**IB Social and Cultural Anthropology Higher Level**

**Research Question:** What are the social and economic implications of Atenas’s increasingly senior citizen dominated demographic from 1960 to 2020?

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Exam Session May 2020

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**Critical Reflection**

**Research Question:** What are the social and economic implications of Atenas’s increasingly senior citizen dominated demographic from 1960 to 2020?

Word Count: 777

For my anthropology internal assessment, I have decided to work on Atenas, and the change there has been since 1968. I will use change and identity as my key concepts, because these are my focus principles. I’ve decided to choose this specific year because it is when my family started living these changes. To begin I have decided to focus my research on the social and economic implications of Atenas’s changing population demographic. This is related to how the sense of belonging of the citizens have changed throughout the years. It is not uncommon for a change in population demographic such as large immigration movement to cause discomfort and possibly conflict. This has been evident in situations ranging from European arrival in native American land, to the widely known Israel Palestine conflict to the recent wave of immigration in Atenas, Costa Rica.

The best research methods for this specific internal assessment topic include interviews and surveys. Interviews provide an inlet into the first-hand thoughts and perspectives of the spectators of an event. I am planning to interview a diverse set of people, ranging from those who have experienced the changes due to the immigration wave, to those that have just recently arrived in Costa Rican soil. On the other hand, a survey will allow me to gather data quickly and effectively. Without the need to coordinate a prolonged conversation, people can quickly fill out a couple multiple choice questions in the park. Both research methods will complement each other, allowing for an appropriate and sufficiently detailed data set for analysis.

Interviewing older people may be difficult because some of them require a lot of attention and respect. Because of this, I have to be very respectful with them and be patient. Also, many seniors will be asking me why so many questions; and I have to be ready and answer properly.

I was planning to interview some family members because they will be very honest with me and they are a phone call away from me. This has its benefits and consequences because as I know my family very well, they will be biased in what and how they respond; there is more trust. This will help me because they will tell me things strangers won’t be able to tell me. This can also negativity affect my investigation because I would never put my own family in an uncomfortable situation and ask incriminating questions. Information will be lost and improperly assessed.

I had my presentation last week and I got a lot a lot of feedback from my classmates and teacher. One of the best constructive comments was given by my teacher, and she told me that I should reconsider the date of my investigation; I shouldn’t go that far away to see a change in Atenas. She is totally right, because the biggest change has been in these past 20-30 years. I decided to change my date to 1968, because my dad was born in Atenas that year and he could help me with an interview about the main changes he has seen and experienced.

Another comment was that I should read the last chapter of The Ticos which I was already planning to. In regard to the interview, the class proposed that I should be very respectful and do the interview instead of a formal interview more like a conversation. As a class they told me that either way people love to be interviewed about themselves, so I should let them talk and respectfully listen to them. Additionally, I should have questions ready, just in case the conversation gets stuck.

I received as a comment that I should visit Atenas more than once for my fieldwork. This way my investigation will be more formal and truthful. I will definitely visit Atenas more than once and would also will be planning to visit during a weekday to observe the differences between a weekend.

As a class they mentioned I have to ask open ended questions in order to have more details and figure out what it is that Atenas is so special to each one of them. There should be a conversation, with a semi structure.

Change as they said is very general and because of this I should specifically focus my investigation in a specific change. I’ve decided to concentrate on some economic and social aspects that have notable changed and affect the way Atenas is today. Including the local stores, family relations, religion and other social and monetary changes.

In conclusion I have my topic and research question identified and I’m ready to start my field work and research. I’m excited to begin and I’m ready for any ethical issues.

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**Research Report and Evaluation**

**Research Question:** What are the social and economic implications of Atenas’s increasingly senior citizen dominated demographic from 1960 to 2020?

Word Count: 1598

The focus of this research paper includes the social and economic implications of Atenas’s[[1]](#footnote-1) increasingly senior citizen dominated demographic from 1960 to 2020. In Anthropology, there are several areas that can be studied and attached to certain concepts learned. I figured the Area of Inquiry that best fits my desired focus is belonging. I will emphasize on globalization[[2]](#footnote-2), because I consider this a very significant reason for the change Atenas is experiencing. (IBO, 106). [[3]](#footnote-3) For my concepts I chose change, the difference there is from Atenas in 1968 to now. More specifically, the modifications that have occurred within social and cultural elements; the consequence of globalization. The other concept I chose is identity because I consider my research reflects on how Atenas’ identity has been built up throughout the years and how time changes how the same citizens of the town and immigrants visualize Atenas.

I utilized three different sources that helped to analyze how people in Costa Rica and in Atenas were influenced in regard to the economic and social changes. Some of these were The Ticos[[4]](#footnote-4), The Costa Rican Reader[[5]](#footnote-5) and Historias De Mi Tierra[[6]](#footnote-6) which were helpful in distinctive ways to show the social and economic changes that have occurred in Atenas. These gave me information on how Costa Rica recently has situated a big part of its economy on ecotourism. Today, about 1.7 million of foreigners come to visit and 80%[[7]](#footnote-7) of this come because of eco-tourism. In our country, Atenas is the second town with more foreigners after Escazú[[8]](#footnote-8). Throughout the years, the number of seniors living in Atenas has risen because Atenas has become a worldwide known location for retirement. This is mostly attributed to the town’s climate. The truth is Atenas has the best climate of the world as it was stated by NatGeo [[9]](#footnote-9) with temperature ranging from sixty to eighty-five degrees Fahrenheit year round. In addition, it was stated by Culture Trip that Costa Rica is the most peaceful country of all Central America[[10]](#footnote-10), and Atenas is a big influence of this statement (Parker, 2017).

My first research method was interviewing, this way I would get the most accurate information on the big and small changes. I interviewed seniors of about 80 years old, and women aged 40. To expand on my investigation, I worked on participant observation. Since Atenas is a town I have frequented throughout my life, I have seen for myself the changes there have been in the city. such as it is traditionally said that Ticos[[11]](#endnote-1) identify themselves more with their town than with their country (Biezanz,1999).

Not surprisingly, all my interviewers agreed there have been changes. The climates’ slogan of having the best climate in the world has been one of the biggest factors of immigrants in the area. Having this reputation has led many immigrants to the town. Today, there are immigrants from all around the world including Germany, Italy, France and the bordering country of Nicaragua (Valerio, 2018). One of people interviewed said that an important aspect of why people have chosen Atenas to live is because of its location. They consider this a huge reason on why people have decided to live in Atenas, while having a home in the most relaxing place in Costa Rica, they can travel on the weekends to the wonderful places Costa Rica has to offer.

After interviewing all of these people I noticed that Ateniences[[12]](#footnote-11)are very proud and identify themselves and their home very similar; a small pueblo[[13]](#footnote-12) that people love and visit because of its climate. In all of these interviews, they talked about the climate about five times because they consider the climate as part of their identity. They consider that Atenas is everything because of its climate, and they all said they feel like they belong to this calm and friendly environment. All of them agreed they have seen a lot of change in the town, such as having more buildings, actual roads and having more foreigners living in the area which are the some of the main changes there have been in Atenas.

Then we discussed what were some of the impacts that have resulted from having more people. Having a larger population means the town had to be able to support more people while having the same amount of resources, which was very complicated. Then, the food had to be more because more people had to be fed. Having more citizens meant there had to be more teachers and schools. There has to be more job opportunities because even though people come here for retirement, they need to get their income from somewhere. Atenas today has many cultural identities because so many foreigners have come live here; this can be seen as problem within language, religion, and different social and economic status.

After visiting Atenas for almost 15 years now I have observed many changes. Currently I’ve been visiting Atenas more often to get the real idea of how Atenas has changed socially and economically. I have observed so many things that caught my attention. The first one is that they still have the tradition of a turno or a traditional town fair with food and entertainment. In addition to having Costa Rican food served, every city highlights its traditional dish, for instance: in Atenas they serve picadillo de papa[[14]](#footnote-13). In this same fair there is a famous tradition in which adults go and dance after going to church. I asked some Atenciences[[15]](#footnote-14) and they said this has been going on for several years now but that they are fearful that only adults go because the tradition will be lost in some years. This is one of the reasons why I consider people enjoy living in Atenas, traditions are kept, and internationals are welcome to join. They consider these traditions belong to them, and without these their identity will not be the same.

Security is distinct in this town. In Atenas people trust their community and they leave their doors open, meaning not locked for the day. In comparison, in the capital which is San Jose you will never leave your house open because thieves will come in. By knowing this we see the reality of a safe town and understand another reason on why immigrants are attracted to Atenas.

Sincerely, in the last 10 years I had visited Atenas I was not conscious of the many immigrants that live in Atenas, and the large senior population. Today, because I’ve become more aware of the small details, I have seen how Atenas really is “the place for retirement”. Besides the extravagant and unique culture Atenas has, it is in close proximity to the beach and mountains. This short distance makes the traveler even more attracted to Atenas.

I have been more conscious on how things are written in Atenas and most of them are written in English, even though in Atenas people speak Spanish. It has more than 1000 American foreigners living there (Atena’s municipality, 2019).

I also realized how big companies such as Walmart have invested in bringing their supermarkets here because families have come to live here. This represents change, and how Atenas is slowly become a developed more commercial town.

After observing, researching and analyzing the change there has been in Atenas I had the opportunity to realize the many implications joined by having a more diverse town. Doing this investigation was important for me mostly because I think it is important to know where you’re from and how things have changed through the years because of globalization. Seeing how Atenas’ citizens identify so much with their culture and have a sense of belonging to their town is important to maintain traditions that have come so far. This investigation was not only beneficial for myself but my family; because now we are more aware of how our identity and where we belong has changed.

If I had a chance to redo my investigation, I would choose another part of Costa Rica. I would choose Jaco beach, because my mother lived there, and she has mentioned the huge change there has been due to globalization there. Also, because I go there every weekend now, I would have more chance to do more observations and interviews that will help my investigation.

After researching and analyzing the huge economic and social changes there were in Atenas due to globalization, I will further would like to investigate more the how of this change and how has the country manage these changes.

List of Sources:

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Parker, Jenn. “Costa Rica Has Just Been Voted the Most Peaceful Country in Central America.” *Culture Trip*, The Culture Trip, 11 June 2017, <https://theculturetrip.com/central-america/costa-rica/articles/costa-rica-has-just-been-voted-the-most-peaceful-country-in-central-america/>.

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Appendix:

Proposed research focus:

the change there has been in Atenas since 1968. Tourism and immigrants. Globalization. I will use culture and identity as my key concepts. And as my area of inquiry I will using group 3, belonging, globalization and ideology community.

Proposed research site:

Atenas, Alajuela, Costa Rica

Proposed research question:

What are the social and economic implications of Atenas’s changing population demographic?

Methodological Issues:

Interviews, surveys, and observation

Practical and ethical considerations:

Age of interviewers, maintaining respect, privacy (merit to the person who gave me the information, authorization to publish what they say. Be respectful with different beliefs,

Notes from presentation and feedback:

* Seeming how has Atenas changed when it comes to language
* Take in consideration how people want to be put of the town to be in a nice nearby (urban, rural) town.
* It’s location is nice
* Don’t go back so far, 1960, 1970
* Major changes in the last 40 years, closer time
* Older people feel more interested
* Open ended questions
* Let the interview be flowing, use follow up questions. (Semi structure, conversation type)
* Read the last chapter of The Ticos
* Change is very big, do something more specific

Interview questions for people living in Atenas (original Spanish):

1. ¿En pocas palabras me puede describir Atenas?
2. ¿En pocas palabras me puede describir Atenas en 1968?
3. ¿Qué cree usted que han sido los factores más grandes del cambio en el cantón?
4. ¿Cual es su parte favorita de Atenas/cosa favorita. ¿Lo que marca la identidad del cantón?
5. ¿Cual es el cambio más grande que usted ha observado en Atenas a través de los años?
6. ¿Cree que ahora hay mas turismo en su cantón?
7. ¿Si dice que si… porque cree que hay más gente visitando el lugar?
8. ¿Conoce usted a algún internacional que ha decidido venirse a vivir a Atenas?
9. ¿Por qué cree usted que las personas van a Atenas a retirarse?
10. Algún otro comentario al respecto …

Interview questions for people living in Atenas (English translation):

1. In few words, can you describe Atenas for me =?
2. Can you describe Atenas in 1968?
3. What do you think are the biggest factors of Atenas change?
4. What is you favorite part/ thing of Atenas? What marks the identity of the town?
5. What is the biggest change you have observed in Atenas?
6. Do you think there is more tourism today?
7. If you said yes, why do you think so?
8. Do you know any international that has decided to retire in Atenas?
9. Why do you think people chose Atenas to retire?
10. Any other comment...

1. Small town in Costa Rica, located in Alajuela [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. the development of complex interdependence [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. IBO (International Baccalaureate Organization). Social and Cultural Anthropology Guide, First Examinations 2019. International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. - Biesanz, Mavis Hiltunen. “Community.” *The Ticos: Culture and Social Change in Costa Rica*. *Lynne Rienner Publishers*, 1999, 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. - Edelman, Marc, and Joanne Kenen. *The Costa Rica Reader*. Grove Weidenfeld, 1989. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Valerio Madriz, Eladio Alonso. *Historias De Mi Tierra: Atenas*. Camino a La Cumbre , 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. “About Costa Rica: Embajada De Costa Rica En DC.” *About Costa Rica | Embajada De Costa Rica En DC*, http://www.costarica-embassy.org/index.php?q=node/19. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Cosmopolitan city with a mainly high socio-economic level demographic [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. “Why Atenas Is a Great Option for Expats in Costa Rica.” *Costa Rica Star News*, 1 Mar. 2019, https://news.co.cr/why-atenas-is-a-great-option-for-expats-in-costa-rica/78944/. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Parker, Jenn. “Costa Rica Has Just Been Voted the Most Peaceful Country in Central America.” *Culture Trip*, The Culture Trip, 11 June 2017, https://theculturetrip.com/central-america/costa-rica/articles/costa-rica-has-just-been-voted-the-most-peaceful-country-in-central-america/. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. How people in Costa Rica identify as [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
12. People from Atenas [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. town [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
14. typical dish made with beef and potatoes [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
15. People from Atenas [↑](#footnote-ref-14)