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**“I MAKE MEXICO AT MY HOME”: SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE,
DIASPORIC DISCOURSE, AND CULTURAL ENDURANCE
OF MEXICANS LIVING IN BARCELONA, SPAIN**
**“HAGO QUE MÉXICO ESTÉ EN MI CASA”: REDES SOCIALES, DISCURSO
DIASPÓRICO Y CONSERVACIÓN CULTURAL DE LOS MEXICANOS
RESIDENTES EN BARCELONA, ESPAÑA**

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Abstract

While many works have focused on Mexican migrants living in the United States of America, little attention has been paid to diasporic communities of Mexicans in Europe. The purpose of this article is to understand how social media serves as a link in between Mexicans living in Barcelona, Spain and their homeland, and how these migrants use the virtual spaces not only to share real-world information to improve their daily lives in Spain, but to preserve their cultural identity. Fieldwork consisted in 17 “in situ” semi-structured interviews to Mexicans living in Barcelona, whose ages are between 21- and 60-years during June and July of 2016. Subjects were contacted through a

Facebook Group named “Mexicanos en Barcelona” (Mexicans in Barcelona) that has more than 5,000 members. This group is conformed not only by Mexicans living in Barcelona, but it also includes Mexicans in Mexico with the interest of studying, touring or working in the city.

Keywords: Social media; cultural identity; diasporic discourse; Latin America; Spain.

Resumen

Mientras que existe una miríada de trabajos centrados en los mexicanos que viven en los Estados Unidos de América, poca atención se ha prestado a las comunidades diaspóricas mexicanas en Europa. El propósito de este trabajo es comprender cómo las redes sociales virtuales sirven de vínculo entre los mexicanos radicados en Barcelona, España y su país de origen, así como la forma en que estos migrantes utilizan las plataformas sociales, no sólo para compartir información para mejorar su vida cotidiana, sino también para preservar su identidad cultural. El trabajo de campo consistió en 17 entrevistas semiestructuradas “in situ” realizadas a mexicanos que viven en Barcelona, cuyas edades oscilan entre 21 y 60 años durante junio y julio de 2016. Los sujetos fueron contactados a través de un grupo de Facebook llamado “Mexicanos en Barcelona” que tiene más de 5,000 miembros. Este grupo está conformado no solo por mexicanos que viven en Barcelona, sino que también incluye a mexicanos en México con el interés de estudiar, viajar o trabajar en la ciudad.

Palabras Clave: Redes Sociales; identidad cultural; discurso de diásporas; América Latina; España.

1. INTRODUCTION

The quick development and spread of social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter, and the popularization of mobile devices have enthroned the Internet not only as the primary form of communication around the world, but as a culture that has radically changed how people socialize with each other. By now, the number of users surpass the number of 3.5 billion (The Economist, 2019). Every day, there is an incommensurable sum of interactions related to social, economic and political assets. In this context, the social media platforms have consolidated as determinant spaces in where people have relocated most of their public and private activities. By now, platforms like Facebook and applications like WhatsApp are no longer just digital applications but “vivid

spheres” that encourage social compromise at different levels, from affective relations up to economic and civil ones (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Inside these spaces, users communicate in a form that just a few years ago was simply unrealistic, creating effective information channels that can surpass material and temporal barriers, potentially reaching worldwide targets. In a matter of little time, social media has transformed many traditional rituals of doing politics and business. Now candidates and enterprises give more importance to these platforms, which are no longer spaces only for entertainment, on the contrary, they have become vital to guarantee success in the political and business grounds.

Regarding Latin America, the users have been in constant growth since the arrival of the Internet in the mid-nineties of the last century. It is expected that in 2020, the number of Latin Americans using the Internet will exceed the number of 375.1 million, about half of the entire population (Statista, 2019). People in the region have deeply incorporated social media into their day-to-day lives. In the case of México, for example, almost all Internet users, about 82 million, have at least one social media profile (AMIPCI, 2019). This significant rise was caused by diverse factors like the reduction of information technology infrastructure cost, the expansion and diversification of Internet connectivity, and not less significant, the public and private efforts to extend Internet access to a wider public, especially in poor rural areas across the region. The Internet has not just given novel opportunities to improve social and economic conditions in communities, but it has also strengthened the connection between Latin Americans, especially with those that have migrated looking for better opportunities in other countries or continents. It is for that reason that the inquiry of the impact of social media in between migrants, particularly the impact in the conformation of Latin America diasporas, must be considered a crucial topic in between scholars.

While most of the academic work focuses on Mexican migrants living in The United States of America, little attention has been paid to inquire about the lives of those who decided to live in European countries like Spain, particularly how those migrants use social media to produce diasporic communities and to stay in contact with the cultural assets left behind in Mexico. Those communities, besides having to settle in a less advantageous context, with fewer Mexican migrant public and private associations, traditional restaurants, consulate services, and Mexican stores than in The

United States of America in which there are about 35 million people with Mexican roots, Mexicans in Barcelona have found their way through social media to preserve their culture. The purpose of this work is to outline the presence of Mexicans in Barcelona, their perception about the economic and social context in Spain, and to explore the impact of social media in the reallocation process in the city. Particularly to understand how social media serves as a link in between the Mexicans and their culture at the homeland?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Despite that the word diaspora has been well known in between historians, who used it to describe a series of historical events related with the dispersion of Jews and other populations like Greeks and Armenians from their homelands (Chan, 2005), it was just until recent decades that the term became a target of interest to a wider cluster of social scientists (Anteby-Yemini and Berthomière, 2005) (Bauböck and Faist, 2010). A diaspora, under this consideration, refers to ethnic minority groups of migrants that maintain a strong cultural connection with their homeland (Brinkerhoff, 2009). However, recently, other scholars have introduced a broader conception that stands further on the notion of identity than in the ethnic aspect of communities. Identity for migrants stands not just as a feeling of belonging to a particular community, but migrants can even be part of a shared identity far beyond territories and nationalities (Anderson, 2006) (Baca, 2008), but as the main connection that links those individuals to their homeland as well (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). This sense of belonging is reinforced by several cultural elements as religion (Westbrook & Saad, 2017), or the conservation of the mother tongue as it happens with the Chinese living in Toronto, Canada or Indigenous people working in Mexico City for example. Another aspect that has a direct impact in the consolidation of the migrant identity is their traditional food, which recipes are preserved from one generation to another. It is through the preparation and consumption of these dishes that migrants consolidated their social imaginaries and beliefs (Vázquez-Medina & Medina, 2015) (Farge & Moretti, 2015). Those cultural elements are significant not just as components that preserve the migrants' culture, but they also support their social cohesion and the feeling of recognition to a transnational group or diaspora. Diaspora, beneath this theoretical scope, is a migrant community whose members share a strong feeling of belonging to a

cultural identity, the determination to maintain and protect their culture and, not less important, the use of this identity as a form of endurance against any social and political factor that compromises it (Cohen, 2009). In XXI, with the irruption of information technologies into daily life, this wider consideration of diaspora is kind of useful to understand the dynamics and complexities that every migrant must face to maintain their relations, in many cases with the use of social media platforms, in the society of settlement and in his/her homeland (Wahlbeck, 2002)(Dumont, 2017). Migrant communities, above all, are groups that live among two realities and territories: the host country and their homeland (Crush *et al.*, 2012)(Linhard & Parsons, 2019), for that reason, they are frequently involved in private and public issues related to both contexts.

The testimonies about the relationship between migrants and the Internet has dated beyond the crowning of social media, even before the foundation of the main social platforms like Facebook or Twitter. At the beginning of the new millennium, migrants started using BBS (Bulletin Board System) as a form to preserve their culture, to strengthen their feelings of belonging and their identity (Chan, 2005). These social and collaborative platforms have provided important advantages to people that, by under diverse circumstances, have been forced to move into another territory, far from their homeland. Thanks to these technologies, they can stay in contact with the culture that was left behind (Share *et al.*, 2017)(Kumar, 2018). Migrants communicate with their relatives and friends in their birthplace, they create groups to socialize and share helpful information that improves the living conditions in the new context as well. These spaces with the passing of time have spread the feeling of belonging to a specific community and conforms clusters with strong cohesion and a shared identity. These online groups could be generated in a blog, an online forum, a group on Facebook or WhatsApp, or the union of many of those platforms (Diminescu, 2012) (Everett, 2009). Migrants systematize the management of these virtual spaces assigning administrative roles and establishing norms of behavior among the affiliates and censoring unwelcomed users or information. But the establishment of a digital community does not necessary mean that all the relations between users are virtual, on the contrary, there is a constant interchange from “the real world” to “the digital one.” Sometimes, like in the case of political activism, online actions could encourage important changes in “real world,” like the case of The Arab Spring or the Yellow Vests movement in France.

3. THE CASE

Even though the United States of America monopolizes Latin American migratory flows, especially from Mexico, many South Americans, like Ecuadorians and Peruvians have travelled across the ocean to settle in Europe, especially in Spain (Eurostat, 2016). This country, besides economic crises and political polarization, remains an important target to migrants (Morén-Alegret, 2015) (Díaz *et al.*, 2012) (Mount & Romei, 2019). Only in the last decade, about 1.5 million arrived to Spain (The Economist, 2012). This migration process has been named by academics as “Latin-Americanization” of Spain (Hierro, 2016), and has been shaped by two main trends a) from 1990-1999, the appearance of the flow and b) 2000-2008, the expansion of the current (Prieto Rosas and López Gay, 2015). Contrary of what usually happens with South American migrants in Spain, Mexican migrants tend to travel to the “Old Continent” largely for educational reasons, to achieve a post-graduate degree or a specialization, as a way to improve their labor conditions when they return to Mexico (Platani, 2012). According to some statistics, about 98,000 Mexicans are living in Europe, from that number 48,000 are located in Spain (CONAPO, 2015). This important presence of Mexicans in Spain is due mainly to cultural affinities like the language, the Catholicism as the main religion in both countries, and some historical events, like the exile of thousands of Spaniards in Mexico caused by the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). In addition, Mexico was a former colony of the Spanish Empire for about 300 years. Actually, Spain is an important target for many Mexicans that look to improve their education.

4. METHODOLOGY AND OUTCOMES¹

The sample consisted in 17 “in situ” semi-structured interviews to Mexicans living in Barcelona (5 men and 12 women), whose ages are in between 21- and 60-years during June and July of 2016. Participants were chosen according to the following criteria: (a) interview people that have been in Barcelona for many years and migrants that have lived there only a few months. This provides the opportunity to contrast different perceptions about safety, labor

¹ All the Spanish translation to English were made by the author. In the case of some women, they were reluctant to mention their age.

and social issues, and (b) to conform the most assorted sample possible, by selecting migrants from diverse ages, labor conditions, genre, and educational background. Subjects were contacted through a Facebook Group named “Mexicanos en Barcelona” (Mexicans in Barcelona) that has more than 5,000 members. This group is conformed not only by Mexicans living in Barcelona, but it also includes Mexicans in Mexico with the interest of studying, touring or working in the city. Fieldwork addressed on gathering data related with the following topics a) demographic data, b) actual context in Spain, c) traveling and reception, d) social media use and, e) information consumption. Collected data was analyzed in the qualitative data analysis software, “NVIVO.”

4.1. The people and the context

Mexicans living for long period in Barcelona, excluding tourists, come to the city under different contexts, but most of their reasons could be gathered in two main categories: a) for family issues and b) for academic reasons. But sometimes, it could be both, like when a student meets someone in the city, gets married and then decides to remain permanently there. The case of “R” is a good example of the first kind, she is a Mexican housewife that met her husband in Mexico, and then they decided to move to Spain. Now they have two children.

Tengo 42 años, hace 12 años que salí de Guadalajara de México, tengo dos hijas ya nacidas aquí y mi marido es español. (R. Mujer, 42 años, youtuber y ama de casa) / “I am 42 years, I travelled from Guadalajara, México 12 years ago (to Barcelona). I have two daughters that were born here, and my husband is a Spaniard. (R. Woman, 42 years old, youtuber and housewife)

But even when their main purpose comes to an end, some migrants endure looking to improve their personal conditions in the city. This was the case of “P” that migrated from Mexico City with her husband, but after they broke up, she decided to stay and remain in the school.

14 años que llegué a esta ciudad a vivir, vine una vez antes a conocerla y bueno me mudé así en plan porque nos dio la gana, yo me vine casada, mi marido se regresó.... pero él se volvió a México al año y yo me quedé porque ya estaba estudiando y no quise dejar mis estudios. (P. Mujer,

psicoterapeuta) / I came to live in this city (Barcelona) 14 years ago, I have already been here before and well we decided to stay here. I came married, but after a year, my husband went back to Mexico, I stayed here because I was already studying, and I did not want to quit (P. Woman, psychotherapist)

Conversely, an important number of Mexicans travel to Barcelona to improve their education. Some of the interviewees were studying a post-graduate program, or a specialization, but it is possible to find students that are also currently studying in Mexico and chose to apply for a short-term exchange, they stay for some months and return, but in the inter they get contacts that allowed them to go back to Europe to continue their education in the future. Here is an example of a student that travelled for academic reasons.

Estoy titulada en medicina, llevo en el mercado laboral de México alrededor de 6 años. Decidí venir a Barcelona, pues para aumentar o hacer un poquito más de mi carrera. Aumentar mi currículum (N. Mujer, estudiante de máster) / I am a doctor; I have been working for about 6 years in Mexico. I decided to come to Barcelona to improve my profession, to have a better résumé (N. Woman, postgraduate student)

The year 2016 will be remembered as a very complex stage for Spain. The country had to deal with important political and economic challenges: It was a year that showed some financial recovery that brought certain relief to the depressed Spanish society, although the labor conditions remain precarious until now (OCDE, 2017) (Sánchez-Silva, 2019). On the other side, the official political party (The Popular Party, PP-right-) candidate to prime minister, Mariano Rajoy struggled to get reelected after two elections, in October of 2016. This situation is well illustrated in the following extract.

Porque aquí lamentablemente el rescate a los bancos ha dejado en la ruina a muchas familias entonces fue simbólico ocupar este banco (por okupas, gente sin hogar que se apropia de lugares abandonados) ¿Porqué así era como quitarles un poco de lo que nos han robado no? (C. Hombre, 49 años, trabaja en relaciones públicas de un bar) / Because here sadly the financial rescue of banks has left many poor families, so it was symbolic to occupy (by *okupas*, homeless people that fill empty houses) this bank

facility, it is like taking a little back from all that has been stolen (C. Man, 49 years old, he works in public relations for a bar)

Labor conditions have remained quite hard. There is high unemployment and low wages, with a deep reduction of workers' rights. It is even possible to find cases in where people work for free under the promise to obtain an income in the future. Like the case mentioned by an interviewed.

Porque está tan escaso el trabajo que por 600 euros son capaces de ir a trabajar. He sabido de personas que trabajan gratis, por no perder el puesto de trabajo... Una persona nos dijo que tenía una sobrina trabajando gratis, para ver si con el paso del tiempo se mejoraba la empresa y continuaba trabajando ahí ya con un salario. (A. Hombre, 60 años, dueño de una tienda) / The unemployment is so high that many people are willing to work for 600 euros. I have heard about people that work for free. A person told us that he has a niece that has been working for free, her hope was that the company someday could recover, and the boss will be able to start paying her for her job (A, Man, 60 years old, operates a small retail shop).

About the case of Mexicans in Barcelona, the labor panorama is not so different. Some students confess their desire to stay in the European country, but it is not only the difficulty to obtain a work permission, but the employment and the precariousness of the available places that turns to consider this option almost impossible.

Yo creo que aquí en España si te quieres quedar te puedes quedar, pero la verdad es que a nivel académico es muy difícil (trabajar en una universidad), porque hay muchos investigadores que son muy buenos que tuvieron que salir porque no hay oportunidades ni para los locales (J. Hombre, 29 años, estudiante de doctorado en ciencias exactas) / I think if you want to stay in Spain you can do it, but it is very difficult (to work as a professor in a university). Because there were many good researchers that had to leave because of the lack of opportunities (J. Man, 29 years old, PhD Student).

But the economic crisis has not just caused a detriment in labor conditions, but also in the welfare, like public sanity, a sector that has suffered severe spending cuts. People must wait for months to get proper medical attention.

(Sobre el detrimento de la sanidad en España debido a la crisis económica) Así es conozco a alguien que ha estado yendo casi siete meses al hospital con diferentes médicos y no salen de su famoso “ten para el dolor” y no han curado para nada esa persona (L. Mujer, 61 años, maestra de idiomas) / (About the detriment of public sanity in Spain due to the economic crisis) Yes, I know someone that has been going to the hospital for about seven months with different medics, and he has just received “some pills for the pain,” but he has not gotten a better treatment to end his illness (L. Woman, 61 years, Language teacher).

However, this adverse landscape promotes cohesion and solidarity as well. When a person needs information about renting a room or processing an application before an authority, like the DNI (The national document of Identity), there are plenty of people in the Facebook group with the desire of helping, even when it is a labor vacancy, the first call is for a Mexican.

Somos muy solidarios, nos echamos la mano, si hay una plaza vacante pues se la pasas a un paisano. (P. Mujer, psicoterapeuta) / We are very caring, we give a helping hand, if there is a vacancy well it goes to a *paisano*. (Mexican). (P. Woman, psychotherapist).

4.2. Reconsidering Mexico at distance: testimonies about crime, narcotraffic and insecurity

2016 marked 10 years of the beginning of the “Narcotraffic War” in Mexico. During that time, the conflict in between Mexican authorities (Police, Marine Corp, Army, etc.) and drug cartels has caused about 150,000 mortalities and 28,000 missing people (Pardo Veiras, 2016). Across the years, the social impact of the fighting has been dramatic, some before well-known tourist places, like the city of Acapulco and the state of Veracruz, are now in a complex situation in between crime and institutional crisis. The sense of safety has declined in between Mexicans, in the country and abroad. However, regarding Mexicans in Barcelona it is possible to observe an interesting scenery; The people who have been more time living in Barcelona are more fearful towards Mexico than those living a little time in the city. Next fragments serve to illustrate this fact.

Cuando yo vivía en México en Guadalajara, la percepción de inseguridad nunca la tuve, yo iba en el camión a la escuela y siempre me movía por el centro con la mayor naturalidad ningún tipo de miedo. La realidad

es que México ha cambiado, México el tema del narcotráfico el tema de inseguridad ha ido en aumento, no lo podemos negar por mucho que queramos a nuestro país, y cuando voy, sí que voy con un poco de precaución (R. Mujer, 42 años, ama de casa y Youtuber, 12 años viviendo en Barcelona) / When I lived in Mexico, in the city of Guadalajara, I did not feel unsecure. I took the bus to the school and I always moved around downtown without fear. The reality is that Mexico has changed. In Mexico, the theme of insecurity and narcotraffic have been in constant grow. We cannot deny this fact, despite our love for our country. When I travel to Mexico, I go with fear (R. Woman, 42 years old, housewife and YouTuber, 12 years living in Barcelona).

Obviamente aquí todo el mundo te interroga sobre la seguridad en México sabes, todo el mundo te dice ¿Oye si es cierto que matan tanto? Yo siempre digo que México es hermoso. O sea, si tenemos zonas que como mexicanos decimos no vayas a tal lugar porque es peligroso, pero si tenemos muchos lugares por ejemplo que es súper seguro que puedes andar caminando a las 10, 11 de la noche y no te roban, no te asaltan nada (L. Mujer, estudiante de máster, 6 meses viviendo en Barcelona) / Obviously, everybody here asks you about the insecurity in México, they ask is it true that they kill a lot? I always reply to them, Mexico is beautiful. Well, there are certain areas in the country that are dangerous, but we also have safe places where you can walk at night (L. Woman, postgraduate student, six months living in Barcelona).

Trying to explain this discrepancy is not quite simple. It is not just the case that one group is overstating the situation and the other is not giving the proper weightiness to this complex situation in the Latin American country. Nonetheless, there are some factors that could help clarify this situation, a) The increasing importance of social media in the distribution of news and information, many migrants confess their preference for reading information concerning Mexico from critical-minded media like the journalist Carmen Aristegui, the newspaper, “La Jornada” and the magazine, “Proceso.” Those sources provide, for good and bad, their particular interpretation of the events. However, that version is not the only one available and should be compared with other sources to have a more complete picture of the incidents, b) people usually read a post regarding news, but they sometimes do not read the entire information, just the headlines or in some cases the “meme” this of course

has encouraged the distribution of fake and “alternative” facts. It does not mean that people have less judgment to inquire about the information, but they do not give the proper time to read the notes carefully. And c) In some ways, the economic model to support digital journalism based on “traffic,” “banner ads” and “likes” instigate sensationalism to magnetize the public with the use of shocking titles, photos and “memes.” At the end, like “J” explains in the interview, it is a combination of diverse factors, like the kind of informational sources people get from social media, the time they have living abroad, and the context every migrant experiments in both countries (Mexico and Spain).

Si siento un poco más de inseguridad (en México) pero no sé si sea una cuestión más relativa de que ahora me siento muy seguro y antes estaba acostumbrado a la inseguridad o si es porque las noticias me han influenciado, pero yo creo que es algo relativo a mi situación actual (J. Hombre, 29 años, estudiante de doctorado, cerca de 2 años viviendo en Barcelona) / Yes, I feel a little more insecurity (in Mexico), but I am not quite sure if this is a question related with the fact that I feel secure because now I’m living in Barcelona, and before, when I lived in Mexico, I was accustomed to insecurity, or I felt insecure since the news that I read from Mexico influenced me to believe it was insecure. But I believe it is about my actual situation (J. Man, 29 years old, Ph.D student, about 2 years living in Barcelona).

4.3. Social media and diasporic discourse

The use of social media in between migrants provides an optimal way to be in contact with their culture in their homeland, but at the same time, these spaces allow to build virtual communities in where they can support each other. These virtual spaces are very helpful for other reasons too, they can unite isolated members that can stay together despite geography.

Nunca me había dado cuenta cuantos mexicanos hay, pero claro por esta página de Facebook he visto que hay bastantes, son jóvenes, gente de mi edad he visto poca (V. Hombre, 60 años, dueño de una tienda) / I have never noted how many Mexicans are (in Barcelona). Well, if you see this Facebook page (Mexicans in Barcelona Group) there are a lot, most of them are young, I have seen few people of my age (V. Man, 60 years old, operates a small retail shop).

e-Diasporic communities help new migrants that no longer must struggle alone to settle in the new location, they already have an online cultural backup that supports them and a community that guides them to surpass daily challenges, for example, where to buy food and to rent a room, as it happens in the next testimony:

Para mí fue increíble encontrar ese grupo porque llegas acá con mucho miedo sin conocer a nadie literalmente. Llegas con una maleta y esperando.... Al encontrar este grupo empecé a conocer gente de México que te decía bueno puedes ir a tal lugar que hay cosas más baratas puedes ir a tales lugares, llegas acá y quieras o no tienes una cultura (L. Mujer, estudiante de máster) / It was incredible to find this group because you came here with much fear, knowing nobody. You arrive with a luggage and waiting.... When I found this group, I met Mexicans that advise you to go there, buy here. You have a (Mexican) culture already here” (L. Woman, postgraduate student).

One important factor that encourages the irruption and strength of cultural identity is the yearning for the homeland. In the case of Mexicans, as it could be possible to observe in the testimonies, this feeling is very strong, and it is evident when, for example, they try to get ingredients for traditional food or to organize meetings to celebrate Mexican national holidays. In this case for example, “E,” a young woman studying in Barcelona wanted to celebrate her birthday with a “piñata,” so she asked in the group where she can buy one.

Eh pues la próxima semana cumpla años, entonces quería una piñata (Un contenedor con dulces que la gente rompe de manera colectiva como parte de algunas celebraciones, particularmente navidad y cumpleaños, en México (E. Mujer, estudiante de máster) / Well the next week it will be my birthday, so I am looking for a *piñata* (A container with candies that people break collectively as a part of some celebrations, particularly Christmas Eve or birthdays in Mexico), (E. Woman, postgraduate student).

Something remarkable in the case of Mexicans living in Barcelona is the fact that along with time, they have configured a regional market that provides goods and services, particularly Mexican goods, like ingredients for traditional dishes, restaurants, Mexican flags, and places to listen to Mexican traditional music such as *Mariachi*. Even some Mexicans have been successful

in growing some traditional ingredients in Spain. This market not only has the function to fill basic needs, but these goods reinforce identity in between migrants, they are now capable to feel and celebrate like any other Mexican despite the distance. Another aspect that emphasizes this community is the fact that in Catalonia, the autonomic community which Barcelona is the capital of, there are three official languages: Spanish, Catalan and Aranés. But historically, official institutions that praise the separation of Catalonia from Spain, encourage the use of Catalan above Spanish. In daily life, Mexicans living in this community must face the fact that, notwithstanding living in Spain, they are constrained to deal with another different language and some other cultural facts, like the way of being of Catalonians who are not very open to accept new social relations, especially from foreign people. These arguments are well illustrated in the next testimonies.

Cuando vine a Cataluña, si algo me pilló sorpresa es que el idioma oficial es el catalán. (C. Hombre, 49 años, trabaja en relaciones públicas de un bar) / When I came to Catalonia, if something caught me by surprise, it was the fact that the official language here is Catalanian! (C. Man, 49 years old, he works in public relations for a bar).

Son más reservados. Ellos como que buscan estar en su grupo social de catalanes... Aquí tienen identidades muy regionalistas de que somos catalanes, no somos españoles y queremos hablar catalán (E. Mujer, estudiante de máster) / They are more reserved. They always try to stay inside their own group of Catalonians. Here they have regionalist identities, (they say) We are not Spaniards, and we want to speak in Catalanian (E. Woman, postgraduate student).

This complicated context, however, does not diminish Mexican identity but strengthens it. As it is shown in the case of “M,” a woman that met her Spaniard wife on the Internet and came to Spain to get married. Now she, as a housewife, takes care of her children following, not the culture of the community of reception, but the Mexican one. As she stated in the interview:

“I make Mexico at my home” (Sobre la manera de educar a los hijos en Barcelona) Yo en mi casa va mi ley, como allá que me dicen, hay no regañes a los niños, pero yo les doy mis reglas y si, hago México en mi casa (M. Mujer, 35 años, ama de casa) / (About how to raise children in Barcelona) In my home I set the rules, some people say, do not discipline the boys. But I gave

them my rules, and yes, I make Mexico at my home. (M. Woman, 35 years old, housewife)

Like “M,” many other migrants persist in recreating Mexico in their daily lives. This cultural endurance stands not only in massive public demonstrations like parades or national independence days, but in small things, like where to find a place to eat *tacos* in the city, to search for an ingredient to prepare traditional food, or to raise descendants inside a Mexican culture, and, what is most important, on a shared feeling of desire and nostalgia for the motherland.

“Yo amo mi país, extraño mucho y cuando oigo Mariachis (un grupo que interpreta música tradicional mexicana) y tocan Guadalajara (una canción muy popular mexicana) me da por llorar” (L. Mujer, 61, maestra de idiomas) / “I love my country, I miss it a lot, and when I hear *mariachis* (a group that plays Mexican traditional music), and they play Guadalajara (a well-known traditional song), I start crying” (L. Woman, Language teacher).

5. CONCLUSION

The point of view expressed by the Mexicans interviewed clearly shows that there is a substantial increment of Internet use between migrants, especially of social media to share practical information about their daily lives in Spain, relocation issues, education and labor opportunities, and there is also a clear predisposition to “close lines,” increasing synergies that enables them to preserve their culture and to stay in contact with their homeland. Social media, due to its inner flexibility and ubiquitous, are ideal spaces to encourage the reinforcement of diasporic communities, which through the sharing of information and the organization of cultural events, like Independence Day celebrations, struggle to maintain their identity toward exogenous influences in the reception communities. Migrants use these spaces not only to share real-world information to improve their daily lives in Spain, but to preserve their cultural identity, sharing information about relevant events that happened in Mexico from traditional elements like food to festivities. Thanks to social media, dispersed migrants across a huge territory stop thinking about “I” and began thinking about the “We.” This is a form of endurance too (Georgiou, 2013). However, one of the most important things that social media provides

to migrants is a space of interaction that consists of several contexts and cultural worlds: the virtual, the physic, the homeland, and the foreign land. A migrant in front of a screen is not just another user, but a liminal person that moves in between several spheres of socialization. Migrants are in constant intercommunication with their different social spaces in a persistent feedback. But what strongly defines a diasporic discourse from others is the fact that migrants are not just yearning about their homeland, but they are trying to build one. Mexicans living in Barcelona, are not just sharing information trying to solve daily issues, they are indeed using these virtual spaces to bring back piece by piece the Mexico that was left behind.

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NOTA BIOGRÁFICA

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