) proposes, imagination is composed by "often incoherent mental pictures and concepts of the world" (p. 46); in this respect, the students from both schools make sense of this nostalgic social imaginary in an ambivalent and contradictory way. When the participants look closely at these imaginaries – i.e., when they translate the narratives of *Stranger Things* (2016) or *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) to a Costa Rican context, or when they localise certain tropes in their own realities – they exhibit a critical assessment of specific social issues. For instance, they use the figure of Freddie Mercury to make sense of the Afro-Caribbean identity in Costa Rica, putting in jeopardy ideals of a perfect and free Costa Rica of the past (Harvey-Kattou, 2019, p. 181). Yet, despite these critical assessments, it is possible to find these ambivalent and contradictory interpretative operations working simultaneously. That is to say, there is a separation of an abstract and a critical level in the participants' engagement with nostalgic media texts.

The underlying logic behind these ambivalences and contradictions entails understandings and narratives that highlight some aspects whilst ignoring others, a logic similar to the aestheticisation of the past explored before in Chapter 4. Thus, positive elements of an imagined past are idealised and, simultaneously, negative elements – e.g., the conservative views of the population or the economic crisis of the 1980s – are acknowledged without affecting the idealisation as such. These young people are aware of the problems and challenges of previous decades, yet they continue to 'surrender' to an imagined conception of the past as better. Why does this happen? As hinted above, narratives and tropes about a golden age provide, and create, 'stories' that give a coherent meaning to the uncertainties and disorder of the present. In the next chapter, I turn my attention towards the contemporary maladies that, for the participants, make the present lacking and frustrating.

5.6 Conclusions

Following the insights obtained from a creative exercise conducted during the focus group discussions, I have been able to analyse a nostalgic social imaginary that provides discourses, tropes and ideas about an idealised past. I have done this by examining how the students from St. Mary High School and Virilla

Vocational High School translated the represented past of *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) into their national context. These young people employ different discursive frameworks to understand Costa Rica's past as rural, idyllic and freer; in short, their imaginings suggest a more peaceful society during the 1970s and 1980s. In addition, these decades are imagined as a lost golden age for youth culture, a period in which self-expression and personal freedom were society's main currency.

Thus, it has come time for me to return to the research question I left partially unanswered: *How do young audiences interpret the past represented in nostalgic media texts?* In the last chapter, I argued that the engagement between Costa Rican young audiences and nostalgic media texts brings together particular aesthetic and textual constructions with wider social dynamics and conditions. This has two implications. First, this engagement is mediated by a nostalgic structure of feeling which establishes a set of impulses, restraints and tones for experiencing and feeling the relationship between the past, the present and the future. Second, nostalgic media texts shape the aesthetic scaffolding of this nostalgic structure of feeling by providing a symbolic repertoire of images, sounds and representations of social interactions, amongst other things. As I noted, this symbolic repertoire converges with other economic, social, cultural and political dynamics that uphold nostalgic visions of the past. In this chapter, I have shown how social imaginaries are collections of discursive frameworks produced and reproduced socially and historically. In this regard, they mould the cultural scaffolding upon which a nostalgic structure of feeling is enacted by building shared patterns of comprehending Costa Rica's history. I can say that young audiences interpret the past represented in nostalgic media texts employing a nostalgic structure of feeling which interacts with the textual and aesthetic constructions of these texts and with a culturally sanctioned nostalgic social imaginary that establish a discursive framework for understanding their country's past. This interaction becomes clearer when we consider that a nostalgic social imaginary does not provide detailed spatiotemporal coordinates, i.e., its construction of the past is large in scope yet vague in definition. Nostalgic media texts set these coordinates by representing, and aestheticising, precise periods of time that are interpreted based on a particular structure of feeling; therefore, certain meanings are attached to the 1970s and 1980s by Costa Rican young audiences. In short, this interpretation arises from lived social experiences and broader social processes and symbolic logics.

The participants take the discursive frameworks afforded by a nostalgic social imaginary and construct a positive vision of the past at the abstract level.

However, when they evaluate the social norms and institutions of Costa Rica during the 1970s and 1980s, and the differences between their country and the United States or the United Kingdom, they critically assess contemporary social frictions that are also imagined having been present in the past. The relationship between abstract and critical accounts does not occur in the same manner amongst the participants; rather, it is rooted in their social identities and position. In the next chapter, my focus resides in the ways in which these ambivalences and contradictions that converge in their idealisations of the past emerge from opposing experiences of being young in Costa Rica. This difference brings about two opposing ways of grasping not only the past and the present, but also the future.

Chapter 6
Lacking Presents and (Im)possible Futures: Being Young in Costa Rica

6.1 A Tale of Two Worlds

On Monday 22 July 2019 I conducted a paired interview with David and Pablo during a sunny morning at St. Mary High School. After the conversation was over, these two students from the 11th grade started inquiring about my research project. I explained to them that I was working in two schools and they became curious about the "other school". Obviously, I once again clarified the anonymity guidelines I was following; in simple words, I told them that I would not say the name of that other school. "If you don't want to tell us", snapped David, "you must be working in a really poor area, like La Carpio". I simply smiled and changed the topic, hiding my surprise about David's correct conjecture.

This exchange illustrates two different experiences of being a young person in Costa Rica, experiences that I explore in this chapter. For the student from the private school, it is relatively easy to summon La Carpio as a community characterised by poverty. In distinct Costa Rican social imaginaries, this community embodies a sense of otherness: through different jokes, memes and media discourses, La Carpio is seen as a place 'plagued' by a migrant Nicaraguan population which brings insecurity and crime to the nation (Masís & Paniagua, 2015; Ramírez, 2015; Sandoval, 2013). Albeit it is actually a binational community, being composed by almost an equal number of Costa Ricans and Nicaraguans, and other minor nationalities, La Carpio is a signifier that condenses images of the foreign, the strange and the rejected (Sandoval et al., 2010, p. 240).

In this chapter, I aim to answer the following research question: *How do the national context and the social identities of young audiences mediate their engagement with nostalgic media texts?* In this respect, I explore how dissimilar realities of being young in Costa Rica establish peculiar ways of understanding the past, the present and the future. Thus, I argue that, as a structure of feeling, nostalgia is "an articulation of presence" (Williams, 1977, p. 135) contingent upon the identities and conditions brought up by a social position; in short, the participants' social positions catalyse the articulation of specific nostalgic

structures of feeling. I analyse how the students from St. Mary High School experience an *aesthetic nostalgia*, based on a longing for the styles of the past, which does not prevent them from envisioning a positive future for their lives and their country. On the other hand, I discuss how the students from Virilla Vocational High School experience a *material nostalgia* marked by a yearning for an economic, social and cultural prosperity situated in the past, a yearning which compels a pessimistic vision of the future derived from the diverse structural constraints they face in their everyday lives.

So far, my argument has revealed many points of convergence between the students from both schools. In the last two chapters, their interpretations of nostalgic media texts and social imaginaries of their country's past have more in common than opposite points. But it is at this stage that they reach a crossroads and take divergent routes. This is not a work of political sociology, but a study of reception practices (Athique, 2005; Livingstone, 2005; Morley, 1992; Wu & Bergman, 2019). In this chapter, my analysis is grounded upon registered expressions about social inequalities and experiences that emerge from the participants' reactions against media texts. In the following lines, my goal is to show how, when audiences engage with the media, they are also engaging with their society and culture at large (Ang, 1985; Athique, 2016; Liebes & Katz, 1993; Livingstone, 2019; Radway, 1984).

Let me explain the steps of the argument I take in what follows. I start my discussion by defining my understanding of social position and how it is related to the social identities of the participants. Then, I turn my attention towards the students from St. Mary High School. I discuss how they exhibit a disconformity towards the present based on claims of generational justice. In this regard, my examination of their experiences follows their understanding of a 'generational cold war' between progressive and conservative ideals which stems from wider social struggles. Furthermore, I analyse their optimistic vision of the future and the modes in which the preoccupations of these young people are characterised by a sense of broken agency that will be restored in coming years. After this, I explore how being a young person for the students from Virilla Vocational High School is distinguished by situations of violence, economic scarcity and structural constraints. Hence, my analysis focuses, first, on the diverse situations of symbolic and material violence these young people face living in La Carpio and, second, on their pessimistic and bleak conception of the future. Then, I dissect two different kinds of nostalgias experienced by the students from both schools and how they entail opposing views of understanding social reality and of engaging with nostalgic media texts. As I hope to make clear, my analysis of

these two groups of young people is thematically different because their experiences are *radically* different.

6.2 Social Position and Nostalgia

Based on the data collected from the focus group discussions and the paired interviews, I identified a thematic map (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) that allows me to examine how the national context and the social identity of the participants, as young audiences, mediate their engagement with nostalgic media texts. I detail this thematic map in the next figure:

Figure N.4
Thematic Map
Social Position and Nostalgia
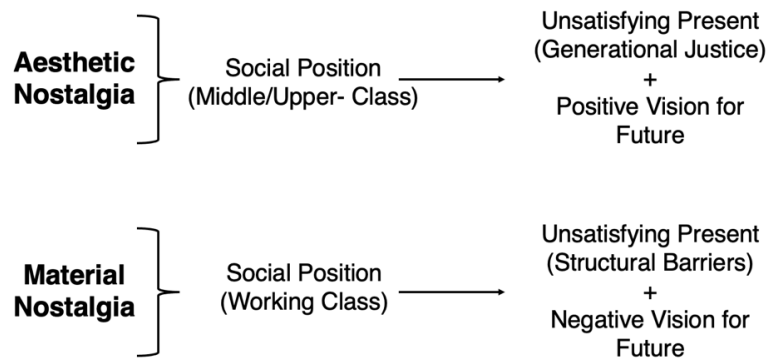
This thematic map is made of organising themes that point out how the differing social positions of the participants are tied to contrasting modes of engaging with the present and imagining the future (see Appendix 10). The global themes of this map are two different types of nostalgia experienced by the participants – what I call aesthetic nostalgia and material nostalgia. These different nostalgias, I claim, are tied to clear social positions that generate specific articulations of nostalgic structures of feeling.

I understand social position as the historically constituted place that a person has within a given society and culture. This place is a complex formation as it implies diverse overlaps and even contradictory dynamics that delineate the conditions upon which an individual's life unfolds. By acknowledging a social positionality, it is possible to explore the entanglement of structural processes and the agency of certain social groups and individuals. Here, I am following social historian William H. Sewell's (2005) re-elaboration of the theories of Giddens (1984,

1991) and Bourdieu (1990, 2010) to comprehend this relationship. For him, structures are "sets of mutually sustaining [cultural] schemas and resources that empower and constrain social action and tend to be reproduced by that action" (p. 143), whereas agency consists of the knowledge and mobilisation, and the access to distinct types, of resources, enabling the continuation, transformation or creation of cultural schemas. Social positionality, I submit, brings about a contingently constituted situation in which a person interacts with established cultural schemas, has the ability to deploying particular repertoires of resources – e.g., emotional, symbolic, material and so forth – and makes sense of this interaction.

This last point is crucial in order to grasp why I am exploring social identity as a matter of social position. With this, I am signalling that identity is originated, maintained and changed *intersectionally* (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Murib, 2020; Narayan, 2019). As Stuart Hall (1996, p. 45) proposes, identities are points of temporary attachment to certain subject positions, i.e., meeting points between discourses and practices that situate people within the social world and social processes that 'provide' the symbolic and material conditions upon which myriad subjectivities will emerge. Otherwise speaking, distinct dynamics and instances – such as social class, gender, ethnicity, age or nationality – converge and become interlocked in the way in which a person understands and expresses his or her own self, builds interpersonal relationships and engages with social reality (Couldry, 2004; Lareau, Evans, & Yee, 2016). In what follows, my analysis problematises the participants' social identity based on their age – i.e., being a young person in Costa Rica – and their social class. Although I agree with Hall's (1991/2019) assessment that "the increasing social diversity and plurality" (p. 68) of contemporary society means that social identities are not just a matter of social class, I believe it is an essential "locator of social position" (p. 67). However, I will also discuss other issues – nationality and gender – on a minor scale, as they cannot be separated from the students' social experiences (Sandoval, 2020, p. 11). I am not suggesting that certain identity issues are more relevant than others; on the contrary, this analytical emphasis only helps to confirm that identities are nuanced and multi-layered (Clarke, 2015; Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020; Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016; Willis, 1977).

Thus, in this chapter, I explore two contrasting modes of being a young person in Costa Rica. As I show in the following sections, the social position of the students from St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School shapes quotidian situations, makes available specific cultural resources and structures frameworks of understanding and imagining the past, the present and the future.

Before continuing with my argument, I must underscore the participants' aspirations, hopes and dreams. As I hope to make evident in the following lines, these two groups of teenagers are not passive agents within a social space; rather, they are taking actions and making efforts, sometimes more explicitly than others, to achieve their goals and live an eventual happy adult life. Although for some this encompasses more challenges, difficulties and risks, it is impossible to ignore their different kinds of bravado. These young people's social positions must be grasped as embedded within a socio-historic process which brings together structural limits and possibilities with personal and collective actions, a process which is "the continually evolving outcome and matrix of social interaction" (Sewell, 2005, p. 151).

6.3 St. Mary High School: Clashing with the Adult World

In this section, I analyse the experience of being young in Costa Rica for the students from St. Mary High School. As I have remarked before, they come from a middle/upper- class background, a background that implies a social position with particular conditions and resources. These participants' interactions with contemporary society are defined by conflicts with the adult world that stem from ideological differences. In what follows, I show how their social identities generate an understanding of the problems of the present based on a sense of generational disparities.

6.3.1 Debating Sexuality and Religion

As I outlined in Chapter 1, same-sex marriage was the main point of confrontation in the last presidential elections in Costa Rica. Consequently, LGBTIQ+ issues are mentioned as the most frequent point of conflict between the students from St. Mary High School and the adult world. The polarisation the elections generated, finding a place in heated family discussions, signals generational differences and conjures painful memories for these young people. A large majority of them describe having been involved in some kind of argument with a relative during the election. Their accounts are characterised by frustrations over their reduced capacity for action: being minors, they were not allowed to vote. These frustrations can be illustrated in the way in which Penélope, a 10th-grade student, encapsulates her experience of defending same-sex marriage in her family:

> Penélope: This can be a really complicated issue depending on the person you are discussing it with, because there's people who are like, 'Being gay is a sin, and gay people will go to hell', and I'm like, 'What?'. There are people who really have a hard time respecting a different opinion. I

really preach the idea of 'You might not think like me, but cool, go ahead with your life, I won't intrude in yours, but don't mess with mine'. But [during the elections] there were people who wouldn't shut up […] So, it was a really tense environment because this is a really complex issue anyway. Actually, last year, I learned that you should avoid certain topics like politics. I mean, you say something political in a family reunion and that was it. It was ugly, but the experience helped me to form a more solid opinion.

In this case, Penélope's conclusion after enduring "a really tense environment" is that she "should avoid certain topics like politics". In this regard, she also brings up moments in which her opinion was not respected or considered. This occurrence is common amongst these students: they point out how certain 'older' relatives wanted to impose their beliefs on them during the elections – or how they were scolded for defending the LGBTIQ+ community.

One of the main points of tension, in this clash with the adult world, is religion. Specifically, evangelical Christianism, which is represented by diverse neo-charismatic movements in Costa Rica (Arguedas, 2020; Pignarato & Treminio, 2019), is seen as a threat to the progressive values supported by these young people. Indeed, many students from this school recall arguments they had with an 'evangelical' relative during the elections. Even though these young people study in a Catholic school – which I am not claiming to be a decisive factor in their religious views – they strongly oppose the fundamentalist creed of evangelical groups regarding sexuality. The resistance towards these conservative views can be exemplified in the following exchange I had with Lucía, a 10th-grade student, in which she recounts her experience with an Evangelical family member:

> Lucía: I don't have problems with my parents. I can discuss any topic with my mum. With my dad it's the same. But I do have problems with my grandparents, because they were raised in another time. My auntie is an evangelical Christian, and she doesn't listen to me, or she doesn't want to listen to other people's opinions. For me, she's very … very … authoritarian. So, for her, you have to do whatever she says is right. It's different with my parents … I may have some conflicts with my mum sometimes, but my dad definitely listens to me.

Here, Lucía details how she feels uncomfortable with a relative who promotes conservative views. She labels her evangelical aunt as "authoritarian" based on her inability to respect – and listen to – alternative opinions to hers. Indeed, this description is constant amongst the participants from this school. It is possible to find the trope of the 'evangelical aunt or uncle' in their recollections of the last

elections. They recall family conflicts originating in political discussions, describing how regularly two opposing bands were formed in family circles that had been close until that moment. Even students, who declared to come from an evangelical background, distance themselves from the religious beliefs of their parents and family – I problematise this further below.

The connection between religion and sexuality is, for the majority of these young people, a regular area of debate with the adult world, a debate that can be grounded in real dialogue, for some, but can be ostracising for others. In this case, they are not simply rejecting the religious overtones that are part of a political process; rather, they are interacting with religious institutions that possess a special place and power in their culture. During my fieldwork, several participants told me that they were part of a Catholic-Christian youth group organised by their school. In contrast, others identified themselves as atheists. I am mentioning this to signal that religion as such – or the belief in a supernatural being or a metaphysical order – is not the main point of contention. It is the imposition of theological dogmas and practices that is problematic for them. As the discussions around same-sex marriage reveal, they criticise the lack of respect, as enacted by certain evangelical groups, towards alternative viewpoints. For the students from this school, religion should be separated from politics given that not everybody shares the same creed.

6.3.2 Generational Conflicts: A Matter of Ideology and Politics

For the students from St. Mary High School, being young implies a clash with older generations. Indeed, this is a common thread amongst them: they have different values and ideals from adults, a situation that often leads to altercations in their everyday lives. Fundamentally, these conflicts emerge from disagreements between progressive and conservative visions on different social issues. For instance, Esteban, a 10th-grade student, explains the ideological deadlock he encounters in his family, especially with his grandparents:

> Esteban: In my family … it's always hard. Well, at least in my family, and in most families, you have differences between generations. Everybody grew up in a different way, so it's hard … for example, for me, it's impossible to discuss politics with my grandparents. They won't give in and I won't give in, I'm not going to change them, and they are not going to change me. So, it's something tough.

In Esteban's words, young people are caught in a *generational impasse*. This student claims that "it's impossible to discuss politics" with some of his relatives. He localises the cause of this dynamic in a perceived difference of values: he

acknowledges that people had different beliefs in the past. In this assessment, Esteban is not alone. His peers, at St. Mary High School, also share the opinion that discussing certain topics with their families is "something tough".

Generally, the students from this school conceive a unitary sense of being young in Costa Rica. Differently put, they often associate certain political positions with youth at large. For instance, when they discuss 'controversial issues' such as abortion or euthanasia, their stances seem to assume that the majority of young people in Costa Rica think in a similar fashion. Nevertheless, they are aware that some peers are aligned with the conservative agenda of particular groups. In the next fragment, Larissa, a 11th-grade student, acknowledges how she learned that not all young people share the same values and ideas:

> Larissa: For me, during the last election, the bubble I was living in burst. I mean, I used to think that all young people had the same views as I do, and it was … I mean, I was like 'it can't be that in 2018 there are so many close-minded people!' I knew that grandparents are really close-minded people, but I saw people of my same age, 18, 19, on social media defending conservative views. Literally, my own bubble burst: Costa Rica is still very traditionalist. It's so absurd that politics are being based on hate. For me, that kind of behaviour is unacceptable in this century. I just couldn't believe it. These were the first elections when I was informed; before them, I just didn't care. I spent a lot of time on Twitter, reading discussions … it was really shocking [says 'shocking' in English]. I mean, it was unreal.

For Larissa, the last presidential elections revealed that not all her peers share the same repertoire of ideological and ethical principles. Indeed, she conveys surprise by learning that some young people defend conservative viewpoints. She states that she could not believe that people of her same age were "really close-minded"; for this student, that kind of attitude belongs to a particular age group – i.e., old people – designating grandparents as such in her argumentation. Here, it is possible to find a frequent explanation that the students from this school provide to make sense of ways of thinking that are different from theirs. Thus, if it is not a matter of being from an older generation, it is a matter of being 'close-minded'.

This last point leads me to a crucial observation concerning my present analysis. My time at St. Mary High School reveals a clear and salient progressive perspective shared by most of the participants. During my research activities, I did not encounter a single student who expressed direct support for Fabricio Alvarado Muñoz or conservative views. Yet, I came across silences that might

constitute differing ideological stances. For instance, during a heated debate on religion that took place in a focus group discussion I conducted with 10th-grade students, I asked Emilia about her thoughts; she simply replied: "I prefer not to think". This answer baffled me, but I did not want to pressure her, so I turned my attention towards her peers, who continued talking intensely. Several weeks later, when I was about to interview Marco and Inés – two students who had not been involved in the abovementioned discussion – they told me how their group of friends had had conflicts with Emilia and her mother, given that they were Christian evangelicals and have "different opinions". In this respect, although the majority of students in this school supports progressive politics, there can be ideological counter-currents in the participants that might signify different experiences of being young and engaging with Costa Rican society and culture, experiences that escape the scope of this research.

Being young, for the students from St. Mary High School, is marked by a discomfort towards the present, grounded in the diverse generational conflicts specified thus far. On some occasions, they recognise the possibility of real dialogue in terms of ideological differences. For instance, several participants detail how they feel heard and supported by their parents when they voice their opinions. However, other participants outline the situation of an argumentative gridlock with certain relatives, specifically relatives from older generations such as grandparents. For these specific students, the outcome entails silence or the imposition of an 'embargo' on certain topics. Politics seems to be the terrain of a *generational cold war* between the young and the old in certain Costa Rican families.

These generational conflicts entail an ambivalent role of the past in the present. The participants are reacting against conservative visions that try to restore a 'lost', or 'forgotten', way of life or secure the survival of social values considered traditional. As I have argued, they exhibit a critical awareness in terms of the ideological conditions of previous decades, i.e., they imagine the Costa Rica of the past as marked by conservative views – just as is perceived today. However, these young people idealise the past under the tropes, ideas and discourses of a nostalgic social imaginary based on a sense of displacement derived from an unsatisfying present – following my argument in Chapter 5. So, why does a lacking present make them go back to the past? My answer will become clearer in section 6.6.2; for now, based on my discussion in this subsection, I can highlight how the elements that these young people lack in the present are projected as approachable in the past. But this is done in a highly nuanced manner: the participants idealise the past for having what is missing in the

present, at the abstract level, but acknowledge certain continuities, cultural factors that were present then and are considered to be causing problems now.

6.4 Stepping Outside the Past: Imagining a Hopeful Future

In this section, I explore how the students from St. Mary High School conceive their future. For them, the years to come will meet their claims of generational justice and their country will follow the path of progressive politics. Furthermore, I analyse how this positive and buoyant vision interacts with their nostalgic assessments of the 1970s and 1980s. As I have laid out, these participants exhibit a longing for an aestheticised past; nonetheless, when they translate this longing to their concrete context, the picture shifts, and a more 'realistic' and critical assessment appears. In this respect, I examine how this longing entails the specific articulation of a nostalgic structure of feeling based on the aesthetics of the past. In sum, I suggest that these young people feel attracted towards the styles of the past but reject its ideologies.

6.4.1 The Promise of Generational Justice

The sense of a clash with the adult world, as described by the students from St. Mary High School, points to a specific vision regarding the future of the country and these young people's lives. For them, this generational cold war will be long, being a consequence of certain hegemonic social values and ideologies: the older generations possess – and exert – different kinds of social power that let them set an ethico-ideological agenda (Barnhurst, 1998; Cammaerts et al., 2016; Laruelle, 2011). Here, I must observe that their vision of this generational difference is not absolute. These students are cognisant about the diverse nuances present in the adult world; in simple terms, they know that not all 'old people' are conservative. For instance, during my fieldwork, many participants from the 10th grade told me how the grandmother of their classmate Celia is championed for openly defending the LGBTIQ+ community. Nonetheless, they directly associate an ideological repertoire with what is considered adult, forging a symbolic chasm between the young and the old.[29]

In this regard, the participants consider that they will eventually reconfigure the "limits and pressures" (Williams, 1977, p. 110) of their society. Felipe, a 10th-grade student, summarises this point by exposing how different his generation's ideological positions might be from others:

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[29] This chasm is also material: older generations have specific social positions that let them set ideological agendas. Their access to economic resources creates an inequality with a young population that is studying and not working, and consequently is dependent on their parents, families or the State (Cammaerts et al., 2016; Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016).

> Felipe: I think you really see a difference when you talk to an elderly person, let's say, because then you notice their conservative views, those opinions that for us, in this moment, are wrong. So, I think it's something that will eventually pass with time. Maybe for us, the new generations, who have views about … I don't know, that gay marriage is fine, for instance … for us, many old beliefs are bad, and we won't teach them to our future children. So, the new generations will generate new views because obviously we want to improve everything, we don't want Costa Rica to get stuck in its current situation. So, I think everything will improve with time.

Discursively, this young man creates a division between generations; in other words, he invokes a sense of an 'us' and 'them'. Thus, young people "want to improve everything", finding that "old beliefs are bad". For him, the solution for this ideological dispute will only come with the passage of time. Implicitly, then, Felipe does not perceive a concrete possibility of dialoguing with older generations; rather, it will be when they are gone that social change can take place – i.e., the social change young people are trying to achieve.

These young people claim that older generations failed to detect diverse social injustices and take action to solve them. Moreover, the participants assert that they belong to a generation characterised by a deep political commitment towards certain social issues. Their sense of the future is positive and hopeful for they believe they will attain their political goals. This can be illustrated in the way in which Camila, a 10th-grade student, details how she comprehends the difference between young and older generations:

> Camila: I think new generations are more critical because my mum tells me that her generation wasn't involved in politics, that they didn't care about that. And nowadays, young people are really informed, maybe thanks to Twitter and social media. Well, it can be a double-edge sword because you find good and fake information, but we're doing something. It's really important to learn from our mistakes and maybe in the future Costa Rica will find all of this current martyrdom funny. And yes, I think we're on the right track, and we have to keep going.

For Camila, despite the problems of social media – i.e, fake news – young people are "doing something". This young woman's assessment of the polarised political environment of Costa Rica is, indeed, optimistic. She describes the current situation as a "martyrdom", yet she hopes that people will be able to "learn from our mistakes" and change in a more progressive direction. In sum, Camila declares that her country, amid all the social tribulations it is facing, is "on the

right track". This positive view of the future is a constant amongst the students from St. Mary High School. For these young people, Costa Rica is moving in their desired direction; thus, following this train of thought, social progress always face diverse obstacles, but it is attainable at the end. Nevertheless, this positive attitude only appears when these young people think of the future; when they evaluate their present, their stance is more sceptical. Otherwise stated, they recognise that they are living through laborious times that will lead eventually to social progress.

Echoing Camila's words, several young people from this school claim that access to information and education, facilitated by the Internet and social media, and notwithstanding the caveat of fake news, can tear down the wall of close-mindedness. Following their logic, the conservative grip that the country is facing will eventually vanish when the proponents of these traditional views 'catch up' with the 'right' kind of information. Nevertheless, whilst for some social change implies a matter of 'catching up' with new perspectives, for others it will be only achieved with the passage of time, when particular generations finally lose their power. Therefore, these young people expect a future defined by a sense of *generational justice* (Devine & Cockburn, 2018; Habib, 2013); that is to say, they believe that the social struggles they support, or the social changes they desire, will bear fruit in coming years, be it sooner or later.

6.4.2 Understanding the Past to Build the Future

As young people, the students from St. Mary High School are dealing with a contemporary society in crisis, in which some voices propose previous decades as models for finding the remedies of current 'social diseases' (see Chapter 1). Despite idealising the youth culture from the 1970s or the fashion from the 1980s, when they are confronted with the *actual* construction of the future, a different rationale appears. This stand can be illustrated with the words of Alonso, a 10th-grade student, who assesses the tensions between past, present and future:

> Alonso: I don't think that we should restore the past because we would be falling into, as I call it, a comfort zone […] for me … it's the same discourse as Donald Trump: 'Make America Great Again'. It's not that … we need to keep searching for innovative ideas, searching for alternatives that will guarantee a kind of development that responds to the social and economic necessities of the moment. Because if we return to the Costa Rica of our grandparents, we would be returning to behaviours or situations that right now are … that are already outdated, let's say.

For Alonso, the present offers novel challenges that require different actions. This understanding is shared by a large portion of students in St. Mary High School. The participants perceive the risks and dangers of conceiving the past as the model or inspiration for tackling contemporary problems, of "falling into [this] comfort zone", to use this young man's words. They consider that, in their country, traditions can be overvalued by certain public discourses and political sectors. As Irene, an 11th-grade student, remarks, there is a tendency in Costa Rica to romanticise what was done before at the expense of missing the significance of what is happening now and what is yet to come:

> Irene: I also believe that something characteristic of Costa Ricans is that they get stuck with the victories of the past. And this is something really visible that I've been noticing through the years […] People get satisfied with the things they did before, and only talk about them, and they stay there, saying, 'We are the best country of Central America'. So, they don't do anything to … we don't do anything to improve this situation.

As Irene suggests, the past can be used to support pleasing ideas about her country. First, she talks about 'Costa Ricans' abstractly, distancing herself from her account of them; later on, she changes her grammatical construction from a 'they' to a 'we' when it is a matter of changing the present and heading to the future. Her words represent the ideas and sentiments of her peers at St. Mary High School. Politically, these young people desire a future free from the shackles of traditionalist customs and ideas, and extreme conservative ideologies. The participants from this educational institution are optimist about what comes next for them. They aspire to achieve victories in the future.

Let me connect the arguments I have developed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 with my current analysis. The students from St. Mary High School idealise – and feel attracted towards – particular elements from previous decades. The aestheticisation of the past constructed in nostalgic media texts, such as *Stranger Things* (2016) or *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), is mediated by a nostalgic structure of feeling which compels this idealisation. In addition to this, the participants, as audiences, also engage with a nostalgic social imaginary that provides discursive frameworks to make sense of those represented periods of time and their country's past. Indeed, as I have demonstrated, this engagement is ambivalent and contradictory for it entails a yearning for the past at the abstract level that occurs, simultaneously, with a critical awareness of problematic situations and disparities that were regular during the 1970s or the 1980s. This ambivalence, as I continue to argue throughout this chapter, depends on the social position of the

participants, and involves two different articulations of a nostalgic structure of feeling.

In this case, the students from St. Mary High School long for the past based on the stylisation and considered superior quality of specific cultural products, such as music, films or clothing, and imagined lifestyles that bring together conditions such as freedom, personal expression and safety, perceived as absent in their present everyday lives. Thus, this specific articulation makes them experience an *aesthetic nostalgia*. The objects of this aesthetic nostalgia are the styles of the past; that is why these young people combine positive and negative assessments of previous decades when they interpret the past represented in nostalgic media texts. In this interpretative operation, they separate the aesthetic values associated to the 1970s and 1980s from their social norms and institutions. This allows these participants to envision the future of their country through an optimistic lens, deploying a rationale which seeks to supersede "outdated" behaviours or situations, to quote Alonso, moving on towards a 'brighter' and more 'updated' society. In short, these young people admire the aesthetics of the past, but reject its ideologies; for them the future demands different mindsets and new possibilities.

Contrary to this positive vision of the future, the students from Virilla Vocational High School are more reserved. Indeed, for them, Costa Rica is facing stark challenges that might imply obscure and even catastrophic consequences. In the next section, I turn my attention towards the ways in which the students from this public school make sense of being young in Costa Rica. As I make evident, their pessimistic visions of the future stems from a daily life marked by uncertainty and diverse kinds of violence, leading them to crave for a past – be it real or imaginary – that seems better than the present.

6.5 Virilla Vocational High School: Clashing with Social Constraints

In this section, I analyse the experience of being young in Costa Rica for the students from Virilla Vocational High School. My focus is located on how living in La Carpio mediates this experience, exhibiting how youth culture – and social identities at large – are contingent upon diverse social factors and conditions (Hall, 2013; Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016; Willis, 1977). As the following statements and words made by these young people show, they are conscious of the structural barriers they face in their everyday lives: the only thing they can do is to play with the 'cards' they have been dealt.

6.5.1 Being Young in La Carpio

The everyday life of the participants from Virilla Vocational High School implies limited economic resources, insecurity and violence – at the personal and collective level. For them, studying in high school requires a considerable effort and often a sacrifice by their families. Despite multiple public and private initiatives to help the community, and the efforts of the community itself (Sandoval, Brenes, & Paniagua, 2012; Sandoval et al., 2010), La Carpio suffers a level of insecurity that, according to the participants, derives from drug trafficking and other crime-related activities. A regular thread, amongst the participants, is to point out how the overwhelming environment of the community creates a sort of 'vicious circle' that aggravates the social diseases of La Carpio. This can be exemplified with the following extract from a conversation I had with Tommy, a 12th-grade student:

> Tommy: I used to go to church, and all of that, because there was a youth group. Do you know about it?
> Rodrigo: In Carpio? Which church? There are many denominations here.
> Tommy: The Evangelical, a church at the back end of Carpio. So, it was a Saturday, around 6:00 p.m., and I was walking near the fourth stop, then I started walking up these stairs, and some dudes saw me from behind, and they put me against a wall. I had my hands in my pockets, so they took them out and they felt that I was carrying something square and metallic. Probably, they thought it was a tablet, but it was my Bible … my Bible had a hardcover, and they took it. Since then, I've learned that Carpio isn't safe at all.

Tommy's story is not uncommon amongst the participants. All of them have experienced some kind of violent situation, be it against themselves, a relative or someone they know. These young people have learned that, following Tommy's words, where they live "isn't safe at all". They do not justify the violence they see on their neighbourhoods' streets; nevertheless, they understand where it comes from. Several students state that "people are not bad" in La Carpio. In this assertion, they are close to reaching the conclusion that the causes of all of these situations are systemic: they are not the product of simple individual agency, but of complex social and cultural processes with historical roots (Alvarenga, 2015; Sandoval, 2015; Voorend, 2019).

The participants identify the threats, in terms of safety and social risks, of their everyday lives. But they are also cognisant of what this entails from the perspective of the 'outside world'; that is to say, they acknowledge that being from La Carpio carries certain stereotypes that are played out in myriad social spheres. For them, when someone says that he or she lives in La Carpio, the rest

of the country conjures an image of danger and criminality – fuelled by media discourses that only highlight the violence of specific zones of the community, e.g., *La Cueva del Sapo*.[30] Furthermore, they have been the victims of xenophobic discourses – from jokes to actual insults directed towards them – as La Carpio is misconstrued in popular social imaginaries as a place exclusively Nicaraguan (Masís & Paniagua, 2015; Ramírez, 2015).

The students from this school are highly critical of the national media, especially news broadcasts. Almost in every focus group discussion and paired interview I conducted at this school, the topic of the representation of La Carpio by the media was brought up by these young people, without any provocation on my part, and was discussed passionately. Hence, for them, the popular image of La Carpio is unfair and fake. The consequence of this false representation is *discrimination*. For instance, Luis, a 12th-grade student, provides an anecdote about a visit he and his class made to the National Technical University in which they were singled out for coming from La Carpio. I quote it at length to exemplify the segregation these young people can suffer just for being associated with a specific place:

> Luis: A lot of people from this community say they live in San José or La Uruca when someone asks them where they come from. So, you're discriminated against, and you lose all confidence in yourself because human beings have the need to feel accepted. One time, we went to the National Technical University [*Universidad Técnica Nacional*], to this vocational fair, and we were in this workshop about studying photography. Some students from another high school were with us, in the workshop. Then, the speaker asked where we came from. For me, it was funny because nobody wanted to answer the question and a classmate of mine told me to do it. So, I spoke up: 'We're from Carpio'. Immediately, the students from the other high school started to put their hands inside their pockets, acting as if we were going to mug them. It would have been stupid to say something to those other students because we showed more politeness than them, and apparently, we come from a place without any manners. They were definitely from a private and posh high school, and when I saw that, that they were discriminating against us, I realised their minds were really poor. I am proud that none of my classmates bit their bait. Obviously, we felt bad about it, but we didn't

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[30] *La Cueva del Sapo* – roughly translated as 'the Toad Cave' – is seen as the most precarious region of La Carpio. The students describe it as a place characterised by a high presence of 'junkies' [*piedreros*] and drug dealers; for them, when people think of La Carpio, the image that comes to mind is influenced by all the coverage that *la Cueva del Sapo* often gets on national media.

react in a bad way. That experience taught me that, in this life, it's better to have a rich and open mind than to have all the money in the world.

This narration depicts the fierce obstacles encountered by these young people on a daily basis. Luis's words point to a situation in which he, and his peers, were the 'others' of another group of young people. But this is not an issue exclusive to a single space – i.e., the vocational fair; rather, they are aware of constituting otherness for a lot of people, if not for a large portion of the population of Costa Rica. In this case, Luis rationalises this moment of exclusion by highlighting the moral aplomb of his class. For him, in the end, his classmates retained the higher ground by being polite and not biting "the bait" from their counterparts. The moral of this story, as proposed by this young man – that it is preferable to "have a rich and open mind than to have all the money in the world" – suggests a strong ethical and moral framework as the solution for different troubles and dilemmas, or as the tool to confront them.

6.5.2 Confronting Social Reality

Morality and ethics form the cornerstone of these young people's understandings of the present and future. They know they cannot change their situation of insecurity, risk and discrimination by themselves; nevertheless, they can deploy a set of personal values to overcome the obstacles of their everyday lives. Here, I must underscore how this idea of personal struggle cannot be associated with a neoliberal ethics of entrepreneurship and self-marketisation (Couldry, 2010; Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020). As Sandoval et al. (2010) exposes, La Carpio is a community historically marked by strong bonds of solidarity; nonetheless, these students are dealing with diverse structural constraints whose outcomes are more powerful than the force of any communal spirit. The participants from this school assert that they can only 'make an effort' to get a job and ignore the 'temptations' of easier forms of making money.

In addition, the hard-working character of the population is employed to describe the positive aspects from La Carpio (Sandoval, 2020); let us observe how this is put to work by Josselyn, a 12th-grade student from Virilla Vocational High School, who recounts her impression of living there:

> Josselyn: In Carpio, let's say … if I had the chance of moving out somewhere, I'd do it, because this is a very interesting community, and it has good things, but it also has bad things. I wish there were less prejudices though, because there are people who think that Carpio is a bad place and that only criminals live here. And that's not true. There are criminals, but also people who leave their houses around 4 or 5 in the

morning to work, and they come back late at night to provide for their families.

Josselyn, here, resorts to the narrative device of highlighting the hardworking character of many inhabitants of La Carpio. However, this young woman would prefer to leave La Carpio instead of staying there. The majority of participants share this opinion: their aspiration is to graduate from high school, find a job, save some money and move somewhere else.[31] Despite their commitment to high moral and ethical standards, they know that living in La Carpio is a toll for their lives, from the violence and insecurity they have to endure every day to the labels and stigmas they bear and withstand. Only a small portion of students affirm that they would like to stay in their neighbourhoods: this reduced number desires to 'give back' to the community and help it to grow into a developed and safer area.

Following their thoughts and assessments, as recollected in this section, it is possible to distinguish four main narratives that underpin how the students from Virilla Vocational High School make sense of their present and their aspirations for the future. First, the violence, criminality and insecurity of La Carpio is seen as a vicious cycle generated by specific social problems such as drug trafficking and consumption – along with other issues such as teenage pregnancies and gender inequality or sexism. Thus, it is not that La Carpio is a dangerous location per se; rather, a repertoire of identifiable maladies are the sources of the collective afflictions. Second, the students from this school assert that avoiding the risks and threats of their community is a matter of individual choice and responsibility. Hence, they are mindful about the benefits of obtaining a high school diploma and the sacrifices that their families are undergoing to make this happen. Every day in which they do not fall into the trap of drugs or 'easy money' is a victory and a step to fulfil their dreams. Third, the participants point out how the media are responsible for spreading biases and false images about this community. In this regard, these false representations – which only highlight the negative incidents that occur there and neglect the positive ones – induce dynamics of stigmatisation that take place in different social spheres, e.g., the job market. Finally, the students from Virilla Vocational High School defend an ethic of hard work as the best tool to defeat all the structural obstacles they might face; moreover, this ethic is used to signal the positive aspects of La Carpio,

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[31] This insight coincides with Sandoval's (2020) recent study of young people in marginal communities in Central America. Following a survey he conducted in these communities – including La Carpio – 61.8% of all the participants expressed a desire to leave their neighborhoods. In this analysis, La Carpio represents the place with the highest percentage of people intending to migrate out of the community: 76.8% (pp. 95-97).

characterising its population as committed to procuring an honest and better life for their families.

Being young, for someone who is growing up in La Carpio, comprises a series of challenges, difficulties and stigmas that are uncommon for many youngsters in Costa Rica. Despite their accurate and incisive analytical skills concerning the state of their community, the participants of this school are only able to rely on their own choices and discipline. For them, being a student is not only a matter of having good grades or having an enjoyable time with their friends; rather, it is a matter of dodging many symbolic and material 'bullets'. When they graduate from high school – although I should unhappily say 'if' – this event will be a victory for many of them and their families, a victory that will probably be momentary but will infuse hope and grit into an unpredictable future.

6.6 Impossible Futures and Charming Pasts

In this section, I explore how, for the students of Virilla Vocational High School, thinking about the future is a luxury that it is difficult to afford. Their preoccupations and aspirations are grounded in the present; although all of them claim to have some sort of plan or goal after graduating from secondary education, these young people are mainly focused on sorting out the often-stark realities of La Carpio. This does not mean that they do not pay attention to the current situation of their nation; on the contrary, they exhibit a highly critical position towards the political status quo. Their difficulty, then, is rooted in finding actual hope in the times to come.

In what follows, I first analyse the participants' experience of joining a strike and how this reveals a pessimistic evaluation of their country's government and society. In addition, I examine how the sense of an unsatisfying present and an impossible future generates a yearning for the past, a yearning that emphasises a perceived lost prosperity thought to have been common in previous decades.

6.6.1 Striking for Being Heard

My fieldwork at this public school was marked by different teachers' strikes that disrupted all the academic affairs there. By the middle of the Costa Rican academic year – i.e., June 2019 – students from different public high schools organised their own strike. This strike was led by an informal student organisation called MEDSE (*Movimiento Estudiantil de Secundaria*, Secondary School Student Movement), which claimed to represent all the high school students in the country (Vargas, 2019b). This organisation emerged from different Facebook groups in which students expressed their discontent towards

the state of education in Costa Rica (Cerdas, Recio & Ávalos, 2019). The students were demanding the resignation of the then Minister of Education, Édgar Mora, accusing him of mismanagement and inattention to rural schools, amongst many other complaints (Ávila, 2019; Cerdas, 2019a). For instance, these young people were worried about the dual education system, a system that was being discussed in Congress by the time of the protests and which would open the possibility for vocational students to complete part of their education in paid professional apprenticeships; this point of contention was marked by the spread of fake news and a clear lack of information from the Ministry of Education (Cerdas, Recio & Ávalos, 2019).

Thus, the country witnessed a series of protests that brought together diverse sectors, from students to various trade unions. These demonstrations criticised the government's handling of multiple social issues – for instance, a widely unpopular tax reform that had been recently approved by Congress and would start during July 2019. A large majority of the participants from Virilla Vocational High School participated in these strikes. In the end, these high schoolers achieved what they wanted: Édgar Mora resigned as Minister of Education (Cerdas, Bravo & Ávalos, 2019). Nevertheless, many of the issues that motivated them to join the strike were not resolved. Following this, during the month of July, members of MEDSE continued protesting, blocking the opening of high schools across the country, especially on the day classes began after the vacation period (Vargas, 2019a). However, after the Ministry of Education formally pressed criminal charges against ten students who had closed a vocational high school in San Carlos, a region located in the province of Alajuela, the manifestations started to wane (Cerdas, 2019b). In addition, after two of the leaders of MEDSE presented several contradicting and misinformed views during an interview they gave on *Matices*, a popular radio programme in Costa Rica (Cerdas, Bravo & Ávalos, 2019), this student movement was publicly scorned on social media and in multiple op-eds. By the end of July, the strike had come to an end.

Although this strike deserves a thorough examination, one that lies beyond the scope of this research, the involvement of the students from this school in the episode, I submit, discloses how young people from La Carpio understand their present and conceive what is to come for Costa Rica and for themselves. In this regard, whilst it gave a small victory to some, the strike did not stop the continuation of anxieties that are part of these young people's lives. In the next fragment, taken from a paired interview, Lisa, an 11th-grade student, illustrates

not only how these students think about their role in the protests, but also their evaluation of the socio-political system of Costa Rica:

> Lisa: For instance, when we joined the strike […] the principal of the school invited Repretel [Channel 6] to interview us, and that time they did hear us, they wanted to interview us because we were part of the strike. So, sometimes, for the important stuff, they actually listen to us … well, they said that we were supporting a traffic slowdown, and that wasn't true. So, the strike had both positive and negative consequences.
> Rodrigo: So, you had invited Channel 6 on other occasions, and it was not until this strike that they came to the school?
> Erin: Yes.
> Lisa: They weren't actually interested in our claims, they came here just because they could benefit from us.
> Rodrigo: OK, so you wanted to be heard […] Do you think something was achieved with this strike?
> Lisa: No, nothing. The Minister of Education resigned, and we wanted to keep fighting. We thought that with his resignation, things would get better, but nothing changed. They just simply put some make up on the problems. Everything will always be a scam.

Discursively, Lisa contradicts herself by the end of this conversation; yet, this contradiction, and the strike at large, represents the experience of being young for this group of individuals. This student asserts that the media – i.e., a TV channel – visited her school to inquire about their demands, leading her to claim that, even though they had invited reporters for other matters without receiving an answer, they are heard "for the important stuff". Immediately, she proceeds to detail how the final information broadcasted was not accurate and how Channel 6 was only following journalistic interests: "they came here just because they could benefit from us". Then, Lisa connects this incident with a broader judgment of the strike's aftermath. In her view, the resignation of the Minister was only a cosmetic measure, for it did not address the real problems the student movement was denouncing. She encapsulates the experience in an affirmation that can be taken to refer to the whole Costa Rican socio-political system as a whole: "everything will always be a scam".

The participants' assessment of the current government, and previous ones, is pessimistic, exhibiting a frustration directed towards a perceived deteriorating economy and society. In this regard, they regularly return to the term "poor people" to refer to themselves. This is essential for comprehending a constant narrative that underpins their evaluation of Costa Rica: there is a powerful class which is taking advantage of the people who have less. This can be exemplified

in the way in which Fátima, a 12th-grade student, outlines the current political route of her country:

> Fátima: There's no one to believe in. We don't have leaders anymore, just people who run for office in order to make money, not because they want real change in the country. We don't have anyone to trust.

Fátima represents a view, frequent amongst her peers, in which a political class is ruining the development of the country. Just as this young woman puts it, the participants from this school consider the current political system as corrupt, being formed by dishonest statesmen and stateswomen who only follow their own interests. For them, they are an underclass which is forgotten, and even ignored, in multiple political decision-making processes (Sandoval, 2020, p. 36).

For the sociologist Annette Lareau (2003), the relationship between social class and education generates a sense of entitlement amongst students from a middle-class background and a sense of restraint amongst their working-class counterparts. Although she acknowledges the relative autonomy of individuals "in the enactment of social structural position and biographical outcomes" (p. 250), the students from Virilla Vocational High School do not exhibit this sense of restraint.[32] Their involvement in this strike shows an active attitude in terms of facing specific social conditions. Even though they have a pessimistic vision of the future, as I explore shortly, this does not imply passivity or acceptance of the status quo. In this respect, I agree with Livingstone & Blum-Ross (2020, p. 80): the struggle for a better life is not a monopoly of a particular social class; rather, it is carried out differently as a consequence of structural inequalities.

6.6.2 The Past: A Remedy for the Uncertainty of the Present and the Future

The participation in the strike brings about an instance which is common for the students from Virilla Vocational High School: a lack of voice, agency and power – of many sorts. For the participants, they have been disinherited from the promises of Costa Rica. They do not perceive their country as a 'rich coast'; rather, they engage with diverse difficulties in their everyday lives which create a dark scenario. As I have examined in the previous chapters, these students imagine the past of their country as an idyllic space of peace and opportunities. In their present, they look backwards to decades that not only had better music, films or clothes, but that are considered to have an aura of tranquillity, of fewer risks than their everyday reality. The large majority of young people from this

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[32] In the case of the students from St. Mary High School, the opposite occurs: it is possible to detect a well-defined sense of entitlement. I will come to this point in Chapter 7.

school consider the past as more positive than the present. As Jason, a 12th-grade student, puts it, the present is viewed as lacking and dangerous:

> Jason: You can't go out, on the street, and say hello to everyone. Today, if you go out, you are scared, no matter what neighbourhood you might live in. In the past, you could walk in peace, with no worries, these days in San José you have to carry your backpack in front because someone can suddenly try to take it off you. So, in the past, people used to conserve a sense of culture and values. You don't have that today.

Similar to the reasoning of Jason, the past is a symbolic shelter for the participants from this school. As Livingstone and Blum-Ross (2020) suggest, whether it is seen as a lost 'golden age' or some 'bad old days' to improve, "the past is at least tangible" (p. 171). In this case, the sense of tangibility is obtained through media texts, official discourses and family memories, and other discursive frameworks – as analysed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Thus, even though they did not live during the 1970s or 1980s, these young people imagine those periods as more fulfilling than their current situation.

The uncertainty these students experience makes it easier to conjure a better picture of yesteryear. A large majority of students from this school exhibit this nostalgic vision of the past. Nevertheless, some young women express a different position (Bonfiglioli, 2020; Novoa, 2021). I mention this because their assessments help us to comprehend how nostalgia works. Let us consider the way in which Lola, a 12th-grade student, unveils the traps of deifying the past:

> Lola: Maybe the past was more beautiful physically, but for us, women, it was harder because our work wasn't valued, or we couldn't study, or we couldn't vote. So, it's true, sometimes you'd like to recreate, I don't know, the fashion from past years, but going back to the past like that would be for us women [*nosotras*] to renounce everything we've advanced.

For Lola, and other female classmates of hers, it can be easy to ignore the difficulties that certain groups encountered in previous decades – Afro-Costa Ricans were also alluded to during these exchanges. I must underscore that these observations were made exclusively by young women from this school. For them, being a woman is still a challenge in contemporary Costa Rica, entailing diverse challenges not known by their male counterparts; for instance, the young women described situations of street harassment and sexist attitudes in their households. Although this is a minority position amongst the participants from this school, it foregrounds the imaginary nature of nostalgia – be it aesthetic,

material or otherwise. Furthermore, it calls attention to the modes in which gender is pivotal in experiences of social class (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Skeggs & Loveday, 2012) – especially in La Carpio where women, through paid or unpaid domestic labour, have been a backbone of its economic and social development (Sandoval, Brenes & Paniagua, 2012, p. 127).

Indeed, the diverse challenges these young people face daily, and the problems they consider are beating their nation, cloud the imagination of a promising future;[33] nonetheless, they arouse the figuration of a fulfilling past. In this regard, the students from Virilla Vocational High School experience a specific articulation of a nostalgic structure of feeling unravelled around the longing for an era considered to be economically, socially and culturally more prosperous. This specific articulation generates a *material nostalgia*. As I have argued before, these young people are also attracted to the styles of the past as represented by nostalgic media texts – i.e., they also experience what I have called aesthetic nostalgia. Nonetheless, the key point of divergence concerns a matter of *emphasis* and of *narrative*. The imagining of the past enacted by these participants is heavily marked by a vision of a lost affluence and welfare; under this logic, the Costa Rica of the past is conceived as a harmonious tropical paradise which was corrupted by a selfish political and economic class. This narrative, then, has a villain who brought misfortune to the country – a common device in nostalgic narratives (Boym, 2001). These young people connect different ideas, discourses, tropes and aesthetic qualities associated to the 1970s and 1980s to imagine a space characterised by a widespread social harmony. For them, the future is a consequence of their bleak present; on the contrary, the past is an irretrievable site of wonder.

In both schools, previous decades are interpreted and grasped in an ambivalent and contradictory manner: they are idealised abstractly, but certain social issues are evaluated critically. The students from St. Mary High School make sense of the past through the lens of an aesthetic nostalgia that allows them to yearn for

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[33] Sandoval's (2020, pp. 67-69) study of young people in marginal communities in Central America offers a different picture. In this case, 81% of the surveyed participants of La Carpio consider that their lives will be 'good in the next 5 years'. Nevertheless, Sandoval (2020, p. 68) considers that these responses might be the outcome of situations of social desirability, i.e., the participants are projecting their aspirations onto their answers. In addition, he recognises that this situation might derive from the fact that young people perceive a higher possibility of agency at the personal level than at the community or national level. I agree with this second explanation, as it showcases two key insights of this chapter: 1) how the students from Virilla Vocational High School deploy narratives of personal responsibility and a committed working ethic to deal with structural constraints; and 2) these students' pessimistic assessment of the future is directed towards their country and society at large.

the styles of yesteryear whilst having a positive vision for their future. The difference in which the past is imagined, I contend, is rooted in the social position of the participants. This becomes palpable when we consider how the students from Virilla Vocational High School experience a material nostalgia that stems from a *lived reality* marked by social and economic deprivation. Its rationale is pessimistic; because of this, their personal narratives about the coming years are based on ideas of individual effort and sacrifice. Their analysis of their personal situation is as incisive as critical: they are aware of the diverse impediments they are dealing with in the present, and the barriers they will endure in the future. It is in the midst of despair and hopelessness that the past starts looking enticing and beguiling.

6.7 Different Nostalgias: Social Position and Structures of Feeling

This is a tale of two cities, and a tale of two worlds that exist in one nation. The future, for the students from St. Mary High School, is something almost 'natural': after graduating high school, they will embark on the adventure of higher education. Going to university is a fact that is not questioned, it is something given. During my time at this school, many participants discussed their plans and aspirations with me. Of course, I do not intend to portray them as overconfident posh boys and girls; as I have shown here, all of them know that multiple challenges lay ahead. They desire to be heard, to be part of the political life of their country. Their main concerns are valid claims of generational justice.

The future for the students from Virilla Vocational High School is unreliable and erratic. Although many of these young people declare that they want to have a university education, they know that this is not an immediate possibility; if this happens, it will be after years of saving money for this purpose, as several of them told me. These participants consider themselves to have been left out of their country's promises. They have learned to distrust their government not by reading fake news on Facebook, but by experience. During my fieldwork, some of these students expressed their support of Juan Diego Castro, a presidential candidate in the last elections who was deemed to be a "Trump in the tropics" (May Grosser, 2018). In their explanations for backing this authoritarian figure, it is possible to find protruding senses of disenchantment and anger in terms of social change. They have been waiting all their lives for many improvements, and these have never arrived.

The different kinds of nostalgia I have examined so far expose how structures of feeling are classed, being derived from the conditions of particular social positions. This is fundamental to understanding why Williams (1977) proposes

that they are "social experiences in *solution*" (p. 133; emphasis in original). Comprehending nostalgia as a structure of feeling, following my argument developed in Chapter 2, consists in analysing diverse articulations of emotions, meanings and materialities. The key aspect, then, concerns the dynamic of *articulating* these elements (Clarke, 2015; Hall, 1996). This is an action that occurs as an interplay of structural constraints and individual possibilities; in other words, both the articulation as such and the different articulated elements occur through historically contingent networks of material and symbolic resources and practices utilised and enacted by particular individuals, and enabled by diverse social and cultural structures within a specific spatiotemporal dimension (Couldry, 2004; Sewell, 2005). Nostalgia, as a structure of feeling, is a process of engaging with an evolving present that implies "particular linkages, particular emphases and suppressions, and, in what is often its most recognizable forms, particular deep-starting points and conclusions" (Williams, 1977, p. 134).

For the participants from both schools, the present is unfulfilling, and the past is alluring; however, their social positions produce different articulations of nostalgic structures of feeling. In Chapter 2, I claimed that there are three common conditions upon which nostalgias are articulated: a temporal and spatial distance, a sense of displacement and a perceived absence. In the next table, I present how aesthetic and material nostalgia are articulated, underscoring the object of a perceived absence, the source of the sense of displacement, the relationship they entail in terms of temporal distance and the outcome concerning visions of the future:

Table N.5
Articulations
Nostalgic Structures of Feeling

Articulation	Object	Source	Temporal Relationship	Outcomes	Examples
Aesthetic Nostalgia	Styles of the past	Symbolic absences: freedom, self-expression, authenticity, aesthetic qualities of cultural products.	Separation of aesthetic qualities associated with the 1970s and 1980s from the ideologies of those decades.	Future is seen as independent of the past. Positive expectations for the future of Costa Rican society.	Zoé: I think music nowadays is more commercial. You can definitely tell if someone is singing with dedication and love, or if that person is just wearing a disguise,

| | | | | | using a lot of makeup (quoted in Chapter 4).

Camila: It's really important to learn from our mistakes and maybe in the future Costa Rica will find all of this current martyrdom funny. And yes, I think we're on the right track, and we have to keep going (quoted in this Chapter). |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Material Nostalgia | Prosperity of the past | Material absences: development, wealth, security. | Connection of different ideas, discourses, tropes and aesthetic qualities associated to the 1970s and 1980s to conjure a space full of social harmony. | The future is understood pessimistically as it is seen as a consequence of the present.

The past is an irretrievable site of lost affluence. | Claudia: Well, if I have to choose between the past and the present, I'd really prefer the past for many reasons. First, there was more freedom in the country to walk without any worries, there were more flashy places where you could go with your family to spend a holiday […] (Quoted in Chapter 5).

Fátima: We don't have |

					leaders anymore, just people who run for office in order to make money, not because they want a real change in the country. We don't have anyone to trust (quoted in this Chapter).

The relationship between these two kinds of nostalgia is complex. By this, I mean that they are not necessarily exclusive of the students from one school or the other – as I claimed in section 6.6.2. What matters is how a specific articulation of a nostalgic structure of feeling has more emphasis and prevalence within the conditions afforded by opposing social positions. In the case of the private school, the aesthetic nostalgia experienced by the students entails comprehending the past as a style, as a set of diverse colour palettes, sounds, clothing, makeup, hairstyles, landscapes, defined by media texts. Their reclaims about the present are a matter of authenticity: for them, their current culture and society lacks a perceived realness that they locate in previous decades (Banet-Weiser, 2012, p. 9). Their accounts do not include an oppositional force, i.e., they do not directly identify an agent that caused this situation. Conversely, in the case of the public school, the material nostalgia experienced by the students implies considering the past as the palliative for contemporary afflictions. These young people point out that the welfare of their country has been lost. In their understanding, they have been left out of many opportunities. Their narratives do have a villain: the political class. These suggestions are regularly vague; that is to say, these participants do not precisely name who brought about this situation. Nonetheless, I contend, the Costa Rican political class operates as an empty signifier of broader structural inequalities (Laclau, 2005). By denouncing an unnamed political class, they are anchoring several social dynamics onto one agent that represents the manifold barriers they encounter every day.

At this point, it is worth noting how this idealisation of the past in La Carpio was not prevalent amongst its inhabitants. In their study of the community, Sandoval et al. (2010) highlight how, during the 2000s, it was possible to find "a tendency to locate happiness in the present and sadness in the past" (p. 313), and that this

was a consequence of the difficult events that led many immigrant families to arrive in the country – and to La Carpio – and the stark conditions that characterised the foundation of the community – e.g., lack of drinking water and electricity. Almost ten years later, we witness a reversal of this vision. The reasons behind this, I argue, are not simply a matter of perception or social imaginaries; rather, they are structural. Costa Rican society, in recent years, has experienced a rising inequality and a weakened and failing welfare state (Sandoval, 2013, 2020; Voorend, 2019). Through these young people it is possible to observe how, when the conditions of the present deteriorate and the prospects of the future start to become obtuse, bad memories vanish and a romanticised past appears.

Underlying the dissimilar nostalgias experienced by the participants from both schools there are also dissimilar senses of agency for the future. The aesthetic nostalgia of the students from St. Mary High School does not preclude them from imagining a future in which they will be active agents. This nostalgia emerges from styles, not from ideologies: as I have explored, their understanding of the past divides the aesthetic from the political. For them, a bright future can be achieved by 'leaning in', i.e., by catching up with more progressive ideals.

The material nostalgia of the students from Virilla Vocational High School is born out of necessity, generating a short-term vision of the future. These young people have plans and ambitions after graduating secondary education – which entail finding a job to help their families economically. Yet, at the personal level, the long term is not considered; it is too abstract to be concretised, and at the social level, it is expected to be negative. Their sense of agency is marked by the tension between being deprived and being annulled from any possibility for social action; in a way, this is a sense of non-agency. This is exemplified by the case of the student strike. Many participants explain that they wanted "to express their voice", "to exert their right to be heard". For them, it was a unique opportunity of feeling that their opinions mattered. However, it was a brief opportunity, for the aftermath of the strike reminded them of something they already understood clearly: being a young person from La Carpio means living with the straitjacket of social stigmas and structural barriers.

6.8 Conclusions

Being young, for the students from St. Mary High School, is characterised by a lacking present derived from diverse generational conflicts, conflicts that concern distinct social issues – e.g., sexuality and the LGBTIQ+ community – and are often enacted in discussions with relatives. These students yearn for the past, but

this yearning is based on aesthetic qualities of specific cultural products that represent features considered to be missing from their everyday lives, such as freedom, personal expression and safety. This specific articulation of a nostalgic structure of feeling generates the experience of an aesthetic nostalgia. In this respect, this kind of nostalgia is directed towards the styles of the past. When these young people envision the future, on the other hand, their rationale is optimistic, they expect that generational justice will arrive sooner or later. Hence, they appreciate the aesthetics of previous decades, but reject 'outdated' ideologies.

When we move to Virilla Vocational High School, this picture shifts. Being young, for these students, is defined by structural barriers. Living in La Carpio mediates this experience, comprising a series of challenges, difficulties and stigmas that configure a particular mode of engaging with the past, the present and the future. These young people picture previous decades as economically, socially and culturally more prosperous. For them, Costa Rica lost its affluence and wealth thanks to a self-centred political and economic class. They experience an articulation of a nostalgic structure of feeling that generates material nostalgia. This kind of nostalgia is connected to a pessimistic rational about the future. Given that these participants have difficulties in conjuring a positive image of the years to come, they resort to the imagination of a more fulfilling past to find a cure for the diseases of the present, and perhaps find a way to a different destiny.

With this in mind, I can answer the research question I formulated at the beginning of this chapter: *How do the national context and the social identities of young audiences mediate their engagement with nostalgic media texts?* The social positions that emerge from a specific national context, I contend, mediate the participants' engagement with nostalgic media texts by catalysing the articulation of specific nostalgic structures of feeling. Simply put, media texts such as *Stranger Things* (2016) or *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) do not produce or cause a nostalgic response in these young audiences by themselves; rather, they are part of complex processes of media production and socio-political developments in which certain ways of feeling and grasping the present are constituted and emphasised. In this case, as elaborated in Chapter 1 and Chapter 4, a nostalgia economy encourages the production of TV series, films, music and other products that construct aestheticised visions of the 1970s and 1980s, and other decades. Concurrently, a nostalgic social imaginary, derived from a specific nostalgia culture, which is unfolded around ideas of the idyllic past of a nation – as I have discussed in Chapter 5 – interacts with contemporary social processes that generate senses of disenchantment and disenfranchisement amongst certain

populations, compelling different modes of yearning for a lost time. These modes emerge from the conditions attached to peculiar social positions. As I have explored in the preceding lines, the social identities of young audiences bring together ways of understanding the past, the present and the future. The students from St. Mary High School, considering that they have an almost guaranteed university education and professional career, yearn for the aesthetics of the past; conversely, the students from Virilla Vocational High School, dealing with structural constraints on a daily basis, long for the economic, social and cultural prosperity of the past, knowing that their future is mortgaged in many ways. In sum, the different nostalgias experienced by the participants are derived from their engagement with the media, but also from their society and culture at large.

Being young is more than what this chapter has examined. Both the students from St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School have rich and complex lives, with manifold nuances, ambivalences and contradictions. Even though they live in different cities, study in different institutions, and, probably, will never meet in person, these young people have many things in common – more than just reception practices. All of them are entangled with the buzz and occasionally innocent dramas of high school life, all of them have dreams, all of them want their voices to be respected and taken into account. But, of course, there are disparities in how this is lived out. These young people share connections with a society that is becoming more and more unequal, privileging some whilst forgetting the rest. Notwithstanding their common bonds, the students from the private school will hardly face any of the difficulties of growing up in La Carpio. For them, everything they have is natural, it is almost deserved; for the others, everything they have comes from necessity and sacrifice. The separation between the participants is not only analytical, being part of an academic discourse. It is a sign of a country where differences are becoming more accentuated, where polarisations are rapidly spreading. It is also a sign of a world in which many more people are being left out of the spoils of economic progress every day. The danger is that the divided contours of this divergent nostalgia will cease to be imaginary and become *actually* real, that it will be an impossibility to think and imagine a future for all.

Chapter 7
Conclusions

7.1 Going Back Before Moving Forward

In this research, I have analysed how when audiences turn on their computers and start streaming an episode of *Stranger Things* (2016), or when they go to the movie theatre and watch *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), they are not simply engaging with 'stylish' representations of the 1980s or with the fictional reconstruction of a cultural icon's life. They interpret these texts through practices that bring together textual and aesthetic cues, cultural discourses, social structures, and personal experiences.

I began my argument by discussing the nostalgia economy. The commodification and economisation of nostalgia is not something new; nonetheless, in recent years there has been a 'boom' of nostalgic texts and products coming from myriad media outlets and other industries (Ewen, 2020; Lowenthal, 2015; Niemeyer, 2014). A simple reason to explain a burgeoning nostalgia economy regards profitability: creating content which seeks to hook audiences and consumers based on a nostalgic sensibility has proven to be effective and it seems to be a 'safe bet' for media producers (Cross, 2015; Gandini, 2020). And perhaps it is. Yet, I argued, the nostalgia economy operates in tandem with nostalgia cultures, i.e., cultural modes of comprehending the past, but also the present and the future (Hassler-Forest, 2020; Radstone, 2000). These frameworks are anchored in historically constructed social imaginaries (Taylor, 2004) which bring together a variety of discourses, tropes and ideas about the past and its relationship with the present and the future.

With this in mind, I introduced Costa Rica as the place where this research took place. In this Central American nation, certain aspects of the past have been emphasised and imagined in order to create common narratives that support a sense of national belonging (Contreras, 2012; Molina & Palmer, 2017). Amongst these narratives, it is possible to find an idealisation of the country's past based on the conceptions of exceptionality and a 'local essence' (Harvey-Kattou, 2019; Jiménez, 2015). The conception of an exceptional past was operationalised nostalgically in the last elections in 2018. The evangelical preacher Fabricio

Alvarado Muñoz, with his *Partido de Restauración Nacional*, almost won the presidency based on an anti-LGBTIQ+ agenda and discourses of 'bringing back the good old times'. Nostalgia became the engine of a conservative movement that rose to prominence unexpectedly. Hence, by analysing the engagement of Costa Rican young audiences with nostalgic media texts, my aim was to conduct a reception study that would analyse the meaning-making dynamics that emerge from the interaction between transnational representations of the past, national cultural frameworks and social identities and positions.

In order to grasp nostalgia, I discussed theoretically the social nature of memory, i.e., how remembering is socially constructed (Keightley & Pickering, 2012; Terdiman, 1993). This discussion assisted me by providing three insights regarding the dialectic between the act and object of remembering (Olick, 1999). First, I underscored the mode in which memory is dependent upon contextual and circumstantial conditions; in other words, memory is established and formed through multiple mediations (Taylor, 2003; Whitehead, 2009). Second, I exhibited how memory is articulated. Through my examination and re-elaboration of Pierre Nora's (1989, 2008) definition of 'sites of memory', I suggested that remembering is instantiated in arrangements of diverse events, objects, narratives and so forth. Third, I highlighted the complexity of memory as a social experience, showcasing that the engagement with the past implies multiple possibilities, from the transmission of cultural traumas from one generation to another, to 'witnessing' a historical period through a film (Hirsch, 2008; Landsberg, 2004). Taking this into account, I discussed how the articulation of nostalgia differs from other practices of memory (Boym, 2001; Pickering & Keightley, 2006). Therefore, following Williams (1965, 1977), I theorised nostalgia as a structure of feeling which is socially produced through an articulation of distinct emotions, meanings and materialities.

I conducted fieldwork in Costa Rica at two secondary schools, anonymised under the names of St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School. For this, I developed an ethnographic sensibility which aimed to understand the participants as active audiences in the production of meaning (Hall, 1980b; Livingstone, 2019; Radway, 1984). In practical terms, this sensibility implied an interest on the student's everyday life and backgrounds; this referential knowledge was obtained through my involvement in the field, i.e., through my interactions and exchanges with these young people. Moreover, I deployed this sensibility based on an ethical commitment of respecting the participant's voice and demands; in this respect, my actions and research activities during my fieldwork followed the boundaries and spaces they set between them and my

persona as social researcher (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Robinson, 2020). At these schools, I applied a media consumption habits survey and I conducted focus group discussions and qualitative paired interviews; I analysed the qualitative data under a thematic analysis approach. With this, my goal was to examine *reception practices*, and to grasp the student's assessments of Costa Rica's social and political life, with a focus on the past, the present and the future.

In what follows, I summarise the main findings and significance of this thesis. I start my argument by going through the main insights that emerged in my empirical analysis and signalling their connections with the relevant literature on audiences, nostalgia, and memory. After this, I flesh out the implications of this research in five areas: the study of nostalgia as a transnational and transcultural social phenomenon, the empirical analysis of memory and nostalgia, the understanding of mediated structures of feeling, the analysis of reception practices and media engagements, and finally, the role of power in media flows, social position, and youth identity. Then, I detail the limitations of this research, outlining the theoretical and methodological drawbacks and challenges that characterise this study and I discuss issues for further research. I conclude this chapter with some final thoughts on the relationship between youth, nostalgia and audiences.

7.2 Findings

In this section, I summarise the main insights that emerged in my empirical analysis and I point out their connections with the relevant literature on audiences, nostalgia and memory. After this, I bring together the thematic maps I presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 in order to discuss why young audiences engage with nostalgic meanings in the media.

7.2.1 RQ1: How Do Young Audiences Interpret the Past Represented in Nostalgic Media Texts?

In Chapter 4, I explored the reception practices that mobilise the engagement between the students from St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School with *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018). I was able to demonstrate how the participants establish an aesthetic relationship with these nostalgic media texts which compels them to imagine the past in an idealised manner – although with crucial nuances as I explore below. This research confirms the theoretical insights of Iser (1974) and Eco (1979) by laying out how reception is a process which implies the interaction of specific textual and aesthetic devices with broader social logics and structures; in addition, it has

followed the analytical line advanced, classically, by Radway (1984), Ang (1985) and Livingstone (1998b), and, recently, by Das & Pavlíčková (2014) and Wu & Bergman (2019), of examining the social nature of interpretation empirically.

Hence, I examined how the diverse styles that compose mediated representations of the past work as spatiotemporal bridges for audiences, which are established from intertextual connections and locate media texts within a temporal frame. Let us remember, for instance, how students from Virilla Vocational High School associate biker jackets and Converse sneakers with the 1980s. The participants make sense of these representations through an interpretative bricolage of different stylisations: an operation of ordering different semiotic codes featured in nostalgic media texts. This bricolage structures a vision of previous decades made from diverse sources. With this in mind, I inspected how these young people engage with particular stylisations of fashion, music, technology and lifestyles featured in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018).

The students from both schools comprehend the fashion depicted in these nostalgic media texts as signifiers of the 1970s and 1980s, deploying them to build a sense of how the past was and looked. This perspective does not only emerge from an encounter with concrete textual elements; rather, it implicates myriad social relationships and dynamics. Let us recall St. Mary High School student Pamela's action of wearing her mother's old denim jacket after experiencing the revival of vintage fashion: "It's exactly the same as the ones that people are wearing nowadays", as she puts it. Indeed, this kind of exchange, with anecdotes from relatives and other narratives and discourses about the past, is common amongst the participants.

This research has corroborated a paradigmatic insight from critical cultural studies (du Gay et al., 2013; Hall, 1980a; Morley, 1992; Silverstone, 1994): the crucial role of everyday interactions in reception practices. In my exploration of the participants' engagements with the music featured in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), I evidenced the role of parents and relatives in fostering an understanding of the past by providing stylistic benchmarks and guidelines of taste. Let us come back, for example, to the way in which Harold, the Virilla Vocational High School student, links his preference for classic rock to childhood memories: "I feel like a child, because I remember when I was little, and my grandfather or uncle were listening to that kind of music". But the affinity for 'old music' is not only a matter of daily exchanges; rather, it encompasses an evaluation of the present. In this regard, when the participants engage with the music featured in these nostalgic media texts, they link a repertoire of sounds to specific decades; moreover, in this interpretative operation the participants

consider the media production of previous decades as more authentic and original than present forms. For them, the main point implies an aesthetic and artistic integrity which is located in previous decades.

The idealisation, or positive view, of the past is also prevalent in the mode in which they understand the representations of technology in these nostalgic media texts. For them, these 'catalogues' of old technologies have an educational purpose as they teach them how certain artefacts were used in their original context. The fact that the past represented in nostalgic media texts is marked by an absence of current technological developments – e.g., the Internet or social media – brings about an understanding of a freer time. This perceived absence generates this idyllic logic: for them, the overabundance of technology is the source of multiple contemporary maladies.

This idealisation of the past is fully operationalised in the way in which these young people grasp the lifestyles depicted in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), as they provide 'experiential' references of the 1970s and 1980s to them – i.e., how certain values, meanings, and activities were lived and felt during those decades. The participants are aware that the lifestyles portrayed in these nostalgic media texts are connected with specific historical conditions, discerning them as factual. In short, they show a perception of verisimilitude when they engage with these representations of the past. This factuality contributes to the construction of an idealised vision of past decades, an idealisation based on polished and refined mediated constructions of the 1970s and 1980s that accentuate certain elements whilst ignoring others, such as the diverse social struggles and issues that were salient during those decades. With this, I was able to confirm an important insight of the growing literature on the reception of historical narratives: audiences build a sense of authenticity following an interplay of aesthetic devices and genre expectations (Gudehus, Anderson & Keller, 2010; Rauch, 2018)

Taking these reception practices into consideration, I identified how a nostalgic structure of feeling mediates the engagement between Costa Rican young audiences and *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018). This nostalgic structure of feeling entails an attraction towards the past rooted in the sense of a lacking and unsatisfying present. This sense is operationalised in a positive assessment of the past, an assessment in which the past is idealised – i.e., it has what is absent from the present. This nostalgic structure of feeling does not emerge directly from the engagement with a nostalgic media text; rather, it is produced socially and culturally. Nostalgic media texts, then, shape the *aesthetic scaffolding* of nostalgic structures of feeling. They provide an aesthetic repertoire

composed by particular images, sounds and portrayed social interactions. This repertoire is part of wider economic, social, cultural and political dynamic that promotes, in some way or another, nostalgic visions of the past. The participants' sense of a lacking present, I contended, is rooted in their personal and everyday experiences, but it is also derived from myriad discourses, ideas and tropes found in different social situations and spheres.

In Chapter 5, I analysed how a nostalgic social imaginary, derived from a particular nostalgia culture, provides a discursive framework for imagining the past. By using data from the focus group discussions I conducted during my fieldwork, I inspected how the students from both schools adapt the represented past of *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) to their national context, and I was able to flesh out the discourses, tropes and ideas deployed to interpret it. My intention, following Anderson (2006) and Taylor (2004), was to examine how the sense of belonging to Costa Rica as a nation is characterised by shared myths and notions about the past, the present and even the future. In Chapter 2, I defined nostalgia as a structure of feeling which emerges from the articulation of particular emotions, meanings and materialities. Social imaginaries, I argued, are one of the possible sources that provide culturally sanctioned meanings to this articulation.

I first explored how the students from St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School translate the events of *Stranger Things* (2016) to a Costa Rican context. When the participants imagine their country during the 1980s, they conjure images of coffee plantations or farms; otherwise stated, they imagine it as mostly rural. Thus, they conceive their country's past as a pastoral scenario marked by simple and peaceful lifestyles. For them, this is a lost condition, an assessment which is tied to a sense of displacement in the present. Furthermore, I analysed the mode in which the students from both schools draw upon local folklore to provide narrative elements similar to the supernatural events that occur in *Stranger Things* (2016) and to make sense of how people from the 1980s would have understood these events around them. Let us remember, as an example, how a group of students from St. Mary High School imagine Costa Ricans of the past thinking that creatures from diverse folktales would be blamed for the disappearance of a boy. Folklore, I claimed, can be part of a nostalgic social imaginary, a constantly evolving repository of ideas and understandings about certain social conditions or situations (Correll, 2014; Propp, 1984; Zipes, 2019, p. 248).

Thus, in the creative exercises of imagining how *Stranger Things* (2016) would have been had it occurred in Costa Rica, these young people understand their country's past as rural, idyllic and freer. When they replicate these exercises vis-á-vis *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), the 1970s and 1980s are conceived as a lost golden age for youth culture, a period characterised by an explosion of self-expression and personal freedom – although with crucial nuances. The students follow the pattern of idealising the past but, when they consider the concrete social and cultural conditions of Costa Rica during those decades, a sense of critical awareness arises. For instance, they envisage a 'Costa Rican Freddie Mercury' as an Afro-Caribbean person or as someone from the Pacific coast. In the country, the coastal populations have historically been marginal identities (Contreras, 2012; Harvey-Kattou, 2019; Sandoval, 2004); thereby, these young people acknowledge contemporary social frictions as part of previous decades. The logic behind this is really similar to the aestheticisation of the past investigated in Chapter 4: positive elements of an imagined past are romanticised and, simultaneously, negative elements – e.g., the conservative views of the population or the marginalisation of certain identities – are acknowledged without affecting the idealisation as such. The participants' engagement with nostalgic media texts is marked by an abstract and critical level of understanding the past.

A nostalgic social imaginary, I argued, supplies discursive frameworks to these young people's interpretations of the past represented in nostalgic media texts, frameworks that are produced and reproduced socially and historically. These discursive frameworks shape the cultural scaffolding upon which a nostalgic structure of feeling is enacted by building shared patterns of understanding Costa Rica's past. Young audiences interpret the past represented in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), deploying a nostalgic structure of feeling that actualises the textual and aesthetic constructions of these texts with a culturally sanctioned nostalgic imaginary that provides distinct discourses, ideas and tropes for comprehending the country's past.

7.2.2 RQ2: How Do the National Context and the Social Identities of Young Audiences Mediate their Engagement with Nostalgic Media Texts?

In Chapter 6, I investigated how the participants' social identities entail different experiences of being young in Costa Rica. By analysing the way in which these identities emerge from contrasting social positions, I identified two distinct articulations of nostalgia as a structure of feeling. My analysis was focused on age and social class; however, several issues of nationality and gender arose as important aspects of the social identities of the students from St. Mary High

School and Virilla Vocational High School. With this, I was able to observe how identities are multi-layered and tied to evolving social dynamics, a key insight advanced by critical cultural studies (Hall, 1991/2019, Willis, 1997) and ethnographic and qualitative traditions of audience research (Athique, 2005; Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016; Radway, 1984; Straubhaar, 2007).

I first turned my attention towards the relationship between the students from St. Mary High School and their contemporary society. This relationship is marked by conflicts with the adult world rooted in ideological differences. Following the polarising 2018 presidential elections in Costa Rica and the role that same-sex marriage played in them (see Chapter 1), these young people mention LGBTIQ+ issues and religion as the most frequent points of contention with parents and relatives. These two elements are closely related as they signal a clash between progressive and conservative views and generational differences. Specifically, evangelical Christianity, in its neo-charismatic form, is considered dogmatic and oppressive. Let us recall Lucía's words about her evangelical aunt who was deemed authoritarian: "she doesn't listen to me, or she doesn't want to listen to other people's opinions". These debates concerning religion and sexuality describe these young people's dissatisfaction with the status quo and are embodied in ideological differences that, for some, are operationalised in real dialogue within their family circles, but, for others, imply ostracising situations.

On the other hand, being young for the students of Virilla Vocational High School is marked by encountering multiple structural barriers. I explored how growing up in La Carpio comprises challenges and conditions that impact their social identities. This working-class community is marked by different kinds of violence whose origin the participants localise in particular issues. For instance, drug trafficking and consumption are considered the main sources of problems for the residents of this area. Indeed, almost all of them have experienced violent incidents in some way or another. Let us remember how Tommy, the 12th grade student, narrates how some people stole his Bible, mistaking it for a tablet: "since then, I've learned that Carpio isn't safe at all". Granted, I am not suggesting that violent situations are an exclusive experience of the students from Virilla Vocational High School; indeed, it would be feasible to envisage their private school counterparts falling victim to a robbery on the street. The difference dwells in the mode in which these situations are systemic in La Carpio (Masís & Paniagua, 2015; Ramírez, 2015; Voorend, 2019).

In Chapter 6, I examined these students' experience of joining a student strike. The strike wove together several concerns, anxieties and dissatisfactions aimed

at the public educational apparatus; as many of them expressed, it was an opportunity to be heard. Although one of their main pleas came to fruition – i.e., the resignation of then Minister of Education Édgar Mora – the strike proved to be a confirmation of their lack of agency and power as the event was rapidly criminalised and ridiculed in the public opinion of the country. This experience embodies the frustrations that these young people have in terms of their country's economy and society. For them, there is a political class that hinders the development of Costa Rica. The statement made by the 12th-grade student Fátima in which she asserts that "there's no one to believe in" exemplifies how the political system is understood as corrupt.

The differing social positions of the students from St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School encompass contrasting modes of conceiving the past, i.e., they entail different articulations of nostalgic structures of feeling. The students from the private school experience an *aesthetic nostalgia*, a longing whose objects are the styles of the past. This longing is directed towards a perceived superior quality of certain cultural products – e.g., music, films, fashion and so forth – and imagined lifestyles linked to conditions such as freedom, personal expression and safety, thought to be absent from their quotidian lives. Fundamentally, their demands vis-à-vis the present regard issues of authenticity; under this logic, culture and society lack a sense of originality located in previous decades. This reclaim resembles classic definitions of the authentic as a quality which is intangible (Banet-Weiser, 2012, p. 10); this intangibility – and vagueness – can be appreciated in the fact that their accounts do not point to a clear oppositional force that caused this situation. This nostalgic structure of feeling allows them to separate the aesthetic values associated with the 1970s and 1980s from the social norms and institutions of those decades. That is why they idealise the past in an abstract manner but critically assess it when they consider circumstantial aspects. Consequently, these young people deploy an optimistic rationale when they envision the future: they expect to meet all their political aspirations in the years to come. Although they express that the journey will be laborious – i.e., change will only come with the passage of time, when older generations lose their power – they are relatively confident concerning their claims of generational justice. I contended that this positive assessment stems from their social position, as they take for granted diverse material conditions – e.g., receiving a university education. In sum, these young people admire the aesthetics of the past, reject its ideologies and expect a brighter future.

Conversely, the students from the public school experience a material nostalgia, a longing for an era considered to be economically, socially and culturally more

prosperous. Under this articulation, a vision of lost affluence and welfare characterises the mode in which previous decades are imagined. This particular nostalgic structure of feeling, I argued, emerges from the experiences of economic and social deprivations these young people have faced throughout their lives; then, all of the myriad elements missing from the present are understood as having been tangible and possible in the past. This kind of nostalgia is unfolded around a common trope of nostalgic narratives: a fall from paradise as the consequence of the actions of an opponent or villain (Boym, 2001). Costa Rica is conceived as a harmonious tropical land which was corrupted by a selfish political and economic class. The diverse barriers they face on a quotidian basis preclude the vision of a positive future: they are aware of the challenges they will have to overcome in the years to come, challenges that are socially structural in nature. In sum, these young people experience multiple absences from their present that make them yearn for a perceived 'lost' prosperity localised in the past and expect an unpromising future.

Before closing this subsection, I must highlight that, as I have already observed, these two kinds of nostalgia are not mutually opposing: the students from Virilla Vocational High School also experience aesthetic nostalgia – something which becomes quite evident when my arguments in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 are considered. The main difference is a matter of emphasis: for these participants, the material wealth located in previous decades is the main engine of their longing. Furthermore, I must underscore that I am not claiming that these two types of nostalgia are the only forms in which nostalgia can be articulated. On the contrary, and following my discussion of an analytics of nostalgia in Chapter 2, an aesthetic and material nostalgia are articulations of nostalgic structures of feeling that are rooted in specific conditions, conditions that I have examined in this thesis.

7.2.3 Engaging with Nostalgia

My analysis in this thesis has unfolded around three aspects of the engagement between young audiences and nostalgic media texts: nostalgic structures of feeling, a nostalgic social imaginary and social identities. All of them are interrelated, as I have highlighted in the preceding chapters, making it possible for us to picture a 'triangle'. This triangle can be visually observed when the thematic maps that emerged from my thematic analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Rendón, & Nicolas, 2012) are brought together (see Figure N.5 in the next page).

This figure assists me in answering the general research question of this study: *Why do contemporary young audiences engage with nostalgic meanings in*

relation to mass media texts? Young audiences engage with nostalgic media texts following the sense of an unsatisfying present. This sense can be operationalised in different ways, based on different motives; yet what is important for our purposes is that young people locate in the past lost qualities considered absent from the present, e.g., authenticity, originality, prosperity and so forth. But this engagement is not a matter of audiences seeking a product to fulfil their needs. It is a complex process in which textual and aesthetic devices, culturally sanctioned discursive frameworks, and social identities, being rooted in particular social positions, converge and catalyse the operation of nostalgic structures of feeling.

Figure N.5
Engagement with Nostalgic Media Texts
Thematic Maps
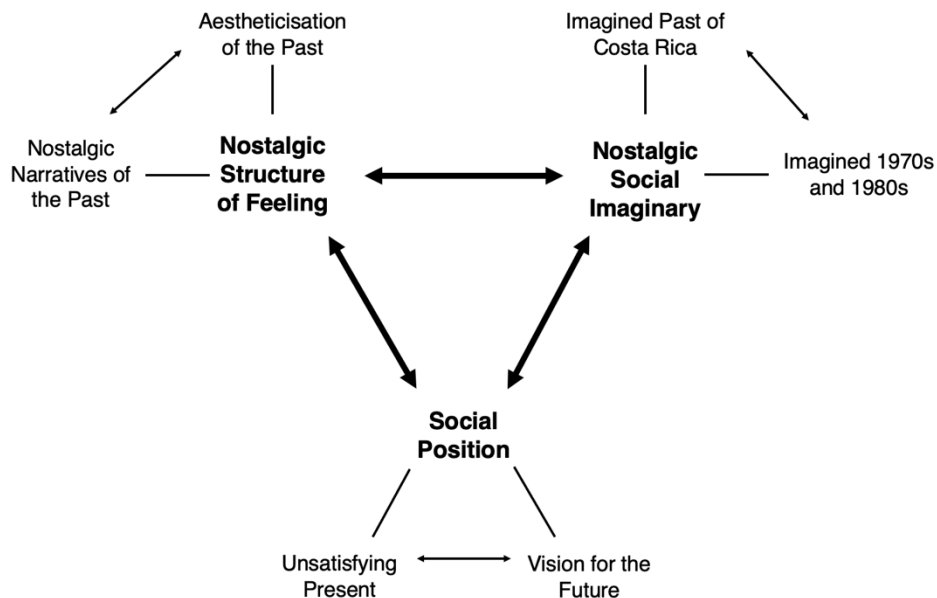
This nostalgic structure of feeling entails a mode of living and experiencing the present, the past and even the future. Nostalgic media texts aestheticise the past: they provide representations of previous decades grounded in distinct stylisations that, in turn, promote a polished and refined vision of them. This aesthetisation builds an aesthetic scaffolding for nostalgic structures of feeling that are employed by young audiences to interpret nostalgic media texts. In this respect, when the participants engage with *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) they enact reception practices in which the past is grasped as whole, confirming notions obtained from interpersonal relationships – e.g., anecdotes from relatives – and gaining mediated images about the looks and lifestyles of the 1970s and 1980s.

These nostalgic structures of feeling are not the direct product of an audience 'consuming' a media text. On the contrary, they emerge from diverse social practices. In this case, I examined how a nostalgic social imaginary provides a cultural scaffolding of specific discourses, ideas and tropes about the past. These discursive frameworks are based on shared narratives about the young audiences' country and about the decades depicted in nostalgic media texts. In this thesis, I have defined nostalgia as a structure of feeling which emerges from the articulation of emotions, meanings and materialities. Social imaginaries are one of the possible sources that provide culturally sanctioned meanings to this articulation. The participants make use of this nostalgic social imaginary in an ambivalent and contradictory manner; as such, they idealise the past abstractly. But, when they consider contextual factors, a critical assessment appears concerning the continuity of certain social problems.

This articulation is not homogeneous for young audiences; in other words, there are different articulations of nostalgic structures of feeling. The social positions of the participants imply myriad conditions and events that shape their social experiences. Their identities, then, are developed in social worlds whose architecture can have similarities, overlapping qualities and divergences. Under these circumstances, distinct articulations take place; in this regard, nostalgic structures of feeling interact with modes of understanding and feeling the past, the present and the future that are tied to broader social structures and logics.

7.3 Implications

In this section, I lay out the implications of this research in five areas: the study of nostalgia as a transnational and transcultural social phenomenon, the empirical analysis of memory and nostalgia, the understanding of mediated structures of feeling, the analysis of reception practices and media engagements, and finally, the role of power in media flows, social position, and youth identity. With this, my intention is to reflect on the theoretical and methodological contributions of my analysis and on possible analytical routes that might be derived from it.

7.3.1 Towards a Transnational/Transcultural Understanding of Nostalgia

In Chapter 2, I theorised memory as a social practice which is grounded in multiple mediations. This means that remembering is understood as an active dynamic that brings forward explicit – and implicit – efforts of recollecting some aspect of the past (Ricoeur, 2004), and a convergence of distinct micro and macro processes, from the personal and the collective to the structural (Halbwachs, 1992). But stating that memory is social is not enough. I needed to problematise

how its routes and trajectories, for memory is not hogtied to a specific place or region; rather, and thanks to the globalisation and digitalisation of society, remembering can be operationalised, under myriad guises, across and beyond national boundaries (Brunow, 2015; Törnquist-Plewa, 2018). It is when this transnational and transcultural nature is acknowledged, that it becomes possible to comprehend every action of reminiscing the past as transitory, with the inherent capacity of changing according to the context and circumstances where it is performed (Assmann, 2010; De Cesari & Rigney, 2014; Radstone, 2011). Following this line of thought, Erll & Rigney (2009) suggest that it is necessary to move from Nora's (1989, 2008) original conception of sites of memory to one of *dynamics of memory* in order to underscore the open and constantly evolving action of remembering a previous period of time.

What about nostalgia, then? Throughout this thesis, I have understood and analysed nostalgia as a structure of feeling derived from an articulation of emotions, meanings, and materialities. Shortly, in the next subsection, I discuss the implications of considering nostalgia as a structure of feeling; right now, what is imperative to me is to bring together transnational and transcultural notions of memory to the analysis of nostalgia (Chin & Morimoto, 2013; Pfoser & Keightley, 2021). In the preceding chapters, I have explored how Costa Rican young people engage with nostalgic media texts. These media texts are transnational in nature for they depict periods of time that do not coincide with the participant's country. In fact, these engagements dialectically mobilise representations from the Global North and interpretations enacted by people from the Global South. *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) might embody nostalgic aspirations and visions of media producers; yet, when young audiences in Costa Rica engage with them, they co-construct meaning-making dynamics in which nostalgic representations of the past interact with assessments of the past and present and visions of the future. In this case, the articulation of nostalgic structures of feeling entails the intersection of socio-historic circumstances and broader social, economic, cultural, and political processes. These practices, I claim, are transnational and transcultural given that they conjure transnational exchanges of meaning – as explored in Chapter 4 – and transcultural appropriations of representations of foreign pasts – as examined in Chapter 5 – (Erll, 2011b; Rothberg, 2014). Hence, it is possible to detect transnational and transcultural nostalgias, a conception which complexifies the conditions and modalities of yearning for the past.

This thesis can be considered an intervention regarding the literature on transnational and transcultural memory. As I outlined in Chapter 2, this corpus

of academic works has a blind spot in terms of the empirical examination of actual audiences interpreting portrayals of the past (Kansteiner, 2002; Keightley & Pickering, 2017). Several theoretical discussions and analyses signal the role of the media in being one of the main sources through which the past is transmitted in contemporary times (Assmann, 2010; De Cesari & Rigney, 2014; Erll, 2011b). Nevertheless, there is a clear scarcity in terms of media reception studies in the literature. The main contribution of this thesis to memory studies, I argue, entails the problematisation of the engagement with representations of the past as a matter of contextual reception practices, i.e., localised meaning-making dynamics.

Analysing nostalgia as a matter of reception involves an analytical focus on the interaction of personal and structural elements. As I have examined previously, the participants experience a dissatisfaction towards the present that fuels the articulation of a nostalgic structure of feeling. This nostalgic structure of feeling is not static; on the contrary, it is constantly actualised through interactions with the social world. For example, in chapter 4, I examined how certain stylisations operate as spatiotemporal bridges that help the participants to comprehend different times and spaces. Through their interpretation of these aesthetic constructions, the students from both schools contrast fictional depictions of the 1970s and 1980s with their reality. In this operation, therefore, the engagement with a media text is marked by everyday experiences such as interactions with relatives or their own assessments of the political life of Costa Rica. What matters for the present discussion is how representations of transnational pasts are actualised in social practices that are rooted in a specific context. In other words, when the nostalgia economy and a nostalgia culture intersect, remembering and interpreting the past encompasses actions grounded in local dynamics. Here, I must note that I am not proposing that *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) have a direct impact on how the participants conceive the past, present, and future; rather, I would like to suggest a dialectical interaction of diverse factors – from certain textual and aesthetic elements to institutional dynamics – that have, as outcome, a mode of making sense of their social reality expressed in the articulation of nostalgic structures of feeling.

The present research allows to observe how transnational and transcultural nostalgias are rooted in situated reappropriations of specific conceptions and representations of the past. In this respect, this thesis offers an empirical examination of the role social imaginaries have in the articulation of nostalgia as a structure of feeling (Appadurai, 1996; Taylor, 2004). By analysing how the students from St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School imagine

Costa Rica in the 1970s and 1980s, I was able to signpost how national and transnational images of the past configure notions of how previous decades were and looked. Even though these figurations are imaginary, they reveal qualities considered to be missing from the present and assessments that point out the anxieties, preoccupations, and hopes of these Costa Rican young people. In this case, the analysis of social imaginaries was crucial to underscore the cultural scaffolding of nostalgic structures of feeling, a scaffolding which is crisscrossed by transnational and transcultural dynamics that involve diverse hybridisations and the enactment of particular social identities (Moses & Rothberg, 2014; Vertovec, 2009).

Although, as I outlined in Chapter 1, this thesis is focused on concrete reception practices, it is impossible to deny the transnational background and transcultural nature of these meaning-making dynamics (Iwabuchi, 2002; Keightley & Pickering, 2017; La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005). It is my contention that the preceding chapters can shed light on the importance of analysing empirically how the reception of media representations of the past is anchored in contextual and localised aspects of social reality. Future research must continue exploring actual interactions between the global and the local with an emphasis on all the multi-directional trajectories that memory and nostalgia have in this process. This 'call to arms' should not be taken as an uncritical suggestion of a 'world without borders'; indeed, as Rothberg (2014) urgently remarks, "in making a transcultural or transnational turn, scholars should foreground located articulations of remembrance embedded in uneven relations of power" (p. 129). I come back to a discussion on power in subsection 7.3.5; for now, I must underline how, as I exhibited in Chapter 6, remembering nostalgically a previous time is tied to particular social positions and discloses the operation of broader social structures.

7.3.2 The Empirical Analysis of Memory and Nostalgia

Throughout this research, I have contended that nostalgia is a structure of feeling composed by an articulation of emotions, meanings and materialities. Based on this, this thesis offers two contributions to the study of nostalgia and its relationship with memory as a socially constituted act (Assmann, 2008; Olick, 1999).

The classifications of nostalgia entail a tricky endeavour, to say the least, for they require the analyst to explore a complex phenomenon regularly using binary terms, losing diverse nuances in this analytical action. Furthermore, these classifications tend to be based on a quality expected to be examined. For instance, reactionary and progressive nostalgia (Smith & Campbell, 2017), or

restorative and reflexive nostalgia (Boym, 2001), as categories, have the goal of evaluating the intentions and possible consequences of certain nostalgic manifestations. Other examples are endo- and exo-nostalgia (Berliner, 2012), or historical and personal nostalgia (Stern, 1992), categories that seek to assess the relationship between a nostalgic object and the person who yearns for it. I am not suggesting that these terms cannot be used in diverse types of studies: indeed, they can have important analytical value. Nevertheless, I have advocated the approach of an analytics of nostalgia to examine the complex practices and relationships, and the myriad conditions that constitute a nostalgic articulation and the rationales behind them, in specific times and places (Chouliaraki, 2006a, p. 7). This approach permitted me to analyse nostalgia with a contextual lens, concentrating my attention on particular articulations present in the social settings where I conducted my fieldwork. In this respect, I identified the presence of two nostalgic structures of feeling – i.e., aesthetic and material nostalgia – that emerge from the engagement with nostalgic media texts, implying different modes of feeling, understanding and imagining the past, the present and the future. Thus, I was able to corroborate that it is essential to explore the contingencies of distinct nostalgias, as Niemeyer (2014) observes.

Proposing an analytics of nostalgia serves two purposes. First, it is a way to investigate the sometimes-elusive object of a nostalgic articulation. This seems initially quite paradoxical as it is clear that when people experience nostalgia, they are yearning for something considered lost or irretrievable (Hassler-Forest, 2020; Keightley & Pickering, 2012; Niemeyer & Keightley, 2020). Nonetheless, this 'something' can be abstract – let us recall how the golden age of youth culture is configured by the participants in Chapter 5. By tracing the different meanings behind this longing, it is possible to establish what is at stake with this cherished object. Second, it helps to detect the selective nature of nostalgia (Pickering & Keightley, 2014, p. 88). As I explored in Chapter 4, nostalgic media texts aestheticise the past, accentuating some elements over others. Even though the participants make sense of this in an ambivalent manner, a focus on this allows us to question what is left out of this romanticisation of the past, and what those omissions might mean.

The second contribution, as outlined above, lies in problematising nostalgia as an issue of media reception. Indeed, the study of audiences vis-á-vis memory is not new (Gudehus, Anderson & Keller, 2010; Rauch, 2018) – although it is an underexplored area in memory studies (Keightley & Pickering, 2012, p. 110). As I discussed in Chapter 2, Landsberg (2004) examines how prosthetic memories imply instances in which people remember historical events they did not

experience on a first-hand basis. Nevertheless, empirical studies of the reception of nostalgic media texts – or nostalgia at large – are scarce in the literature. The cultural production of nostalgia is regularly assessed based on politico-economic and textual critiques (Cross, 2015; Dames, 2010; Gandini, 2020). By turning the attention towards audiences as active meaning-making agents, I examined nostalgia as a mediated articulation which is lived, felt and interpreted by actual people. Furthermore, this research has not assumed why young audiences experience nostalgia; rather, it has sought to interrogate them directly about their engagement with nostalgic media texts in order to grasp their interactions with representations of the past.

Although my emphasis in this thesis was focused on the meaning-making dynamics that take place in concrete reception practices, examining nostalgia as an articulation (Grossberg, 1986; Hall, 1985; Williams, 1977) allowed me also to parse some of the emotional logics behind the idealisation of the past; for instance, how the anxieties and fears derived from the present conditions lived by the students from Virilla Vocational High School generate the notion of a more prosperous past. In addition, it permitted me to determine how nostalgia is 'engraved' in different items, events and periods of time (Bevan, 2019). Let us take as an example the mode in which the students from St. Mary High School 'crave' the styles featured in *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018). Thus, I hope for this research to become an invitation for analysing nostalgia empirically and contextually, focusing on the different elements that form its articulation and how they are connected to broader socio-cultural processes. Future research must continue assessing the particularities of nostalgia in certain times and places, but it also must establish connections between countries, and even regions, to understand what the longing for the past means under the ever-evolving circumstances of social life.

7.3.3 (Mediated) Structures of Feeling

By defining nostalgia as a structure of feeling, I was able to problematise its nuanced nature. The concept permitted me to investigate how peculiar relationships with the present mobilise conceptions of previous times in a complex dynamic in which myriad social and cultural processes and products intersect.

Since its formulation, the concept of structure of feeling has been applied widely (Aston, 2018; Franks, 2014; Lee, 2007). Recently, it has gained traction in diverse kinds of analytical endeavours. The first reason seems to be the rise of affect studies (Leys, 2011; Massumi, 2002). As I outlined in Chapter 2, Williams

(1965) coined the term to explain how a given era was lived through different cultural products and individual experiences; yet, despite having the word 'feeling' in its name, the emotional did not receive much theoretical attention (Williams, 1977). The affective turn in the social sciences and humanities has brought about an interest in the role that feelings play in the constitution of subjectivities and the configuration of different social spheres (Hemmings, 2012; Mazzarella, 2009). In this thesis, I followed Williams's original path and my focus, as I have already stated, was posed on meaning; nevertheless, several efforts have included a more meticulous vision of emotional dimensions in the scope of the concept (Ahmed, 2010, p. 216).

The second reason signals the theoretical purchase of the concept, entailing a deep inspection of present conditions, of social formations that are still not fully 'precipitated' and open to change, and of active engagements with an evolving society. Some commentators have critiqued the concept of structure of feeling and prefer to work with the concepts of habitus and hegemony (Milner, 1994; Filmer, 2003). Bourdieu (1990) defines habitus as a principle of continuity and regularity which allows a controlled spontaneity, i.e., a set of coordinates derived from broader socio-cultural processes – e.g., social class – that opens certain probabilities of behaviour for an individual (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Although both terms share the intention of investigating the middle ground between individual action and social structures, the concept of habitus encompasses "a system of durable dispositions rather than a pattern of felt experience" (Milner, 1994, p. 67). In addition, as Sewell (2005, p. 139) observes, Bourdieu's ideas do not contemplate, in a concrete fashion, the possibilities of change and transformation. On the other hand, hegemony, as operationalised by Gramsci (1971), brings about a social process in which, through power relations, a political consensus is established and maintained. This consensus, then, flourishes from a distribution of power which has historical roots and a relative degree of consistency – let us remember that even Williams (1977) differentiated structures of feeling from hegemony in *Marxism and Literature*. My point here is that, despite their fundamental inputs in the social sciences and humanities, the concepts of habitus and hegemony do not entirely afford an analysis of engagements that emerge from current social and cultural conditions and interactions, and the tensions between the residual and the emergent in contemporary situations (Hassler-Forest, 2020). The merits of the concept of structure of feeling can be appreciated in Sandoval's (2020) study of young people who live in marginal areas in Central America – a study which includes La Carpio. Through a methodology that combines statistical and interpretivist methods, the analysis exhibits how diverse dynamics of social inequalities

generate a structure of feeling of distrust and disenchantment towards the political class and the status quo. As Sandoval (2020, p. 37) suggests, the identification of structures of feeling helps to grasp the different issues and elements that compose and delineate the social experiences of diverse populations.

Following the points raised above, this research has two implications. First, it helps us to theorise structures of feeling as *mediated*. Indeed, media representations – and the media at large – feature prominently in Williams's (1965) conceptualisations of the term; after all, he examined the presence of structures of feeling in media texts, e.g., British novels of the 1840s. However, his elaborations expose a notion of 'inscription' concerning structures of feeling vis-à-vis the media – a position I discussed in Chapter 5. This becomes problematic because reception, as a social process, is left uninspected. As I have demonstrated, the engagement of young audiences with nostalgic media texts is fundamental for the enactment of nostalgic structures of feeling. Structures of feeling, I claim, are actualised, transformed and preserved through the languages and logics of the media (Livingstone, 2009; Silverstone, 2005). Media representations and institutions are essential for their operation, providing images, sounds, colour palettes, narratives and outlets that help to construct social experience. My intention, in this case, was to examine particular articulations; nonetheless, this dynamic of mediation, I submit, is probably present in other kinds of contemporary structures of feeling. In this respect, future research must address the creation, operation and transformations of mediated structures of feeling in diverse social spheres. This endeavour might provide important insights concerning the relationship between the modes in which people engage with the current state of their societies and the representational capacities of the media (Orgad, 2012).

The second implication concerns the methodological approach for analysing structures of feeling. Adapting Huehls' (2010) assessment of the ways of operationalising the concept, I examined structures of feeling as articulations that are structurally coherent and linked to different social structures. To do this, I deployed an ethnographic sensibility whose objective was to gather the participants' reflections about their media engagements and their relationship with ongoing social dynamics. As hinted before, this empirical approach is a way to meet the potential of the concept as it brings together data about actual social interactions and interpretations that are occurring at the moment of conducting the fieldwork. For instance, the strike joined by the students from Virilla Vocational High School was a crucial moment in my fieldwork which permitted

me to explore these young people's relationship with a political status quo and how they conceive past decades as materially more prosperous. For future research, and for the sake of continuing with the conceptual evolution started by Williams (1965, 1977), it is necessary to analyse structures of feeling in concrete social situations and with a focal point directed at real people.

7.3.4 Reception Practices, Audiences and Media Engagements

In this thesis, I analysed the relationship between nostalgic structures of feeling, social imaginaries, and social identities in the engagements of young audiences with nostalgic media texts. The difference between these elements is entirely analytic for, as I hope is clear by now, they converge synchronically in social reality. Following my argument in Chapter 1, the circuit of culture, as proposed by du Gay et al. (2013), help us to understand this convergence by showcasing the mode in which production, consumption, representation, identity and regulation, are interconnected (Livingstone, 2015). In this case, the participants are engaging with *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) in a process in which individual, interpersonal and socio-cultural logics play a key role. The circuit of culture allows us to grasp how reception is more than simply understanding the message of a media text; rather, it entails making sense of society based on diverse moments with their own conditions and contingencies (Champ, 2008, p. 89). The challenge, for future research, resides in exploring the ever-evolving connections, and disconnections, between the moments, events and structures that establish and crisscross reception whilst acknowledging that audience activity stems from an individual agency which, limited as it may be, embodies how people create meaning in their lives.

Classic ethnographic and qualitative audience research advocates that the nuanced and multi-layered nature of audiences must be grasped vis-à-vis their own identities and the social worlds they inhabit (Liebes, 1997; Liebes & Katz, 1993; Radway, 1984). Indeed, the reception practices of Costa Rican young audiences are marked by ambivalences and contradictions: the past is idealised at the abstract level, but when it is inspected closely – taking into account the contextual aspects of the 'old Costa Rica' – a critical assessment appears. In this respect, missing qualities from the present are projected into the past. Nonetheless, at the same time, these young people are reacting against the hegemonic cultural constructions of the country – i.e., the idea of an ethnically 'white', Catholic and patriarchal population – when they critically assess the historical marginalisation of certain identities in their country (see Chapter 5) or the conservative views of certain religious and political groups (see Chapter 6). Although I agree with Jiménez (2015) and Harvey-Kattou (2019) in their view

that Costa Rica's cultural identity derives from a clear ideological project, the participants of this research demonstrate how hegemonic cultural frameworks are always open to fissures and cracks that might eventually lead to transformations. The crux of the matter here regards the way in which the idealisations and critiques of the past are enacted simultaneously, without hampering the attraction for previous decades.

These ambivalences and contradictions are hard to resolve; that is to say, they signpost a sense of an unsatisfying present anchored in historically established socio-economic processes. In this case, I could summon Hall's (1980b) encoding/decoding model and propose that these interpretative operations are negotiated readings. However, this would not be enough as the abstract idealisations and critical assessment of the past, as actualised by the participants, are rooted in different social positions. Moreover, as Yousman (2013) underlines, "no one is simply a negotiating reader, or an oppositional reader. In fact, these positions can operate almost simultaneously within audience readings of various moments in a single text" (p. 201). For instance, an audience might resist historical representations because they are not aligned with official narratives of the past, and this is an oppositional stance based on dominant ideological structures (Wu & Bergman, 2019, p. 120). It is not satisfactory, then, to pinpoint that there is a negotiated reading; instead, it is crucial to explore this dynamic closely, finding the patterns and logics that underpin it. That is why, I claim, considering the complex social dynamics that occur around the actions of engaging with the media (Bødker, 2016, p. 420), it is preferable to develop a vocabulary for interpretative contradictions and ambivalences. The development of this vocabulary is a task for future research, and it must encompass a detailed dissection of negotiated interpretations, taking into account the diverse semiotic, social, cultural, political and economic factors that play a role in the engagement between an audience and a media text.

In this thesis, I have utilised the word 'engagement' to refer to the complex relationships between audiences and media that take place within the contextual framework of everyday life (Livingstone, 1998b, p. 8). Recently, several voices have been discussing the emergence of a new 'engagement approach' within audience research (Reinhard, 2021; Walmsley, 2019). The debates that have arisen from this point to the myriad definitions and uses the term 'engagement' has and the multiple traditions that have theoretically and methodologically employ it in some manner (Bury, 2021; Walmsley, 2021, p. 305). Nevertheless, as Barker (2021, p. 199) remarks, there is a growing body of academic works which shares an interest in analysing how and why significant cultural

experiences emerge from encounters between audiences and the media. Under this perspective, as Ørmen (2021) succinctly puts it, "engagement encapsulates what people care about" (p. 259). With this in mind, I would like to take advantage of the ferment in the field and situate this thesis within this developing approach. Since the beginning of my doctoral studies and especially during my fieldwork, I always sought to explore media engagements as intertextual and dialogic exchanges between media texts and audiences who are expressing their own identities in this act. My analysis brought together not only the reception practices that the participants employ to interpret a particular set of media texts, but their own understandings and visions concerning what matters for them in their lives and society. I believe that the analytical link I have built between meaning-making dynamics, cultural frameworks, and social positions – with a focus on social class and age – is a modest contribution to addressing the lack of attention to issues of social and cultural identities identified in the literature on engagement by Bastos, Grohmann, & de Oliveira (2021, pp. 223-224).

7.3.5 Power: Media Flows, Social Position and Youth Identity

The reception practices analysed in this thesis are not simply enacted within Costa Rica's geographical borders; rather, they are located within a wider process of transnational media flows (Athique, 2016; Lobato, 2019; Straubhaar, 2015). As I pointed out in Chapter 1, Costa Rica's media system is dependent upon foreign media content. With a limited local media production, and an incipient film industry, national media often broadcast and screen content from Latin America – specially Mexico, Colombia and Brazil – and the United States (Cortés, 2016; Fonseca, 2009; Sinclair, 1999). Furthermore, the historical geopolitical relationship between this Central American country and the United States is embodied in media reception. The recent popularity of streaming services such as Netflix or Spotify in this nation deepens the presence of U.S.-based media production within the Costa Rican mediascape (Siles, Espinoza-Rojas, Naranjo & Tristán, 2019; Siles, Segura-Castillo, Solís & Sancho, 2020).

In this research, I have analysed engagements with transnational media texts (Athique, 2005; Martín-Barbero, 1991). As I signalled in Chapter 5, these young people are interpreting represented pasts that are foreign, contrasting these images with their imagined visions of their country's yesteryear. My analysis lays out how reception is porous and nuanced; yet it is tied to power dynamics that must not be ignored in favour of glorifying audiences' creative capacities (Hall et al., 1994; Livingstone & Das 2013; Morley, 1992). Once again, I have reached a common concern of classic qualitative audience studies (Ang, 1985; Hermes, 1995; Staiger, 2005). What is pivotal here is to achieve a balanced view

in which Latin American audiences are not seen as passive vessels of imperialist values (Dorfman & Mattelart, 1991; Tomlinson, 1991) but as agents with diverse interpretative possibilities – from negotiation to collusion (Hall, 1980b; Silverstone, 2002) – that are enacted from specific social positions and power relations. In this respect, future research must investigate how audiences make sense of disparities in terms of media production; for instance, how Costa Rican young audiences comprehend having media diets with an almost exclusive offering of U.S. media texts.

Now, I would like to come back to a point I raised in Chapter 6. For Lareau (2003), middle-class children cultivate a sense of entitlement, and their working-class counterparts develop a sense of restraint, based on the structural conditions of their upbringing. I already critiqued this idea vis-á-vis the students from the public school, pointing out how, despite the manifold barriers they face in their everyday lives, they still actively seek to affirm their identities and to advance socially in Costa Rican society. However, in the case of the private school students, it is possible to detect a well-defined sense of entitlement. During my fieldwork, I was able to observe a process of concerted cultivation, as theorised by Lareau (2003, p. 31), in which these students join different activities – from drama clubs to dance lessons – that might imply the formation of a set of skills, abilities and confidence that can be transformed into certain advantages in several institutional settings (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020, p. 76). Nonetheless, this sense of entitlement does not preclude these young people from having anxieties and fears in terms of their future lives. Just like their public-school counterparts, they are cognisant of the uncertainty that will come in the following years; after all, the university education they will most surely receive is not a guarantee of employment and personal success. It is clear that young people are facing situations of deep inequalities – from the economic to the environmental – that will affect their livelihoods (Devine & Cockburn, 2018; Habib, 2013). In the concerns of the students from St. Mary High School it is possible to detect how even the middle classes notice processes of social and institutional deterioration, processes whose outcome entails the conformation of only two groups: those who have resources and those who do not (Couldry, 2010; Sandoval, 2020).

Power is entrenched in the media and in social life, setting the field for a game in which some players have more advantages than others. But audiences are ambivalent, contradictory, frustrated, distrustful, resistant, amongst multiple possibilities. And with this, I am signposting interpretative operations and also engagements with social reality at large. I wholeheartedly agree with Livingstone's (2019) contention that, when we assess power in our study of the

media, we must always have in mind "people's lives, including their meanings, values, cultures, indeed their humanity" (p. 180). In this thesis, my intention has been to underscore how people – i.e., individuals with their own identities, views, and dreams – are ultimately the ones who make the media, be it on the production or the reception side of the process of social communication.

7.4 Reflections on the Limitations of the Research

As I described in Chapter 3, the ethnographic sensibility I developed during my fieldwork was tied to ethical considerations but also to boundaries imposed by the participants. Although I believe that this thesis provides powerful insights concerning the relationship between nostalgia, reception, social imaginaries and social identities, it cannot make claims to examining, in a holistic fashion, the cultural envelopments of these young people.

The data collection methods I utilised entailed potent modes of grasping how the participants discursively understand their media engagements and reflect on diverse social issues (Lunt & Livingstone, 1994). Specifically, the focus group discussions, and the creative exercises I conducted during their application (see Chapter 5), provided insightful accounts of audience activity concerning the imagination of a national past (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996). Nonetheless, these methods bring about important limitations that I need to recognise. I designed the focus groups to accomplish an environment of trust and familiarity for the participants (Liebes & Katz, 1993); nonetheless, its organisation implies certain boundaries to the conversations and debates. Simply put, these research activities were conducted based on topic guides that emphasised specific issues over others (Rothwell, Anderson, & Botkin, 2016). This is important to consider as it fails to investigate more spontaneous exchanges that could have been recorded through more strictly ethnographic means (Brewer, 2000). The qualitative paired interviews assisted me in complementing and deepening the knowledge I gained from the focus group discussions (Polak & Green, 2016; Zarhin, 2018); in addition, they were useful to secure the participation of the students as they were motivated by the fact of being interviewed with a friend (see Chapter 3). However, by conducting paired interviews I sacrificed a more incisive focus on individual experiences (Kvale, 2007). This could have shed a different light on the evaluations of Costa Rica's future, or it could have implied new nuances regarding other phenomena.

The preceding chapters are mainly based on a thematic analysis of transcriptions obtained from focus group discussions and qualitative paired interviews. This data analysis method has proven to be a powerful way of identifying patterns of

meaning within rich data sets. However, its operationalisation had drawbacks that I need to address. First, I coded the data by myself; even though I specified how I constructed thematic maps in Appendix 10, this process could have benefited from more coders to test the coding scheme and to gain diverse analytical perspectives (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This situation derived from a lack of funds that made it difficult for me to hire extra help. Second, notwithstanding the myriad precautions I took during my fieldwork and subsequent data analysis, I cannot declare that the coding process was completely bias free (Rendón & Nicolas, 2012, p. 237). The initial deductive codes I created were influenced by my interest in different social categories. My intention of working with inductive codes sought to counter this by allowing the data to 'speak' by itself, looking for a balance in terms of methodological rigour.

Thematic analysis is versatile inasmuch it permits the operationalisation of multiple theoretical perspectives. Nevertheless, it fails to address aspects of power within its principles. Granted, a focus on power was not a leading preoccupation of this thesis. But critical social sciences must always at least retain a sensibility for the inspection of power relations in the phenomena they are analysing (Couldry, 2004, 2020; Couldry & Hepp, 2017; Sewell, 2005). Other methodologies, such as critical discourse analysis (CDA), are built to examine power within their frameworks from the beginning (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2003). Future research could start to create bridges between these two data collection methods to combine their strengths – a task which Polizzi (2020) has already started by formulating a mode of doing thematic analysis enhanced by elements of CDA (pp. 99-101).

This thesis has a deficit concerning the analysis of nostalgia vis-á-vis gender. In Chapter 6, I mentioned how some female students recognised the selective nature of nostalgia in their assessment of how sexism and gender disparities were more common in previous decades – although they were keen to highlight that this has not ceased to exist today. Indeed, recent studies have started to discuss dynamics of gendered nostalgias (Novoa, 2021) and gendered structures of feeling (Bonfiglioli, 2020). As Banet-Weiser (2021) and Couldry (2020) remark, gender has become a key site of conflict in contemporary society, being embodied in the different conservative movements' pleas to bring back a time where the roles of men and women in social and domestic life were well demarcated. Thus, future research must investigate how experiences of gender are related to the articulation of nostalgic structures of feeling – or even if gender entails a structure of feeling in its own right.

The qualitative nature of this research implies a focus on depth and not on scope (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 403; Eynon, O'Donnell & Williams, 2018, p. 1484). In this respect, I must recognise that the population with which I worked cannot be taken as a representational token of all the young people in Costa Rica (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010, p. 572). I have analysed two social worlds with their own characteristics and lines of force; indeed, it would not be far-fetched to propose that each school has its own culture (Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016; Willis, 1977). Future research must continue the inspection of diverse 'school cultures' in Costa Rica and other parts of the planet and build bridges between them to generate a broader picture of how young people engage with the media and their societies from an ethnographic and qualitative perspective. Despite this caveat, this thesis, I submit, provides a profound portrait of why young audiences engage with nostalgia. By employing the theoretical and methodological frameworks of critical cultural studies and audience studies (du Gay et al., 2013; Hall, 1980a; Staiger, 2005), I have showed that young people do not simply 'read', 'watch' or 'listen' to messages; rather, in the act of making sense of the media, they are making sense of society and culture at large.

7.5 Moving Forward: Issues for Further Research

The strengths and limitations of this thesis point out several research routes for the future in terms of the analysis of nostalgia, the media, and young people. In what follows, I flesh out some of the main questions and analytical tasks that arise in consequence of my findings.

This project is focused on media reception, i.e., the meaning-making dynamics that take place through specific reception practices. A necessity, then, emerges to examine how nostalgic media texts come to being from the perspective of media producers. Exploring how these media texts – and other kinds of products – are created might shed some light about the dynamics that mobilise the nostalgia economy. Are there practical reasons for media industries to rely on remakes, reboots, and other kinds of nostalgia-based media texts? Are there other criteria besides profitability? In this respect, Bevan's (2019) ethnographic study of the role of production design and art direction in the development of "nostalgia TV" provides crucial insights for this analytical endeavour. Understanding media production as a creative process in which different departments – from screenwriting to music composition – interact provides new nuances to analyse the complexity of the "encoding" process, to use Hall's (1980b) concept.

The role of nostalgia, as a creative tool, in the media industries raises questions concerning originality. In her classic analysis of the cinema industry, Wasko

(1994) warns against the tendency of producing similar films – e.g., remakes or reboots – in order to guarantee satisfactory revenues, for it might create a situation where repetition replaces creativity and innovation. Almost 30 years later, this warning remains prescient. For instance, filmmakers such as Martin Scorsese (2019) have proclaimed their concern regarding the high volume of sequels, remakes, and franchises being produced by major studios. What occurs to new voices when the main tendency is to rely on the past? Are these new voices – i.e., young media producers – finding outlets to develop their perspectives and approaches? How is this tendency operationalised and perceived by media producers? Perhaps, the crucial question that crops up from this discussion is: are these concerns substantiated in a real situation? Indeed, it is imperative to investigate the broader politico-economic conditions that organise the contemporary production of nostalgic media texts and products; in addition, it is crucial to examine how audiences comprehend their own engagement with the nostalgia economy and with this so-called environment of repetition.

In this thesis, I analysed how young people engage with nostalgic representations of the past. From this, it is possible to signal the necessity of thinking normatively about this process. How should we represent the past? The study of memory and nostalgia has given us crucial theoretical and methodological tools to think about how diverse relationships with past eras are constructed (Farrar, 2011; Kennedy-Karpat, 2020; Niemeyer, 2014; Pickering & Keightley, 2006). Nonetheless, it is imperative to devise actual guidelines to avoid regressive representations in which previous decades are understood without any kind of reflection. Be it actually factual or imaginary, we need to come to terms with our ideas about what precedes us. Keightley & Pickering (2012) point out the creative potential of a critical nostalgia which "seeks to uncover and assess which aspects of the past may act as the basis for renewal in the future" (p. 137). Then, how can we achieve this critical nostalgia? Which are the tools and means to do it? This is a task that will encompass a continuing dialogue between different stakeholders, a dialogue that must cross epistemic and professional boundaries to ensure a productive interaction with a global past, a dialogue that must also take into account disparities, and perhaps unresolvable wounds, between different parts of the planet.

The participants of this study experience a dissatisfaction towards the present. This dissatisfaction is anchored in claims of generational justice or in critiques towards a socio-political status quo. Indeed, these young people will face diverse challenges and disparities in their adult lives. But this is not a new insight. Rising inequality, for example, is one of the main global features of the last decades

(Couldry, 2020; Piketty, 2014). Furthermore, they do not feel heard and do not have political outlets to express their aspirations – a situation that is not exclusive to the Costa Rican case. Again, these observations are not new; rather, they have been widely debated by diverse works that draw from youth studies and other academic disciplines and areas (Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016; MacDonald, Shildrick, & Furlong, 2020; Piispa & Kiilakoski, 2021). A theoretical and methodological endeavour emerges, then, in terms of how to take into account young people's voices in decisions that will impact the future they will live. Is it a matter of defeating political apathy and of re-channelling current values and attitudes, or is it a matter of creating new structures of participation? These questions demand a close analysis of policymaking processes and of actual social movements led by young people around the world (Cammaerts et al., 2016). Moreover, they underscore the importance of problematising how some populations are left out from certain democratic processes.

In this thesis, I have examined transnational and transcultural reception practices. These reception practices entail multi-layered and localised meaning-making dynamics in which multiple social conditions converge (Kansteiner, 2002; Pfoser & Keightley, 2021). Future research must address how transnational and transcultural nostalgias – as I called them in subsection 7.3.1 – are articulated in different contexts and how they might share similar, but also different, characteristics within diverse places across the planet (Bisht, 2013; Brunow, 2015; Niemeyer & Keightley, 2020). As I have argued throughout the preceding chapters, yearning for the past is not tied to entirely personal experiences, but encompasses a mode of understanding and making sense of the relation between past, present, and future. When we complexify this insight with a transnational and transcultural perspective, it becomes imperative to adopt an empirical lens to analyse how remembering is transitory, i.e., how it constantly changes based on circumstantial conditions and broader social, cultural, political, and economic practices (Athique, 2014; Keightley & Pickering, 2017; Orgad, 2012).

7.6 Some Final Thoughts

On 20 August 2019, I was about to leave St. Mary High School after interviewing a teacher, when I saw a group of students eating some snacks. They called me and I approached them. They had just finished doing an exam and they had been given permission to leave their classroom and have some rest. We started talking about diverse topics; after a while, two students, Celia and Camila, began discussing the politics of young people. These young women expressed their disgust towards adults who treat them condescendingly and do not respect their

views. The next fragment is taken from the fieldnotes I wrote about the conversation that ensued.

> "I remember", I said to them, "that when I was in High School, everybody told me that I was just going through a phase … but those phases have not ended, I still believe in what I believed 15 years ago."

> "That really pisses me off", snapped Celia, "when they think that just because you're a teenager, because you're still in high school, because you are young, you don't know anything … I have valid points; I have a perspective."

> "Some people would say that you are 'confused'", I replied cynically, "that you are liberal because you haven't …"

> "Yes, because we haven't experienced anything", interrupted me Celia, "that we are just kids [*chamacos*] … [starts to imitate the voice of an adult]. 'Just wait to see what life will throw at you' … that really angers me because I can think, and I can have my own opinions. This is not a phase."

> "I mean, I don't believe in something because it's cool, but because I thought about it, I thought about the big picture", added Camila. "In 5 years I won't stop supporting the [LGBTIQ+] community or stop thinking that you can have an abortion."

> "Everything I believe in is shared by my nana and my mum,"[34] remarked Celia, "so it's not about being of a certain age, it's a matter of mindset".

> "Yep, we are living in a world which is different, which is going through many changes", said Camila.

> "So, it's not that [imitating the voice of an adult] 'we haven't experienced anything' … We were born in a new world, we know it better than many people, we know how it is," said Celia.

These words register common ideas shared by the young people who participated in this project. Granted, as I have analysed, they inhabit contrasting social worlds, and they will embark on dissimilar lives after graduating high school. Despite their differences in cherishing the past and imagining the future, these young people are motivated by dreams and desires that, in some way or another, make

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[34] Let us remember that, as I described in Chapter 6, Celia's grandmother is particularly celebrated for her progressive values by the 10th-grade students from St. Mary High School.

them wake up every morning, sit down in a classroom and listen to lessons that can sometimes be boring. Evidently, for some this is easier than for others. I do not intend to romanticise these students and portray them as free agents of change who will transform the world someday. In the end, they are teenagers who are discovering their identities, who are still dependent on their parents, who probably spend more time lost in their own 'wastelands' than devising plans for what is to come. They are contradictory, they are passionate, they get disillusioned, they get inspired, just like any other human being.

I arrived at St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School with the typical concerns and preoccupations of any social researcher. During my fieldwork many of my initial assumptions were challenged by the curiosity and enthusiasm of the participants. For instance, I was not expecting these students to be as engaged as they were with the political life of Costa Rica. In every focus group discussion and qualitative paired interview, I was always amazed by something, be it a specific opinion about a film or an original approach to life. I hope that this thesis accomplishes, notwithstanding its limitations, some of the desires expressed by Celia and Camila above. At its core, my intention has been to hear diverse voices of young audiences and explore why the media and certain social practices are meaningful to them.

In this thesis, I have analysed two specific articulations of nostalgic structures of feeling. It could be tempting to suggest that these articulations are unique for the Costa Rican context; but I would argue the contrary. Explorations conducted in other countries or regions could identify, with their own nuances, the operation of aesthetic and material nostalgias, amongst young people and other social groups. Nevertheless, I am not claiming that these are the only possible articulations of nostalgic structures of feeling. My desire is for the preceding analysis to become an invitation to analyse nostalgia in the plural, as Niemeyer (2014, p. 6) compels us to do. In addition, I wish that my emphasis on structures of feeling will continue to demonstrate the analytical purchase of the concept and motivate future research to investigate how social life is lived and experienced 'in solution'.

Analysing nostalgia is crucial, for it reveals those qualities that are considered missing in the present, and that, in turn, mobilise people's convictions. The current nostalgia wave is not an accident: it is the consequence of the rapid growth of economic, political and social uncertainties amongst several populations (Cross, 2015; Hassler-Forest, 2020; Niemeyer, 2014). These uncertainties can be operationalised in many ways; in other words, they are not

the same for everybody (Gandini, 2020; Grainge, 2000). From media industries to populist movements, and following a whole spectrum of motivations and goals, it seems that an attraction towards the past will continue to shape diverse social processes – specially as it appears to give dividends, from box office successes to victories in political elections (Elçi, 2021; Ewen, 2020; Niemeyer & Keightley, 2020). What is essential, I argue, is to discuss thoroughly the reasons behind nostalgia and to assess how they relate to the present and how they might impact the future.

Celia and Camila feel misunderstood and neglected, just like many other young people in Costa Rica and across the planet. This is also the case of audiences. Audiences are usually assumed and taken for granted in media and communications research, a tendency which does not seem to stop any time soon (Athique, 2016; Livingstone, 1998a, 2019; Livingstone & Das, 2013; Staiger, 2005). It is not rare to find debates about passive spectators, gullible voters, innocent viewers or naïve users in the public sphere, from popular media outlets to academic symposia (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020). Yet every single time we actually interrogate audiences we discover the contrary. They are savvy in many ways, they are cognisant of their choices or at least have a hint of the rationales that guide their media diets; in short, they are active (Ang, 1985; Athique, 2008; Georgiou, 2012; Livingstone, 1998b; Radway, 1988). Again, my aim is not to glorify audiences (Couldry, 2003, pp. 17-19; Barker, 2006; Morley, 2006); as I have already stated, audiences are enmeshed in power relations that cannot be depleted with the tools of interpretation or with alternative media practices. Nonetheless, the ambivalences and contradictions of audiences are crucial, I submit, to comprehending the modes in which society and culture are mediated and concretised in everyday life (Livingstone, 2015), to explore how people make sense of a world that sometimes demands too much and gives back too little. Perhaps, studying audiences entails realising that, even in the most mundane media engagement, there is always space for creativity and surprises, confirming that, as Raymond Williams (1977) puts it, "no mode of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention" (p. 125).

8. References

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Appendix 1
Locating the Research

I conducted this research in Costa Rica, a country in which recent anxieties linked to diverse socio-economic inequalities have been politically operationalised with the discursive framework of a nostalgia culture which describes the national past as extraordinary. There, I developed my fieldwork in St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School. Although I provide the rationale behind their selection and a description of their facilities in Chapter 3, it is crucial to understand the urban spaces where they are located. This helps to delineate the tensions that have arisen from the urbanisation of Costa Rica, tensions which have not ceased to impact Costa Rican society.

Costa Rica is administratively divided in 7 provinces: San José – the capital –, Alajuela, Heredia, Cartago, Guanacaste, Puntarenas, and Limón. This division separates the country in centre and periphery with important consequences. The Great Metropolitan Area is formed by the Central Valley, comprising most of the territories of San José, Alajuela, Heredia, and Cartago, and the Guarco Valley, where some sections of Cartago are located. Since colonial times, this area – specially the Central Valley – has been the main urban space of Costa Rica and it has been the place where most of the political, economic, and intellectual life occurs (Molina & Palmer, 2017). As I consider in Chapter 1 and Chapter 5, the hegemonic national identity of Costa Rica has been constructed from the Central Valley, i.e., it is often assumed to be urban, neglecting and marginalising minority populations (Harvey-Kattou, 2019, p. 39). This is crucial to understand symbolic and material tensions which have make the socio-economic development of the country uneven and fragmented.

St. Mary High School is located in Alajuela City, the main urban space of the province of Alajuela. According to the last national census conducted in 2011, this city has 254, 886 inhabitants[1] (INEC, 2013, p. 56). Alajuela City is part of a rapid process of urbanisation in the country that started after the 1948 revolution. For instance, in 1950, 66,5% of the population lived in rural areas and 55% of the economically active men and women worked mostly in agriculture (Molina, 2002, p. 83). Decades later, by the 2010s, 75% of the population lived in urban areas, the highest percentage in Central America, and with a projected 90% for 2050 (Aguilera, 2018, pp. 35-36). For the historian Iván Molina (2002), this process has been characterised by a vigorous migration from rural to urban spaces since the 1960s and by a lack of city planning; the absence of planning has implied a disordered growth whose outcome has been the creation of boroughs and neighbourhoods without green

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[1] Costa Rica is administratively divided in provinces, which in turn are divided in *cantones* and *distritos*. The former regards middle-size urban centres and the latter smaller boroughs. In this case, I am taking 'Alajuela City' as the *Cantón Central* of the province of Alajuela.

areas and marked by air pollution (p. 85). Furthermore, in recent years, the urbanisation of Costa Rica has been tied to dynamics of social segregation in which the middle- and upper-classes have started living in condominiums or private residential zones, translating to the city landscape a rising inequality (Alcázar, 2016). Indeed, during my fieldwork, several students from this private school expressed that they live in condominiums, or similar places, with their families.

Virilla Vocational High School is located in La Carpio, a 'marginal area' located in the province of San José characterised by its Nicaraguan migrant population. During the 1990s and 2000s, Costa Rica experienced important migratory movements from Nicaragua (Mora & Guzmán, 2018, p. 9). According to the last national census, 75% of the migrant population in the country is Nicaraguan, representing 287,766 persons; this corresponds to approximately 7% of the whole population (INEC, 2011). The impact of the Nicaraguan population in the country is relevant, especially considering that 11% of the GDP is produced by migrants (Sandoval, Soto & González, 2020, p. 4). Nonetheless, Nicaraguans are often xenophobically associated with crime, danger, and poverty in the popular culture of Costa Rica (Campos & Tristán, 2009). In this regard, La Carpio is a signifier that represents threatening others in Costa Rican society (Sandoval, 2004).

La Carpio was established in 1993 as an illegal and informal settlement. The terrains where it is located were property of a German family; however, they had been expropriated by the State authorities in December 1942 under the context of World War II. By the beginning of the 1990s, they were owned by the *Caja Costarricense del Seguro Social* (Costa Rican Social Security Fund) – the equivalent of the NHS in the UK (Sandoval et al., 2010, p. 36). The first inhabitants of La Carpio were both internal and external migrants: some were migrating from the rural areas of Costa Rica, whilst others were coming from Nicaragua or other parts of Central America. Economic scarcity was the main mobiliser for this people to take an abandoned piece of land and start building their houses with pieces of wood, zinc sheets and other found materials. The community was baptised with the name of one of the first settlers, a man who struggle with the authorities to have basic services such as electricity and drinking water: Marco Aurelio Carpio (Sandoval et al., 2010).

From there, La Carpio started to grow, gathering more residents; according to the last national census, this area has an approximate number of 19,035 inhabitants, although other official records report higher numbers (Gómez, Guillén & Salas, 2018; Sandoval et al., 2010). Notwithstanding the folklore regarding its migrant roots, La Carpio is actually a binational community, being composed by almost an equal number of Costa Ricans and Nicaraguans, and other minor nationalities (Sandoval, Brenes & Paniagua, 2012). The area has an extension of 23 kilometres and 618 squared metres, and it is surrounded by the Virilla river in the north and by the Torres river in the south (Sandoval, 2004).

La Carpio is divided in diverse sectors: San Vicente, Las Brisas, Central, San Martín, María Auxiliadora, El Roble – which has a zone known as Las Gradas, or 'The Stairs', in its north part –, La Arboleda, La Libertad, and La Pequeña Gran Ciudad ('The Small Big City') or Corazón de María, also known as La Cueva del Sapo or Bajos del Sapo (Sandoval et al., 2010, p. 40). However, this community is

symbolically mapped in 'bus stops'; in other words, its residents know the whole area according to the sectors where the bus line that goes to the city of San José stops. Thus, it was regular to hear participants saying that they live in the "first stop" [*primera parada*], for instance, referring to the immediate zone next to the stop as such. In total, La Carpio has 5 stops – being the last one the bus terminal. As several of the students from Virilla Vocational High School expressed during my fieldwork, the level of "danger" increases with their number; in this respect, according to these young people, the places located from the first to the third are less unsafe than the ones close to the fourth and the fifth.

Appendix 2: Research Ethics Review

This form should be completed for every research project that involves human participants or the use of information relating to directly identifiable individuals.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="5" style="background:red">PART I - CHECKLIST</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">The Checklist is designed to identify the nature of any ethical issues raised by the research.
This checklist must be completed before potential participants are approached to take part in any research.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">1. Name of Researcher: Rodrigo Antonio Munoz Gonzalez</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Status <i>(mark with an 'X' as appropriate)</i></td><td>Undergraduate student</td><td></td><td>Masters student</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Research degree student</td><td>X</td><td>Staff</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Email</td><td>R.A.Munoz-Gonzalez@lse.ac.uk</td><td>Telephone number</td><td colspan="2">+4407722170430
+50683354098</td></tr>
<tr><td>Department</td><td colspan="4">Media and Communications</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">2. Student Details if applicable</td></tr>
<tr><td>Degree programme:</td><td colspan="4">PhD Programme in Media and Communications</td></tr>
<tr><td>Supervisor's name:</td><td colspan="2">Sonia Livingstone</td><td>Supervisor's email:</td><td>s.livingstone@lse.ac.uk</td></tr>
<tr><td>Supervisor's department:</td><td colspan="4">Media and Communications</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">3. Title of the proposal and brief abstract</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">i) Title: Engaging with Nostalgia: Reception, Social Imaginaries, and Young Audiences</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">ii) Abstract
<i>(approx.150-200 words. Your abstract should outline in non-technical language the purpose of the research and the methods that will be used.)</i>

The present project analyses the engagement of young audiences with nostalgic media products. In recent years, there has been a tendency in the entertainment industries of reviving old franchises or contents – from remakes to reboots – in order to capture both original and new audiences. The video streaming service Netflix has expanded its global operations, using this strategy, gaining audience attention and critical acclaim. A nostalgia economy, thus, has appeared, bringing visual and narrative elements from the past through the resources of contemporary media.

This rise of nostalgic media products has been carried out in parallel with political processes marked by a yearning for a lost 'golden age'. In Latin-America, the case of Costa Rica illustrates a recent election characterized by discourses of nostalgia, aimed at restoring a romanticized traditional past. In the last decade, the country has become a beacon of ICT's industries, having a</td></tr>
</table>

strong culture of technological innovation. With the arrival of Netflix, and the presence of a nostalgic culture, a question arises regarding the engagement of young people with nostalgic media products and with a nostalgic national reality. This project proposes to deploy a survey, qualitative interviews and focus groups in Costa Rican high schools in order to understand the interpretative dynamics of young audiences immersed struggles between the local and the global, between the new and the old.

4. Funding

Is it proposed that the research will be funded? No

If so by whom?

5. Where the research will be conducted

In what country/ies will the research take place? (See Note 1)
The research will take place in Costa Rica. Specifically, it will be undertaken in the Great Metropolitan Area, the main urban region of the country.

6. Data Management Plans

Please confirm whether you have completed a Data Management Plan and submitted to Datalibrary@lse.ac.uk ?   (*See Note 2*)
Yes

Please mark an X in the appropriate right-hand column/box	Yes	No	Not certain
7. Research that *may* need to be reviewed by an external (non-LSE) Ethics Committee			
i Will the study require Health Research Authority approval? *(See Note 3)*		X	
ii Does the study involve participants lacking capacity to give informed consent? *(See Note 4)*		X	
iii Is there any other reason why the study may need to be reviewed by another external (non-LSE) Ethics Committee? If yes, please give details here:		X	
If your research will be reviewed by an external (non-LSE) ethics committee, you may not need to complete the rest of this LSE review form – please email research.ethics@lse.ac.uk for guidance.			
8. **Consent** (See Note 5)			

	Please mark an X in the appropriate right-hand column/box	**Yes**	**No**	**Not certain**
i	Does the study involve children or other participants who are potentially or in any way vulnerable or who may have any difficulty giving meaningful consent to their participation or the use of their information? *([See Note 6](#))*			X The study will include a survey, in-depth qualitative interviews, and focus groups conducted with adolescents aged 15-17. All the gathered data will be collected only in cases in which the participant, his or her parents or teachers, and the educational institution have given proper consent and authorization.
ii	Are subjects to be involved in the study without their knowledge and consent (e.g. through internet-mediated research, or via covert observation of people in public places)?		X	
iiii	Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited? *(Answer 'yes' to this question only if the involvement of a gatekeeper in your study might raise issues of whether participants' involvement is truly voluntary or of whether the gatekeeper might influence potential participants in some other way.)*			X Yes, the study intends to recruit participants through schools, so a gatekeeper – in this case, the headmaster or principal of the school – is anticipated

	Please mark an X in the appropriate right-hand column/box	Yes	No	Not certain
				for each such site.
9. Research Design / Methodology				
i	Does the research methodology involve the use of deception? (*See Note 7*)		X	
ii	Are there any significant concerns regarding the design of the research project? For example: • where research intrudes into the private sphere or delves into some deeply personal experience; • where the study is concerned with deviance or social control; • where the study impinges on the vested interests of powerful persons or the exercise of coercion or domination; or • where the research deals with things that are sacred to those being studied that they do not wish profaned.		X The study will collect data with participants in designated spaces by the identified schools. The research is not primarily concerned with sensitive information; however, there is the possibility that the adolescents might bring up some information of their own accord.	
iii	Does the proposed research relate to the provision of social or human services?		X	
10. Financial Incentives				
	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants that might have an impact on the objectivity of the research?		X	
11. Research Subjects				
i	Could the study induce unacceptable psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences		X	

	Please mark an X in the appropriate right-hand column/box	Yes	No	Not certain
	beyond the risks encountered in normal life?			
ii	Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics? For example (but not limited to): sexual activity, illegal behaviour, experience of violence or abuse, drug use, etc.). (Please refer to the Research Ethics Policy, § 13).			X The study is not primarily concerned with sensitive information; nonetheless, the adolescents might bring up some sensitive information of their own accord. The participants will be notified in advance about mandatory reporting and possible future publications.
iii	Are drugs, placebos or other substances to be administered to study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?		X	
12. Confidentiality				
i	Will research involve the sharing of data or confidential information beyond the initial consent given?		X	
ii	Is there ambiguity about whether the information/data you are collecting is considered to be public?		X	
iii	Will the research involve administrative or secure data that requires permission from the appropriate authorities before use?		X	
iv	Will the research involve the use of visual/vocal methods that potentially pose an issue regarding confidentiality and anonymity?		X The study will conduct audio recorded	

	Please mark an X in the appropriate right-hand column/box	Yes	No	Not certain
			focus group discussions, and in-depth qualitative interviews. A provision has been made for seeking informed consent in these cases.	
13. Legal requirements				
	Is there any reason why the research will NOT comply with the requirements of current data protection legislation? *(See Note 8)*		X	
14. Dissemination				
	Are there any particular groups who are likely to be harmed by dissemination of the results of this project? Or is there any potential for misuse of the findings?		X	
15. Risk to researchers				
	Does your research pose any risks to your physical or psychological wellbeing, or that of others working with you?		X	
16. Sensitive research materials				
	Will the research involve accessing security-sensitive material, such as material related to terrorism or violent extremism of any kind? (See Note 9)		X	

Please continue to Part II

PART II: LOW RISK, DEPARTMENTAL/CENTRE/INSTITUTE CERTIFICATION AND/OR NEXT STEPS

Please note that there are certain circumstances where Self-certification of ethics review is not appropriate. Please see Note 10.

A If, after careful consideration, you have answered **No** to all the questions, you do not need to complete the questionnaire in Part III, unless you are subject to some external requirement that requires you to seek formal approval from the School's Research Ethics Committee. You can select **A** in the **Low risk, Departmental/Centre/Institute Certification Section** below, sign as appropriate and submit the form to the appropriate approver in your Department, Centre or Institute. Occasional audits of such forms may be undertaken by the School.

B If you have answered **Yes** or **Not certain** to any of the questions in sections 8-16 of the checklist you will need to consider more fully how you plan to deal with the ethical issues raised by your research. Answering the relevant questions in the Questionnaire in Part III below may assist you. If having done so you are wholly assured that adequate safeguards in relation to the ethical issues raised can and will be put in place, you may select **B** in the Low risk/Departmental/Centre/Institute certification Section below, sign as appropriate and submit the form to the appropriate approver in your Department, Centre or Institute. Occasional audits of such forms may be undertaken by the School.

C If you have answered Yes in section 7 that your research will be subject to review by an external (non-LSE) ethics committee, please select **C** below and send the Checklist (questions 1-7) to research.ethics@lse.ac.uk. You should submit your research for ethics approval to the appropriate external body. Once approval is granted please send a copy of the letter of approval to research.ethics@lse.ac.uk.

D **If Departmental/Centre/Institute certification is not appropriate** you should complete the questionnaire in Part III below, the '**Refer to Research Ethics Committee Section'** at the end of the form, and then submit the form to research.ethics@lse.ac.uk

LOW RISK, DEPARTMENTAL/CENTRE /INSTITUTE CERTIFICATION

Select A, B or C (delete as appropriate):

I have read and understood the LSE Research Ethics Policy and the questions contained in the Checklist above and confirm:

D Refer to Research Ethics Committee

Please complete the box below and sign the relevant section

i) Summary of any ethical issues identified and safeguards to be taken

The study will deal with adolescents aged 15-17. Although the participants are expected to have a satisfactory level of self-consciousness and reflexivity, they remain minors. For this, the path to gain consent for this research will follow three steps: first, the identified high schools will provide authorization to conduct the fieldwork in their premises; second, the parents or guardians of the participants will be informed of the study and they will be asked for their consent; finally, the adolescents will be informed of the goals of the study and will be asked for their consent.

Moreover, it is expected to conduct individual qualitative interviews with some teachers in the identified high schools. In these cases, the abovementioned route will also be followed, i.e. a proper consent form with all the details of the research will be given to them.

Given that the research will take place in Costa Rica, all the consent forms will be written in Spanish. The originals and their translation to English will be provided as appendices of the present document.

The researcher will be alert to meet the participants in spaces outside the identified high schools; in these cases, the contact will be made through a gatekeeper (e.g. sports coach, youth leader, or teacher) in order to gain access to these spaces. Under these circumstances, oral and written consent (when possible) will be sought from the participants and gatekeepers; concerning oral consent, the researcher will audio record their words on a recording device.

ii) Details of relevant experience or training in this area

The researcher has professional experience in market research, in which he conducted qualitative in-depth interviews and focus groups. In addition, he deployed a series of pilot interviews with young people last year that led to the methodological considerations of the present study.

Low risk/Departmental / Centre / Institute Certifications should be approved as follows:
- MSc (or undergraduate) student review forms should be approved/signed by the academic supervisor. (PhD students cannot approve ethics review forms);

- PhD student review forms should be approved/signed by the supervisor

- Research staff who are not PIs should have their review forms approved/signed by the PI;

- Faculty and any research staff who are PIs on grants should have their review forms counter-signed by a designated research ethics champion in their Department / Centre or Institute, for example its research director

Signature of researcher (whether student or staff):		Date:	18.02.2019
Approved by (name)	Sonia Livingstone		
Approved by (signature)*:		Date:	18.02.2019

*By signing here the approver confirms that to the best of their understanding any ethical issues have been adequately addressed in the research design, and the researcher has been made aware of her/his responsibilities for the ethical conduct of her/his research. If in doubt, please refer to your departmental ethics champion, or to the Research Governance Manager, research.ethics@lse.ac.uk

Part III - QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire enables you to explain how the ethical issues relating to your research will be addressed. If you are intending to submit your proposal to the Research Ethics Committee it needs to be completed in full.

17. Research aims

Please provide brief (no more than approx.500 words) details in non-technical language of the research aims, the scientific background of the research and the methods that will be used. This summary should contain sufficient information to acquaint the Committee with the principal features of the proposal. A copy of the full proposal should nonetheless be attached to this document in case it is required for further information.

The present research studies the representation of the past in mediated texts, and the processes of audience engagement that turn it into nostalgia. With this, it is intended to comprehend how young audiences elaborate the meanings and values of media products that are set narratively in the past and are labelled as 'nostalgic'; furthermore, it is intended to understand the reasons that lead young individuals to the consumption of nostalgic products.

Streaming services have become an important home for nostalgia-inspired media products; thus, this research also aims to study the use of these services as platforms for – and as part of – engagement practices that rely on the past. It is intended to scrutinize the experience of young audiences as users of Netflix in terms of the viewership strategies they unfold, and the possible modes in which a media product is affected by and developed within these media platforms.

A nostalgia economy, thus, has appeared, bringing visual and narrative elements from the past through the resources of contemporary media. This rise of nostalgic media products has been carried out in parallel with political processes marked by a yearning for a lost 'golden age'. In Latin-America, the case of Costa Rica illustrates a recent election characterized by discourses of nostalgia, aimed at restoring a romanticized traditional past. In the last decade, the country has become a beacon

of ICT's industries, having a strong culture of technological innovation. With the arrival of Netflix, and the presence of a nostalgia culture, a question arises regarding the engagement of young people with nostalgic media products and with a nostalgic national reality.

The focus of this research is posed on Costa Rica, being considered a developing country in which international, national, and local dynamics, in terms of media production and reception, collide. The young audiences consist in high school students in their last years of study, adolescents who are about to embark in life as young adults.

The project will use (1) a survey intended to be applied to adolescents of a high school age (15-17 years); (2) focus group research with adolescents of a high school age (15-17 years); (3) qualitative in-depth interviews with adolescents of a high school age (15-17 years); (4) qualitative in-depth interviews with teachers of the identified secondary schools.

18. Informed consent

i.	Has information (written and oral) about the study been prepared in an appropriate form and language for potential participants? At what point in the study will this information be offered? (See Note 5)
	The study will require informed consent from site gatekeepers (where applicable), parents, teachers, and adolescents. The draft information sheets and consent forms (see appendices) will be tested for clarity during a pilot study that will be conducted prior to the application of all the research activities. The above-referenced letter and form will be explained to parents, educators and young people before participation. Data subjects will be informed of all conditions of the research including privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. They will also be reminded that their participation is voluntary and that they are able to withdraw, to omit answers, or not to participate in activities at any point. The research will be clearly explained to the adolescents and they will be asked to indicate their willingness to participate through verbal agreement and through signing a form, in addition to their parent's/guardian's signature.
ii	Will potential participants be asked to give informed consent *in writing* and will they be asked to confirm that they have received and read the information about the study? If not, why not? *Please attach your proposed information sheet and consent form.*
	Yes, participants will be asked to provide informed consent in writing and they will be asked to confirm that they have read and received the information about the study. The researcher will be alert to meet the participants in spaces outside the identified high schools; in these cases, the contact will be made through a gatekeeper (e.g. sports coach, youth leader, or teacher) in order to gain access to these spaces. Under these circumstances, oral and written consent (when possible) will be sought from the participants and gatekeepers; concerning oral consent, the researcher will audio record their words on a recording device.
iii.	If the research takes place within an online community, explain how informed consent will be obtained? What arrangements are in place for ensuring that participants do not include vulnerable groups or children?
	N/A

iv.	How has the study been discussed or are there plans to discuss the study with those likely to be involved, including potential participants or those who may represent their views?
	A letter of introduction, information sheet and an explanatory consent form (see appendices) will be provided for any potential participant young person, parent or educator. This will provide clear and non-technical information about the study and the key points of the consent form that any participating parent, educator or young person will have to fill in.
v	Will potential participants be clearly informed that no adverse consequences will follow a decision not to participate or to withdraw during the study?
	Yes, this will be included, in a clear and non-technical language, in the letters of introduction, information sheets, and explanatory consent forms that will be given to the participants, i.e. young persons, parents, or educators. The above-mentioned form and letter will provide information on the research protocol and will emphasise the voluntary nature of participation. It will remind the research participants that they are able to omit answers, withdraw from participation, or chose not to participate in specific activities at any point without the need for explanation. The letter will highlight that there will be no adverse consequences of a decision not to participate. This information will be reiterated at the beginning of the focus group discussions as well.
vi	What provision has been made to respond to queries and problems raised by participants during the course of the study?
	A dedicated email address and telephone numbers for the researcher will be provided for the participants or their parents/guardians should they choose to raise concerns at any point in the project. The researcher will also invite queries and problems at the initial stage of the project through the discussion of the aforementioned letter and form, and subsequently through verbal 'check ins' to ensure participants' on-going willingness to participate before any research activity.
19. Research design and methodology	
i	Where the research involves the use of deception (or the withholding of full information about the study), how does the research methodology justify this?
	N/A
ii	How will data be collected and analysed during the project?
	First, the researcher will contact the identified high schools and will introduce the project. After a stage of preliminary conversations – with the idea to discuss all the details of the research –, formal and written consent from the institutions will be gathered. Then, the researcher will go to the fieldwork sites in order to initiate the data collection process. Then, a survey will be applied to the students in their two final years of study (in the Costa Rican educational system, these years are 10th and 11th grade). The survey will touch upon topics such as media consumption habits, entertainment preferences, and technology use. The intention is to gather a picture of the students' general media activity in order to attain a more localized and personalized information about the participants. This information will be used to tailor further questions in the in-depth qualitative interviews.

Information leaflets inviting students to participate will be disseminated through the schools. In addition, the researcher will ask teachers if they know potential candidates in their classrooms. With this, a group of possible participants will be identified, having in mind different variables such as socio-economic status, gender, religious affiliation, and ethnicity. They will be contacted directly by the researcher.

The focus groups will be conducted first. The approximate duration of the focus groups will be of 2 hours. They will start with a screening of a TV series or film which exhibits a representation of a past period of time; this part will have an approximate duration of 20 or 30 minutes. This will be the starting point for a discussion that is expected to touch upon topics such as media consumption habits, personal understanding of the national and international past, interpretation of the past represented by the media, and their personal vision for the country's future; this discussion will approximately last 90 minutes. In total, 3 focus groups of 8 participants will be conducted in each identified high school.

Following the technique of purposive sampling, a mix of participants that had already formed part of the focus groups and new ones will be selected. Hence, 10 individual in-depth qualitative interviews will be conducted in pairs; hence, in total, 20 adolescents will be interviewed in each school. This activity will be undertaken in a space designated by the school. The interview will touch upon themes of media consumption habits, interpretation of the past represented by the media, personal understandings of nostalgia, and personal assessments of the country's political life. The interviews are expected to have an approximate duration of 1 hour.

The in-depth qualitative interviews with teachers will be based on their teaching subject. Thus, it is expected to interview the teachers of social sciences, history, geography, and literature. If there is any other person that is interested in participating in the research, he or she will be taken into consideration. The interview will touch upon themes of personal interpretation of the national history, interpretation of the past represented by the media, and personal evaluations of the youth's relationship with the country's memory. Each interview is expected to have an approximate duration of 1 hour.

The researcher will be alert to meet the participants in spaces outside the identified high schools; in these cases, the contact will be made through a gatekeeper (e.g. sports coach, youth leader, or teacher) in order to gain access to these spaces. Under these circumstances, oral and written consent (when possible) will be sought from the participants and gatekeepers; concerning oral consent, the researcher will record their words on a recording device.

The focus groups and in-depth qualitative interviews will be audio recorded. The recorded audio will be transcribed for analysis. This material will be analysed using a specialized software such as NVivo. The results will be reported in the doctoral thesis and in possible future academic publications – with all the names of the participants being anonymised.

iii	How have the ethical and legal dimensions of the process of collecting, analyzing and storing the data been addressed?
	All the research activities (survey, focus groups, and in-depth qualitative interviews) will be conducted in the schools, in a specially designated room. All of these activities will have the permission of the gatekeepers (where

applicable) and all participants. In case any activity is conducted outside the identified high schools thanks to a special circumstance, oral and written (when possible) consent will be sought from the participants; in the case of oral consent, the researcher will audio record the participants uttering their expressed consent.

Only necessary identifying information will be collected (e.g. contact detail files, consent forms, and audio recordings) and it will be kept only as long as necessary/legally required. All research which includes identifying information will be stored on a secure server at the LSE (in an encrypted word file, using Safehouse for Windows) or in a locked cabinet at the LSE. No data will be shared with research partners or in some kind of academic publication until it has been anonymised. Please see the data management plan detailing this strategy in depth (see appendices).

The transcription of the audio-recorded data will be done by the researcher and by a transcription service agency located in Costa Rica – considering the peculiarities and slang of the language spoken there. The selection of the transcription service will be done following the highest standards of ethics, confidentiality, and anonymity. The researcher will ask the agency to erase all the transcriptions once they are in his possession.

iv	If agencies, communities or individuals may be directly affected by the research (e.g. participants, service users, vulnerable communities or relations), what means have you devised to ensure that any harm or distress is minimized and/or that the research is sensitive to the particular needs and perspectives of those so affected?

Conducting the research activities proposed so far with adolescents might present practical challenges, as well as ethical ones. All the information of the project will be explained to the participants in a non-technical language and in the clearest manner possible. All the interviews and focus groups will have breaks, where some snack or refreshment will be offered to the participants. This will be done with the idea of inducing a relaxed and non-compromising environment. In case any kind of problem might appear, the researcher will make sure to inform the schools, the parents or guardians, and the proper authorities.

The rest of participants who are not minors will also be informed of all the details of the research and will be required to sign the consent form to be a part of this study.

Although the recruitment of participants will be done via gatekeepers (i.e. schools), the content of the research activities (survey, focus groups, and interviews) are not designed towards evaluating the experience of these spaces as such and as such no service user feedback will be solicited.

20. Ethical questions arising from the provision of incentives

Are any incentives being offered to participants? If so, please provide details

No, there are no incentives offered for participating in the study.

21. Research participants

i	Who do you identify as the participants in the project? Are other people who are not participants likely to be directly or indirectly impacted by the project?
	As detailed above, in this study (adolescents, and teaching or administrative staff) will be recruited through the schools, using information leaflets and recommendations by the teaching staff. All the people who have expressed an interest will be invited on the basis of this research's goals and objectives. In case other people might be directly impacted by the project, oral and written (when possible) consent will be sought from them. In the case of oral consent, the researcher will audio record the participants uttering their expressed consent.
ii	Are there any specific risks to research participants or third parties? If so, please give details
	There are no anticipated risks to research participants or third parties as part of taking part in the research.
iii	If the research involves pain, stress, physical or emotional risk, please detail the steps taken to minimize such effects.
	Although the nature of this research should not invite particularly sensitive or ethically problematic responses, adolescents will be asked to share their views about a wide scope of topics. If, during the research activities explained above, any adolescent reveals information that indicates he or she is personally at risk, appropriates steps will be taken. The researcher will consult the Principal of the school and will also contact the *Patronato Nacional de la Infancia* (PANI), the Costa Rican government's agency in charge of the children and youth population's welfare, to take advice on whether outside authorities should be informed. If the researcher has any reason to suspect an adolescent might be at risk of harm, then the research will be suspended until the adolescent's safety is secured. Given the qualitative nature of this project, the responses of the participants remain open, and as such it is possible for participants to introduce sensitive topics. In these cases, the researcher will proceed with caution and ensure that the participants are comfortable with the lines of questioning.
22. Confidentiality	
i.	What arrangements have been made to preserve confidentiality and anonymity for the participants or those potentially affected, and compliance with data protection law?
	The following confidentiality and data protection measures will be taken: 1. All audio recordings will be stored on a secure server at the LSE until they have been transcribed and fully anonymised. At this point, they will be deleted. 2. Any document with full identifying information (contact sheets with family names) will be encrypted and will be stored on the LSE secure server. 3. All hard-copy consent forms with identifying details will be kept in a locked cabinet at LSE. 4. All data will be kept confidential from other participants and no information reported by one participant will be disclosed to another or to a service provider or school. The only exception to this will be if information disclosed indicates illegal activity or the possible harm of an adolescent.

	In this case advice will be taken from the *Patronato Nacional de la Infancia* (PANI), the Costa Rican State agency in charge of the welfare of the country's minors, and the appropriate guardian will be notified. 5. No data will be shared in any academic publication or report until it has been fully anonymised. 6. Any audio material will not be stored with named data. Any audio file where the name of a participant is evident will only be kept until the proper transcriptions are done; after this, it will be deleted. 7. Access to confidential/identifiable information about research participants will be strictly limited to the researcher (Rodrigo Munoz-Gonzalez) and the primary supervisor (Professor Sonia Livingstone) of the project.
ii	Have you considered the limits to confidentiality, if, for instance, a participant should disclose information which suggests that they or someone else may be at significant risk of harm?
	If this happens, the researcher will consult the Principal of the school and will also contact the *Patronato Nacional de la Infancia* (PANI), the Costa Rican government's agency in charge of the children and youth population's welfare, to take advice on whether outside authorities should be informed. If the researcher has any reason to suspect an adolescent might be at risk of harm, then the research will be suspended until the adolescent's safety is secured.

23. Dissemination

	Will the results of the study be offered to those participants or other affected parties who wish to receive them? If so, what steps have been taken to minimize any discomfort or misrepresentation that may result at the dissemination stage.
	This research intends to produce results which would be of interest to a broad variety of stakeholders, including young people, parents, academics, educators, commercial and marketing entities, media industries, and policy-makers. These audiences will be reached through academic publications that will be derived from the doctoral thesis. At the point of dissemination, all participants will be notified via e-mail, where this is possible. It is also possible that many of the participants will want a copy of the academic publications that might be related to this study; in these cases, the researcher will send them via e-mail or will provide a hard-copy when possible. No discomfort or misrepresentation is anticipated as a consequence of this dissemination. It is possible that the participants may recognise themselves in the research outputs even though every effort will be made to ensure they are anonymous to other audiences. It is unlikely that participants will have access to the academic outputs – such as books or papers –, unless requested.

24. Risk to researchers

	Are there any risks to researchers? If so, please provide details.
	All the research activities (survey, focus groups, and in-depth interviews) are expected to take place in schools. In case the data collection process might go outside this space, the researcher will seek oral and/or written consent from the participants; in terms of the oral consent, the researcher will audio record

	the expressed consent of the participants. In spaces outside the schools, all the safety cautions will be taken into consideration. No risks are anticipated. The researcher is aware of all the safeguarding procedures both for himself and for the research participants.

REFER TO RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Approval is required by the Research Ethics Committee on one or more of the following grounds (please mark with an 'X' in the appropriate place in the right-hand column):

a.	Significant ethical issues are raised by the research, including research characterised by one or more of the following features: (i) Research involving deception of participants, or which is conducted without their full and informed consent at the time the study is carried out or when the data is gathered, or which involves the use of confidential information. (ii) Research where informed consent will be obtained orally but not in writing; (iii) Research involving any of the following: vulnerable groups; personally intrusive or ethically sensitive topics; groups where permission of a gatekeeper is normally required for initial access to members (where involvement of the gatekeeper might raise issues of whether participants' involvement is truly voluntary); research which would induce undue psychological stress, anxiety or humiliation cause more than minimal pain; (iv) Research involving more than minimal risk of harm to the researcher(s)	**X** **X**
b.	The researcher wants to seek the advice of the Research Ethics Committee	
c.	External obligations (for instance, funder requirements, data access requirements) require it	
d.	Research undertaken by a student or member of staff who has not received appropriate training or has insufficient experience in research ethics and has been unable to access appropriate advice or support.	
Please submit your review form, research proposal and your planned Information Sheet and Consent form to research.ethics@lse.ac.uk for review by the Research Ethics Committee.	

NOTES

1. If the research will be conducted abroad you will need to complete a Notification to Travel form. If you will be travelling to a high risk destination you may need to

complete a risk identification form and a risk assessment form. Please see: https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/Risk-and-Compliance-Unit/Health-and-Safety/Fieldwork-overseas-travel-and-off-site-activities . Note that if the location or nature of the research presents a high degree of risk, the Research Ethics Committee may check with the Health and Safety team that a risk assessment is underway.

2. If you have not already done so, please complete a Data Management Plan (DMP). We recommend using the templates provided on DMPonline: https://dmponline.dcc.ac.uk/ Guidance on writing a DMP and using DMPonline can be found on the Library webpages at: http://www.lse.ac.uk/Library/Research-support/Research-Data-Management/What-is-a-Data-Management-Plan-and-how-do-I-write-one Unless you have a research funder that is listed, selected the generic DMP option. Please submit your completed DMPs to the Data Librarian on Datalibrary@lse.ac.uk

3. If your research involves participants identified from, or because of, their status as patients of the NHS or other health services of the UK Devolved Administrations, and/or the relatives of such patients then it will most likely fall under the remit of the Health Research Authority; similarly, social care research involving adults children or families and some proposals for social science studies situated in the NHS will fall under the remit of the Social Care Research Ethics Committee. There is an easy-to-use tool to help you ascertain whether or not you need HRA approval or not at: http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/ethics/ For further guidance see: http://www.hra.nhs.uk/research-community/before-you-apply/determine-which-review-body-approvals-are-required/

4. Under the Mental Capacity Act 2005, research involving adults aged 16 or over with learning difficulties or who otherwise 'lack capacity' will be subject to approval by an NHS REC if that research is deemed to be 'intrusive'. For guidance see: http://www.hra.nhs.uk/resources/research-legislation-and-governance/questions-and-answers-mental-capacity-act-2005/

5. Please refer to the LSE guidance on Informed Consent (which includes a sample template) here: http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/policies/pdfs/school/infCon.pdf. Note that if you will **not** be obtaining **written** consent then your ethics application will need to be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee for review.

6. Please note that we follow the ESRC definition of vulnerability which is as follows: 'Vulnerability may be defined in different ways and may arise as a result of being in an abusive relationship, vulnerability due to age, potential marginalisation, disability, and due to disadvantageous power relationships within personal and professional roles. Participants may not be conventionally 'vulnerable', but may be in a dependent relationship that means they can feel coerced or pressured into taking part, so extra care is needed to ensure their participation is truly voluntary.' https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics/frequently-raised-topics/research-with-potentially-vulnerable-people/
Please also note that as general guidance, research participants under the age of 18 may be vulnerable. If your research will involve children or other potentially vulnerable participants please refer to the LSE Safeguarding policy at: https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/services/Policies-and-procedures/Assets/Documents/safPol.pdf
Also, see Note 4 above regarding the Mental Capacity Act.

7. Deception can occur at a variety of levels: for example, at one level, experimental methods may depend on participants being deliberately misled as to the true nature or purpose of the research in which they are taking part; at another, covert participant

observation may entail an implicit deception as to the true identity and role of the researcher. Deception may be a legitimate and necessary feature of social scientific research, but its use must always be properly justified. Any research involving deception must be submitted to the LSE Research Ethics Committee for review.

8. Please refer to the School's guidance on Data Protection and research: https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/services/Policies-and-procedures/Assets/Documents/datProRes.pdf

9. Where staff or students are planning research projects that will entail accessing security-sensitive material, it is important we ensure that the necessary safeguards are in place to protect both the researcher and the School. Even where there are no ethical issues raised by the research (inasmuch that there are no human participants) it is very important that we have a log of any such research so that students or staff do not run the risk of being wrongly accused of accessing such materials for other/non-research reasons. If your research will involve accessing such material please email research.ethics@lse.ac.uk

10. Applications relating to the following kinds of research should always be subject to review by the Research Ethics Committee:
(i) Research involving deception of participants, or that is intentionally conducted without their full and informed consent at the time the study is carried out or when the data are gathered
(ii) Research which involves or may lead to the publication of confidential information
(iii) Research where informed consent will be obtained orally but not in writing
(iv) Research involving any of the following:
   • research involving vulnerable groups ;
   • research involving sensitive topics ;
   • research involving groups where permission of a gatekeeper is normally required for initial access to members (where involvement of the gatekeeper might raise issues of whether participants' involvement is truly voluntary);
   • research which would induce undue psychological stress, anxiety or humiliation or cause more than minimal pain.
(v) Research involving more than minimal risk of harm (whether emotional or physical) to the researcher(s)

LSE Media and Communications

APPENDIX 3

INFORMATION SHEETS

FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN THE PROJECT

My name is Rodrigo Munoz-Gonzalez. I am a doctoral researcher at the Department of Media and Communications of the London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom.

Currently, I am developing a study which seeks to analyse how young people engage with nostalgic media products in video streaming services such as Netflix. In recent years, the entertainment industries have been generating TV series and films which are set in previous times and decades, e.g. the 1980s. Thus, I am interested in grasping how Costa Rican adolescents interact with media content that depicts a period of time prior to their own birth.

For this investigation, I need to conduct interviews and focus groups in educational institutions in Costa Rica. Furthermore, I would like to do some observations in classrooms and to chat with the teaching staff about their perception of the relationship between technology and contemporary youth.

I will explain the details of the study and what this would imply for your institution as follows.

What is this research about?

Nostalgia is a feeling which idealizes a past, a past that might have been personally lived or not. The contemporary entertainment industries have been following a trend in which media products are set in the past or are based upon successful franchises such as Star Wars. This is what I call the *nostalgia economy*. Netflix, in particular, has had a fair amount of critical acclaim with TV series that nostalgically represent previous decades.

In parallel, contemporary political developments have been marked by populist movements that emphasize the importance of the past, idealizing it and proposing measures to 'bring it back' in some sort. In Costa Rica, the political culture tends to rely on traditions and to take into consideration the values of older generations.

Therefore, it is important to inquire how Costa Rican adolescents understand this past represented by media outlets – which are usually foreign –, and how they understand a national reality where the past plays a relevant role. They will likely live the consequences of the present. And yet, they cannot vote; in other words, they are not part of the official political life of the country. Hence, it is crucial to comprehend their voices and opinions about the past, the present, and the future.

What would the researcher do?

For this study, it is intended to conduct interviews with students in their last year of secondary education. In addition, it is expected to conduct focus groups, which will

consist in sessions with eight participants where a Netflix TV series will be screened and subsequently discussed.

Moreover, it would be ideal to conduct observations in certain classrooms and to chat with the teaching staff. It is expected that the researcher will approximately spend three months in the educational institution; however, this timeframe is negotiable and flexible.

Authorization and Consent

Given that it is expected to work with students in their final years of secondary education, this is a great opportunity for them to be part of an academic research and to learn how the process is unraveled. In other words, it could be an introduction for a future university life.
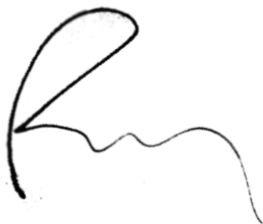
Ethically, it is needed the authorization and consent from the educational institution, the parents or tutors, and the students themselves. This process would follow the steps established in the agreement between the institution and the researcher.

Getting in touch

Obviously, you may still have many questions about this research. For this, I would like to talk to you personally in order to discuss certain details and to answer all the doubts that you may have.

Thank you for your valued time and participation!

All the best,

Rodrigo Muñoz-González, M.Sc.
Department of Media and Communications
London School of Economics and Political Science
Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE
www.rodrigomunoz-gonzalez.com

THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

INFORMATION LETTER: PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Invitation to take part in the project

Hello. My name is **Rodrigo Munoz-Gonzalez**. I am a researcher who works at the Department of Media and Communications of the London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom.

Currently, I am developing a study which seeks to analyse how Costa Rican adolescents interact with media content that depicts a period of time prior to their own birth.

What will happen if you or your child takes part?

For this study, I will conduct **individual interviews** and **focus groups** with students, teachers, and administrative staff from [insert name of school] between [insert dates]. The goal is to understand how young people engage with the past, history and memory of the country. These activities will be audio recorded to help us remember what we discussed. I will store your son's or daughter's personal data (consent form) securely and destroy it after 10 years.

Your son's or daughter's individual information will not be shared with people outside the research project and will be securely stored. Your son or daughter won't be identifiable in any of the materials from the project – for example, I will not use your real name or the name of the children, teaching staff, or school. I will ask your son or daughter not to talk to people outside the school about this project.

Do you or your child have to take part?

Participation is **voluntary.** There are no adverse consequences for your son or daughter if you decide not to take part in this study. If your son or daughter decide to take part but then later on, he or she changes his or her mind, he or she can leave the research and he or she will not have to explain why. It is absolutely fine if your son or daughter feel that he or she does not want to take part in a specific activity or answer specific questions – her or she can just tell me, and we will move on.

Returning the consent form

If you give your son or daughter permission to participate, please sign and return their parental consent form to the researcher or send it to [insert name of the school].

Contact

If you have any questions about the project or any of the research activities, you can contact the main researcher:

Rodrigo Munoz-Gonzalez: R.A.Munoz-Gonzalez@lse.ac.uk

Phones: +44 077 22170430 (WhatsApp) or +506 83354098 (phone call and regular text message).

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INFORMATION LETTER: STUDENTS

Invitation to take part in the project

Hello. My name is **Rodrigo Munoz-Gonzalez**. I am a researcher who works at the Department of Media and Communications of the London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom.

Currently, I am developing a study which seeks to analyse how Costa Rican adolescents interact with media content that depicts a period of time prior to their own birth.

What happens if you want to take part?

For this study, I will conduct **individual interviews** and **focus groups** with students, teachers, and administrative staff from [insert name of school] between [insert dates]. The goal is to understand how young people engage with the past, history and memory of the country. These activities will be audio recorded to help me remember what we discussed. I will store your personal data (consent form) securely and destroy it after 10 years.

No information you give me will be shared with your parents, friends, teachers, or the school. You won't be identifiable in any of the materials from the project – for example, I will not use your real name or the name of your classmates, teachers, or school, in our reports or publications. I will ask you and the rest of participants not to talk to people outside the school about the project.

Do you have to take part?

Participation is **voluntary.** There are no bad consequences for you if you decide not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part but then later on you change your mind, you can leave the research and you will not have to explain why. It is absolutely fine if you feel that you don't want to take part in a specific activity or answer specific questions – you can just tell me, and we will move on.

Returning the consent form

If you agree to take part, please, sign the consent form. Please, also make sure to ask your parent or guardian to read the information sheet and give you their written permission to participate in the study.

Contact

If you have any questions about the project or any of the research activities, you can contact the main researcher:

Rodrigo Munoz-Gonzalez: R.A.Munoz-Gonzalez@lse.ac.uk

Phones: +44 077 22170430 (WhatsApp) or +506 83354098 (phone call and regular text message).

You can get in touch with me if you want to ask for a copy of your data or if you no longer want to be part of the research.

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APPENDIX 4

CONSENT FORMS

STUDENT CONSENT FORM

Thank you for letting me talk to you for my research about how you understand the past, memory, and history, as it is represented through the media.

If I ask something you don't understand, just ask me to explain. If there's anything you don't want to answer, that is fine. And if you want to stop and leave the discussion at any point, just let me know.

I have had the research explained to me and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	☐ (please tick)
I understand that my responses will be kept confidential and anonymous and that my personal data (consent form) will be kept securely and destroyed after 10 years.	☐ (please tick)
I agree to participate in the individual interviews and/or the focus groups.	☐ (please tick)
I have my parent's permission to participate in this study.	☐ (please tick)
I understand that the individual interviews and the focus groups will be audio recorded. I understand that my real name will be anonymised and will not be used in possible future academic publications.	☐ (please tick)

Your name:

Your age:

Which class are you in:

Signature:

Date:

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PARENT CONSENT FORM

Thank you for reading the information sheet about this project and for authorising your son or daughter to participate in the present research.

Please, in case of any question or doubt, get in touch with the researcher via e-mail, WhatsApp message, or phone call.

I, parent/guardian, of _____ [insert your child's name here] have read the information sheet and give consent for my child to participate in the **Engaging with Nostalgia** project.

I agree for the interviews and/or focus groups to be audio recorded to be used in future reports and academic publications. Moreover, I understand the confidential treatment that the data will receive, and I understand that the real name of my son or daughter will never be used in this study.

☐ **(please tick)**

I understand that my son's or daughter's participation is entirely voluntary and will not result in any different treatment from the school. I understand that my son or daughter does not need to answer any question they do not wish to, and can withdraw from the research at any time.

Parent's name:

Signature: **Date:**

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POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

SCHOOL CONSENT FORM

Researchers' name: Rodrigo Munoz-Gonzalez
Research institution: London School of Economics and Political Science
To be completed by the: Head of School or Relevant Administrative Officer
I am happy to support the **Engaging with Nostalgia** project in our school and have no objections to students/ parents/ teachers from _____ School participating in this study. Respondents will participate in individual interviews and/or focus group discussions. Moreover, I authorise that the researcher can conduct observation in specific classrooms, according to the conditions set by the respective teacher. Further details are available in the information sheet facilitated by the researcher of this project. This study seeks to understand how Costa Rican young people engage with the past, memory, and history represented by the media. Any other activity that the researcher might undertake in this school will need the seal of approval from the principal's office. I understand that the individual responses of all students, teachers and administrative staff will be kept confidential and anonymous. The research is anonymous and neither the school nor the students will be identified in the project findings or reports. Participation is entirely voluntary and decisions to take part or not will not result in any different treatment from the school.
Signed by Principal: Date: Name in block letter: Principal's phone number: Email:

Department of
**Media and
Communications**

Appendix 5

Dramatis Personae

As I have described, 90 students from both schools participated in the focus group discussions – 55 in St. Mary High School and 35 in Virilla Vocational High School – and 70 took part in the qualitative paired interviews – 40 in the private institution and 30 in the public institutions. Considering that these young people are a fundamental part of my analysis, I had organised their anonymised names in a list of the 'dramatis personae' according to their involvement in the different research activities I developed during my fieldwork. For the rationale behind the recruitment strategies, see Section 3.8.1.

Focus Group Discussions

St. Mary High School		
Research Activity	**Participants**	**Grade**
Focus Group #1	1. Celia 2. Tomás 3. Guillermo 4. Helena 5. Alejandra 6. Mariana 7. Juan 8. Leonardo	10th grade
Focus Group #2	9. Antonio 10. Vilma 11. Sergio 12. David 13. Pablo	11th grade
Focus Group #3	14. Camila 15. Fernando 16. Felipe 17. Ricardo 18. Carolina 19. Emilia 20. Juan Carlos	10th grade
Focus Group #4	21. Penélope 22. Catalina 23. Alonso 24. Lucía 25. Isabel 26. Esteban	10th grade
Focus Group #5	27. Mario 28. Carlos	11th grade

	29. Manrique 30. Larissa 31. Ignacio 32. Irene 33. Zoé 34. Alicia	
Focus Group #6	35. Verónica 36. Inés 37. Marco 38. Teresa 39. Eva 40. Maribel 41. Adriana 42. Juliana	10th grade
Focus Group #7	43. Pamela 44. Luz 45. Alba 46. Aldo 47. Alex 48. Gloriana 49. Julio 50. Violeta 51. Maricruz	11th grade
Focus Group #7	52. Diego 53. Vanessa 54. César 55. Benjamín	10th grade

Virilla Vocational High School		
Research Activity	**Participants**	**Grade**
Focus Group #1	1. Saúl 2. Aarón 3. Ajax 4. Graham 5. Stephanie 6. Ruth 7. Nidia 8. Melody	11th grade
Focus Group #2	9. Liliana 10. Pierce 11. Alberto 12. Susan 13. Erin 14. Lisa 15. Emanuel 16. Keyla 17. Libia	11th grade
Focus Group #3	18. Diana 19. Marta	12th grade

	20. Harold 21. Roberto 22. Luis 23. Ponce	
Focus Group #4	24. Carmen 25. Rocío 26. Josselyn 27. Jesús 28. Lola 29. Katty	12th grade
Focus Group #5	30. Patricia 31. Jason 32. Tommy 33. Amrita 34. Fátima 35. Claudia	12th grade

Qualitative Paired Interviews

St. Mary High School		
Research Activity	**Participants**	**Grade**
Paired Interview #1	1. Carolina 2. Fernando	10th grade
Paired Interview #2	3. Catalina 4. Isabel	10th grade
Paired Interview #3	5. Celia 6. Mariana	10th grade
Paired Interview #4	7. Camila 8. Ricardo	10th grade
Paired Interview #5	9. Penélope 10. Alonso	10th grade
Paired Interview #6	11. Juliana 12. Verónica	10th grade
Paired Interview #7	13. Helena 14. Gaby	10th grade
Paired Interview #8	15. Emilia 16. Felipe	10th grade
Paired Interview #9	17. Lucía 18. Esteban	10th grade
Paired Interview #10	19. Carlos 20. Mario	11th grade
Paired Interview #11	21. Guillermo 22. Juan	10th grade
Paired Interview #12	23. David 24. Pablo	11th grade
Paired Interview #13	25. Teresa 26. Adriana	10th grade
Paired Interview #14	27. Irene 28. Ignacio	11th grade
Paired Interview #15	29. Maribel	10th grade

Research Activity	Participants	Grade
	30. Eva	
Paired Interview #16	31. Vilma 32. Antonio	11th grade
Paired Interview #17	33. Inés 34. Marco	10th grade
Paired Interview #18	35. Pamela 36. Julio	11th grade
Paired Interview #19	37. Violeta 38. Manrique	11th grade
Paired Interview #20	39. Tomás 40. Leonardo	10th grade
Virilla Vocational High School		
Research Activity	**Participants**	**Grade**
Paired Interview #1	1. Pierce 2. Aarón	11th grade
Paired Interview #2	3. Erin 4. Lisa	11th grade
Paired Interview #3	5. Amrita 6. Fátima	12th grade
Paired Interview #4	7. Keyla 8. Libia	11th grade
Paired Interview #5	9. Roberto 10. Luis	12th grade
Paired Interview #6	11. Patricia 12. Claudia	12th grade
Paired Interview #7	13. Jesús 14. Rocío	12th grade
Paired Interview #8	15. Jason 16. Tommie	12th grade
Paired Interview #9	17. Josselyn 18. Susan	12th 11th grade
Paired Interview #10	19. Marta 20. Ponce	12th grade
Paired Interview #11	21. Katty 22. Carmen	12th grade
Paired Interview #12	23. Lola and 24. Liliana	12th 11th grade
Paired Interview #13	25. Alberto 26. Emanuel	11th grade
Paired Interview #14	27. Diana 28. Harold	12th grade
Paired Interview #15	29. Graham 30. Saúl	11th grade

Department of
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Communications

APPENDIX 6
MEDIA CONSUMPTION HABITS SURVEY

THE MEDIA ARE CHANGING:
WHAT ARE YOU WATCHING?

Thank you for participating in this research project which seeks to understand how young people in Costa Rica use the media. This project is developed by Rodrigo Munoz-Gonzalez, a researcher from the Department of Media and Communications of the London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom.

In this survey, you will find questions that can be answered by **marking an 'X'** on the option that best fits what you think. In others you will need to provide a **short written answer**. Please write as clearly as you can.

Some questions might ask you about your media consumption habits; for instance, how much time per day you spend using your phone or watching TV. If you are not sure about an exact number, please give an approximate of what you think is your reality.

You will complete this survey in an average time of **15-20 minutes**.

All your answers will remain **anonymous**: your real name will never appear in any report or publication part of this project. The data collected from this survey will be stored in a safe location and will be deleted after 10 years.

Your school will have access to the overall results of this survey. However, nothing will personally identify you and your answers.

The participation in this survey is entirely **voluntary**. There are no bad consequences for you if you decide not to take part in this study.

In case you have doubts, please ask me for help. You can ask for help at any moment.

I Part: Internet and Mobile Phone
In this section, you will be asked questions about how you use the Internet and your mobile phone. If you are not sure about the frequency of some of your habits, please give an approximate number of what you think you do. If you have any doubts, please ask me any question you may have.

1. How often do you use the Internet? [*Please tick one answer*]
☐ Never
☐ Hardly ever
☐ At least every month
☐ At least every week
☐ Daily or almost daily
☐ Several times each day
☐ Almost all the time

2. Which devices do you use for going online? [*Please tick as many answers as you want*]
☐ A smartphone
☐ A mobile phone which is not a smartphone
☐ A desktop computer
☐ A laptop or notebook computer
☐ A tablet
☐ A game console
☐ Other:

3. About how long do you spend on the internet on an ordinary week day (school day or working day)? [*Please tick one answer*]
☐ Little or no time
☐ About half an hour
☐ About 1 hour
☐ About 2 hours
☐ About 3 hours
☐ About 4 hours
☐ About 5 hours
☐ About 6 hours
☐ About 7 hours or more

4. About how long do you spend on the internet on a day at the weekend? [*Please tick one answer*]
☐ Little or no time
☐ About half an hour
☐ About 1 hour
☐ About 2 hours
☐ About 3 hours
☐ About 4 hours
☐ About 5 hours
☐ About 6 hours
☐ About 7 hours or more

5. Why do you use the Internet? [*Please tick as many answers as you want*]
☐ To learn something new or get informed about something that matters to me.
☐ To do my homework
☐ To look for resources or events in my local neighbourhood
☐ To look for news online
☐ To create my own blog, music or video and upload it to share it
☐ To visit a social networking site (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram …)

☐ To join political discussion on a social networking site
☐ To use instant messaging (IM) (e.g. WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram …)
☐ To talk to family or friends who live further away (e.g. Skype)
☐ To watch video clips (e.g. on YouTube)
☐ To play online games
☐ To listen to music online (by downloading or streaming) (e.g. Spotify)
☐ To watch TV shows or movies
☐ To use some app
☐ Other:

6. Which websites and apps do you mostly use these days? [*Please tick as many answers as you want*]
☐ Facebook
☐ Facebook Messenger
☐ Twitter
☐ YouTube
☐ Netflix
☐ Vimeo
☐ Amazon
☐ Tumblr
☐ Reddit
☐ 9Gag
☐ Popcorn Time
☐ Cuevana
☐ Pelispedia
☐ A website to watch TV series or films which I don't know its name.
☐ Instagram
☐ Snapchat
☐ WhatsApp
☐ Telegram
☐ Spotify
☐ iTunes
☐ Gmail
☐ Shazam
☐ Uber
☐ UberEats
☐ Skype
☐ Google Maps
☐ Google Chrome
☐ Other:

7. Which is your favourite social networking site? Can you explain briefly why?

8. About how long do you spend on social networking sites on an ordinary week day (school day or working day)? [*Please tick one answer*]

- ☐ Little or no time
- ☐ About half an hour
- ☐ About 1 hour
- ☐ About 2 hours
- ☐ About 3 hours
- ☐ About 4 hours
- ☐ About 5 hours
- ☐ About 6 hours
- ☐ About 7 hours or more

9. About how long do you spend on social networking sites on a day at the weekend? [*Please tick one answer*]

- ☐ Little or no time
- ☐ About half an hour
- ☐ About 1 hour
- ☐ About 2 hours
- ☐ About 3 hours
- ☐ About 4 hours
- ☐ About 5 hours
- ☐ About 6 hours
- ☐ About 7 hours or more

10. Do you have your own smartphone? (If you don't have a smartphone, **please go to question 14**). [*Please tick one answer*]

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No, I don't have a smartphone
- ☐ I use a smartphone owned by a relative or a friend.

11. Why do you use your smartphone? [*Please tick as many answers as you want*]

- ☐ To visit a social networking site (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram …)
- ☐ To use instant messaging (IM) (e.g. WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram …)
- ☐ To watch video clips (e.g. on YouTube).
- ☐ To play games online or using an app.
- ☐ To listen to music online (by downloading or streaming) (e.g. Spotify).
- ☐ To watch TV shows or movies using an app (e.g. Netflix).
- ☐ To talk to family or friends who live further away (e.g. Skype).
- ☐ To take pictures.
- ☐ To record videos.
- ☐ To make phone calls.
- ☐ To write text messages.
- ☐ Other:

II Part: TV and Cinema
In this section, you will be asked questions about how you engage with TV and cinema. If you are not sure about the frequency of some of your habits, please give an approximate number of what you think you do. If you have any doubts, please ask me any question you may have.

People watch TV and films in a lot of ways. They can watch their favourite TV series or films on platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, or other platforms; or they can even watch fragments of their favourite TV series or films on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Please bear this in mind for answering the following questions.

12. How do you watch TV? [*Please tick as many answers as you want*]
- ☐ A TV set
- ☐ A desktop computer
- ☐ A laptop or notebook computer
- ☐ A tablet
- ☐ A game console
- ☐ A smartphone
- ☐ Other:

13. About how long do you spend watching television on an ordinary week day (school day or working day)? [*Please tick one answer*]
- ☐ Little or no time
- ☐ About half an hour
- ☐ About 1 hour
- ☐ About 2 hours
- ☐ About 3 hours
- ☐ About 4 hours
- ☐ About 5 hours
- ☐ About 6 hours
- ☐ About 7 hours or more

14. About how long do you spend watching television on a day at the weekend? [*Please tick one answer*]
- ☐ Little or no time
- ☐ About half an hour
- ☐ About 1 hour
- ☐ About 2 hours
- ☐ About 3 hours
- ☐ About 4 hours
- ☐ About 5 hours
- ☐ About 6 hours
- ☐ About 7 hours or more

15. Which are your favourite TV networks? [*Please tick as many answers as you want*]
- ☐ Channel 7
- ☐ Channel 6
- ☐ Channel 4
- ☐ Channel 11
- ☐ MTV
- ☐ Sony Entertainment Television
- ☐ Fox
- ☐ Nickelodeon
- ☐ Cartoon Network
- ☐ HBO
- ☐ CineMax
- ☐ TCM
- ☐ VH1
- ☐ ESPN
- ☐ FX
- ☐ Other:

16. Which is your favourite TV show? Can you explain briefly why?

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17. Where do you watch your favourite TV show? [*Please tick one answer*]
- ☐ Cable TV
- ☐ National TV
- ☐ Netflix
- ☐ Amazon Prime
- ☐ Hulu
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ I google the name of the TV series that I want to watch, and I select an option from the search
- ☐ TD Más [Costa Rican video streaming service]
- ☐ Other:

18. Which was the last TV series you watched?
A:

19. Which are your favourite film genres? [*Please tick as many answers as you want*]
- ☐ Comedy
- ☐ Drama
- ☐ Horror
- ☐ Western
- ☐ Science Fiction
- ☐ Fantasy
- ☐ Action
- ☐ Adventure
- ☐ Crime and gangster
- ☐ Epics/historical films
- ☐ Musicals/dance
- ☐ War
- ☐ Other:

20. Which is your favourite film? Can you explain briefly why?

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21. Where do you usually go to the cinema? [*Please tick as many answers as you want*]
- ☐ A cinema located in a shopping mall
- ☐ An independent cinema
- ☐ A multiplex cinema theatre

☐ A screening in a traditional theatre
☐ At youth clubs
☐ A church
☐ At outdoor screenings
☐ Other:

22. How often do you go to the cinema? [*Please tick one answer*]
☐ Never
☐ Hardly ever
☐ At least every month
☐ At least every week
☐ Daily or almost daily

23. Which was the last film you watched either at the cinema or in TV or any other platform?
A:

III Part: Video Streaming Platforms
In this section, you will be asked questions about how you use video streaming platforms. If you are not sure about the frequency of some of your habits, please give an approximate number of what you think you do. If you have any doubts, please ask me any question you may have.

24. Do you use video streaming platforms? Which one(s)? (If you don't use video streaming platforms, **please go to question 34**). [*Please tick as many answers as you want*]
☐ Netflix
☐ Amazon Prime
☐ Hulu
☐ YouTube
☐ Cuevana
☐ Pelispedia
☐ Popcorn Time
☐ TD Más [Costa Rican video streaming service]
☐ I don't use video streaming platforms.
☐ I google the name of the TV series or film that I want to watch, and I select an option from the search
☐ Other:

25. Do you pay for an account – or have a profile – in at least one of these services?
☐ I pay for an account in at least one video streaming platform.
☐ I use a video streaming platform that someone else pays.
☐ I don't pay for an account of a video streaming platform.

26. If you don't pay for an account, but you have a profile in at least one video streaming service, who pays for it?
☐ My parents
☐ A friend
☐ A sibling
☐ A relative
☐ My partner (boyfriend/girlfriend)
☐ I pay for the account with friends (we share the same account but have different profiles
☐ I use a free video streaming platform from the Internet.
☐ Other:

27. About how long do you spend using video streaming services on an ordinary week day (school day or working day)? [*Please tick one answer*]
- ☐ Little or no time
- ☐ About half an hour
- ☐ About 1 hour
- ☐ About 2 hours
- ☐ About 3 hours
- ☐ About 4 hours
- ☐ About 5 hours
- ☐ About 6 hours
- ☐ About 7 hours or more

28. About how long do you spend using video streaming services on a day at the weekend? [*Please tick one answer*]
- ☐ Little or no time
- ☐ About half an hour
- ☐ About 1 hour
- ☐ About 2 hours
- ☐ About 3 hours
- ☐ About 4 hours
- ☐ About 5 hours
- ☐ About 6 hours
- ☐ About 7 hours or more

29. Which is your favourite video streaming service? Can you briefly explain why?

30. Which is your favourite media product from a video streaming service? Can you briefly explain why?

31. Which was the last media product you watched from a video streaming service?
A:

IV Part: A Little Bit About Yourself
Please answer the following questions about your background. If you have any doubts, please ask me any question you may have.

32. How old are you?
_____

33. Which gender do you identify with?

_____

34. In which neighbourhood do you live?

_____

35. In which year of high school are you currently enrolled?

_____

36. Which nationality do you identify with? [*Please tick as many answers as you want*]
- [ ] Costa Rican
- [ ] Nicaraguan
- [ ] Colombian
- [ ] Panamanian
- [ ] American
- [ ] Mexican
- [ ] Canadian
- [ ] Italian
- [ ] French
- [ ] Spanish
- [ ] Venezuelan
- [ ] Other:

37. Which ethnicity do you identify with? [*Please tick one answer*]
- [ ] White/Caucasian
- [ ] Mestizo
- [ ] Indigenous
- [ ] Black/Afro-Caribbean
- [ ] Mulato
- [ ] Asian
- [ ] Arabic
- [ ] Other:

38. How many cars do you have at home? [*Please tick one answer*]
- [ ] We don't have cars
- [ ] One
- [ ] Two
- [ ] More than three

39. How many books do you have at home? [*Please tick one answer*]
- [ ] We don't have books
- [ ] Less than 10
- [ ] Between 10 and 50
- [ ] More than 50

40. How many TV sets do you have at home? [*Please tick one answer*]
- [ ] We don't a TV set
- [ ] One
- [ ] Two
- [ ] More than three

41. Do you have Cable TV at home? [*Please tick one answer*]
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

42. Do you have Internet connection at home? [*Please tick one answer*]
☐ Yes
☐ No

43. Did your parents or guardians finish high school? [*Please tick one answer*]
☐ No
☐ One of my parents or guardians finish high school
☐ Both of my parents or guardians finish high school

44. Do your parents or guardians have a university degree? [*Please tick one answer*]
☐ No
☐ One of my parents or guardians have a university degree
☐ Both of my parents or guardians have a university degree

45. From the next list of TV series and films, would you say some of them are nostalgic? Please select the ones that you think are nostalgic for you [*Please tick as many answers as you want*]
☐ Black Mirror
☐ Hannah Montana
☐ Pirates of the Caribbean
☐ Sponge Bob Squarepants
☐ Riverdale
☐ Bohemian Rhapsody
☐ The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina
☐ Ghostbusters
☐ E.T
☐ The Breakfast Club
☐ Luis Miguel: The Series
☐ Stranger Things
☐ Orange is the New Black
☐ A Series of Unfortunate Events
☐ Fuller House
☐ One Day at a Time
☐ Buscando a Marcos Ramírez
☐ Green Book
☐ The Crown
☐ Narcos
☐ The Umbrella Academy
☐ It
☐ The Order
☐ Captain Marvel
☐ The Dirt
☐ Sex Education
☐ Big Mouth
☐ Friends
☐ Roma
☐ 13 Reasons Why

46. Have you ever felt nostalgic with another TV series, film, or song? Could you tell me which one?
A:

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Appendix 7
Focus Group Discussions
Topic Guide

In this annex, I shall present the topic guides I used for conducting the focus group discussions at St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School. As I exposed in Section 3.8.3, this activity was executed in different ways depending on the conditions that the institutions afforded me. The first topic guide was designed for a discussion with an approximate duration of 2 hours, whereas the second was constructed for a duration of 1 hour. In the case of the public school, the focus group discussions consisted in a more concrete version of the ones I held at the private counterpart.

a. Topic Guide for St. Mary High School

Activity	Description	Key Actions
Activity 1: **Introduction** **20 minutes** **All together** **Need:** - **Post-its** - **Cardboards** - **Coloured pens** - **Audio recorder**	*This part will start with an introduction, by the researcher, about the study. He will collect the consent forms at the beginning.* *The researcher will ask the participants to write down their names on some stickers.* *As a warm-up activity, the researcher will play the videoclip of "Just Like Heaven" by The Cure. After this, he will ask the following questions:* 1. If you don't know the year of this song, when would you say it was released? Why? 2. Did something catch your attention in the video? 3. Do you think this is an old song and video? Why? 4. How would you describe this song to a friend?	**[Check for and collect consent forms]** **[Hand out stickers for the participants' names]** **[Turn on computer and play videoclip]**

	5. Did you like the song? *At this moment, the researcher will connect a computer to the video projector in order to show a video streaming platform – most probably, Netflix. He will ask the participants how they would choose something to watch. He would re-enact on the platform what the participants will tell him.*	**[Turn on computer and log in to Netflix]**
Activity 2: Screening **30 minutes** **All together** **Need:** - **Computer** - **Video projector** - **Speakers** - **Audio recorder**	*In this section, Stranger Things or Bohemian Rhapsody will be screened.* *The screening will have an approximate duration of 30 minutes.*	**[Play selected media text]**
Activity 2.2: Interpretation **15 minutes** **Groups of four** **Need:**	*The researcher will start this activity asking some questions.* 1. What do you think of the TV series/film we just saw? Did you like it? 2. Is it similar to what you see regularly? 3. Did you learn something you did not know before? 4. [In the case of a TV series] Would you continue watching the series? Why?	

- Post-its **- Cardboards** **- Coloured pens** **- Audio recorder**	5. [In case someone has already watched the TV series] Did you watch the complete series? If so, what made you keep going? *At this moment, the research will divide the participants in groups of four. Each group will receive a paperboard and some markers.* *The researcher will ask the students how Stranger Things/Bohemian Rhapsody would have been had it happened in Costa Rica. He will ask the participants to imagine how the TV series or film would be if its characters were Costa Ricans living during the 1970's or 1980's.* *When the time is gone, the researcher will compare the stories and will identify similarities and differences between the two groups, and will ask about them. After a series of questions based on this activity, the discussion will carry on.* 6. OK, we have been talking about [name of the film or TV series], would somebody like to summarize our discussion? What should I take away?	**[Hand out paperboards and markers, give them 10 mins to work in groups]**
Activity 3.1: **Past and the Media** **20 minutes** **Pairs** **Need:** **- White papers** **- Coloured pens** **- Audio recorder**	*In this section, the researcher will start with three general questions for the whole group.* 1. How do you feel about the people of your same age that appears on TV series or films? 2. Previously, we talked about Netflix and other video streaming services. Some people have said that Netflix have been following a trend of producing TV series set in another time (e.g. *Stranger Things* or *The Crown*). What do you think about this? 3. How do you know when a media product is set in the past? Does it matter to you? 4. Would you say you learn from films or TV series about the past? Why? 5. What do you think when you hear a media product is an adaptation of a previously well-known franchise (e.g. *Star Wars*, *Ghostbusters*, *Jumanji* …)?	

	6. How do you feel when you see the past of a country different from Costa Rica represented in a media product? Do you think about Costa Rica? 7. Do you know from where are the TV series and films you watch? 8. Do you watch Costa Rican TV series or films? 9. Does it matter to you that the majority of TV series and films that we watch in Costa Rica come from the United States?	
Activity 3.2: Nostalgia and the Media **15 minutes** **All together** **Need:** - **Post-its** - **Cardboards** - **Coloured pens** - **Audio recorder**	*The researcher will start this activity asking some questions.* 1. What is nostalgia? 2. Have you ever experienced nostalgia with a TV series, a film, a song, or something else? 3. Would you write down with what have you felt nostalgic? Please stick your answers on the whiteboard [or paperboard]. *The students will then proceed to stick their answers on a different whiteboard [or paperboard]. The researcher will identify similarities and differences amongst the answers. After a series of questions based on this activity, the discussion will carry on.* 4. If a media product (e.g. a TV series, a film, a record, etc.) is labelled as "nostalgic", what do you think about it? 5. Would you be interested in consuming "nostalgic" media products? 6. We have been talking about the past and about nostalgia. What caught your attention in this discussion?	**[Hand out packs of post-its, give them 5 mins to work]**

| Activity 4: Costa Rica 20 minutes All together Need: - Post-its - Cardboards - Coloured pens - Audio recorder | *This section will start with general questions about the last presidential campaign in Costa Rica.* 1. Do you remember the last presidential election? 2. If you could have voted, whom would you have voted for? Why? 3. Was the past evoked during the electoral campaign? 4. How important are traditions in Costa Rica? 5. Would you say there is nostalgia in Costa Rica? 6. Would you please write down on a post-it what would you like to do after graduating from high school? *The students will then proceed to stick their answers on a different whiteboard [or paperboard]. The researcher will identify similarities and differences amongst the answers. After a series of questions based on this activity, the discussion will carry on.* 7. How do you feel about graduating from high school? 8. What concerns you about the future? 9. How do you foresee the future of Costa Rica? 10. OK, I think we have had wonderful discussions today. Would somebody like to tell me what caught your attention? 11. Is there anything else you would like to tell me? | **[Hand out packs of post-its, give them 3 mins to work]** |

b. Topic Guide for Virilla Vocational High School

Activity	Description	Key Actions
Activity 2: **Screening** **30 minutes** **All together** **Need:** - **Computer** - **Video projector** - **Speakers** - **Audio recorder**	*In this section, Stranger Things or Bohemian Rhapsody will be screened.* *The screening will have an approximate duration of 30 minutes.*	**[Play selected media text]**
Activity 2.2: **Interpretation** **10 minutes** **Groups of four** **Need:** - **Post-its** - **Cardboards**	*The researcher will start this activity asking some questions.* 1. What do you think of the TV series/film we just saw? Did you like it? 2. Is it similar to what you see regularly? 3. Did you learn something you did not know before? *At this moment, the research will divide the participants in groups of four. Each group will receive a paperboard and some markers.*	

- **Coloured pens** - **Audio recorder**	*The researcher will ask the students how Stranger Things/Bohemian Rhapsody would have been had it happened in Costa Rica. He will ask the participants to imagine how the TV series or film would be if its characters were Costa Ricans living during the 1970's or 1980's.* *When the time is gone, the researcher will compare the stories and will identify similarities and differences between the two groups, and will ask about them. After a series of questions based on this activity, the discussion will carry on.* 4. OK, we have been talking about [name of the film or TV series], would somebody like to summarize our discussion? What should I take away?	**[Hand out paperboards and markers, give them 10 mins to work in groups]**
Activity 3.1: **Past and the Media** **5 minutes** **Pairs** **Need:** - **White papers** - **Coloured pens** - **Audio recorder**	*In this section, the researcher will start with three general questions for the whole group.* 1. Would you say you learn from films or TV series about the past? Why? 2. What do you think when you hear a media product is an adaptation of a previously well-known franchise (e.g. *Star Wars*, *Ghostbusters*, *Jumanji* …)? 3. How do you feel when you see the past of a country different from Costa Rica represented in a media product? Do you think about Costa Rica? 4. Do you watch Costa Rican TV series or films? 5. Does it matter to you that the majority of TV series and films that we watch in Costa Rica come from the United States?	
Activity 3.2: **Nostalgia and the Media**	*The researcher will start this activity asking some questions.* 1. What is nostalgia? 2. If a media product (e.g. a TV series, a film, a record, etc.) is labelled as "nostalgic", what do you think about it?	

5 minutes **All together** **Need:** - **Post-its** - **Cardboards** - **Coloured pens** - **Audio recorder**	3. Would you be interested in consuming "nostalgic" media products? 4. We have been talking about the past and about nostalgia. What caught your attention in this discussion?	
Activity 4: **Costa Rica** **10 minutes** **All together** **Need:** - **Post-its** - **Cardboards** - **Coloured pens** - **Audio recorder**	*This section will start with general questions about the last presidential campaign in Costa Rica.* 1. Do you remember the last presidential election? 2. If you could have voted, whom would you have voted for? Why? 3. Would you say there is nostalgia in Costa Rica? 4. How do you foresee the future of Costa Rica? 5. OK, I think we have had wonderful discussions today. Would somebody like to tell me what caught your attention? 6. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?	

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**Appendix 8
Qualitative Paired Interviews
Topic Guide**

Personal Information of the Respondents

Names:
Ages:
Gender:
Education:
Residence:
E-mail (in case they want copy of data):

I. Consumption Habits

1. What kind of media do you use to consume entertainment media products?

2. How is the process you follow to choose, and consume, a specific entertainment media product?

3. Have you ever used a video streaming service (e.g. Netflix, Amazon Prime, HBO GO …) to consume entertainment media products? Which one(s)?

4. What elements do you take into consideration for the selection of a video streaming service?

5. Do you own an account – or profile – in at least one of these services?

6. Have you ever used a pirate platform for entertainment purposes? If so, why?

7. In which devices do you use the video streaming services of your preference? Why?

8. When do you use these services? How is the experience?

9. How do you choose what to watch in these platforms?

II. Media Practices and Preferences

1. How do you start watching a TV series or a film? What kind of elements attract you to a media product?

2. Do marketing campaigns or media coverage influence your decision of watching a series or a film?

3. Do you watch certain media products with friends? If so, how do you organise the progress of watching that product, e.g. binge-watching or other practice?

4. Do you comment the entertainment you consume on a social media platform (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or other) whilst watching it? If so, have you ever received any replies from friends or acquaintances?

5. What kind of films and TV series do you like? Why?

6. What kind of elements do you seek in entertainment when you are browsing around?

7. Which is your favourite TV series and film? Why?

8. What kind of media products do you dislike? Why?

9. Do you use the media for education? If so, could you give me an example of this?

III. Past, Memory, and History

1. Where do you have contact with the past?

2. What makes something 'old' or 'antique'?

3. When you think about the past, in what do you think?

4. How do you get informed about the past?

5. Is the past important for you?

6. How do you differentiate the new from the old?

7. How would you know that a film or a TV series is old?

8. Do you like to watch stories about the past or history? Why?

9. For you, what is history?

10. Where do you learn history? Do you like it?

11. How do you know that something is 'historical'?

12. What would you consider 'historical' in the city or your neighbourhood? Why?

13. In a few words, how would you describe the history of Costa Rica?

14. For you, which is the most important event of Costa Rican history? Why?

15. Do you dislike some event of the history of Costa Rica? Why?

IV. Netflix and Nostalgia

1. When you see that some period of time is portrayed on the media, does your conception of the past change?

2. How do you feel when you see the past of a country different from Costa Rica represented in a media product? Do you think about Costa Rica?

3. How do you know when a media product is set in the past? Does it matter to you?

4. What do you think about Netflix's trend of media products set in another time (e.g. *Stranger Things* or *The Crown*)?

5. What do you think when you hear a media product is an adaptation of a previously well-known franchise (e.g. *Star Wars*, *Ghostbusters*, *Jumanji* …)?

6. How would you define nostalgia?

7. Have you ever felt nostalgic about something? When?

8. Have you ever experienced nostalgia with a media product? Which type of product and why?

9. If a media product (e.g. a TV series, a film, a record, etc.) is labelled as "nostalgic", what do you think about it?

10. Would you be interested in consuming "nostalgic" media products? If so, why?

11. What would you say is the difference between going to a historical museum and watching a TV series, or a film, set in the past?

V. Nationhood and Nostalgia

1. Do you follow the political life of Costa Rica? Why?

2. How would you describe the current state of Costa Rican society?

3. What do you think of the current government?

4. Do you remember the last presidential election? What do you remember?

5. What were your thoughts on the candidates? Have they changed? Why?

6. If you could have voted, whom would you have voted for?

7. Do you have a political ideology? If so, how would you describe it?

8. For you, was the past evoked during the electoral campaign? If so, what was its role?

9. How important are traditions in Costa Rica?

10. Are traditions important for you? Why?

11. Would you say there is nostalgia in Costa Rica? If so, for why?

12. Why would you think some people feel nostalgic in Costa Rica?

13. Do you think nostalgia in Costa Rica is positive or negative? Why?

14. How do you see yourself in the next four years? Why?

15. How do you feel about the future of the country?

16. How would you like Costa Rica to be? How is your utopic vision of the country?

17. Is there anything else you want to tell me?

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Appendix 9
Codebook – Thematic Analysis

1. Initial and Deductive Codes

The present codebook offers an account of the codes utilised for the thematic analysis of the qualitative data of the present research. The codes were extracted from the topic guides deployed in the focus group discussions and the qualitative paired interviews.

Following Saldaña (2009), the next coding frame fragments a code into: 1) labels that summarise the sense of an extract of information; 2) a description of the definition of the code; 3) an explanation of the cases in which it applies; and 4) examples of questions that might contain the code. This last criterion is only a reference for the identification of codes; evidently, several questions along the topic guides triggered responses with similar, different, or overlapping meanings.

Deductive Codes			
Label	**Description**	**Application**	**Examples**
1. The 1980's	A direct reference to some aspect of the decade of the 1980's.	The participant mentions, critically examines, or tells something about the 1980's.	Do you like to watch stories about the past or history? Why?
2. Aesthetic	The set of artistic principles upon which a media product is created.	The participant mentions directly or indirectly the "aesthetic" of a media product.	What kind of elements do you seek in entertainment when you are browsing around?
3. Binge-watching	The action of consuming a TV series, or a set of films, without stopping, usually in a small timeframe.	In cases in which the participant mentions that he or she binge-watched a media product.	Do you watch certain media products with friends? If so, how do you organise the progress of watching that product, e.g. binge-watching or other practice?
4. Costa Rica	A reference to Costa Rica.	The participant mentions or describes a situation that is occurring in his or her country.	Would you say there is nostalgia in Costa Rica?

5. Costa Rican Past	Past events, conditions, or figures that happened or lived in Costa Rica.	In cases in which the participant mentions some aspect of the past of his or her country, Costa Rica.	How do you feel when you see the past of a country different from Costa Rica represented in a media product? Do you think about Costa Rica?
6. Characters	The actors that guide actively or passively the events depicted in a mediated narrative structure.	The participant mentions the characters featured in a specific media content.	Would you have changed something about the characters or the story?
7. Elections	The last presidential elections that took place in Costa Rica. Or a reference to a similar political process.	The participant discusses the last presidential elections in Costa Rica or mentions a similar political process.	Do you remember the last presidential election?
8. Evaluation	A scrutiny of the quality or reception of a media content.	The participant critically assesses the way in which a media content was produced or received.	What kind of media products do you dislike? Why?
9. Films	A narrative form usually created to be shown at a cinema theatre or on TV. It can be consumed on other media outlets such as video streaming platforms.	The participant mentions a film or an instance in which he or she interacted with a film.	Now, would you please write down your favourite TV series and films?
10. Foreign Media	Media produced in other parts of the world, except the U.S. and Latin-America (e.g. Europe or South Korea).	The participants mention media (TV, cinema, music, etc.) produced in in other parts of the world, except the U.S. and Latin-America	Do you know from where are the TV series and films you watch?
11. Foreign Past	Past events, conditions, or figures that happened or lived in a foreign country.	In cases in which the participant mentions some aspect of the past of a foreign country.	Would you say you learn from films or TV series about the past? Why?
12. The Future	An abstract or explicit reference to future situations.	The participant refers to situations, events, or elements that might happen in the future. This reference can have a personal, social or global perspective.	Would you please write down on a post-it what would you like to do after graduating from high school? What concerns you about the future?

13. Genre	The narrative conventions of certain media products that provide a set of expectations and semiotic rules to an audience.	The participant refers directly or indirectly to the genre of a single or a group of media products.	What do you think of the TV series/film we just saw? Did you like it? Is it similar to what you see regularly?
14. Historical Media	Media products whose content have any sort of background based on historical events (e.g. Schindler's List).	In cases in which the participants describe an engagement with a film or TV series with a historical basis.	How do you know that something is 'historical'?
15. Latin-American Media	Media produced in Latin-America, except Costa Rica	The participants mention media (TV, cinema, music, etc.) produced in Latin-America, except Costa Rica.	Do you know from where are the TV series and films you watch?
16. Media in Everyday Life	A situation in which media (e.g. video streaming services, social media, TV networks, etc.) plays an important role in everyday life.	In cases in which media appears to be an important for the participant's everyday life.	Do you watch TV and films with your friends? How and When? (E.g. online conversations, simultaneously, binge watching …)
17. Media Habit	Repeated or frequent actions in which the media in used directly or indirectly.	The participant describes how he or she uses the media in a quotidian basis.	How do you start watching a TV series or a film? What kind of elements attract you to a media product?
18. Media Practice	Material and social practices undertaken by the participants that imply an engagement with a media product.	In cases in which the participant emphasises a behaviour enacted in parallel with a media use.	How is the process you follow to choose, and consume, a specific entertainment media product?
19. Media set in the past	A media product whose content occurs during a past era.	Cases in which media or media products whose main story happens in the past are mentioned.	How do you know when a media product is set in the past? Does it matter to you?
20. Netflix	The U.S. based video streaming service named Netflix.	The participant directly mentions Netflix as a platform or describes its use.	Previously, we talked about Netflix and other video streaming services. Some people have said that Netflix have been following a trend of producing TV series

			set in another time (e.g. *Stranger Things* or *The Crown*). What do you think about this?
21. National Media	Media produced in Costa Rica	The participants mention media (TV, cinema, music, etc.) produced in their own country, Costa Rica.	Do you watch Costa Rican TV series or films?
22. Nostalgia	The yearning for a previous era, or the idealisation of the past.	Cases in which the participant mentions nostalgia in an abstract manner.	What is nostalgia?
23. Nostalgic Media Products	A media product which triggers a nostalgic sensibility.	In cases in which the participant considers a media content as nostalgic.	If a media product (e.g. a TV series, a film, a record, etc.) is labelled as "nostalgic", what do you think about it?
24. The Past	An abstract or more explicit reference to a previous time and space.	In cases in which the participant refers to a past spatiotemporal dimension.	How do you feel when you see the past of a country different from Costa Rica represented in a media product? Do you think about Costa Rica?
25. Personal Future	Personal plans and actions that are expected to happen in coming months or years.	The participant mentions actions or plans that he or she is planning to undertake in the future.	How do you see yourself in the next four years? Why?
26. Personal Nostalgia	A personal longing for a previous time and/or space.	In cases in which the participant talks about a nostalgic situation in his or her life.	Have you ever experienced nostalgia with a TV series, a film, a song, or something else?
27. Pirate Platform	A free and illegal video streaming service (e.g. Cuevana, Popcorn Time, Pelispedia, etc.).	The participant mentions the use of a "free" – and subsequently illegal – video streaming service.	Do you know something about pirate platforms? Have you ever used them?
28. Preference	A favourable or negative attitude towards a certain media product, visual style, or narrative genre. It can also be applied to negative cases, i.e. when the participant declares that he or	In cases of explicit or implicit preference towards a media product.	How do you choose what to watch in these platforms?

		she does not like certain content.	
29. The Present	An abstract or explicit reference to the present situation.	The participant refers to a situation, an event, or an element set in contemporary times.	How would you describe the current state of Costa Rican society?
30. Remake	The new version of a previously released film, TV series, or song.

Reboots will be also counted under this code. | When the participant mentions or discusses a remake (in cinema, television, or music). | What do you think when you hear a media product is an adaptation of a previously well-known franchise (e.g. *Star Wars*, *Ghostbusters*, *Jumanji* …)? |
| 31. Socialisation | Moments in which a person interacts with other peers for several reasons | In cases where the participants state that they interacted with other persons in their everyday lives. | Do you watch TV and films with your friends? How and When? (E.g. online conversations, simultaneously, binge watching …) |
| 32. Social Media | Digital media outlets in which users interact with each other (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram). | The participant describes some action or interaction that took place on a social media platform. | Do you comment the entertainment you consume on a social media platform (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or other) whilst watching it? If so, have you ever received any replies from friends or acquaintances? |
| 33. Story | The narrative events and the narrative universe told in a media product. | The participant refers in some manner to the narrative construction of a media product.

The person can also be reflecting on the formal narrative aspects of the media product. | Did the ending of the film/episode match what you initially thought? |
| 34. Style | The way of creating a media product. In its abstract definition, it entails the possibilities upon which a certain aspect of a media product can be created. | The participant directly or indirectly talks about the "style" of a media product. | What would you say is the difference between going to a historical museum and watching a TV series, or a film, set in the past? |

35. Traditions	The set of material and social practices inherited from the past.	In cases in which the participants highlight the role of traditions in Costa Rican society.	How important are traditions in Costa Rica?
36. TV Series	A serialised narrative that is transmitted and consumed on television or a video streaming service (e.g. Stranger Things, Friends, etc.)	The participant mentions the engagement with a TV series.	Would you please write down which are the last TV series and films you watched? Please stick your answers on the whiteboard [or paperboard].
37. U.S. Media	Media produced in the United States	The participants mention media (TV, cinema, music, etc.) produced in the United States.	Does it matter to you that the majority of TV series and films that we watch in Costa Rica come from the United States?
38. Video Streaming Service	A digital platform in which the user can reproduce and engage with media products (e.g. Netflix, Amazon Prime, HBO GO, Popcorn Time, etc.).	The participant mentions the use of a video streaming service or directly names one.	Now, please raise your hand those of you who have ever used a video streaming (e.g. Netflix, Amazon Prime, HBO GO, Popcorn Time …).
39. Visual Style	The visual modes of presenting how a narrative world looks (e.g. colour palettes, hairstyles, clothing, technology, etc.)	The participant mentions directly or indirectly a characteristic of the visual style of a media product.	How would you know that a film or a TV series is old?
40. Youth Representation	The portrayal of young people in media products.	In cases in which the participants mention or describe how young people are depicted on the media.	How do you feel about the people of your same age that appears on TV series or films?

2. Inductive Codes

After the first analysis of the data, several new codes emerged from the transcriptions. The new codes were operationalised and integrated into the repertoire described above. With this, another revision of the data was undertaken in order to have a more consolidated code frame. Again, following Saldaña (2009), the new codes were fragmented into labels, descriptions, applications, and examples. In this case, the given examples correspond to extracts from the transcripts in order to illuminate their identification.

Inductive Codes			
Label	**Description**	**Application**	**Examples**
1. Audiences	The reaction of a group of audiences towards a media product.	In cases in which a participant describes the reaction of an audience towards a media product (e.g. Stranger Things).	"I think that it is a good story, really well developed, and that is why it attracted the attention of many people".
2. Authenticity	A media product which is not false, which is created based on genuine ideals of aesthetic creation.	In cases in which the participant describes explicitly or implicitly a media product as "authentic".	"It's a real song, not like all these new songs that are about drugs and sex, and all of that".
3. Bohemian Rhapsody	The film about Freddie Mercury's life.	In cases in which the participants mention that they engaged with Bohemian Rhapsody	"For me it is a super cool movie [Bohemian Rhapsody]".
4. Carpio	A marginal neighborhood located in San José, Costa Rica.	When the participants mention some experience that occurred in Carpio.	"I live in the 'first stop', the quietest part [of La Carpio]".
5. Clothes and hairstyles	The styles of clothes and hairstyles that people of the past used to wear.	When a participant mentions old clothes or hairstyles or compares one of them with the present.	"And obviously how they are dressed tells a different concept".
6. Conservatism	Political movements which promote the conservation of a specific status quo.	In cases in which the participants refer to political movements, candidates, or people as "conservative".	"It was an election of really conservative people against liberals".
7. Contemporary Music	Music produced recently.	In cases in which the participants mention songs or music produced in recent times.	"Nowadays, music is not sentimental, it doesn't make you to sing the lyrics".

8. Costa Rican Artists	The experience of being an artist in Costa Rica.	In cases in which the participants discuss how the experiences of being an artist in their country are.	Rodrigo: Is it difficult for a Costa Rican artista to gain success abroad? All: Yes! Obviously!
9. Costa Rican Mainstream Popular Culture	All the hegemonic elements that form part of the Costa Rican Mainstream Popular Culture (or those elements that are left out).	When the participant discusses or criticises some aspect of the Costa Rican Popular Culture (films, TV, sports, music, science, etc.).	"There are many people who are having a lot of success in different sports, but here people are only interested in talking about football".
10. Crisis	The action of describing the current situation of Costa Rica as one of "crisis".	When a participant describes the current moment of her or his country as a "crisis".	"We are living in tough times. We have a crisis to solve".
11. Critical Thinking	The use of critical faculties to assess reality.	In cases in which the participants discuss the role and use of critical thinking in society.	"For me, critical thinking means to think really well what you're going to say".
12. Disney	Media (films, TV, music …) produced by the Walt Disney Company.	When a participant describes, evaluates, or mentions a media product created by the Walt Disney Company.	"Disney is producing a lot of live-action remakes. I like to watch them and remember the details of the original ones".
13. Essence	The intrinsic nature or quality of a media product.	When a participant highlights the essence of a media product or a franchise of cinema or television, e.g. Star Wars, Men in Black, etc.	"So, those films lose the essence of the originals".
14. Ethnicity	A social group which has a shared social and cultural background.	When the participant mentions or discusses issues concerned with ethnicity.	"Yes, black people used to suffer a lot in this country. There was a lot of racism".
15. Folklore	A repertoire of legends and fantastic stories autochthonous from a culture.	In cases in which a participant describes some aspect from Costa Rican folklore.	"El Cadejos or La Llorona would be in Stranger Things … in the Costa Rican version".
16. Gender	Social experiences or situations marked by the gender of a person.	When the participant describes a social situation or experience in which	"There are many sexist attitudes in music, but that's how society is".

		her or his role played an important part.	
17. Generation	A group of people who lives at the same time within a specific timeframe.	When the participants mention directly or indirectly the concept of generation.	"I think that music changes how generations are. And now, music is really different".
18. Imagined Past	Imaginary conceptions of how the past was. This code will be utilised to imagined ideals of Costa Rica.	In cases in which the participants imagine how their country used to be (e.g. in the exercise of imagining Stranger Things in Costa Rica).	"That would have happened on October, 1980, on the 17th … no, no, on the 26th, David's birthday".
19. Innovation	A kind of aesthetic, technological, or social innovation performed on a media product.	When the participant describes a feature of a media product as "innovative".	"It was a time of different innovations, from a certain point of view".
20. LGBTIQ+	Social issues related to the LGBTIQ+ community in Costa Rica.	When a participant mentions an issue related to the LGBTIQ+ community in Costa Rica	"A lot of people were supporting Fabricio because he was against gay marriage".
21. Lifestyle	The mode in which people and objects used to look and be used during a specific period of time.	When a participant explicitly or implicitly some kind of lifestlyle from a previous time.	"Everything was different in that time: friendships, family …"
22. Media and Carpio	Instances in which la Carpio is mentioned on the media.	In cases in which the participants discuss how Carpio is portrayed on the media.	"I think the media has created a negative image of Carpio".
23. Media and Family	The action of engaging with the media with a relative (e.g. mother, father, sister, etc.).	In cases in which the participant mentions that he or she engaged with a media product in a situation in which a relative was present.	"I started watching The Walking Dead alone, but then my mum tagged along. Also, I have started watching other TV series with my mum".
24. Mood	An emotional state which is managed by a person using some sort of media product.	In cases in which the participants discuss how they use a media product (music, TV series, films …) in order to impact the mood	"I have a playlist called 'Chill' which is like more indie and as the word described it: chill". And other called 'Party' which is for partying".

		they were experiencing.	
25. Multiculturalism	The interaction between different cultures within a specific social space.	When the participants describe or discuss a multicultural experience they had or have.	"As you experiment with diverse stuff from other cultures, you become more open to the opinions of other people".
26. Netflix Categories	Algorithmic categories created by Netflix which provide users and audiences with certain recommendations.	When a participant mentions that he or she utilised a category given by Netflix.	"When I will watch something with my brothers, we first choose what to watch: comedy, horror, action …".
27. Nicaragua	Reference to Nicaragua as a country or to the Nicaraguans.	In cases in which the participants mention Nicaragua or Nicaraguans.	"People classify them [Nicaraguans] as rapist, or those who murder and steal our jobs".
28. Old Music	Music produced and released in a past decade, e.g. Madona in the 1980's.	When a participant describes some kind of music from the past.	"This sounds like something from the 1980's".
29. Originality (Creativity)	The action of creating a novel media product in terms of story, characters, visual style, etc. This code will also be used for "creativity" when the participant is using the word as a synonym of "originality".	When the participant is discussing media products that are novel in some aspect.	"There is an obvious lack of creativity in all of those remakes".
30. Private High School Students	Stundets who are currently taking classes at a Costa Rican private high school.	In cases in which students from the public school mention their counterparts of the private high school. Also, in cases in which private high school students refer to themselves.	"I've been my whole life in a private school so I can be admitted in a good university".
31. Production Values	The quality of the different aesthetic elements of a media product (e.g. sound, image definition, editing …)	In cases in which the participants refer to the production values of a media product.	"It's a matter of quality because many [Costa Rican] films have bad audio, not like the American ones".
32. Profit	The goal of generating profit	In cases in which the participants	"They just remake movies because they

	when a TV series or film is produced. For instance, when a famous franchise is rebooted.	describe, mention, or critique the economic goals of a media product.	want to make profit out of a brand".
33. Progressivism	Political movements which promote social change.	In cases in which the participants refer to political movements, candidates, or people as "progressist".	"You just want to avoid going backwards and be as progressist as possible".
34. Public High School Students	Stundets who are currently taking classes at a Costa Rican public high school.	In cases in which students from the private school mention their counterparts of the public high school. Also, in cases in which public high school students refer to themselves.	"They didn't know what they were doing in the strike. I heard an interview on the Radio and they didn't know anything".
35. Religion	Manifestations of a religious creed in Costa Rica or in any other part of the world.	When a participant discusses a religious expression in his or her life, or in Costa Rican society.	"I mean, how are we going to choose an evangelical pastor as our president?"
36. Repetition	The act of continually producing media based on previous iterations (e.g. remakes, reboots, sequels, prequels …).	When a participant discusses a media product that he or she considers "repetitive" in some way or another.	"They keep releasing the same movies instead of creating new stories".
37. Representations of Costa Rica	Media products (film, TV, music …) that depicts Costa Rica or talks about it.	When the participants discuss the representation of Costa Rica on national and international media.	"In Jurassic Park, San José is like a farm, literally is depicted as a jungle or forest".
38. Rural Areas	Areas or zones that are not located within an urban space and are characterised by a presence of nature.	When the participants describe the imagined or real countryside of Costa Rica	[San Carlos] is a place with less population and is outside the centre of society".
39. Safety and Wellbeing	References to safe environments and wellbeing in Costa Rica.	In cases in which the participants mention situations or spaces that were, are, or will be safe and produce wellbeing.	"Back then, you weren't scared that you would get mugged".

		On the contrary, this code can also be used in cases in which the participants are discussing the lack of safety and wellbeing.	
40. Sexism	Media products which are sexist, i.e. objectify women.	In cases in which the participants discuss or criticise a media product because it is sexist.	"There are many songs that are sexist but you still sing them".
41. Social Capital	The different interpersonal connections that a person have depending of his or her social class.	When the participant discusses the social capital of a person, or the social capital required to practice certain activities in Costa Rica	"Everything in Costa Rica is about connections, it's not a matter of how talented you are".
42. Social change	Social situations that mark a transformation of some kind in society at large.	In cases in which the participants discuss or describe some sort of social change.	"There are many things who are changing with this government".
43. Star Wars	Films or TV series which are based on the narrative universe created originally by George Lucas.	When a participant describes the engagement with the films or TV series of Star Wars.	"All my friends who like Star Wars have told me that the new movies were unnecessary".
44. Stereotype	A formulaic image about a person which is often portrayed in a media product.	When a participant describes a stereotype depicted in a media product.	"You see all the classic stereotypes when you watch a movie about teenagers and their high schools".
45. Stranger Things	The Netflix original production set in the 1980's.	In cases in which the participants mention that they engaged with Stranger Things.	"In Stranger Things, characters who were villains at the beginning, are heroes at the end".
46. Strike	The strike that took place in Costa Rica in June and July 2019, and which comprised different sectors (e.g. teachers, religious leaders, transportation leaders …).	In cases in which the participants mention some event related to the strike that took place in Costa Rica in June and July 2019.	"Many people joined the strike just because they wanted to promote disorder".

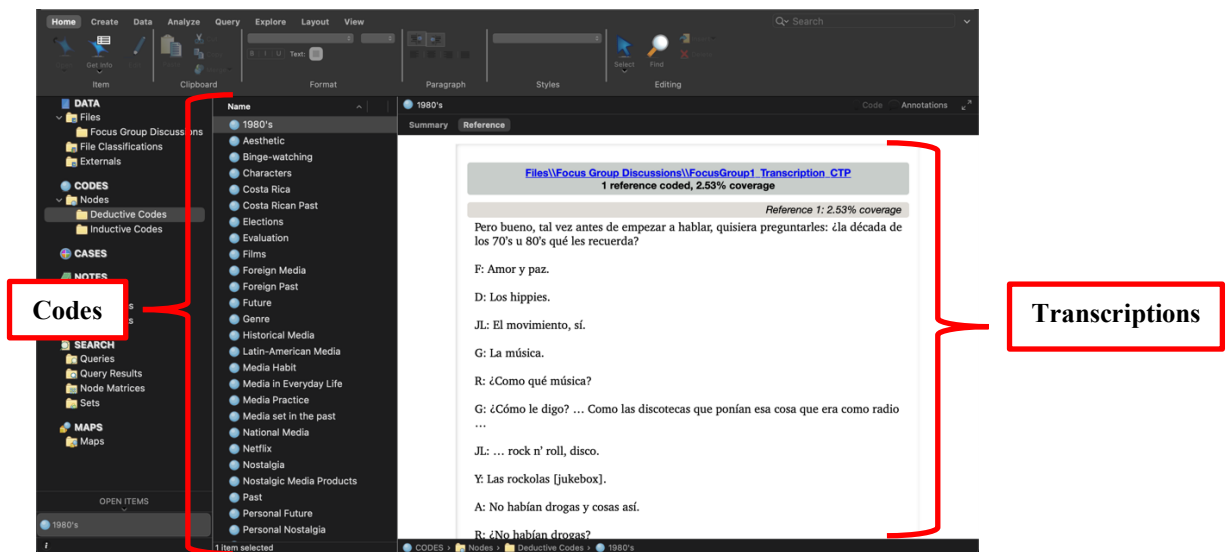| 47. Technology	Material artefacts or devices that have a social purpose.	When the participants highlight some sort of technological device.	"Now it's really difficult to tell, because there are many old devices that are becoming popular right now".
48. Tico	"Tico" is a mode of referring to Costa Rican culture and identity. A "tico" is a synonymous of "Costa Rican".	In cases in which the participant uses the word "tico" to refer to some cultural or identity aspect of his or her country.	"We, as ticos, are used to certain things".
49. U.S.A.	A direct reference to the United States of America.	In cases in which the participant mentions directly or indirectly the U.S.A.	"Latin-America is really different to the United States [Gringolandia]".
50. Voice	The action of expressing our own opinions, ideals, or convictions.	In cases in which the participants describe a situation in which they could or could not express themselves.	"I felt that I didn't have voice, nor I could vote … well, perhaps I had a voice, but I couldn't vote".
51. Xenophobia	Actions or expressions that signify hatred or fear towards what is foreign.	In cases in which the participants signal that they, or someone they know, have experienced some kind of xenophobic manifestation.	"You say that you are Nicaraguan, and people think different of you".
52. Youth in Costa Rica	The experience of being a young person in Costa Rica	When a participant describes an experience of being young in his or her country.	"I just want to get a good job after graduating".

Appendix 10
Coding – Thematic Analysis

In section 3.9.1, I described the six phases of thematic analysis I developed for this research (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). In what follows, I specify the details of each phase in order to comply with the quality measures of *credibility*, *dependability* and *transferability,* as defined by Ólafsson, Livingstone & Haddon (2013).

The first step concerns the *codification of the material*. After devising an initial set of 40 deductive codes, I dissected all the transcriptions of the focus group discussions and the paired interviews. I conducted this coding using the NVivo software package. The coding consisted in assigning fragments of the data to certain codes. For this, I took a flexible approach: I took into account sentences, paragraphs, and even large portions of a conversation to assign them to a code. In addition, given that my exchanges with the participants were rich and nuanced, some fragments had more than one code. The data was coded based on each research activity and the school in which they were conducted, e.g., all the transcriptions from the focus group discussions conducted in Virilla Vocational High School were coded in a single NVivo document.

Figure N.1
Sample
NVivo Coding Document

After a first coding of the data, I moved to the second phase: *identification of themes.* For this, I coded for a second time all the transcriptions in order to identify inductive codes. Thus, based on Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006, p. 87), I added 52 additional codes to the coding scheme that had not been previously established through a deductive lens, i.e., they were the product of 'spontaneous' patterns of meaning that emerged during the research activities. With a codebook which incorporated deductive and inductive codes, I coded the data for a third and final time. After this process, I began to recognise qualitative tendencies amongst all the codes.

Then, the third stage entails the *definitions of themes*. I reviewed all the deductive and inductive codes and group them together in basic themes, i.e., clusters of meanings that were constant throughout the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). These basic themes would be the base of the thematic maps I devised later on. As I demonstrate shortly, I did not use all the basic themes that arose in this phase. I followed principles of prevalence, frequency, and semantic importance to incorporate a repertoire of basic themes in my analysis. Indeed, at this point, this third phase seems a little bit abstract. I will make it more concrete with my explanation of the fourth step.

This leads me to the *construction of thematic maps* (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006)*.* The construction was made following three main patterns of meaning prevalent in the data set, patterns that form the basis of the empirical analysis chapters of the present work. In short, I built three different thematic maps. The general operation involved using the basic themes identified in the previous phase to form organising themes – i.e., middle order clusters that point out the main orientation of the data –; after this, I was able to recognise the presence of global themes, the general principles of meaning-making present throughout the data. Let me go through the details of this process.

For Chapter 4, I found four basic themes that were concerned with the engagement between the participants and nostalgic media texts: 1) Text Structure; 2) Format and Production; 3) Media Practices; and 4) Personal Engagements. Evidently, there is a degree of correspondence between some of the codes I used to create the basic themes. This operation was based on the emphasis of the data; that is to say, I considered the qualities of the coded fragments to decide how to organise them in basic themes. Thus, 'Text Structure' refers to textual elements of media texts, 'Format and Production' entails modes of and goals for producing a media text, 'Media Practices' implies diverse actions that take place whilst engaging with the media, and 'Personal Engagements' is formed by codes in which the participants highlight an individual attitude, preference, or desire, concerning the media. These basic themes led me to recognise the organising theme of 'Nostalgic Narratives of the Past'.

Figure N.2
Basic Themes and Organising Theme (Part I)
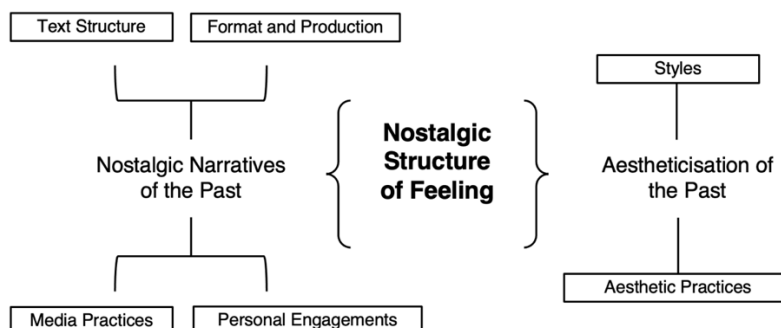Chapter 4

Nostalgic Narratives of the Past
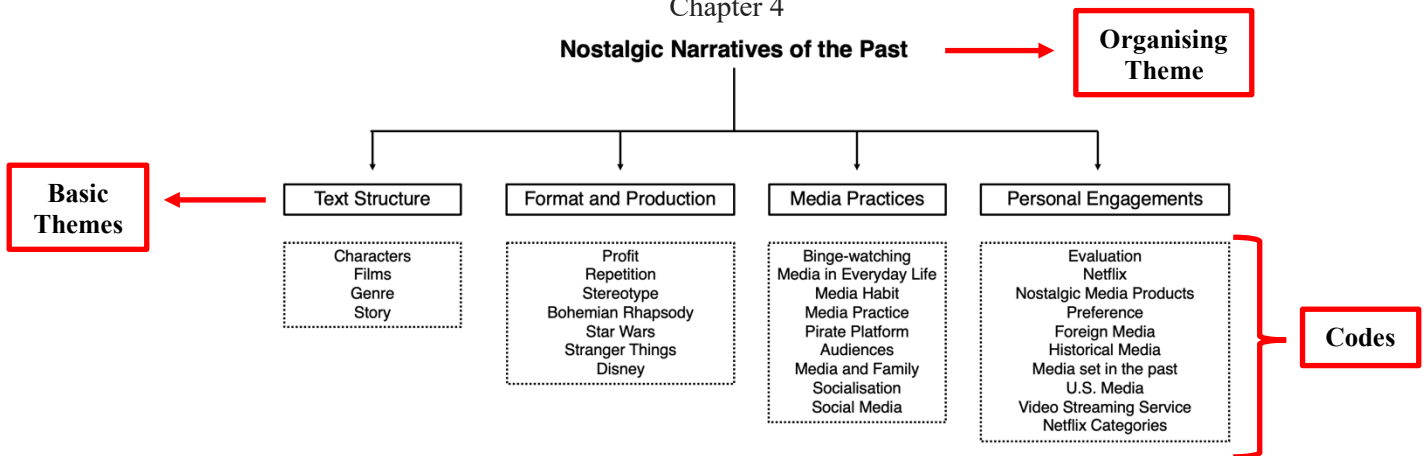
In addition, as I discuss in Chapter 4, I identified a set of basic themes concerned with aesthetics: 1) Styles and 2) Aesthetic Practices. The former implies stylistic features present in media texts and the latter points out actions of producing an aesthetic construction or engaging with one. This permitted me to determine an organising theme I called 'Aestheticisation of the Past'. Indeed, as it is possible to observe, some codes were used twice in the definition of basic themes – something which occurred in the other thematic maps discussed below. I utilised this overlapping to build the connections between the two organising themes.

Figure N.3
Basic Themes and Organising Theme (Part II)
Chapter 4

Aestheticisation of the Past
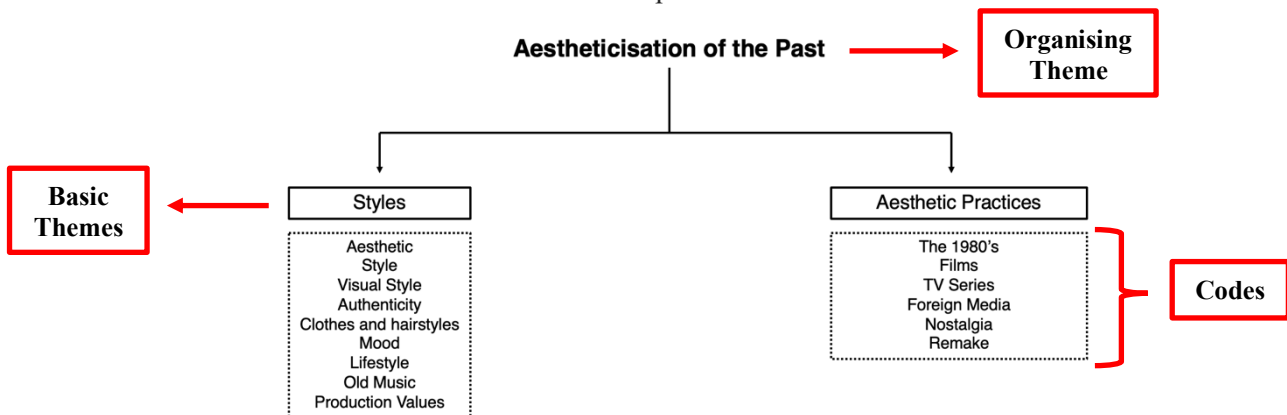
With these basic and organising themes, I was able to construct a thematic map based around a global theme: 'Nostalgic Structure of Feeling':

Figure N.4
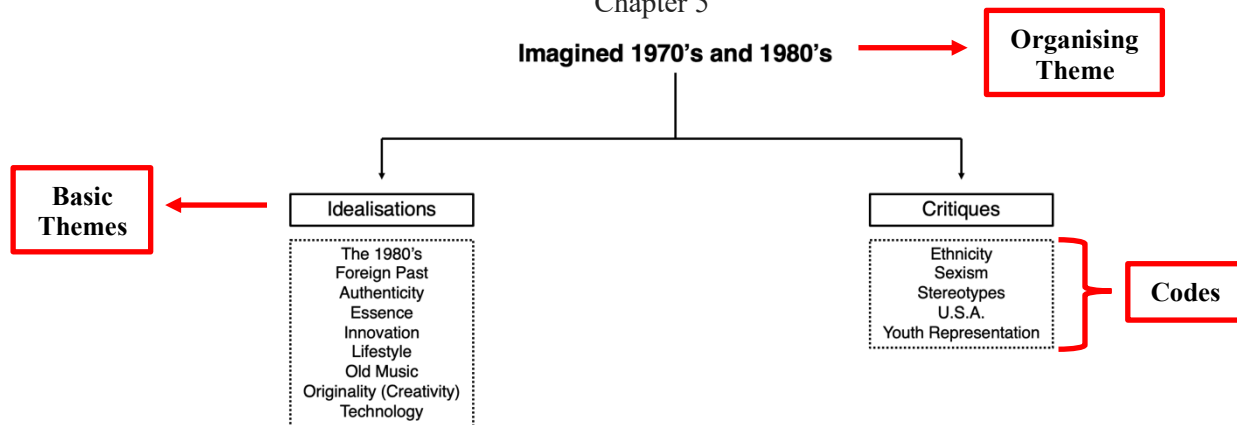Thematic Map – Chapter 4
Nostalgic Structure of Feeling

For Chapter 5, I recognised two basic themes that emerged around the imagination of the Costa Rican past by the participants: 1) Idealisations and 2) Critiques. The first entails the romanticisation of a previous period of time and the second brings forward critical attitudes towards the past. With them, I defined the organising theme of 'Imagined Past of Costa Rica'.

Figure N.5
Basic Themes and Organising Theme (Part I)
Chapter 5
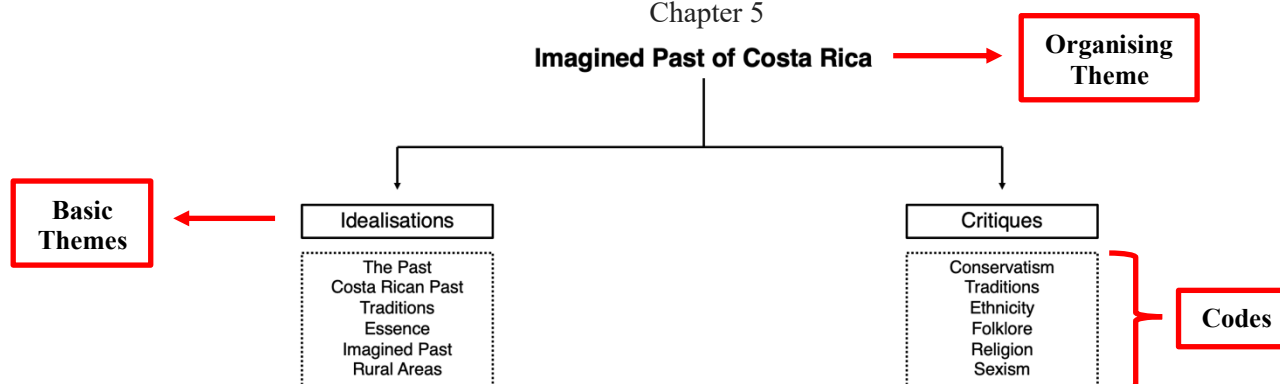
But the imagination of the past, as enacted by the participants, did not stop there. The previous figure exhibits a localised conception, i.e., ideas about how Costa Rica used to be. Considering that these young people were reacting against nostalgic media texts in which the main narrative events take place in the United States and the United Kingdom, they also imagined a more abstract and transnational past. Thus, I identified the basic themes of 1) Idealisations and 2) Critiques, around the organising theme of 'Imagined 1970s and 1980s'.

Figure N.6
Basic Themes and Organising Theme (Part I)
Chapter 5

Imagined 1970's and 1980's

Organising Theme

Basic Themes

Idealisations

The 1980's
Foreign Past
Authenticity
Essence
Innovation
Lifestyle
Old Music
Originality (Creativity)
Technology

Critiques

Ethnicity
Sexism
Stereotypes
U.S.A.
Youth Representation

Codes

Hence, with these basic and organising themes, I created a thematic map based around a global theme: 'Nostalgic Social Imaginary':

Figure N.7
Thematic Map – Chapter 5
Nostalgic Social Imaginaries

Idealisations

Imagined Past of Costa Rica

Nostalgic Social Imaginary

Imagined 1970's and 1980's

Idealisations

Critiques

Critiques
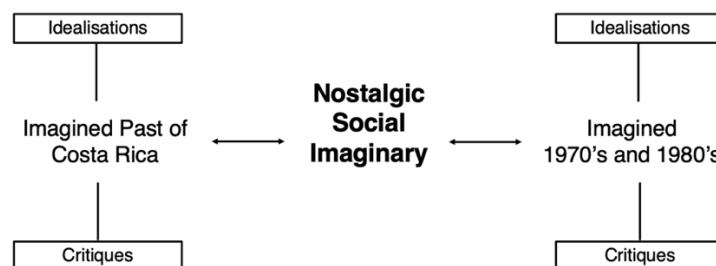
Given that, in Chapter 6, I intended to analyse the participants' social experiences of being young in Costa Rica based on their social positions, I first identified basic themes that emerged around their engagement with the present. In the case of the students from St. Mary High School, I determined three basic themes: 1) Politics; 2) Culture and Society; 3) Economy. The first refers to aspects of the political life of the country or the 2018 presidential elections; the second entails issues of cultural production, historical processes, and social problems; finally, the third implies economic affairs taking place in contemporary Costa Rica. I also found these three basic themes in the data obtained through the research activities conducted at Virilla Vocational High School; in this case, I only added the basic theme of 'La Carpio' to this process, gathering codes regarding the everyday life of this community. With this I was able to describe the presence of two organising themes based on the participants social class: 'Middle/Upper-Class' and 'Working Class'.

Figure N.8
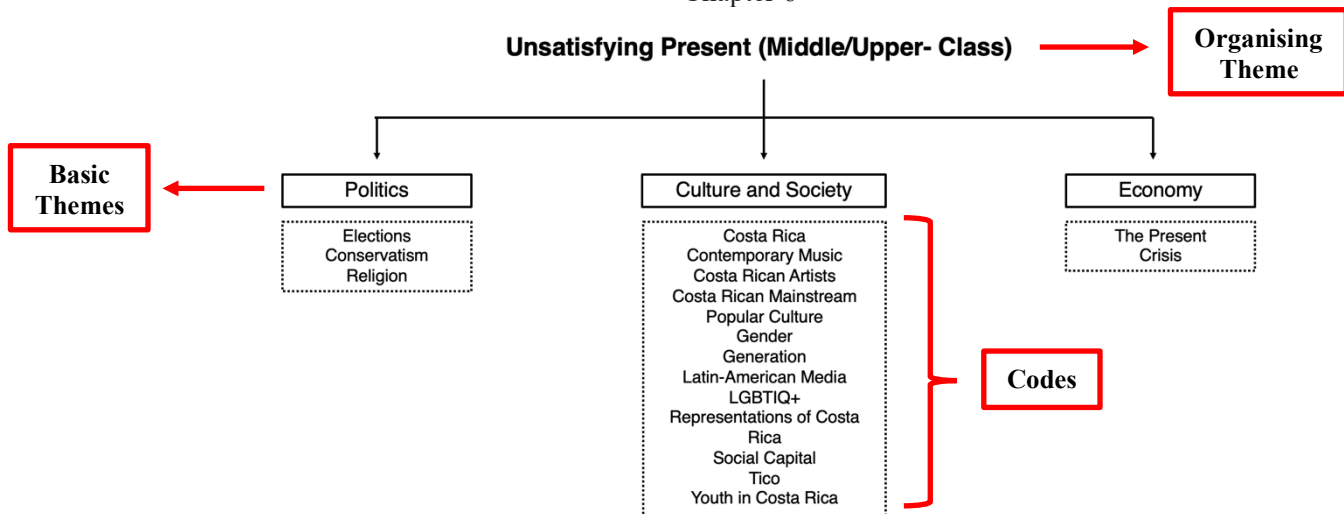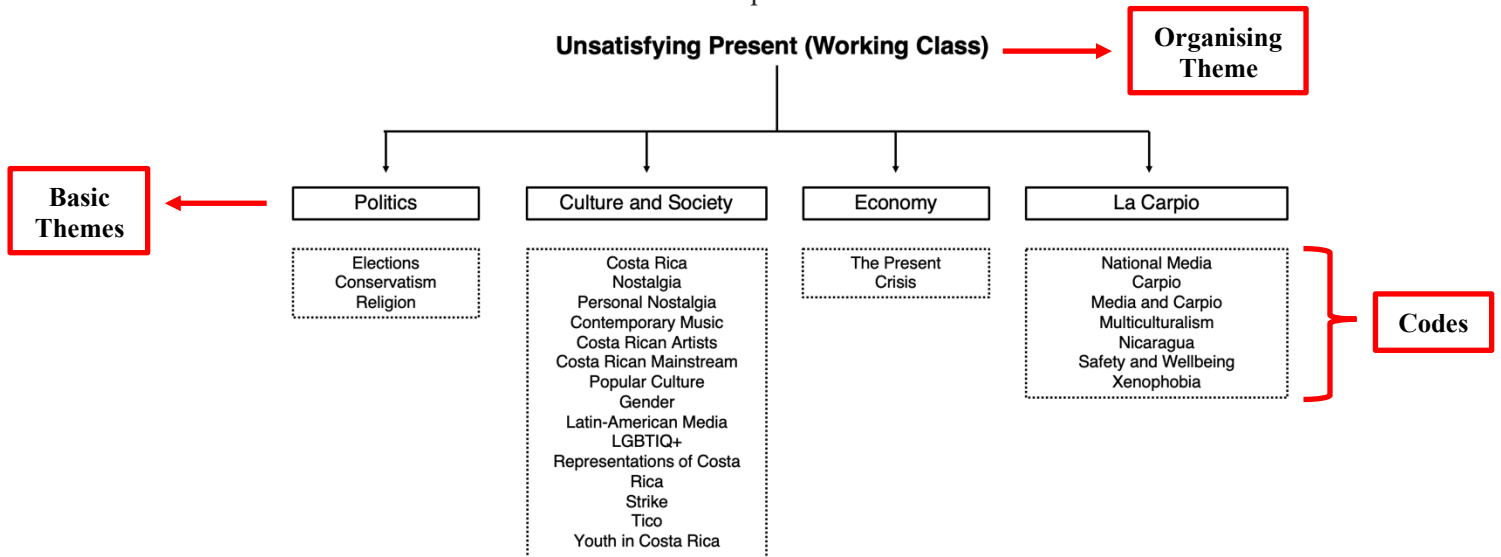Basic Themes and Organising Theme (Part I)
Chapter 6

Unsatisfying Present (Middle/Upper- Class) → **Organising Theme**

Basic Themes ←

Politics	Culture and Society	Economy
Elections	Costa Rica	The Present
Conservatism	Contemporary Music	Crisis
Religion	Costa Rican Artists	
	Costa Rican Mainstream	
	Popular Culture	
	Gender	
	Generation	
	Latin-American Media	
	LGBTIQ+	
	Representations of Costa Rica	
	Social Capital	
	Tico	
	Youth in Costa Rica	

Codes

Figure N.9
Basic Themes and Organising Theme (Part II)
Chapter 6

Unsatisfying Present (Working Class) → **Organising Theme**

Basic Themes ←

| Politics	Culture and Society	Economy	La Carpio
Elections	Costa Rica	The Present	National Media
Conservatism	Nostalgia	Crisis	Carpio
Religion	Personal Nostalgia		Media and Carpio
	Contemporary Music		Multiculturalism
	Costa Rican Artists		Nicaragua
	Costa Rican Mainstream		Safety and Wellbeing
	Popular Culture		Xenophobia
	Gender		
	Latin-American Media		
	LGBTIQ+		
	Representations of Costa Rica		
	Strike		
	Tico		
	Youth in Costa Rica		

Codes

Furthermore, I identified themes concerned with the future. As I argue in Chapter 6, the participants have contrasting views of their future based on their social positions. In this respect, I determined two basic themes: 1) Positive Future and 2) Negative Future. Indeed, these basic themes corresponded to each school; in simple terms, the students from St. Mary High School have a positive view of the future whereas the students from Virilla Vocational High School have a negative one. The organising theme that connects them is 'Visions of the Future'.

Figure N.10
Basic Themes and Organising Theme (Part III)
Chapter 6
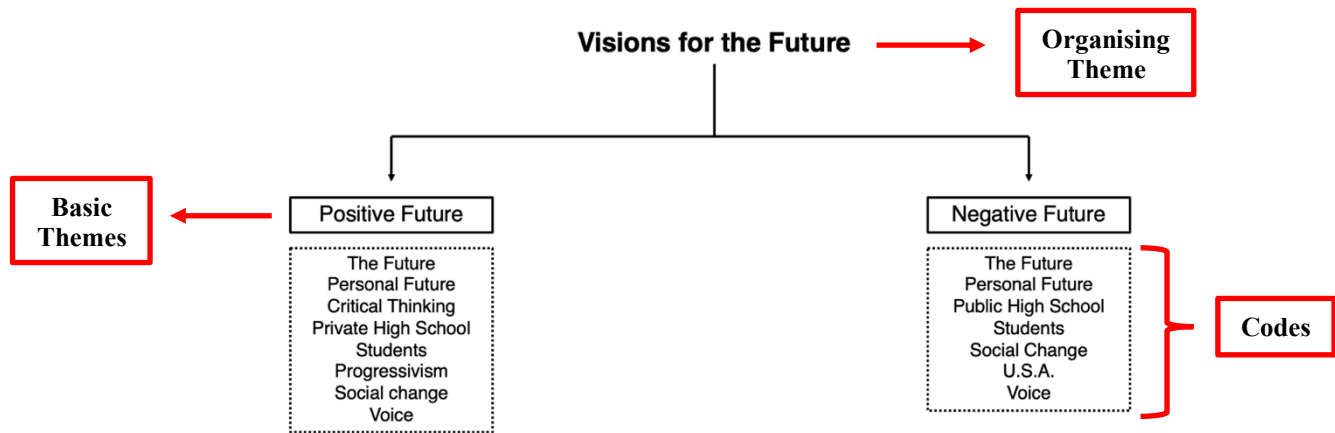
For this chapter, I developed a different thematic map compared to the previous ones. I only utilised the organising themes to show how the participants' differing social positions generate two kinds of nostalgia. Moreover, I included aspects from the two next phases of my thematic analysis to indicate the main points of divergence – i.e., I portrayed how senses of generational justice and structural barriers mark the experience of an unsatisfying present for these young people.

Figure N.11
Thematic Map – Chapter 6
Social Position and Nostalgia
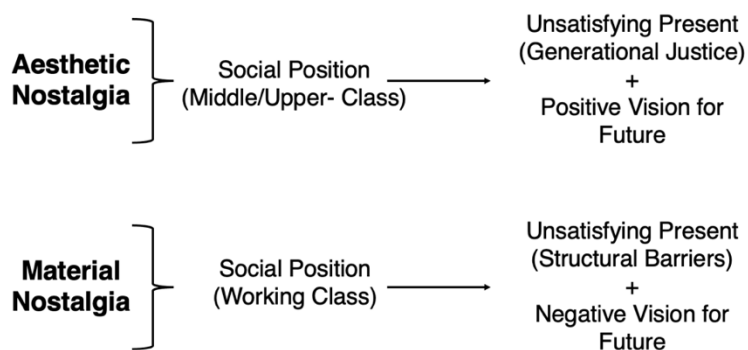
With these thematic maps, I then proceeded to the fifth and sixth phases: the *summary of the thematic maps* and the *interpretation of patterns* and the *production of the report*. I wrote an empirical analysis grounded on the findings collected from the process described in this appendix. This analysis is what constitutes Chapters 4, 5, and 6 of the present work.

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Appendix 11
Stranger Things (2016) & *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018)
Synopses – Focus Group Discussions

As I exposed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, I screened fragments from *Stranger Things* (2016) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) during the focus group discussions I conducted at St. Mary High School and Virilla Vocational High School. In what follows, I provide the synopses of these fragments. They are the first acts of the first episode of the TV series and the film, consisting in the setting up of the main elements and characters of the narratives.

Stranger Things (2016)

Season 1 – Chapter 1: The Vanishing of Will Byers.
Written and directed by: The Duffer Brothers.

We start on November 6th, 1983, in Hawkins, Indiana. It is a starry night. In the Hawkins National Laboratory of the U.S. Department of Energy, there is trouble. An alarm starts sounding and a SCIENTIST runs vigorously through some halls. Something is chasing him. He enters into an elevator. He realises that there is a creature above him. He gets dragged to the ceiling.

We cut to a group of kids hanging out inside a house. MIKE, DUSTIN, LUCAS, and WILL are playing Dungeons and Dragons. Mike's MUM interrupts the game and tell the kids that they should go home. Despite some allegations from MIKE, they leave the house and go home.

DUSTIN, LUCAS, and WILL ride their bikes to their homes. LUCAS says goodbye, whilst DUSTIN and WILL decide to compete over which one will arrive first at DUSTIN'S house. If WILL wins, he can get any comic book DUSTIN has. WILL speeds on and surpasses DUSTIN.

WILL continues riding his bike and he encounters a strange create on the road. He falls off. WILL runs to his house but discovers that neither his mum nor his brother Jonathan are there. He grabs a gun but realises that the creature is

behind him. Just like that, he vanishes from the house. Cut to credits.

JIM HOPPER wakes up around a messy house. He starts to get ready to go to work and we realise that he is the Hawkins Police Chief. He leaves his house.

JOYCE and JONATHAN BYERS are also getting ready to leave their house. JOYCE asks for his son Will, and she realises that neither she nor JONATHAN saw him come back home last night.

MIKE, DUSTIN, and LUCAS arrive to Hawkins Middle School in their bikes and wonder where Will is. Two BULLIES come closer and start mocking the kids, especially DUSTIN as he has cleidocranial dysplasia.

We cut to Hawkins High School and we see NANCY WHEELER, Mikes's sister, chatting with her friend BARB about a boy she has been seeing: Steve Harrington, one of the popular boys at school. NANCY founds a letter from Steve in her locker telling her to meet him at the bathroom. NANCY and STEVE kiss at the bathroom and, then, make plans for the night.

JIM HOPPER arrives at the Police Station and meets JOYCE BYERS, who is upset given that her son disappeared. JOYCE tells HOPPER that she is worried as Will has always had problems socialising with his peers. HOPPER minimises the case and tells her that 99% of the times in which a boy goes missing, he is with one of his parents. JOYCE wonders what happens with the other 1% of the cases and says that she will call Will's father, who has not been around for a year.

BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY (2018)

Story by: Anthony McCarten & Peter Morgan
Screenplay by: Anthony McCarten
Directed by: Bryan Singer

FREDDIE MERCURY wakes up. He starts getting ready, taking a shower, and trimming his moustache. We see crowds of people entering Wembley Stadium in London: they came to the Live Aid concert. Throughout this sequence, we hear "Somebody to Love" by Queen. FREDDIE leaves his house. We see different staff preparing all the logistics of the concert. FREDDIE walks until he arrives to the stage. We see a piano and behind it crowds cheering. Cut to black.

We are in London, 1970. FREDDIE MERCURY is working as a baggage handler in Heathrow Airport. A CO-WORKER refers to him as a "paki", and he replies that he is not from Pakistan. We cut to FREDDIE's home, where he lives with his parents and her SISTER. He tells her MUM that he is going out with some friends and have a brief spat with his FATHER. His FATHER tells him that he does not think about his future.

FREDDIE arrives to a pub where a rock band called Smile is playing. He enjoys their music. After the concert, the LEAD SINGER and BASSIST of Smile tell their bandmates that they are quitting to join a more successful band. FREDDIE walks through a hall full of people and asks LUCY, a girl, where the band is. He compliments her clothes, and a FRIEND of her tells him that they are from Biba, where LUCY works.

FREDDIE approaches BRIAN and ROGER from Smile and tells them that he writes songs and that he could be their new lead singer. ROGER replies that he has large teeth for that role. FREDDIE sings majestically and tells them that he has more space in his mouth which implies more vocal range.

The next day, FREDDIE goes to BIBA and sees LUCY, the girl he met the other day. In the dressing room LUCY puts some eyeliner to FREDDIE and says that she likes how he takes risks in his style.

We cut to Smile giving a concert. BRIAN introduces their new bassist, JOHN, and singer, FREDDIE. A member of the audience calls FREDDIE a "paki". Although he has problems at the beginning of the song, FREDDIE performs greatly and charms the audience.

One year later, the band is touring Scotland. ROGER says that they sold out all the pubs in Glasgow. FREDDIE proposes that they should sell their Van and record an album. We cut to a recording studio. The band is playing their music, experimenting with different objects and styles whilst they record the tracks for their album. An executive comes by and asks for a demo of the band.

FREDDIE is hanging out with LUCY,and tells her that his band's new name is Queen. He starts playing some notes from "Bohemian Rhapsody" on a piano and says they have potential.