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Engaging in homeland politics from abroad: processes of subjectivation and transnational mobilisation

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Abstract (English)

Keywords: political transnationalism, subjectivation, extraterritorial mobilisation, diasporas.

Migrant populations have the power to engage in homeland politics once they leave their country of origin through transnational campaigns, extraterritorial voting, advocacy efforts, protests, and even artistic performances. This dissertation presents ethnographic material collected among the Mexican community in Brussels and Paris between 2014 and 2018 to answer to the following research question: How do Mexican migrants in Europe engage in homeland politics?

By looking at how Mexican migrants engage in homeland politics, this research posits three main arguments. First, it places migrants at the forefront of the analysis. Migrants are recognised as the individuals (with cognitive and emotional dimensions) who decide how and when to engage in homeland politics from abroad. Second, it is contended that migrants' motivations and decisions to engage in homeland politics rely on their individual processes of subjectivation. Through these processes, migrants can reflect upon their life experiences, determine their own political identity, and thus develop their own original strategies of transnational political participation. Finally, it is argued that migrants are embedded and operate in four social spaces: the homeland, the hostland, the diaspora and the global. These spaces not only influence migrants' decision to engage in transnational politics, but they also determine their strategies. Indeed, it is argued that migrants are individuals who can only engage in transnational politics once they adapt to the norms, create alliances with key actors, and find resources embedded and governing each of these four social spaces. In short, migrants become political subjects with the power to use the norms, interact with actors, and exploit resources available in the hostland, homeland, diaspora, and global political spheres to achieve their political goals.

Abstract (Français)

Mots clés : transnationalisme politique, subjectivation, mobilisation extraterritoriale, diasporas.

Les populations migrantes ont le pouvoir de s'engager dans la politique de leur pays d'origine une fois qu'elles l'ont quitté, à travers des campagnes transnationales, des votes extraterritoriaux, des efforts de sensibilisation, des manifestations et même des performances artistiques. Cette thèse présente du matériel ethnographique recueilli auprès de la communauté mexicaine à Bruxelles et à Paris entre 2014 et 2018 pour répondre à la question de recherche suivante : Comment les migrants mexicains en Europe s'engagent-ils dans la politique du pays d'origine ?

En examinant comment les migrants mexicains s'engagent dans la politique de leur pays d'origine, cette recherche avance trois arguments principaux. Premièrement, elle place les migrants au premier plan de l'analyse. Les migrants sont reconnus comme des individus avec des dimensions cognitives et émotionnelles qui décident quand et comment participer à la politique de leur pays d'origine depuis l'étranger. Deuxièmement, la recherche montre que les motivations et les décisions des migrants dépendent de leurs processus individuels de subjectivation, que je définis comme la capacité d'une personne à définir sa propre identité politique et son engagement politique : les sujets réfléchissent à leurs expériences de vie, déterminent leur propre identité politique et ainsi développent leurs propres stratégies originales de participation à la politique transnationale. Troisièmement, la recherche définit quatre espaces sociaux dans lesquels ils opèrent, à savoir le pays d'accueil, le pays d'origine, la diaspora et l'espace mondial.

Ces espaces influencent non seulement la décision des migrants de s'engager dans la politique transnationale, mais ils déterminent également leurs stratégies. En effet, les migrants sont des individus qui ne peuvent s'engager dans la politique transnationale que s'ils s'adaptent aux normes, créent des alliances avec des acteurs clés et trouvent des ressources propres à chacun des quatre espaces sociaux dans lesquels s'inscrivent.

Abstract (Español)

Palabras clave: transnacionalismo político, subjetivación, movilización extraterritorial, diásporas.

Las poblaciones migrantes tienen el poder de participar en la política de su país de origen desde el extranjero mediante campañas transnacionales, votaciones extraterritoriales, actividades de promoción, protestas e incluso actuaciones artísticas. En esta tesis se presenta material etnográfico recopilado durante el estudio de la comunidad mexicana en Bruselas y París entre 2014 y 2018 para responder a la siguiente pregunta de investigación: ¿Cómo participan los migrantes mexicanos en Europa en la política de su país de origen?

Al examinar la forma en que los migrantes mexicanos participan en la política de su país de origen, esta investigación plantea tres argumentos principales. En primer lugar, sitúa a los migrantes en el primer plano del análisis. Se reconoce a los migrantes como los individuos (con dimensiones cognitivas y emocionales) que deciden cómo y cuándo participar en la política de su país de origen desde el extranjero. En segundo lugar, se demuestra que las motivaciones y decisiones de los migrantes para participar en la política de su país de origen dependen de sus procesos individuales de subjetivación. Mediante estos procesos, los migrantes pueden reflexionar sobre sus experiencias de vida, determinar su propia identidad política y, por lo tanto, desarrollar sus propias estrategias originales de participación política transnacional. Por último, se argumenta que los migrantes están incrustados en y operan desde cuatro espacios sociales: el país de origen, el país de acogida, la diáspora y el global. Estos espacios no sólo influyen en la decisión de los migrantes de participar en la política transnacional, sino que también determinan sus estrategias. De hecho, se demuestra que los migrantes son personas que sólo pueden participar en la política transnacional una vez que se adaptan a las normas, crean alianzas con actores principales y encuentran recursos integrados y que rigen cada uno de estos cuatro espacios sociales. En resumen, los migrantes se convierten en sujetos políticos con el poder de utilizar las normas, interactuar con actores y explotar los recursos disponibles en las esferas políticas de su país de origen, de su país de acogida, de la diáspora y global para alcanzar sus objetivos políticos.

"Art should be something that liberates your soul, provokes the imagination and encourages people to go further."

Keith Haring

Contents

Acronyms

ACAT	(Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture) Christian action for the abolition of torture
AGM	Alternative Globalisation Movement
AMLO	Andrés Manuel López Obrador
CCIME	(Consejo Consultivo del Instituto de Mexicanos en el Exterior) Advisory Council of the Insitute of Mexicans Abroad
CNI	(Congreso Nacional Indígena) National Indigenous Congress
EPN	Enrique Peña Nieto
EU	European Union
EZLN	(Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional) Zapatista Army of National Liberation
HTAs	Hometown associations
IME	(Instituto de Mexicanos en el Exterior) Institute of Mexicans Abroad
INE	(Instituto Nacional Electoral) National Electoral Institute
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MORENA	(Movimiento Regeneración Nacional) The National Regeneration Movement
PAN	(Partido de Acción Nacional) National Action Party
PRI	(Partido Revolucionario Industrial) Institutional Revolutionary Party
SMOs	Social Movement Organisations

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Introduction

My interest in migration studies started when I was very young. I specifically remember reading an article in a Mexican magazine reporting on migration and prostitution in one of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Mexico City. My first academic work on migration was when I was 17, in the last year of high school. French Baccalaureate examinations required us to design a research project. It had to be presented in an innovative format and be interesting and socially relevant. I convinced a group of four friends to write a mock diary of a migrant telling the story of his journey to the United States. We used data from books, specialised magazines, and newspapers to create the fictional story of a migrant crossing an international border and facing challenges such as travelling without documentation, hiring a *pollero*, and sending remittances to his mother back in Mexico.

Little did I know that years later I would be studying members of the Mexican community living in Europe. Studying the Mexican migrant community in Brussels and Paris was an interesting process through which I was able to discover and analyse questions related to transnationalism, migration, and security. By meeting the participants of this research and observing how they interacted as members of the Mexican diaspora in Europe, I questioned myself about the causes that bought them together. I quickly realised that homeland politics triggered their interest to gather as they organised multiple political and social events mainly related to the defence of human rights and security issues in Mexico.

Migrant populations have the power to engage in homeland politics once they leave their country of origin. Indeed, migrants are agents with the capacity and ability to develop transnational strategies to respond to humanitarian crisis and other socio-political issues embedded in their homelands from abroad. Migrants may engage in homeland politics through transnational campaigns, extraterritorial voting, advocacy efforts, protests, and even artistic performances. In order implement transnational political strategies, migrants need to understand and adapt to different socio-political contexts and interact with actors in different social spaces.

After observing the behaviour of Mexican migrants in Europe and intrigued by how they organise strategies of transnational political engagement regardless of the distance or time spent abroad, I decided to conduct this ethnographic research.

Using original material collected through an ethnography from among the Mexican community in Brussels and Paris, this dissertation aims to shed light on the motivations sustaining transnational politics by answering to the following research question: How do Mexican migrants in Europe engage in homeland politics?

By looking at how Mexican migrants engage in homeland politics, this research posits three main arguments. First, I place migrants at the forefront of the analysis. I recognise migrants as the individuals (with cognitive and emotional dimensions) who decide how and when to engage in homeland politics from abroad. Second, in line with this argument, I contend that migrants' motivations and decisions to engage in homeland politics relies on their individual processes of subjectivation. Through these processes, migrants can reflect upon their life experiences, determine their own political identity, and thus develop their own original strategies of transnational political participation. Finally, I argue that migrants are embedded and operate in four social spaces: the homeland, the hostland, the diaspora and the global. These spaces not only influence migrants' decision to engage in transnational politics, but they also determine their strategies. Indeed, I argue that migrants are individuals who can only engage in transnational politics once they adapt to the norms, create alliances with key actors, and find resources embedded and governing each of these four social spaces. In short, migrants become political subjects with the power to use the norms, interact with actors, and exploit resources available in the hostland, homeland, diaspora, and global political spheres to achieve their political goals.

This research contributes to the better understanding of transnational politics and social movements organised by migrant communities mainly by focusing on an unexplored migrant community in Europe and by introducing the notion of "subjectivation" in migration studies. This concept, developed by scholars on social movements and — as I will show — largely absent in the scholarship on transnational politics and diasporic mobilisations, captures the

predominant role of individuals in the development and implementation of transnational political strategies. In particular, this concept enables to understand how migrants engage in homeland politics by undertaking creative political actions while detaching themselves from state institutions.

By focusing on the Mexican case study, I shed light on the organisation and dynamics among the members of the Mexican diaspora living in Brussels and Paris who engage in homeland politics. As a result, I manage to determine how migrants develop deinstitutionalised and original strategies of mobilisation such protests, advocacy efforts, and artistic manifestations. Mexico is a relevant case study for its complex political context and social transformations, particularly from 2014 to 2018, the period where I collected the data for this research.

The specific context of insecurity in Mexico and its rampant violence since the declaration of war against drugs have triggered the transnational engagement of Mexican migrants living abroad (Pérez-Armendáriz 2019). Indeed, since the militarisation and the "War on Drugs" declared in 2006, the level of violence and cases of human rights violations in Mexico skyrocketed. From December 2006 through to the end of 2015, over 150,000 people were intentionally killed in Mexico (Open Society Foundations 2016). The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime indicated that from 2007 to 2010, Mexico was the country with the highest rate of increase in intentional homicides and 2017 marked the country's deadliest year in two decades registering a total of 29,000 murders (Pérez-Armendáriz 2019: 3).

The so-called "war" against organised crime has created a context of increasing insecurity and escalating violence, impunity, and corruption across the entire country (Bailey 2014). As a result of this political context, members of Mexican civil society organised national and transnational movements (i.e. #YoSoy132 in 2012 and Ayotzinapa in 2014) to denounce the incapacity of the Mexican government to respect the rule of law and provide security to its citizens. Besides the will of the Mexican society to denounce the context of violence and impunity affecting their country, Mexicans also mobilised intensively after a deadly earthquake in September 2017, and the presidential elections in July 2018. In short, the range of diverse political reasons that triggered the political mobilisation of the Mexican society, showcase the

interest of considering this country for the study of political transnationalism. Indeed, by scrutinising the variety of political causes that triggered the transnational mobilisation of Mexican migrants living in Brussels and Paris (i.e. insecurity and violence, an earthquake, and elections), I was able to create a systematic analytical framework by focusing on the actions and processes undertaken by migrants.

This research also contributes to the field of migration studies through the analysis of original empirical data collected within a migrant community understudied in Europe. Since most of Mexican immigrants reside in the United States and Canada, only few studies focusing on this specific population have been conducted in other geographical areas. As I explain in detail later in the methodological chapter, I decided to conduct this study in Brussels and Paris for two main reasons. On the one hand, the choice of Brussels is particularly relevant regarding the study of transnational political movements in Europe. Considered the capital of the European Union, Brussels hosts the headquarters of the main European institutions and is as a result the preferred place to organise demonstrations and petitions at the European level. On the other hand, Paris has historically been a pole of attraction for Latin American migrants (Streckert 2012). Accordingly, for more than a century, the city has attracted intellectuals, politicians, and members of the social Latin American elite, including refugees from military regimes. Furthermore, Paris has historically been the seat of several political movements organised by Latin American migrants and other minorities and therefore represents a relevant city to enrich the data collection for this research.

The main objective of this research is to understand how Mexican migrants engage in homeland politics. Thus, besides answering to this main research question, this research also addresses these following sub-questions:

- What actions do Mexican migrants undertake to engage in homeland politics from abroad?

- What type of political activities and events do they organise?

- In which socio-political spaces do they operate to achieve their political goals?

In order to answer to these questions, this dissertation is organised into five chapters. The first chapter presents the existent literature of political transnationalism, diaspora mobilisation, and social movements. In this chapter, I demonstrate the utility of integrating the notion of subjectivation into the study of migrant transnationalism by articulating political transnationalism and social movements approaches in the study of immigrant cross-border mobilisation.

The second chapter presents an original analytical framework to map the political spaces (political spheres of mobilisation) where migrants operate, inspired by previous work done by Lafleur (2005). I argue that migrants are embedded in four political spheres (homeland, hostland, diaspora and global) where they create alliances, find resources and mobilise norms to be able to engage in transnational politics. I conceive these four spheres of political mobilisation as the socio-political spaces where migrants create alliances with actors, manipulate norms, and adapt resources to engage in homeland politics from abroad and achieve their political goals.

In the methodological chapter, I explain the research design, data collection, treatment and analysis of this study. I present my approach as an interpretive researcher (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012) and the 41 participants of this ethnography. In this section, I analyse my role as a member of the Mexican community and make important remarks on my positionality and reflexivity. I make special emphasis on my fluid identity and the different roles and memberships that I adopted during my fieldwork (Williams et al. 1992; Jansson and Nikolaidou 2013). Finally, I introduce a critical analysis about the ethical implications raised in this research.

The fourth and fifth chapters present the analysis of the empirical material of this research. I decided to present my empirical data in two chapters after realising that Mexican migrants engage in homeland politics either responding directly to events embedded in Mexico or to independent causes triggered by actors in their respective hostland.

On the one hand, the fourth chapter unpacks the transnational responses organised by Mexican migrants from abroad. In this section, I analyse their individual processes of subjectivation and their organisation as members of activist groups. In addition, this chapter explores the different strategies organised by Mexican migrants living in Brussels and Paris who decided to engage in the recovery of the earthquake in 2017 and in the elections of 2018. This chapter focuses exclusively on the activities organised by Mexican migrants in response to events embedded in their homeland. On the other hand, the fifth chapter analyses the activities that Mexican migrants organised in response to the political positions adopted by European actors on Mexican politics. Mexican migrants have developed their individual and creative strategies of transnational political mobilisation to gain more legitimacy and visibility for their political causes in Europe.

In the conclusion, I present the main results and findings of this research, I discuss its main limitations and recommendations for future research in transnational politics and mobilisation organised by migrant populations. This research contributes to scientific knowledge by analysing a relatively unexplored population in Europe, by presenting an innovative framework to analyse transnational politics and by placing the individual at the forefront of the analysis of transnational political mobilisation. This research sheds lights on the individual processes of subjectivation of migrants to become transnational political subjects instead of merely focusing on the political opportunities, structures and cultural frames, a framework largely used for studying diaspora mobilisations. Indeed, by introducing the notion of subjectivation, this research contributes to the better understanding of the contemporary transnational movements organised by migrant populations, where migrants emancipate themselves from institutions and engage in politics through original initiatives where they value horizontality, friendship, and trust.

Chapter 1.

Bridging Transnational Politics, Diaspora Mobilisation and Social Movement Theories

"We are the victims and it hurts. It hurts a lot and we do not want any other parent to suffer like us" says María de Jesús de Tlatempa Bello in a political meeting organised in Paris in April 2017. Her son, José Eduardo Bartolo Tlatempa is one of the 43 missing students of the Normal School Raúl Isidro Burgos of Ayotzinapa. She travelled from Mexico to France to attend a series of political events co-organised by members of the Mexican diaspora in Paris interested in homeland politics. During her stay there, she attended political meetings and private gatherings to present the case of the missing students from Ayotzinapa, to denounce the inability of the Mexican government to respond and to lobby for support from abroad.

This example from my fieldwork reveals the complex system behind transnational politics, diaspora mobilisation and social movements. Indeed, diasporas can create, transform, and exploit transnational spaces to engage in political movements. Several authors have contributed to the better understanding of how diasporas navigate political and social structures at the local, national, and global levels in order to participate in politics (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Boccagni, Levitt and Lafleur 2015; Lyons and Mandeville 2012; Adamson 2018). Accordingly, scholars have studied the role of states, institutions, and global trends in shaping social movements at a macro level (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Lafleur 2013; Koinova 2017a; Koinova 2017b; Koinova 2017c; Délano and Gamlen 2014; Lestage 2015). Others have depicted hometown associations and kinship groups as meso-level catalysers of ideologies and spaces where diasporas find resources and opportunities to mobilise to engage in transnational politics (Itzigsohn and Villacrés 2008; Müller-Funk 2016; Bermúdez 2016; Moss 2016; Mavroudi 2017; Però 2008). Last, at the micro-level, authors have focused on the role of diasporic leaders or entrepreneurs sparking transnational politics (Koinova 2017b; Adamson and Koinova 2013; Betts and Jones 2016;

Brinkerhoff 2009), and on determining the profile of migrants participating in transnational politics (Guarnizo and Chaudhary 2014; Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003; Lafleur and Calderón 2011).

In addition to the different spatial fields and actors involved in transnational politics, migration scholars have payed special attention to the different tactics of political mobilisation deployed by migrants as well as their abilities to find and exploit resources and political opportunities in their places of residence (Martiniello and Lafleur 2008; Tarrow 1998; Adamson 2005; Tilly 2003; Smith and Fetner 2010; Della Porta 2008; Betts and Jones 2016; Morales and Pilati 2013; Adamson and Koinova 2013). In sum, migration scholars have borrowed analytical tools from social movements theories to unpack the motivations, capacities and strategies behind transnational politics orchestrated by migrants living abroad.

Despite these efforts, in this chapter I will argue that the notion of subjectivity, vastly integrated in the study of alter-globalisation movements and global social movements organised since 2010 (Pleyers 2017; Pleyers 2016; Glasius and Pleyers 2013; Rebughini 2017; Rebughini 2014), has been overlooked in the study of immigrant transnational politics. As a result, I will demonstrate that by including the concept of subjectivity in the study of migrants engaging in homeland politics, it is possible to shed light on the individual triggers, forms, and expectations of diasporic activists. Indeed, this concept, thus far absent from the migration literature, manages to unpack the capacity of actors to construct their existence, to control their experience, and to creatively engage in social movements (Wieviorka 2012; Glasius and Pleyers 2013; Rebughini 2014; Martucelli 2005).

By intertwining the scholarship of migration studies and social movements, I aim to demonstrate that the concept of subjectivity is useful to understand the individual decision-making processes and organisation of extraterritorial social movements organised by migrants. In order to do so, I divide the chapter in three sections. The first part scrutinises the contributions from the literature on transnational and extraterritorial politics. The second section reviews the literature on diaspora mobilisation and transnational social movements. Finally, the last part introduces the literature on subjectivation and the individualisation of

political activism to demonstrate that migrants detach themselves from state institutions by creating new spaces for transnational political engagement in homeland politics. Throughout the chapter, I also present relevant examples from my fieldwork to illustrate the importance of recognising the positionality and role of migrants at the forefront of the organisation of transnational social movements.

1.1. Transnational politics and extraterritorial politics

1.1.1.   Conceptualising transnational politics: definitions and typologies

For over a decade, the political dimension of immigrant transnationalism has gained a lot of attention from scholars trying to identify the actors, nature, causes, channels, and impacts of migrant communities engaging in homeland politics across borders (Lafleur and Martiniello 2009; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Boccagni, Lafleur and Levitt 2015). Martiniello and Lafleur (2008) define "immigrant political transnationalism" as:

> any political activity undertaken by migrants who reside mainly outside their
> homeland and that is aimed at gaining political power or influence at the
> individual or collective level in the country of residence or in the state to
> which they consider they belong. Such power or influence may be achieved
> by interacting with all kinds of institutions (local, subnational, national, or
> international) in the country of residence and/or the home country, by
> supporting movements that are politically active in the country of origin or
> by intervening directly in the country of origin's politics (653).

This definition is relevant for my study first because it recognises the diversity of actors involved in transnational politics. Second, it captures the idea that transnational political participation may be organised and sustained at the local, subnational, national, or/and international levels. Finally, this definition crystallises the deterritorialised transfers of ideas, behaviours, norms, and knowledge involved in transnational politics. Overall, we can understand immigrant political transnationalism as any political activity organised by migrants

who are interested in influencing their homeland and/or hostland politics, who navigate across different political, social, and economic structures in different countries.

One of the most relevant typologies to study transnational political engagement of migrant populations is the one developed by Østergaard-Nielsen (2003) based on the study of the political transnational practices of Turks and Kurds in Europe. Østergaard-Nielsen (2003) identifies five broad categories of migrant mobilisation: immigrant politics, homeland politics, emigrant politics, diaspora politics and translocal politics (2003: 762). Immigrant politics designate the political transnational activities undertaken by migrants with the purpose of improving their social, political, and economic situation in their host country. Homeland politics refer to the activities undertaken by migrants when they aim to engage with their country of origin exclusively on issues concerning the domestic or foreign policy of the homeland (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Lafleur and Martiniello 2009). Østergaard-Nielsen (2003) identifies three sub-sets of homeland politics: emigrant, diaspora, and translocal politics. Emigrant politics refer to the dialogue between migrants and their countries of origin about their legal, economic and political status in their homeland (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003: 762), while diaspora politics encompass migrant groups who are unable to participate directly in the political system of their homelands. Consequently, the use of "diaspora politics" connotes a political dispute or sensitive issues regarding the homeland politics. Finally, translocal politics consist of the political initiatives organised abroad aiming to improve the situation the local communities of origin (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003).

Although this typology has vastly been used in the study of transnational politics, it is important to note that it presents some limitations. First, as stated by Lafleur and Martiniello (2009) it fails to clarify how translocal politics differ from homeland politics. Second, the typology developed by Østergaard-Nielsen (2003) does not take into consideration the regional level of politics or the possibility of interaction with the migrant community living in a third country. Transnational communities are groups based in two or more countries (Castles 2007; Koinova 2017c); however, transnationalism does not refer exclusively to a direct and linear interaction between people living in the homeland and those living in different host countries.

Migrant communities living in two different foreign countries can interact before or during the engagement with their homelands. In fact, some migrant communities might even adopt a communalist strategy at a regional level mainly through lobbying and diplomatic negotiations (Sheffer 2009). For instance, my fieldwork revealed a network of interaction at the European level connecting Mexican migrants that helped coordinate their political activism in half a dozen countries.

Finally, this typology diminishes the role of the homeland society in the transnational political processes, by focusing primarily on the role of migrants and those of the governments in the country of origin and of residence. In my case study, the homeland society played an important role in the initiation and sustainment of transnational political engagement. Both the information as well as the strategies of engagement shared between migrants and members of the homeland society inspired and influenced the form of the political mobilisation of Mexican migrants in Brussels and Paris.

One concept developed in the migration literature to capture the social transactions and interactions between migrant populations and people in their homelands is social remittances (Levitt 1998). Peggy Levitt coined this term to refer to the ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital that flow between receiving and sending communities (Levitt 1998; Faist 2008). Indeed, the flow of ideas and information between migrants and actors in their places of origin influence the way migrants interact in their host societies and how they engage with their homeland politics.

Building on this idea, Goldring (2003) introduces the concept "political remittance" as a theoretical term to acknowledge the political and social implications resulting from the flow of ideas sustained between diasporas and their homeland societies and how they affect homeland politics. In turn, Piper (2009) conceptualises political remittances as a "sub-issue" of social remittances and uses it to explore the emergence and organisation of transnational networks advocating to promote migrants' human rights globally. In short, she defines political remittances as the "activities, actions, and ideas, aimed at the democratisations of the migration process via political mobilisation in the form of collective organisations operating in the

transnational sphere" (Piper 2009: 238). Through her research, Piper contributed to the conceptualisation and understanding of collective efforts to improve migrant's conditions and access to rights. Nevertheless, this study overlooks at the individual advocacy initiatives initiated and sustained by migrant activists aiming to improve not only their living conditions in their respective hostlands but also the socio-political conditions in their countries of origin. More recently, Krawatzek and Müller-Funk (2019) define political remittances as: "the act of transferring political principles, vocabulary and practices between two or more places, which migrants and their descendants share a connection with" (Krawatzek and Müller-Funk 2019: 7). In addition, they clarify that since political remittances are embedded in a context of migration, they can influence the political behaviour, mobilisation, organisation and narratives of belonging in places of destination and origin. The authors also explain the predominant role of the State in mediating and shaping the form and content of these type of remittances (Krawatzek and Müller-Funk 2019: 8).

Migrants can engage politically with their homelands through institutional and non-institutional channels. Institutional forms of transnational political participation include membership in political parties, contributions to political campaigns, and extraterritorial voting (Itzigsohn and Villacrés 2008; Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003; Lafleur 2013; Lafleur and Sánchez-Domínguez 2014; Ahn Paarlberg 2017). Meanwhile, non-institutional forms of participation encompass membership in hometown organisations, contributions for development initiatives and membership in charity organisations (Itzigsohn and Villacrés 2008; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Bermúdez 2016; Martiniello 2006). Other forms of non-institutional political participation less explored in migration studies include boycotts, strikes, demonstrations, writing letters, blocking traffic, and artistic representations (Constantino and Sabucedo 1991; Manzano 2007; Smith and Fetner 2010; Tilly and Tarrow 2007).

The so-called institutional forms of political participation are regulated by the administrative apparatuses of states interested in engaging with their emigrant populations. Gamlen (2008) highlights the instrumental interest of migrant-sending states to engage with their diasporas. In short, he argues that emigration states are interested in their diasporas because of

imperatives and opportunities. The author explains that migrant-sending states readapt their emigrant policies and institutions as an imperative to preserve their legitimacy and relevance among their expatriates. Opportunities, on the other hand, are exploited by emigration states to engage with their diasporas in order to boost their homeland's growth through the flow of remittances, knowledge transfers and investments (Gamlen 2008). Indeed, from the 1990s, states with important emigrant populations, started implementing policies and programs to provide services, protection, and extraterritorial rights to their citizens scattered in the world.

Scholars on migration studies have developed multiple typologies and theoretical tools to study how migrants engage in transnational politics. In particular, they have identified the actors, resources and impacts behind the transnational political initiatives orchestrated by migrant communities. For instance, Østergaard-Nielsen's typology identifies five broad categories of migrant mobilisation: immigrant politics, homeland politics, emigrant politics, diaspora politics and translocal politics. Her work builds on an analysis of the form and objectives behind the transnational political mobilisation initiated and sustained by migrant communities. Other authors have based their studies on the distinction between institutional and non-institutional channels of transnational engagement (Itzigsohn and Villacrés 2008; Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003; Lafleur 2013; Gamlen 2008). Studies based on such typologies underscore the role of States and diasporic organisations in the formation of transnational political actions. However, this dichotomy downplays the role of migrants as political subjects able to create deinstitutionalised initiatives of transnational political mobilisation that surpasses institutional and electoral politics such as social movements and other individual forms of protest.

1.1.2. Institutional forms of political participation: the case of Mexico

Mexico is one the most relevant case studies to understand the institutionalisation of the relation between a State and its diaspora. Through the Mexican case, scholars have managed to deeply understand the rationale and strategies developed by a government to engage socially, economically, and politically with its diaspora (Iskander 2010; Fitzgerald 2006; Délano 2011; Délano 2016; Smith 2008; González Gutiérrez 2006; Lafleur and Calderón Chelius 2011).

According to the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IME), there are about 12 million Mexicans registered outside the country, of which 97% live in the United States (IME 2016). Since 2003, the Mexican government has created several programmes and institutions to provide legal protection, social security and education opportunities to the Mexican population living in the United States (Délano 2016; Smith 2008). However, it is important to note that the institutionalisation of this relationship is the result of a long history of negotiations between both parties, where the Mexican government responded to the demands its diaspora (Smith 2008; Lara-Guerrero 2013). Indeed, the Mexican community living in North America has accumulated over time the necessary resources, political force, and organisation to advocate for the recognition and institutionalisation of their social and political rights from abroad.

The first effort to institutionalise the relation between the Mexican diaspora and its state was the *Bracero Programme* (González Gutiérrez 2006), an agreement between the Mexican and the US governments to protect and control temporary Mexican migrant workers from 1942 to 1964. Later, in the mid-1960s, Mexican migrants living in the United States organised the Chicano movement, an important series of demonstrations staged by different migrant groups to advocate for the full recognition of their rights as American citizens (Délano 2011). In 1968, the Chicano movement intensified after the *Tlatelolco*[1] massacre in Mexico City, as it triggered the unification of the different diasporic groups and boosted the transnational activism between both countries (Iskander 2010). As a result of this transnational mobilisation and advocacy activities, the Mexican government reacted and organised meetings with Chicano leaders, provided them with consular protection, scholarships and promoted cultural activities within the members of the Mexican diaspora in the United States (González Gutiérrez 1999). From then onwards, the Mexican government systematised meetings with Mexican leaders of the Chicano movement (Iskander 2010).

Another political turning point that accelerated the institutionalisation of the relation between the Mexican state and its diaspora was the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA)

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[1] The *Tlatelolco* massacre was a repressive act organised by the Mexican authorities against students protesting on the 2nd of October 1968 and which resulted in the killing of at least 300 civilians.

approved in 1986 allowing the immediate regularisation of 2.7 million Mexicans in the US (Ayón 2006). The change of legal status of an important part of the Mexican population encouraged the Mexican government to improve its consular services and get closer to its diaspora through cultural and academic programmes (Délano 2011). In 1998, the Chicano groups and other diasporic activists showed their political empowerment across the Mexican-American border by supporting the left-wing candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, during the presidential elections. Not satisfied with the results of a very contested election, the Mexican diaspora organised protests and started claiming their rights to vote from abroad, which was only granted in 2005 (Smith 2008).

As stated by Smith (2008), the Mexican migrant vote was a long-term negotiation between the Mexican government, migrant leaders, and transnational migrant organisations with political influence in specific states in Mexico such as Zacatecas and Michoacán. In addition to the extraterritorial political rights granted to Mexican migrants to vote in the presidential elections, the Mexican government engaged politically with its diaspora through an Advisory Council to the IME (CCIME). The CCIME is an innovative strategy implemented by the Mexican government to consult migrant leaders living in the US and Canada and incorporate their suggestions and demands into emigration policies (Ayón 2006; Délano 2011). The CCIME became an institutionalised dialogue platform between 125 migrant leaders and the Mexican government that meets twice a year to discuss the interests of the Mexican diaspora in six specialised committees (politics, economics, education, legal affairs, border issues, and media and communications) (Diario Oficial 2013; Valdés Corona 2014).

In addition to the extraterritorial rights and the social programmes, the Mexican government has tried to fuel the cooperation among high-qualified Mexican professionals, entrepreneurs, academics and students with the program *Red Global de Mexicanos Calificados* or Global Network of High-Skilled Mexicans (Délano 2016). This program aims to create synergies between Mexican leaders across the world to stimulate cooperation in the entrepreneurial, industrial, scientific, cultural, and technological sectors for the benefit of their homeland (Red Global MX 2019).

External voting has gained special attention among migration scholars (Scuzzarello 2015; Pilati and Morales 2016; Lafleur and Calderón Chelius 2011; Guarnizo and Chaudhary 2014; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Hammond 2012; Boccagni 2014; Tabar 2014; Ahn Paarlberg 2017). Through different case studies, scholars have managed to analyse: the formal settings in which migrants participate in politics, migrant's political behaviour, their political opportunities and the impact of ethnic organisational affiliations shaping their political participation in foreign countries.

Intrigued by the low turnout among Mexican emigrant voters in the presidential elections in 2006, Lafleur and Calderón Chelius (2011) studied (1) the role of bureaucratic rules in the organisation of elections abroad, and (2) the interest of migrants and migrant organisations in home country politics. After analysing the political behaviour of Mexican migrants and their turnout in the presidential elections, the authors identified three type of variables to explain the limited voter turnout: political, institutional, and demographic. In sum, they conclude that the lack of engagement in electoral politics by Mexican migrants could be partly explained by: the limited capacity of the Mexican authorities in informing and registering potential voters abroad; the limited role of emigrant associations promoting the migrant vote; and the personal socioeconomic characteristics of the potential migrant votes including their income, occupation and level of literacy (Lafleur and Calderón Chelius 2011). In addition, even if the effect of trust on external voting could not be precisely measured for this study, the authors conclude that trust in home country elections and institutions is a factor influencing the turnout. This literature highlights the importance of individual characteristics and perceptions that shape transnational political participation.

Over the past two decades, the Mexican government has managed to establish strong political links with its diaspora by granting them the right to vote and by creating a formal and continuous dialogue with migrant leaders living in the United States and Canada. However, it is important to note that most of these emigration policies are not applied equally in all the countries were Mexicans reside. The Mexican state has prioritised the relation with the Mexican diaspora in North America for economic, political, and historical reasons. As previously stated,

the majority Mexicans living abroad reside in the United States (IME 2016). Since the Mexican community has a remarkably diverse socioeconomic profile, the Mexican government has focused on the most vulnerable people to provide them with protection and better employment and education opportunities. In addition, the Mexican government has also given special attention to the Mexican communities living in the US and Canada as a result of the diplomatic and commercial relations between these three countries. Finally, the fact that the Mexican government has not institutionalised a political dialogue with Mexican leaders in other parts of the world could be partially explained because of the composition of the Mexican migrant communities.

Mexican migrants who are not living in the United States or Canada are mostly first-generation migrants which means that they might not have the same political resources and a dense social network with formal organisations and experience to advocate transnationally with the same political weight as their co-nationals in North-America. As a result, it is important to analyse other case studies to shed light on how Mexican migrants without institutionalised channels of political engagement manage to advocate, lobby, and organise transnational political movements from other regions in the world.

1.1.3. Beyond state institutionalisation

The individual characteristics of migrants such as - age, education, marital and social status, visa status and length of stay in the foreign country - have been pointed out as key elements that determine their transnational political activism (Portes, Escobar and Walton 2007; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003). In addition, the political ideologies before migrating may strongly shape the political engagement and external voting practices of migrants (Lafleur and Sánchez-Domínguez 2014; Lafleur 2013; Bermúdez 2010).

Some authors have focused on determining the conditions that motivate migrants to participate collectively in transnational politics as members of migrant organisations or hometown associations (HTAs) and political parties (Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003; Portes, Escobar and Walton, 2007; Però 2008; Bermúdez 2010; Ahn Paarlberg 2017). In a

study carried out by Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller to investigate transnational political activities developed by Colombians, Salvadorans, and Dominicans living in the United States, they determined that political transnationalism is conditioned by individual motivations and by the size and spatial scope of their networks (2003: 1218). They demonstrated that for their case studies, political transnationalism is strongly associated with national origin, the experiences in the receiving society, strong social connections, and enduring moral ties with the societies of origin (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003: 1233). As a result, they portray political transnational activism as the response of migrant communities to long-distance social obligations and belonging, aiming to transform the politics of their homelands. Additionally, Ahn Paarlberg (2017) concludes after studying the Salvadorian diaspora, that besides the interest of migrants in extraterritorial politics, it is also important to consider the overseas party infrastructure.

The context in the hostland also shapes the migrant political demands and their mobilisation. After studying the political engagement of Latin Americans in the UK, Però (2008) concluded that Latin-American migrants took the initiative to create a sense of community and sustain organisations to advocate jointly for their working, social security and voting rights. In sum, Latin-Americans in the UK mobilised to improve their social recognition, citizen rights, and living conditions in the host country. In her fieldwork in the United Kingdom and Spain with Colombian migrants, Bermúdez observed that Latin-American migrant communities in Europe act collectively in order to advocate for their rights in their host-country while at the same time they sustain individual efforts of political engagement through voting or active involvement in party politics (Bermúdez 2010: 81). The author concluded that previous political experience seems to be a common pattern among the Colombian migrants engaging in homeland politics from Europe, who were mostly refugees and long-term migrants.

When studying extraterritorial and institutionalised forms of political engagement, scholars have focused on the role of the emigration states influencing and shaping the formal channels of transnational political engagement. In addition, they have unpacked the profile of migrants involved in homeland politics determining their personal characteristics and political background as factors influencing their political mobilisation. The literature presented in this

section is useful to understand the formal channels of transnational politics, but it pays less attention to other the informal arrangements of transnational politics such as: demonstrations, petitions, lobbying, and artistic performances, which have been other important forms of mobilisation such as in the case of the Mexican diaspora living in Brussels and Paris. The next section presents theories that have been developed in the literature of diaspora mobilisation and social movements to address this gap.

1.2. Diaspora mobilisation and transnational social movements

Diaspora mobilisation refers to the political activities undertaken by migrants from one country that target the domestic and foreign policy of said country. These activities might cross one or more borders and can be sustained by actors such as human rights activists, religious groups, or similar movements in other countries (Müller-Funk 2016: 354). Diaspora mobilisation aims to influence the political situation in one's perceived country of origin, in the host society or/and in the general public opinion.

Recent work has focused on the mobilisation of diasporas during critical periods of war-time violence and instability in their homelands (Koinova 2017a; Koinova 2017b; Koinova 2017c; Betts 2016; Müller-Funk 2016; Bermúdez 2016; Godin 2017; Lyons and Mandeville 2012). Building on theories on social movements, these studies: (1) examine the practices and strategies used by diasporic entrepreneurs at the macro, meso, and micro levels; (2) contend that migrant engage in transnational politics once they have found the necessary political opportunities, networks, and resources; (3) analyse the way in which framing processes are used for diffusing political messages and disrupt political structures.

1.2.1. Unpacking diaspora mobilisation at the macro, meso and micro level

Adamson (2005) sheds light on the nexus between globalisation, transnational networks, and non-state political entrepreneurs. By analysing transnationally organised violent movements, she argues that globalisation (a macro-level process) creates incentives and opportunities for

political entrepreneurs to operate internationally and engage in politics beyond state boundaries. She recognises that the increased mobility of people, capital, ideas, and resources, enhanced by globalisation, can be exploited by radical political entrepreneurs to support their transnational political cause. In other words, political entrepreneurs tap on existing global circuits and resources to achieve their political purposes (Adamson 2005).

Global networks and dynamics have an impact on the formation and intensity of transnational political movements, including those organised by diasporas. In one important contribution to the study of diasporas mobilisation, Koinova (2017a) focuses on the mobilisation of conflict-generated diasporas to demonstrate that the transformation of the international order has the capacity to change the strategies and intensity of extraterritorial political activism. By focusing on the macro-level of analysis, Koinova (2017a) argues that global "critical junctures"[2] and "transformative events"[3] can disrupt the transnational mobilisation of diasporas regardless of their ethnicity, place of origin, and place of residence. Instead, she identifies the positionality of the diaspora operating in transnational social fields as a key determinant to explain how diaspora entrepreneurs respond to global challenges. Here, we may understand positionality as the relative power that diasporas are perceived to derive from their social positions in a specific context (Koinova 2017c: 598).

By using empirical examples from the Kosovo and Palestinian diasporas, Koinova (2017a) demonstrates that international critical events have the capacity to disrupt diaspora mobilisation trajectories without fundamentally changing the relationship between the diaspora and their country of origin. Furthermore, since "critical junctures" and "transformative events" do not have the same relevance across the transnational social fields where diasporas operate, the onus is on diasporic entrepreneurs or political leaders to readapt

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[2] Koinova defines critical junctures as "short periods of time that bring about profound transformations and long-term legacies" (2017: 3). A clear example of this could be the terrorist attacks of 9/11. According to the author, critical junctures profoundly reshape polities.

[3] According to Koinova, "transformative events" are defined in the social movements' literature, as turning points that can dramatically increase or decrees the mobilisation (2017: 3). In short, transformative events are specific to social movements while critical junctures affect global political dynamics.

the transnational strategies to face the crisis. Finally, the author concludes that since critical events take place in transnational spaces (Glick Schiller 2005), it is important to integrate this level of analysis in the scholarship of diaspora mobilisation which tends to focus on the dynamics and relationships between the migrant communities, their hostland, and their homeland.

For my case study, "critical junctures" and "transformative events" played an important role in sparking and shaping the way Mexican migrants engage in transnational political movements. Unforeseen events that represent an imminent danger to the homeland may trigger feelings of impotence among migrants and encourage them to contribute to the emergency relief either individually or collectively. As will be further developed in the next chapters, there are global norms (i.e. the human rights protection regime) and critical events (i.e. earthquake in September 2017) that boost and affect the transnational political mobilisation of Mexican migrants residing in Brussels and Paris.

While studying collective political activism among Latin Americans in the United States, Manzano (2007) demonstrated that through continuous interactions, migrants share their political grievances and concerns, articulate common views, and have access to human resources and social capital, which may boost their political activism and thus sustain transnational political movements. She determined that bridging and bonding activities in migrant communities, enhance the accumulation of social capital which at its turns provides resources for political involvement and expression. Bridging activities are defined as connections across the lines of class, gender, ethnicity, race, and broader lines of community building. On the other hand, bonding activities are developed through associations such as voluntary organisations, religious institutions, and residential enclaves (Manzano 2007: 125).

Similarly, by focusing on the meso-level of analysis, Müller-Funk (2016) demonstrates that personal networks play a crucial role in diaspora mobilisation. Through these nets, migrants create links that cross-cut different spaces and organisations, such as religious groups, hometown associations and kinship organisations, which can be exploited to engage in transnational politics. Müller-Funk also finds that in order to understand their degree and

shape of political activism we should take into account diasporas' characteristics such as the time of residence, the size and its composition (immigrant generation). After studying the mobilisation of the Egyptian diaspora from Paris and Vienna, she concludes that migrants mobilise in a space influenced by the emigrant policies of the homeland, the integration politics of the hostland, and the characteristics of the diasporic group itself (Müller-Funk 2016: 354).

In relation to conflict-generated diasporas, Lyons (2007) argues that these networks have commonly a specific set of traumatic memories and thus retain symbolic ties to their homeland. For diasporas in conflict, the attachment to the homeland shapes the initiation, form, and duration of diasporic mobilisation. According to Lyons, the traumas of violent displacement resulting from the conflict remain vivid among the first generations and are usually kept alive in subsequent generations through commemorations and symbols (2007: 532). The emotional attachment to the homeland is often fed by national symbols such as flags, maps, specific national items, etc. usually displayed in diasporic websites, publications, and other cultural events. Besides the emotional and identity linkages, diaspora networks implement strategies to find supporters and resources in their host governments and among the international community including the media and important stakeholders.

In an effort to determine the impact of diasporic networks and their engagement in homeland affairs, Van Hear and Cohen (2016) distinguish three spheres of engagement: "the largely private and personal sphere of the household and extended family; the more public sphere of the 'known community'; and the largely public sphere of the 'imagined community', which includes the transnational political field, among other arenas" (2016: 3). These spheres are meant to be conceived as analytical categories that overlap, however by recognising that diasporas engage differently in private and public arenas, these authors demonstrate that the level of social proximity and cohesion differs among members of a family, members of an ethnic group or association and members of a larger "imagined community". As a result, the personal level of commitment, personal wealth and resources, individual social capital and class directly influence the way and intensity in which immigrants engage with their homeland in conflict and post-conflict societies (Van Hear and Cohen 2016). While a clear distinction

between the private and public spheres might seem blurry, it is important to note that academics recognise that migrants' personal connections and individual resources (i.e. social capital) shape how they engage in homeland politics both individually and collectively.

Indeed, there is a body of literature in migration studies further exploring why and how diasporic entrepreneurs engage in homeland politics by deconstructing these dynamics at the micro-level of analysis. For instance, Brinkerhoff (2009) contributes to the understanding of diasporas engaging in homeland politics in conflict settings by pointing out that diasporic entrepreneurs aim to acquire resources and influence constructively or destructively their homeland affairs. As such, she points out that diasporic leaders may intervene in homeland affairs via economic remittances, philanthropic efforts, human capital investments, and political strategies such as advocacy or peace processes initiatives.

Diasporic entrepreneurs use different strategies to engage in homeland politics, nevertheless, only the ones with specific resources and opportunities might be able to transform the political system in their country of origin. To capture the role and interests that elites have in fomenting transnational politics, Betts and Jones (2016), introduce the notion of "animators". Through the provision of resources, expertise, and connections, these "animators" can encourage and guide migrants to become political actors with enough agency to engage in contentious politics (Betts and Jones 2016). Betts and Jones (2016) thus emphasise the role of animators in providing resources to diaspora mobilisation. It should be noted that only animators with enough money, skills, knowledge, and connections are able to stimulate transnational political activism. In addition, the authors explain that since diasporas are not animated in the same way, they distinguish between "internal" and "external" as well as "institutional" and "networked" animation. On the one hand, the internal/external distinction relates to whether the animation emerges from actors within or without the diasporic community. On the other hand, the institutional/networked distinction is related to the character of the animators (Betts and Jones 2016: 30). In other words, the institutionalisation sustaining the animation refers to the codes, conventions, traditions, rituals, and forms of organisation constructing networks and personal ties between the animators and the stakeholders involved in the diasporic

mobilisation (Betts and Jones 2016). By emphasising the specific role of "animators", Betts and Jones (2016) shed light on the instrumental interests of some individuals who allocate resources strategically and inject energy into specific groups to accomplish their own purposes.

Animators of diasporas can also be returnee migrants who are concerned by the development of their homelands. In his research about the Somaliland diaspora, Hansen (2013) examines the return of professionals who lived in Europe and North America and who decide to return to Somalia to get involved in local politics. These professionals use their experience abroad to argue that they are well-prepared to contribute to the development and democratisation processes in Somaliland. Nevertheless, Hansen (2013) highlights that the mismatch between the ideas of the diaspora and local Somalilanders might create contradictions and prevent the implementation of inclusive and broadly accepted policies for development. In other words, a coherent discourse between political leaders, members of the diaspora, and the local population in the homeland might be necessary to implement meaningful policies that respect local values and ideologies.

Overall, the literature on diaspora mobilisation demonstrates the importance of analysing transnational politics from the macro, meso, and micro-level perspectives. This specific literature recognises that global dynamics, diasporic groups, and individual capacities shape the strategies and scope of transnational political mobilisation. Moreover, this literature emphasises that migrants engage in homeland politics individually or collectively depending on the political opportunities and resources (social and economic) at their disposal. Political opportunities and resources are important for the practical implementation of transnational political mobilisation. Nevertheless, common norms, and ideologies among the stakeholders involved in the organisation of transnational politics are also particularly important since they ensure group cohesiveness and consistency of their political demands.

1.2.2. Frames of political engagement

Framing approaches understand the cultural narrative, discourses, and ideology used by migrants when sustaining transnational mobilisations. Adamson and Koinova (2013) explain

that migration scholars have borrowed the concept of "strategic framing" from social movements theories to explain the collective action among diasporic groups and organisations. Through frames, people justify, dignify, and animate collective action (Tarrow 1998). Indeed, social movements are inspired and sustained by shared grievances based on collective frames.

According to Della Porta, social movements scholars use the concept of "frames" to refer to the narrative and common ideas used by political actors to justify their actions and characterise their positions (2008: 226).

In diaspora politics and mobilisation, scholars have noted that migrant groups strategically exploit human rights-based frames to gain the support from new allies and expand their social movements (Adamson and Koinova 2013). Injustice frames fuel anger and negative emotions which in turn may spark collective movements (Jasper 1997). In the context of diasporas mobilisation, Sökefeld (2006) explains that master frames such as human rights or ideas of environment create a common framework of interpretation and an ideology to sustain and broadly diffuse certain social movements.

Drawing on the literature of transnational social movements, Adamson (2012) explains that diasporic entrepreneurs, construct, and deploy strategically frames and categories to mobilise diasporas. Accordingly, political entrepreneurs manage to construct shared identity categories, coherent discourses and symbols which act as the "glue" that holds diasporas together to engage in world politics. Indeed, several scholars have tried to better understand the construction and utility of frames in diaspora mobilisation.

For instance, Godin (2017) makes an important contribution to the study of diaspora mobilisation showing that diasporic Congolese women in Belgium and in the United Kingdom adapt and exploit different discursive and narrative strategies to bridge, amplify, and extend their political demands. In so doing, these entrepreneur diasporic women are able to become activists in different territories and public spheres. Godin (2014) analyses the different alignment processes and concludes that human rights discourses, and women's rights in particular, have been exploited by Congolese activists to diffuse their movement, find more

allies, and ultimately as a strategy of political empowerment within and beyond their ethnic diaspora.

Similarly, Kleist (2013) underlines in her work the relevance of considering frames, discourses, metaphors, and ideologies in the study of the Ghanaian diaspora. She posits that in the Ghanaian context, diaspora mobilisation has been framed by the state to mobilise non-resident populations for homeland development through references to autochthony (Kleist 2013: 301). As a result, she argues that Pan-Africanism has been used historically as a collective discourse by the Ghanaian authorities to attract members of the diaspora living in developed countries to invest in their homeland. More recently, the Ghanaian state has insisted in framing its migrants as development agents to keep attracting them to their country of origin. In short, the Ghanaian state promotes discourses of belonging, loyalty, and emotional attachment to call on its diaspora to invest and get involved in development projects in their homeland.

In sum, frames are an important conceptual tool in the study of transnational political engagement for three main reasons. Through frames, political actors define a common line of thinking which in turn directs their political goals and strategies. Second, frames enable political actors to find allies and supporters. Indeed, as pointed out by Snow et al. (1986), frame alignment is an important part of the recruitment process in social movements. Through convincing and coherent frames, political actors might be able to attract other stakeholders to join the mobilisation. Lastly, in the study of diaspora mobilisation, it is necessary to consider global and dominant frames shaping international politics (i.e. Human Rights frame). Global interconnectedness has had an impact on how people define their political norms and values. Through globally accepted frames, political actors are able to find allies in different countries and diffuse their political movements worldwide. As a result, diasporic entrepreneurs might use globally accepted frames to legitimise their own political mobilisation and expand their political outreach. For my case study, global frames where particular important for Mexican activists since through common human rights norms they were able to find allies both in their host societies and internationally.

1.2.3. Introducing the mobilisation of Mexicans from Europe

Overall, the works reviewed above suggest that the profile of migrants, their kinship, their personal networks, and their capacity to face global challenges, play a crucial role in the organisation and development of transnational social movements. By building on social movements theories, this body of literature portrays diaspora mobilisation as instrumentally based and sustained by political leaders who have the capacity and ability to use an array of political, economic, social, and cultural resources in different territories. However, these studies have overlooked migrants' strategies of mobilisation, which are often characterised as horizontal, deinstitutionalised, and lacking clear political objectives. In my particular case study, I observed the way Mexican migrants have created spaces of political engagement in a very creative way and in some occasions, without following any institutionalised channel.

In addition, the existing literature on diaspora mobilisation, focusing largely on authoritarian regimes, neglects the ways in which diasporas mobilise in democratic regimes with high levels of violence and criminality. Although there is a literature specialised in conflict-generated diasporas (Koinova 2017a; Koinova 2012; Brinkerhoff 2009; Lyons 2007; Smith and Stares 2007), many democratic countries like Mexico suffer from peacetime violence in the form of drug-trafficking related violence. There, collusion between state officials and criminals is common, police institutions and the judiciary are corrupt, and levels of citizens' trust in authorities is low (Ríos 2015; OEA 2015). Growing distrust towards state authorities may generate grievances among citizens at home and abroad (Moss 2016) and therefore promote unconventional forms of mobilisation among the emigrant population. As mentioned before, for the case of Mexico, Lafleur and Calderón Chelius (2011) have pointed out that trust in the institutions is a key element to take into consideration while studying the way the Mexican diaspora engages in homeland politics.

Analysing the case study of the Mexican diaspora mobilising from Europe with the current analytical tools on diaspora mobilisation and political transnationalism, it is possible to state in the words of Koinova (2017a) that "critical junctures and "transformative events" have played a crucial role in the initiation and shape of their transnational political mobilisation organised

by Mexican migrants living in Brussels and Paris. From a macro level of analysis, Mexican migrants in Europe have deployed different individual and collective strategies to react to crucial events that have transformed the political life in their homeland such as the case of Ayotzinapa, the earthquake of the 19th of September 2017 or the presidential elections of July 2018. As a result, Mexican migrants have engaged in homeland affairs by organising different kind of events such as gastronomic events, private concerts, fundraising events, cultural festivals, petition writing, embroidery sessions, and lobbying activities with European authorities.

From a meso-level of analysis, it is important to recognise that as a community, the Mexican diaspora in Europe has managed to collaborate in some political events as the result of their collective emotions, personal interests and will to engage in homeland politics as a group. In addition, to persuade more actors to support their political struggle, Mexican migrants have used the frames of human rights and injustice to attract more allies and denounce the Mexican government abroad.

Finally, from a micro-level perspective, the case study of Mexicans in Europe highlights the relevance of considering diasporic entrepreneurs as animators with personal interests and resources and with the capacity to summon other members of the Mexican diaspora to advocate as a group. It is important to also state that these political entrepreneurs undertake individual actions whenever they feel it is more effective or suitable for their political cause. In fact, these Mexican political actors living in Europe have shown to be at the forefront of the diasporic political mobilisation either informing and calling to collective action among other members of Mexican migrants, finding resources, exploiting political opportunities, mobilising frames, and feeding transnational advocacy networks. By focusing at the individual level and introducing theories of subjectivation, currently absent from the literature diaspora mobilisation, it is possible to deeply study what triggers and feeds transnational political actions by recognising that key individuals are the core initiators and animators of transnational political movements. In addition, by introducing theories of subjectivation (Pleyers 2017 and 2018; Rebughini 2014; Martucelli 2005) it is possible to understand how Mexican migrants

residing in Brussels and Paris engage in homeland politics through individual and collective initiatives based on processes of rationalisation and emancipation, where they prioritise human relations, socialisation and creativity.

1.3. Towards Subjectivity and the individualisation of political activism

Snow, Soule and Hansperter define social movements as "one of the principal social forms through which collectivities give voice to their grievances and concerns about the rights, welfare and well-being of themselves and others by engaging in collective actions such as protesting" (2004: 3). Scholars on social movements have developed a large variety of approaches and theories to understand the emergence, motivations, stakeholders, and dynamics of collective protests. The multidisciplinary nature of social movements theory has enabled scholars to shed light on why and how people organise collective activities from multiple perspectives and levels of analysis (Roose and Dietz 2016). Indeed, some authors have focused on the individual motivations and characteristics of actors engaging in social movements (Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2010; Melluci 1996), while other scholars have developed more holistic approaches to understand the macrostructures, spaces, networks, and power dynamics behind collective protests (McAdam et al. 1996; Tilly and Tarrow 2007; Tilly 2003). Furthermore, other scholars have prioritised the study of the organisational structures, ideologies, and resources feeding and sustaining social movements (Diani 1992; Della Porta and Diani 1999; Della Porta 2008; Polletta 2009).

According to Edwards (2014), social movement studies have gone through several phases of conceptual development since 1970s, which have created great binary debates among academics (*Figure 1*). For instance, some academics use a rational approach to determine the origin and life of social movements, while others sustain that emotions act as initiators, accelerators, and amplifiers in social protests (Jasper 2010; Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2010). Similarly, some scholars stress the structural and political factors, while others accentuate the cultural and social aspects of social movements (Edwards 2014).
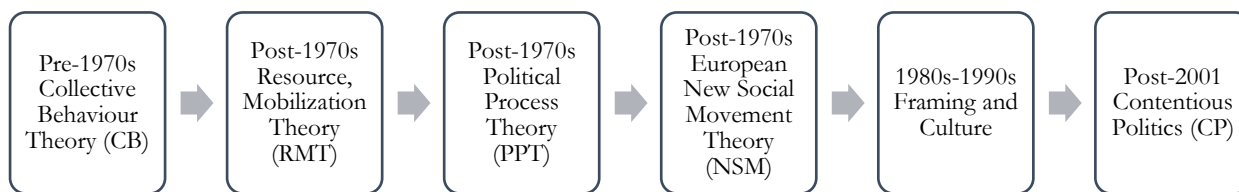
Figure 1: The chronological development of social studies. Source: Edwards, G. (2014) Social Movements and Protest. UK: Cambridge University Press, p.3.

1.3.1. Conceptual distinctions in social movement theories

Edwards (2014) goes beyond the traditional debates in the field to suggest that overall, there are four main "conceptual distinctions" to explain the common ground and shared assumptions among social movement theorists (2014: 4-5):

1) *Social movements are collective efforts rather than individual efforts at social change.*

   The author highlights the collective aspect of social movements by pointing out that it is rather accepted that social movements are collective and organised actions. However, it important to keep in mind that the way in which these collective actions have been an actual source of discrepancy among scholars who debate on the one hand that social movements are sustained by "formal organisations" (Social Movement Organisations) (Zald and Ash 1966), while on the other hand, some theorists highlight the interpersonal relations and "informality" of the connections and networks sustaining social movements (Edwards 2014: 4). For instance, on this last point, Kotler-Berkowitz argues that friendships are a key component of social networks sustaining social movements since they generate direct, frequent, voluntary, and purposeful interactions (2005: 153).

2) *Social movements exist over a "period of time" by engaging in a "conflictual issue" with a "powerful opponent" rather than being "one-off" events.*

   Edwards (2014) argues that social movements are collective actions that last over a period of time. In addition, she explains that they crystallise the opposition behaviour between people and a "powerful opponent" over an issue of conflict. Generally, the "powerful

opponent" is well delimited, historically it has been the nation state, political institutions and other powerful institutions.

3) *The members of a social movement share a "collective identity"*

After studying predominantly working class-based mobilisations, scholars from the so-called New Social Movement Theory (NSM) argue that social movements are sustained by people sharing a collective identity, cultural values, and ways of living (Edwards 2014; Della Porta and Diani 1999). As a result, the collective identity has been recognised as a key element to explain the emergence and nature of social movements from the 1960s onwards. On this matter, Mario Diani (1992) suggests that social movements are sustained by informal networks of people who "shared a collective identity" or "shared beliefs and solidarity". More recently, authors have pointed out that globalisation has transformed the exchanges among these informal networks through internet-based communication which allows a rapid connection, facilitated the coordination among groups and enhanced the formation of collective identities (Earl, Hunt and Garrett 2010).

4) *Social movements actively pursue change by employing protest.*

Edwards (2014) identifies the employment of protest as the fourth common ground of social movements. Accordingly, she points out that acts of disruption or declarations of disapproval are currently a common practice in social movements. As a result, protestors adapt their tactics of mobilisation which include demonstrations, sit-ins, walkout, boycotts, etc. (Jasper 1997; Della Porta and Diani 1999).

The four main "conceptual distinctions" made by Edwards (2014) highlight that scholars have largely agreed that social movements are repeated actions that gather actors sharing a collective identity who organise protests against a well-defined and powerful opponent. These four axes of analysis enable us to understand some of the main characteristics of social movements, however it is important to remember that there is not a consensus on what motivates protesters to act collectively, how they organise their activities and diffuse their messages, what are their

main strategies and repertoires of activism and what are their goals and impacts of their mobilisation.

1.3.2. Moving towards the New Social Movement theory and subjectivation

In the mid-1990s, scholars developed what it is known as the "political process model" (McAdam et al. 1996) to integrate the cultural and symbolic dimensions to the political study of social movements. The political process model explains the emergence of social movements using a theoretical framework constructed by three axes: political opportunities, mobilising structures, and cultural frames (*Figure 2*). First, the political opportunity structure refers to: "features and regimes and institutions (e.g. splits in the ruling class) that facilitate or inhibit a political actor's collective action and the changed in those features" (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 49). Second, the mobilising structures refer to the formal and information organisations through which resources are mobilised (Edwards 2014: 93). Finally, cultural frames unpack frames, defined as: "interpretative schemata that allow agents 'to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large'. In addition, they 'function to organise experience and guide action'" (Snow et al., 1986 in Husu 2013).
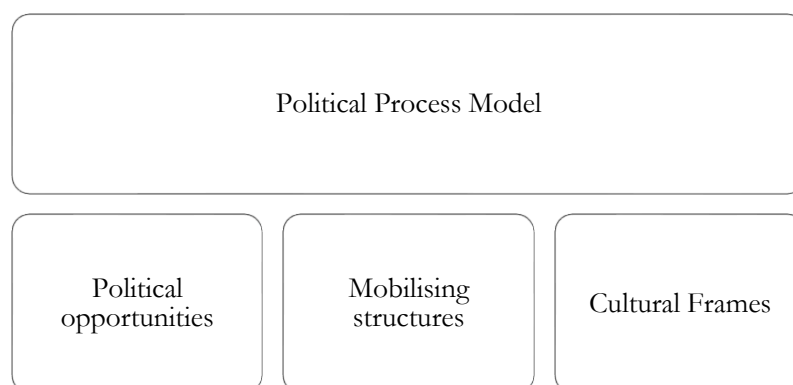
Figure 2: The political process mode. Source: Edwards, G. (2014) Social Movements and Protest. UK: Cambridge University Press, p.93 based on McAdam et al. (1996).

In sum, the Political Process Model integrates a holistic analysis of the political opportunities, resources and ideological discourses that sustain the initiation, form, and life of social

movements. As demonstrated in the previous section, this model has largely shaped the study of the political mobilisation of migrant populations (Smith and Stares 2007; Betts and Jones 2016; Müller-Funk 2016; Bermúdez 2016; Godin 2017; Lyons and Mandeville 2012; Martiniello 2006; Lafleur and Martiniello 2009; Kleist 2013; Varela Huerta 2008). This classic model provides a structured framework to analyse the constraints, capacities, opportunities and ideologies sustaining social movements organised by migrant populations. However, it has been criticised by social movement theorists for overemphasising the rationalist aspect of political mobilisation and for diminishing on the one hand the fact that activists can produce their own opportunities and, on the second hand, the role of emotions and cultural contents (Jasper 2010; Jasper 1998). Finally, this model has been criticised for focusing too much on the institutionalised structures derived from nation states (Edwards 2014; Melucci 1984; Polletta and Jasper 2001). The emphasis on the nation state and its institutions is particularly problematic in contexts where social movements include protests who challenge other actors or have more abstracts demands and in contexts where the institutions are weak, mistrusted, and violence prevails.

To overcome the theoretical challenges of the Political Process Model, New Social Movement theorists advanced that social movements should instead be conceptualised as collective identities and analysed integrating a cultural approach (Edwards 2014; Bosco 2006; Melucci 1984). By focusing on the social movements from the 1960s (i.e. African-American civil rights movement or the student movement), scholars pointed out that these movements were organised and supported by minorities and middle-class intellectuals who made claims regarding human rights, quality of life, identities and moral values (Edwards 2014: 118). Later, the so-called social movements organised from the 1970s and 1980s, which include feminism and environmentalism highlighted the connection between the political struggle and the people's everyday lives and personal values (Juris and Pleyers 2009). NSM theory argues that the new social movements are different because activists mobilise mostly around cultural concerns through decentralised and participative networks often hidden from public view (Edwards 2014; Natsh 2006; Polletta and Jasper 2001) (*Figure 3*).
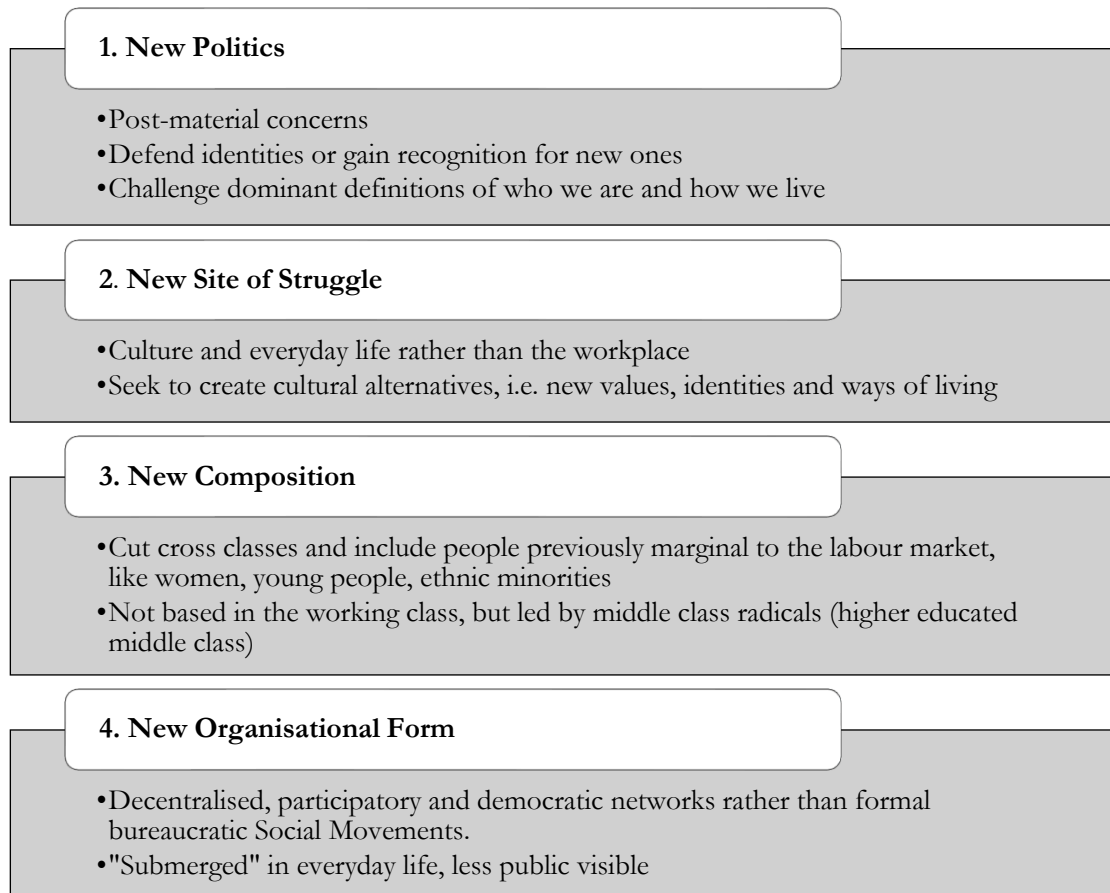
Figure 3: What was "new" about new social movements? Source: Edwards, G. (2014)
Social Movements and Protest. UK: Cambridge University Press, p.119.

From the 1990s, globalisation reshaped the study of social movements as a result the multiplication of powerful non-state actors, the development of transnational advocacy networks, and the growth of interdependence and interconnectivity among global activists (Keck and Sikkink 1998). In this context, activists deploy strategies of political engagement either externalising their demands from the national to the global level or domesticating global demands targeting their nation state (Tarrow 2006). Technology has also transformed the way global activists connect through social media and internet by amplifying their connectivity, access to information and resources to disseminate their movement and gather international support (Earl, Hunt and Garrett 2010).

1.3.3. Alternative globalisation movements and political subjectivity

One of the most discussed global social movements is the alternative globalisation movement (AGM) or global justice movement (Pleyers 2010a). According to Pleyers (2010b), global justice activists mobilise against neoliberalism and one of the first movements that denounced the need of local autonomy and participatory self-government was the Zapatista movement organised in 1994 in Mexico. The Zapatistas managed to gain international support and resources on the one hand by liking their local land struggles with global resistance against neoliberalism (Edwards 2014: 170). On the other hand, Zapatistas managed to exploit new channels of communication and to call for global action through a spontaneous cyber-network installed and sustained by sympathisers of the indigenous movement (Rovira 2009). Edwards (2014) explains that this transnational network of activists called "Peoples Global Action" became a crucial hub of the alternative globalisation movement where activists found information and coordinated global protests events. Theoretically, it is important to mention that these decentralised transnational hubs should not be conceptualised as Social Movement Organisations but rather as horizontal networking spaces for social protest (Edwards 2014; Ibrahim 2009).

Pleyers (2010a; 2010b; 2016; 2017) has made important contributions in the theorisation and understating of alternative globalisation movements. He argues that alter-activists mobilise around specific projects through informal and interpersonal networks. As a result, he posits that alter-globalisation embodies a call for the *renewal of political citizenship and activism* where actors value diversity and seek for models of alternative societies (Pleyers 2010a: 22). Accordingly, actors elaborate two different ways of becoming actors in the global age: one focuses on reason and rationality, while the other on subjectivity and creativity (Pleyers 2010a: 12). The former involves formal organisations who target nation states and international political institutions while the latter focuses on the capacity of actors to create autonomous spaces and different ways of living overcoming and detaching themselves from the hegemonic role of the nation state (Edwards 2014). By recognising that activists may approach differently institutions, Pleyers (2010a) bases his analysis on the individual experience

and subjectivation of the activists to shed light on the organisation, tactics, guiding values and motivations behind alter-global social movements.

Various authors contend that contemporary social movements are different in terms of the informality of their organisation, the nature of their demands, their relationship with the formal institutions and the eagerness in which social movements actors use original and creative ways to mobilise (Pleyers 2017; Glasius and Pleyers 2013; Pleyers 2016b; Wieviorka 2012; Modonesi 2017). For Rebughini (2014), activist's subjectivity, has become the spark that originates, leads, and sustains the recent social movements, such as alter-global movements for social justice or Occupy. A political subject is a conscious individual with the freedom to decide how to act and how to engage in political activities. Through this personal subjectivation, the individual chooses their own fights and collective identity, and becomes the manager of their own political engagement, determining the nature, rhythm, involvement, and duration of their mobilisation (Wieviorka 2008). For this specific research, I define subjectivation as one's ability to define her/his own political identity and political engagement.

Considering the subjectivation of actors in the study of social movements is relevant since, nowadays, political subjects do not seek to establish a new political order nor to capture the state power (Edwards 2014). Moreover, both globalisation and technology have transformed the dynamics of mobilisation in the world. Accordingly, political subjects do not follow any specific manifesto, but their autonomy, emotions, thoughts, and values catalyse and shape their political engagement (Pleyers 2016). Current social movements do not have a clear opponent, instead they are political subjects being mobilised by a sense of personal responsibility and personal values as well as abstract demands of democracy, human rights, social justice, or human dignity (Glasius and Pleyers 2013). These political subjects also create their own "spaces of experience", in which they can share their experiences, establish social links, experiment with alternative practices, and feed their politisation (Pleyers 2016; Pleyers 2017).

Conclusion

As we have seen in this literature review, migration studies literature has prioritised the use the Political Process Model to unpack the political mobilisation of migrant and diasporic populations. Nevertheless, the most recent literature on social movements prioritises a bottom-up approach and insists on the individualisation of social movements. The alternative globalisation movement (AGM) theories predominately developed by Pleyers, present some advances that are relevant for the study of migrant populations mobilising from abroad in homeland politics. First, such movements highlight that social movements are influenced and shaped by larger social transformations such as globalisation and the new technology. Second, the AGM theorists centre their analysis on the individual level and recognise the impact of autonomous and bottom-up initiatives. Third, this scholarship recognises that some activists do not longer target institutions but rather create new spaces for reflection and political engagement while enhancing their individual processes of subjectivation. Fourth, this approach insists on the fact activists organise their movements in alignment "with alternative values of the way of subjectivity" (Pleyers 2010a: 43-44). In other words, political subjects prioritise a horizontal organisation, strong participation, rotation of tasks and respect for diversity (Pleyers 2010a). Finally, the AGM approach recognises the essential role of interpersonal relations and friendship in the development and organisation of social movements.

The organisation, dynamics, and tactics deployed by Mexican migrants in Europe to engage in homeland politics highlight the importance to consider the theories of subjectivation and creativity (Pleyers 2010a, 2017). As it will be demonstrated with empirical examples in chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation, Mexican migrants living in Brussels and Paris tend to engage in homeland politics through individual processes of subjectivation. In short, I argue that by engaging in homeland politics from abroad, Mexican migrants have managed to: 1) enhance individual processes of subjectivation; 2) detach themselves from state institutions; 3) focus on creative forms of political mobilisation; and 4) create of new spaces for reflexion, political engagement, and socialisation.

By adopting a bottom-up approach, it is possible to focus on both the individual and collective efforts and actions undertaken by Mexican activists from abroad. However, it is important to clarify that even if Mexican migrants have prioritised the subjective and creative (Pleyers 2010a) forms of mobilisation to engage in homeland politics, they have not completely disregarded the institutionalised channels of political engagement.

In fact, Mexican migrants have also targeted some international organisations, and actors to accomplish specific goals such as finding allies, diffusing their messages, and putting pressure to the Mexican government in the international political field. As a result, I argue that migrants engaging in homeland politics become transnational political actors through the two ways depicted by Pleyers: "one focusing on *subjectivity and creativity* and the other on *reason and rationality*" (2010: 12). Nevertheless, I do not to conceive migrant political activism as the result of these two well-defined categories and dichotomous approach. Instead, I argue that migrants' individual processes of subjectivation enable them to reflect and create original transnational political initiatives from their hostlands. Indeed, through the analysis of their accumulated political experiences and their migratory trajectories, Mexican migrants have been able to tap on resources, navigate, and manipulate norms, and interact with actors embedded in different socio-political fields (homeland, hostland, global, and diaspora) to engage in homeland politics. As a result, I place the individual (migrant activist) as the core piece of the transnational political mobilisation since through its individual processes of subjectivation, actors manage to: navigate several social and political spaces to find allies and diffuse their messages, create horizontal cells of political activism based on interpersonal relations, sustain transnational connections with their homeland and address political demands to specific institutional stakeholders. In short, I will demonstrate that through individual processes of subjectivation Mexican migrants residing in Brussels and Paris have been able to critically analyse their life experiences to define their political identity and determine their strategies of transnational political engagement in homeland affairs despite of living abroad. In the next chapter, I present more thoroughly the political arenas that migrants navigate and exploit to become political subjects.

Chapter 2.

Political spheres of transnational activism: depicting the political spaces used by migrants to engage in homeland politics from abroad

> "There are many problems in Mexico. I try to make certain issues visible through concerts and denouncing what is going on from Brussels. I also send a little bit of economic aid. […] The number of femicides in the country is a total madness. I have sisters, cousins and I suffer a lot. I was crying today because they found a corpse of a thirteen-year-old girl in Guerrero. I am very sad for what is happening. Fortunately, I can do things through the social networks, we sustain a great communication among us…" (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, November 22nd, 2017).

This quote from one of the Mexican activists living in Brussels and engaging in homeland politics reflects the different socio-political fields that migrants navigate to organise transnational political activities. Despite the geographical distance and the time spent abroad, Ana keeps maintaining emotional and social links with members of her family living in Mexico. Moreover, she often reads Mexican newspapers to be informed about the politics of her homeland. Ana has been able to maintain a fluid communication with her relatives in Mexico through social media, a channel that she also uses to summon her closest Latin-American friends residing in Belgium to jointly organise events to denounce the political situation in Mexico or to collect funds for specific causes. In her years abroad and through her political activism and professional career, Ana has developed a personal network which includes Mexican and Latin-American migrants, Belgian acquaintances, European parliamentarians, European reporters, and international human right defenders. In order to engage in homeland politics from Brussels, Ana has been able to identify the opportunities and resources embedded in multiple social spaces, and to create alliances with actors and navigate the norms in multiple countries.

In practical terms, transnational politics rely on the capacity of migrants to engage with actors, tap on resources, and find political opportunities in multiple social spaces. Nevertheless, that capacity —I argue—depends in turn on the individual processes of subjectivation through which each activist reflects upon his/her past experiences and decides whether to engage in transnational politics in a creative and independent way. It is important to clarify that these individual processes of subjectivation are not alienated nor selfish acts since they are influenced by actors and dynamics embedded in multiple social spaces.

In this chapter, I argue that migrants manage to engage in transnational politics on the one hand by enhancing their individual processes of subjectivation and on the other hand by navigating four specific spheres of political mobilisation: the hostland, the homeland, the diasporic and the global. I conceive these spheres of political activism as: *the socio-political spaces where migrants interact with actors, use norms, and manipulate resources to engage in political transnational activities.*

In this chapter, I present an innovative framework based on the theoretical articulation of transnational politics with subjectivation theories combined with the critical analysis of the empirical material that I collected throughout my fieldwork. Following the analysis of the data I gathered, I realised that migrants as individuals are the core foundation of transnational politics. As a result, I developed my theoretical framework on the following three main contentions. First, I place the individual at the forefront of the analysis of transnational politics. Second, I argue that migrant's processes of political subjectivation are influenced by their accumulated experiences in multiple political spheres (hostland, homeland, diaspora, and global). Third, I posit that migrants engage in transnational politics once they have managed to build alliances with specific actors, navigate norms, and tap into resources embedded in the hostland, homeland, diaspora, and global political spheres.

With this framework, I contend that, by analysing the individual processes of subjectivation of migrants, it is possible to understand how their individual experiences, emotions, interests, and values trigger and shape their political transnational mobilisation. Furthermore, by placing migrants and their political subjectivity at the centre of the analysis, I recognise their will and

ability to develop innovative and creative forms of transnational mobilisation without the exclusive need for formal institutions or hometown organisations. Nonetheless, it is important to note that migrants are influenced by different socio-political contexts in their country of origin, in the country where they reside, and in other places they feel attached to. Also, migrants, as any other political actor, are exposed to global ideologies and frames that might influence their political activism. Consequently, I argue that both migrant's political subjectivity and their strategies of transnational mobilisation are not only shaped by their accumulated experiences but also by their sustained interconnections with a complex system of norms, actors, and resources embedded in the four political spheres. Concisely, migrants reach actors and use the norms and resources available within their hostland, homeland, diaspora, and globally at their convenience, to engage in homeland politics.

This chapter is organised in three main sections. In the first one, I present a literature review on the contributions made by migration scholars to capture the different social fields mobilised by migrants to engage in transnational politics. I demonstrate that migration scholars have prioritised a top-down approach in the studies of transnational politics, neglecting the predominant role of migrants. As a result, I introduce the notion of subjectivation to shed light on the individual processes of rationalisation, emancipation, and identity formation that guide transnational politics. In the second part, I explain the relevance of placing the individual at the forefront of the analysis and why it is important to analyse the individual processes of subjectivation and political identities of migrants engaging in homeland politics from abroad.

In the third section, I present and define the four political spheres: hostland, homeland, diaspora and global. To systematise my analysis, for each of the spheres, I examine the specific norms, actors, and resources mobilised by migrants in order to engage in homeland politics. Besides presenting the four spheres of political engagement, this chapter briefly alludes to the case of Mexican migrants mobilising from Europe, which will be thoroughly discussed in the following chapters of this dissertation.

2.1. Depicting transnational social spaces, contexts, and political spheres of mobilisation

Migration scholars have developed an important body of literature to conceptualise the social and geographical spaces that migrants navigate to keep engaging with their respective homelands. One of the main contributions in this field was made by Faist, who defines transnational social spaces as "combinations of ties, positions in networks and organisations, and networks of organisations that reach across the borders of multiple states" (2000: 191). Transnational social spaces include a variety of norms, actors, and resources. Indeed, Faist argues that these are constituted by various forms of resources, capital, people, and organisations who mostly interact in accordance to regulations dictated by Nation-States (2000: 192). Even if Nation-States are the predominant actors regulating and shaping transnational social spaces, Faist (2008) argues that the smallest element in transnational social formations are transactions which may occur between people belonging to small groups such as households (Faist 2008). In other words, he recognises that "bounded communications between at least three persons" (Faist 2008: 23) may have an impact on the transformation of transnational social spaces.

Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004) also adopt a transnational approach to analyse the continuous and simultaneous interactions sustained by migrant communities beyond national borders to better understand how they adapt to their hostland while remaining strongly influenced by their ties with their homeland. In this context, the authors use the concept of "social field to conceptualise the potential array of social relations linking those who move and those who stay behind" (2004: 1009). This conceptualisation is important in migration studies because it recognises that migrants have the capacity and ability to transcend the boundary of nation-states as well as the possibility to readapt and combine ways of being and belonging in different environments (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004). In relation to politics, Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004) explain that people in transnational social fields are exposed to different ideas of citizen rights, responsibilities, and political practices. In other words, migrants are continuously

reformulating and readapting their political ideas, demands, and practices in relation to the places where they live, where they have lived, and where they sustain feelings of belonging.

Lafleur (2005) developed a complex theoretical framework that captures the factors and dynamics of transnational political spaces (*Figure 4*). By focusing on four specific contexts (departure context; reception context; internal community context and international context) he provides an important analysis on the different macro and meso actors and dynamics shaping transnational political spaces. For each of these "contexts" (or categories), Lafleur (2005) manages to analyse the social and political factors that might promote or limit transnational politics. For instance, for the first spatial category identified as "departure context", he presents a set of factors that might influence transnational politics related to the country of origin of migrants such as: reasons to migrate, the perspective on return and the institutional links between the emigration state and its diaspora (Lafleur 2005: 48). The second context, defined as "context of reception" includes the social and political factors in the receiving state that might influence how migrants engage in transnational politics. This context includes the legal migration system implemented by the receiving State, the access to citizenship, the openness of the National political system to adapt to transnational interests, the public opinion, and the media. The third spatial category defined as the "internal community context" depicts the dynamics and factors inside of the migrant communities that affect their transnational political engagement such as the socioeconomic status of their respective diaspora, the transnational political agenda, leadership inside the migrant community, and the management of the generation issue. Finally, the international context includes larger factors embedded in the international system that might influence how migrants mobilise transnationally. These factors include the international order and ideology, the bilateral diplomatic relations between the host and home country, and the role of international organisations.
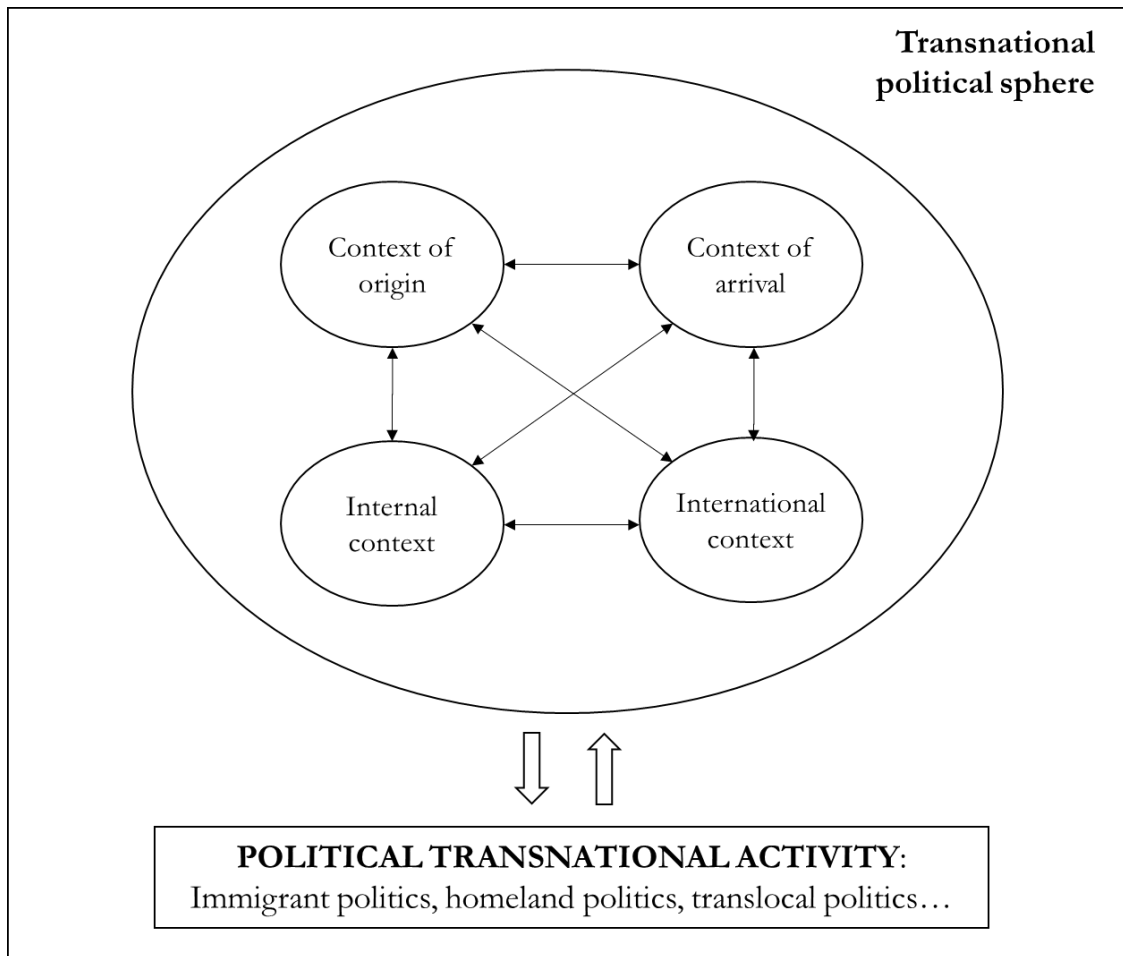
Figure 4: Schematic Representation of Transnational politics (original version in French). Source: Lafleur (2005) Le transnationalisme politique. Pouvoir des Communautés Immigrés Sans leurs Pays d'Accueil. Cahier Migrations 35, Academia Bruylant, p.61.

Lafleur's framework is a valuable contribution to the conceptualisation of how multiple socio-political spaces influence transnational politics. He manages to identify the main macro and meso-level dynamics that shape transnational politics by identifying key socio-political variables embedded in the hostland, the homeland, the migrant community, and the international contexts. Although, I agree that the four social spaces analysed (origin, destination, community, and international) embed all the political and social variables considered by migrants to engage in transnational politics, I would advance that the socio-political factors analysed for each "context" could be rearranged in accord to three main variables: norms, actors, and resources. By systematically grouping these factors into only these three variables, it is possible to clearly understand how migrants relate to specific actors,

navigate norms, and adapt resources embedded in different social spaces to achieve their transnational political goals.

Lafleur's theoretical framework places the State at the forefront of the analysis. Although I agree that Nation-States shape the international migratory system and influence transnational political mobilisation, it is the migrants themselves that decide on how to mobilise in practical terms. Lafleur does not recognise the predominant role of migrants as the key actors forming and developing transnational political initiatives. As a result, this framework presents some limitations to understand on the one hand the relevance of individual processes of subjectivation (which include both a rational and an emotional dimension) and on the other hand, to recognise the capacity that migrants have to engage in non-institutional forms of political transnationalism.

More generally, migration scholars have overwhelmingly studied the role of political opportunities, mobilising structures, and cultural frames (Smith and Stares 2007; Betts and Jones 2016; Müller-Funk 2016; Bermúdez 2016; Godin 2017; Lyons and Mandeville 2012; Martiniello 2006; Lafleur and Martiniello 2009; Kleist 2013; Varela Huerta 2008; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003). In other words, they have prioritised the study of institutionalised politics by focusing on the impact of the sending and receiving states and diasporas engaging in transnational politics.

Transnational politics have thus been largely studied from a top-down approach unpacking the legal, administrative, and political structures determining the political mobilisation of migrant communities. While these theories are useful to depict the role of states and groups in the formation and development of transnational politics, they overlook at the individual level of analysis by neglecting the impact of migrants' personal subjectivation.

As I have mentioned before, with this research, I aim to demonstrate that migrants and their individual processes of subjectivation are the key factors explaining and triggering their transnational political engagement. By focusing on the individual rather than on the State, I aim to provide a deeper analysis on how individual's experiences, skills, and personal values

trigger and shape the way migrants engage in homeland politics from abroad. Likewise, by placing the individual at the core of the analysis, I aim to shed light on how migrants can engage in transnational politics through creative and original channels, independently of formal organisations and institutions.

Finally, by introducing a new framework based in the analysis of actors, norms, and resources, I aim to also clarify the spatial location and role of specific actors such as non-state diasporas (i.e. Latin American diaspora), the international media and transnational advocacy networks, which are absent in previous frameworks.

The innovative analytical framework presented in this chapter brings together elements from migration and social movements theories in order to provide a holistic approach to determine how migrants engage in homeland politics from abroad. To date, the literature on migration studies tends to scrutinise the role of the hostland, the hostland, and diasporas in transnational politics, with some authors also considering global dynamics and international regimes such as the work by Koinova (2017a) or Lafleur (2005). On the contrary, the literature on social movements, tends to focus on three level of analysis: the individual, the national, and the global. In the following sections, I aim to demonstrate that, in order to understand the dynamics behind migrants' political engagement in homeland politics, it is important to integrate all levels of analysis migrants navigate to create their own political initiatives. To do so, I argue that migrants engaging in homeland politics interact and make use of four different interconnected and interdependent spheres of political activism: the hostland, the homeland, the diaspora, and the global.

I conceive these four spheres of political mobilisation as *the socio-political spaces where migrants create alliances with actors, navigate norms, and adapt resources to engage in homeland politics from abroad* (*Figure 6*). Migrants' political activism is intrinsically influenced by the internal dynamics of each of these spheres, which are not meant to be conceptualised as bounded spaces with the same structures and resources but rather as social spaces with their own norms, actors, and resources. These four levels of analysis are an effort to unpack the territorial complexities of the dynamics and mechanisms that originate and sustain transnational political activism and

that migrants navigate to engage in homeland politics. We could think of these political spheres of activism as more or less abstract spaces[4] shaped by inner norms, resources, and actors, that migrants are exposed to, transform, and exploit to become political subjects and which may overlap.

In the context of migrant's engaging in homeland politics, I would argue that migrants' individual processes of political subjectivation and personality including their emotions, reflections, experiences, identities, interests, and skills are influenced by the inner forces of each of these political spheres. In particular, I argue that as migrants become political subjects, they take the lead in navigating, exploiting, and adapting elements from each sphere (norms, actors, and resources) at their convenience to engage in homeland politics from abroad.

By looking at these four political spheres of mobilisation, instead of unpacking social movements as processes divided into initiation, development, and success or failure, I focus on the individual processes of subjectivation of migrants and their capacity and desire (Van Hear and Cohen 2016; Koser 2007) to navigate the multi-spatial and multi-faceted nature of transnational political participation (Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2010; Diani 2002a).

2.2. The individual at the forefront of transnational politics

As addressed in the previous chapter, there has been an important evolution of the conceptualisation and methodological approaches to study social movements. Classical models consider unity, reciprocity, and coexistence as key components of enduring social movements (Pleyers 2010). As a result, it is assumed that through repeated interactions, activists will work out their differences and define homogenous discourses, strategies, and goals. Nevertheless, Pleyers (2010) argues that contrary to these models, alter-globalisation activists proclaim that their differences, heterogenous narratives, and goals reinforce their political struggle. In other

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[4] Considering that technology continues to infiltrate our social life and that online and physical spaces overlap (Hallett and Barber 2014), these political spheres include the exchanges done in both types of spaces. However, the specific study of online spaces remains beyond the scope of this dissertation albeit not incompatible with this framework.

words, alter-activists do not act as a homogeneous group since they are not equally politicised, on the contrary, they value their different approaches in relation to institutional and non-institutional politics.

After analysing post-2010 protests in Tunisia, Barcelona, New York, Paris, Moscow, Rio de Janeiro and Mexico, Pleyers (2017) argues that global social movements integrate social justice and democratic demands intrinsically related to the dignity of the activists. As a result, he explains that actors have opted to exalt their individual autonomy, inter-subjectivity, and individualism as core elements of their political activism. Pleyers thus introduces the individuality of the activists as a key element to understand the organisation and discourses of these pro-democratic social movements. Indeed, he argues that social movements are now permeated by individualism and autonomy because activists do not longer trust institutions and because they aim to defend their own subjectivity, specificity, and creativity (Pleyers 2017: 95). Accordingly, the new alter-activists have become increasingly reflective individuals trying to maintain a certain level of coherence between their values and their actions (Pleyers 2017). In sum, activists are trying to line up their values with their practices through the development of more inclusive and cultural forms of political activism (Pleyers 2016; Naveau and Pleyers 2012).

According to the scholarship on social movements, individuals become political actors through individual processes of subjectivation, which include processes of self-reflection and emancipation (Wieviorka 2012; Dubet 2007; Martucelli 2005; Rebughini 2017; Pleyers 2016). Through these processes, individuals are able to analyse their past experiences and memories to define their own political identities and values while detaching themselves from political forces of domination.

Based on these arguments and after analysing my empirical data, I decided to place the migrants (individuals) at the forefront of my analysis, contrary to the approach developed by migration scholars who base their analysis on State institutions and diasporic organisations. Indeed, migrants are the actors making the decision on how and when to engage in homeland politics. Not all migrants decide to engage in transnational politics as I will show that only

those whose individual processes of political subjectivation and whose political identity remains connected to their homeland are the ones who decide to engage in transnational political activities from a foreign country.

Melluci argues that "identity is a process involving constant negotiation among different parts of the self, among different times of the self, and among the different settings or systems to which each of us belongs" (2005: 49). Similarly, political identities are also determined by different parts of the self and influenced by different political spheres to which the individual belongs. Migrants are exposed to exogenous and endogenous factors that motivate their transnational political mobilisation. On the one hand, the individual political identity of migrants is shaped by the exogenous relations that they sustain with actors in the hostland, homeland, diaspora, and global spheres, and influenced by socio-cultural norms, including ideologies also embedded in these four spheres of political mobilisation. On the other hand, migrants' political identity depends on personal endogenous factors related their own emotions, interests, and skills.

Scholars on social movements have payed special attention to some endogenous factors that motivate individual's engagement in political actions. For instance, emotional responses, beliefs, and moral evaluations have been identified as the three main forces that motivate, rationalise and channel political action (Jasper 1997: 12). These forces are in turn highly determined by the personal experiences, moral principles, ideas, identities, and the culture of the protestors (Jasper 2010). In the case of migrants, emotional responses, beliefs, and moral evaluations are intrinsically influenced by norms embedded in the homeland, hostland, diaspora, and global political spheres.

According to Jasper, "emotions are our stances and reactions to the world that express how it matters for us. To some extent, they are cognitive evaluations, but typically with psychological components precisely because something makes a difference to our satisfaction and flourishing" (Jasper 2010: 80). Emotions are therefore very subjective by nature and provoke different reactions depending on what shocks, hurts, disgusts, angers, terrifies, or impresses people. These reactions might also vary in form, intensity, and time across individuals.

Certain emotions such as anger, compassion, frustration or perceived unfairness stimulate political protest (Klandermans, Van der Toorn and Van Stekelenburg 2008; Jasper 1998) and thus play an important role in each phase of the mobilisation, i.e., recruitment, consolidation, and dissolution (Flam 2014). For instance, "moral shocks" create an immediate political inclination on people who feel outraged by an unexpected event or information (Jasper 1997). Moral shocks might be momentary, but they create intense and immediate responses. They develop a deep sense of injustice in people which triggers their necessity to express their disagreement. Jasper thus identifies such moral shocks as the first step towards recruitment into political and social movements.

In the case of migrant activists engaging in homeland politics, it is also important to stress that their political activism is particularly influenced by their migration experiences, legal status, perceptions of belonging and links that they maintain with their homelands (Van Hear and Cohen 2016; Bermúdez 2016; Martiniello and Lafleur 2008). Even when living abroad, migrants tend to remain connected virtually or physically with their home countries, for instance through remittances, telephone calls, social media, newspapers, which function according to Vertovec (2004) as the social glue of transnationalism. As a result, migrant's "emotional responses, beliefs, and moral evaluations" (Jasper 2010) are also influenced by norms and actors embedded in the homeland and diaspora political spheres of mobilisation.

The motivations sustaining political transnational activism have an emotional and a cognitive dimension. These motivations might be rational or irrational; brief or long lasting; and encouraged by instrumental, identity, ideological, or emotional causes (Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2010). Since the protestors' consciousness, desires, agency, opinions, and perceptions constitute the ultimate essence that encourages and sustains political movements, the individual's subjectivity becomes a key element to integrate in the analysis of transnational political activism. For the case of migrants who become political actors, it is important to note that their processes of subjectivation are naturally influenced by the places where they have lived, including their place of origin and of residence.

It is important to make an explicit emphasis on the fact that migrants have different experiences than people who have not lived in other countries. Moving to another country exposes migrants (to a greater or lesser extent) to foreign social structures, languages, mindsets, psyches, traditions, and cultural baggages. The fact that migrants are exposed to different norms and places might spark internal grapples that force them to readapt and reassess their ways of thinking, their identities, and senses of belonging. These processes of self-assessment might include emotional moments of self-reflection and re-adaptation where migrants might decide to include new sociocultural and political norms to their ways of living and thinking. In sum, migrants learn to juggle between several sociocultural and political structures which drives them to continuously redefine their position in the multiple societies that they live in and belong to. Regarding social protest and activism, it is also relevant to note that migrants' political values, demands, subjectivity and creativity are also rooted in their personal expectations, perceptions, and beliefs, which in turn are intrinsically shaped by their individual and accumulated experiences.

In order to better understand the dynamics and motivations behind the transnational political activism organised by Mexican migrants living in Brussels and Paris, I conducted an ethnography[5] to fully unpack the individual decision-making processes, emotions, and expectations that transnational activists have when engaging in homeland politics. Through repeated interactions with the main organisers of these transnational movements, I was able to observe how migrants take the initiative to respond to events happening back in the homeland (either individually or collectively) and to create spaces of reflexion to oppose injustice, violence and human rights violations. In short, migrants are both emotional and cognitive subjects positioned at the forefront of transnational political activism and whose determination to engage in homeland politics enable them to navigate local and global structures to achieve their goals. Triggered by their individual processes of political subjectivation, migrants have been able to understand and adapt to norms, develop alliances

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[5] See Chapter 3 for full details regarding the Methodology of this research.

with actors, and tap into resources embedded in multiple political spaces (hostland, homeland, diaspora, and global) to engage in transnational political activities.

2.3. Political spheres of mobilisation: actors, norms, and resources

2.3.1. Hostland sphere of political mobilisation

Migration scholarship has largely recognised the role of the host state shaping transnational political engagement (Lafleur 2005; Martiniello 2006; Martiniello and Lafleur 2008; Rother 2009). Accordingly, the first sphere of political activism constituting my framework to study the transnational political mobilisation of migrants is the hostland or country of residence. The hostland political sphere of activism is inhabited by local actors who are not from one specific nationality and whose political activity is delimited by national political contexts and regulated by national political norms.

I conceptualise the hostland political sphere as a territorialised space ruled by explicit and implicit political norms and where migrants reach local actors to engage in transnational politics and diffuse their political messages. Indeed, receiving states are territories inhabited by actors such as residents of the host-society, organisations, political parties, local authorities, and the local media whose political engagement is regulated by implicit and explicit norms including political regimes, electoral laws, and regulations on protest. For instance, democratic regimes are generally considered to be favourable for social movements and protest because of their relative openness, tolerance of opposition, freedom of association and access to information (Silva 2015: 35). More generally, the political context, and integration policies of the host country influence the dynamics of migrant political participation and mobilisation (Martiniello 2006; Martiniello and Lafleur 2008; Rother 2009; Hadjab 2016; Vélez-Torres and Agergaard 2014).

The literature studying migrant political mobilisation highlights the impact of assimilation and discrimination in the hostland as either triggers or inhibitors of transnational political activism

(Chaudhary 2016; Guarnizo and Chaudhary 2014; Morales and Pilati 2013; Morales and Morariu 2011). This literature also argues that the precarious conditions of migrants encourages their political mobilisation to tackle the lack of rights and employment opportunities in the host states (Valera Huerta 2008; Klandermans; Van der Toorn and Van Stekelenburg 2008; Bermúdez 2016; Morales and Pilati 2013).

Migration scholarship has also shown the political context of the hostland has a transformative effect on migrants' political identities, demands, and practices (Piper 2009; Tabar 2014; Krawatzek and Müller-Funk 2019). In general, it is assumed that migrants are exposed to new political norms in the hostland that they will acquire and try to integrate in their own homelands via transnational transfers of political principles, vocabulary, and practices (Krawatzek and Müller-Funk 2019).

Conversely, scholars on social movements recognise political contexts and mobilising structures as two analytical tools to determine the ways state-structures shape social movement dynamics (Smith and Fetner 2010; Della Porta 2002; Della Porta and Mattoni 2014). Indeed, political contexts composed of state policies, bureaucracies, and repressive capacities (Smith and Fertner 2010) determine the political opportunities available for migrants to initiate and develop transnational political activities. In other words, immigration laws and the regulations on protests in the hostland (norms) shape the transnational political responses organised by migrants in a foreign country. In practical terms, migrants are aware about their rights and obligations imposed under national norms when organising political events in public spaces. As a result, they learn to operate in such complex normative systems by developing alliances with local actors who support them in complying with the national norms and become transnational political subjects.

Local actors (including members residing in the host society, local organisations, political parties, local authorities, and the local media) embedded in the host political sphere might act as enablers or inhibiters in the processes and mechanisms of transnational political activism. Indeed, actors residing in the host society can either disapprove, ignore, or support the political activities organised by migrants. Host societies become then territorialised spaces where

migrant activists can find allies or opponents to their political movements regardless of their original place of origin (Martiniello 2006; Martiniello and Lafleur 2008). Allies in the host countries are important for transnational political activism for four main reasons. First, they can give legitimacy and resonance to the political movement organised by migrants; second, members of the host society have knowledge of national norms; third, members of the receiving state can develop effective lobbying strategies with relevant national political actors or institutions; finally, they know the symbolic places of protest and the recurrent protest strategies accepted in their societies (implicit norms).

In short, sympathisers in host-societies can act as co-organisers and diffusers of the political demands of migrant populations. Indeed, members of the host societies may help migrants trace an effective path of political activism in receiving states. Their knowledge of national politics, regulations, symbolic places, and strategies of protest (implicit and explicit norms) constitute elements that can maximise the planning and development of transnational political activism orchestrated by migrants.

Finding individuals or organisations that support the political cause sustained by migrants can also have an impact on the costs, logistics, and organisation of the transnational political movement (resources). By finding experienced allies in national politics, migrants can reduce the costs and risks of participation in political actions. Indeed, the political know-how (resource) of the members of the host societies can guide and influence the form, content, and strategies of the migrant transnational political mobilisation (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011; Boccagni, Lafleur and Levitt 2015).

Regarding the different strategies of mobilisation, Della Porta (2008) argues that repertoires of action, defined as limited forms of protest, are commonly used in a particular time and place. Indeed, Adamson and Koinova (2013) stress the relevance to consider the specificities of some metropolitan spaces such as "global cities" acting as nodes in global networks and offering migrants a wide range of mobilisation strategies. These two arguments, one from the social movements' scholarship and the other one from the migration literature highlight the input

that local actors have in determining the strategies of political mobilisation in delimited spaces such as cities.

Some forms of protest include campaigns of claim making, petitions, demonstrations, fundraising, strikes, rallies, public meetings, letter writing, lobbying, chanting slogans, boycotting, etc. (Tilly and Tarrow 2007; Klandermans, Van der Toorn and Van Stekelenburg 2008). More recently, autonomous political initiatives aligned with individual values and the creation of independent spaces of protest have also been pointed out as strategies of mobilisation (Merklen and Pleyers 2011; Pleyers 2011; Glasius and Pleyers 2013).

As explained by Della Porta (2008: 222) strategies of mobilisation are generally learned from previous protests and are adopted and adapted to particular times and places. For the specific case of the transnational political events organised by migrant populations in their respective hostlands, I would argue that migrants can either adopt the local strategies of political engagement (norms) or develop their own original strategies of mobilisation inspired by norms from their homeland. For the former case, the alliances with local actors might be very significant for the transnational mobilisations organised by migrant populations since local actors are more likely to have accumulated more resources such as information and know-how on where and how to organise political mobilisations successfully.

The input made by local actors in migrant political activities can also accelerate the diffusion of the social movement in the host society. The members of the host societies can put their political network (resource) and strategies of protest at the service of the migrant political cause. By sharing key resources of where and how to organise demonstrations, how to address the political message to the broader society, and who to put pressure on the administration of the receiving state, members of the host societies may become key participants in the dynamics of transnational political activism.

In short, the hostland political sphere of transnational activism includes the norms, actors, and resources that influence and facilitate migrant transnational mobilisations from the receiving societies. It has been argued that besides the democratising influence that living abroad might

have in migrant's ideals and political values, receiving societies can provide migrants with allies, resources, and tactics of protest. On the contrary, local norms such as immigration policies and protest regulations might limit the political activism in the host states.

Migrants have thus the ability and capacity to interact with local actors to decide wheatear and how to engage in transnational political activities from the foreign city they inhabit. For the particular case of study presented in this dissertation, it is important to consider the political and symbolical implications that Brussels and Paris have as global cities, further addressed in the empirical and analytical chapters (chapter 4 and 5). According to Adamson and Koinova (2013), these dense urban centres act as key nodes in circuits of transnational political activity. Both global cities are indeed dense hubs of information, communication, competition, and opportunities (Sassen 2005) where Mexican migrants found allies and jointly developed strategies to engage in their homeland politics.

2.3.2. Homeland sphere of political mobilisation

The second political and territorial space in which migrants operate and engage with to mobilise transnationally is the homeland sphere of political mobilisation. This political sphere includes the norms, actors, and resources embedded in the country of origin of migrants which influence their motivations and forms of political transnational engagement.

Since the home country's political and institutional context predominately determines transnational political activism (Guarnizo and Chaudhary 2014; Lafleur 2005; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003), a mismatch of the political interests or views (norms) between the homeland political institutions (actors) and the migrants abroad might motivate them to organise transnational political actions. As a result, the national political context and, in particular, the local political norms implemented by homeland actors (including political parties, institutions, political figures, etc.) act as a key factor that motivates and shapes extraterritorial political action.

I would argue that the political norms implemented by homeland actors triggers and shapes political transnational actions in four main ways. First, a negative assessment of the performance of the administration and institutions in the homeland might fuel anger, feelings of injustice and grievances among migrants living abroad, which in turn sparks political activism (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Lafleur and Martiniello 2009; Délano 2011; Margheritis 2011; Ahn Paarlberg 2017). Second, the national political context including the political stability, national protests and political mobilisations can act as a catalyser of transnational political activism by inspiring migrants to reproduce national political movements abroad (Krawatzek and Müller-Funk 2019; Van Hear and Cohen 2016; Lafleur 2005). Migrants might replicate the political movements staged in their home countries at their places of residence either in front of their extra-territorial official representations or in other symbolic places (Lundgren Jörum 2015; Müller-Funk 2016). Furthermore, the strategies of mobilisation and some elements such as slogans, songs, and messages used in the homeland can be reproduced and re-adapted by migrants in their countries of residence (Müller-Funk 2016; Lara-Guerrero 2018). Third, the political opportunities derived from the homeland political context (including norms, actors, and resources) shapes the transnational political activism (Lyons and Mandeville 2012; Koser 2007;). Migrants advocating from abroad need to know where to direct their political protests in their country of origin and to whom to present their political demands. Finally, the way the political institutions in the homeland deal with the extraterritorial demands might affect the duration and form of the political transnational activism (Délano 2011; Bermúdez 2016). For instance, this is illustrated by the transnational advocacy efforts done by the Mexican diaspora until they obtained the right to vote from abroad in 2005 (Smith 2008).

Accordingly, one of the main actors shaping the transnational political mobilisation of migrant populations are emigration states since they have the capacity to proclaim extraterritorial norms to engage with their respective diasporas. As introduced in Chapter 1, many emigration states have granted special norms such as rights and entitlements to their citizens living abroad to ensure their protection and loyalty (Guarnizo and Chaudhary 2014; Gamlen 2006; Gamlen 2008; Délano and Gamlen 2014; Lafleur and Calderón 2011; Lafleur 2013; Lafleur and

Sánchez-Domínguez 2014; Délano 2011; Iskander 2010; Margheritis 2011) by developing specific programs to maintain transnational economic, social, and political linkages with them. The degree of institutionalisation of such political relationship between emigration states and their citizens abroad depends on the one hand on the interests of the emigration states in maintaining the members of its diaspora involved in home country affairs and, on the other hand, on the transnational political demands expressed by the migrant community.

Political norms between sending states and their diasporas include extraterritorial political rights, representation in the homeland government institutions, and involvement in public consultations (Boccagni, Lafleur and Levitt 2015). This long-distance relationship might also include the granting of rights such as of dual citizenship, the permission of external voting, the participation in consultative councils and the representation of migrants in homeland political affairs (Boccagni, Lafleur and Levitt 2015; Gamlen 2008; Délano and Gamlen 2014). Even if some states have developed a close and institutionalised political relationship, it is important to keep in mind that migrants might open extra-official channels of political engagement. In other words, migrants who are not satisfied with the management of their extraterritorial demands or by the politics in their homeland, might circumvent the institutionalised political relation and develop new strategies of transnational political engagement.

In addition to the organised and institutionalised political norms in the homeland implemented by local authorities, there are other relevant actors embedded in the countries of origin who have also a crucial role shaping transnational political activism. Indeed, members of the homeland society such as family members, friends, local activists, local organisations and the local media also have a predominant role determining the configuration and endurance of transnational political mobilisations.

As mentioned before, the actors from the home society demonstrating in the homeland influence the strategies of mobilisation organised from abroad, but they can also act as information sources (or social remittances, as referred to in Chapter 1) not only for the migrants, but to the hostland government and society as well as to transnational organisms. The circulation of resources such as information and social capital among the stakeholders

involved in transnational political activism is essential to crystallise effective advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Piper 2009; Krawatzek and Müller-Funk 2019). The exchange of resources such as information might, on the one hand, persuade new allies to join and support the political movement, and on the other hand, give resonance to the transnational political movement by pressuring the homeland government directly.

Finally, the homeland society can get involved in transnational political activism through political testimonies. Political testimonies might come from local activists embedded in the homeland political sphere whose personal political experience may enhance the mobilisation of other actors. As a result, testimonies constitute an important part of social and political movements because they confer legitimacy to the transnational networks of advocacy (Kaldor 2003; Stewart 2004). Especially when people advocate in favour of human rights, testimonies fuel the grievances, moral shocks, and emotions that sustain political movements (Stewark 2004; Estrello 2011; Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001). Indeed, the information provided by political testimonies might acts as a resource that fuels the transnational political mobilisation of migrant communities.

The homeland political sphere of transnational mobilisation highlights the role of actors, norms, and resources embedded in the migrant's country of origin. The state of emigration (actor) and particularly its national political norms and context influence the origin, patterns, development, and survival of transnational political activism. Also, actors embedded in the homeland can support the deterritorialised political activism by sharing resources such as information that encourages new allies to join the political struggle or by giving more legitimacy to the movement with testimonies (Sicilia and Vázquez 2016) of people affected by the political decisions taken in the homeland.

For the specific case of Mexican migrants living in Brussels and Paris, the homeland sphere is key to understand the initiation, configuration, and diffusion of their transnational political activism. As it will be further developed in the following chapters, the Mexican political and social context is intrinsically linked to the response of Mexicans living in Europe as the latter have mirrored the actions undertaken by the Mexican society back in their country (Ruse 2015;

Lara-Guerrero 2018; Modonesi 2017; González Villareal 2015). I observed this phenomenon for several cases such as the #YoSoy132 movement, the mobilisation for the case of Ayotzinapa, the response to the earthquake of September 2017 and the Presidential elections in July 2018.

The transnational links maintained between the Mexican migrants and actors in their homeland, have also influenced their mobilisation strategies. Indeed, the private and public connections (Van Hear and Cohen 2016) sustained between the Mexican migrant community and the Mexican society have impacted their mobilisation as a result of the transfer of political practices (norms), information and direct connections (resources) with Mexican advocacy groups, writers, and public figures acting as spokespeople (actors) of the victims of insecurity in Mexico who have travelled to Europe to feed the transnational political activism.

2.3.3. Diaspora sphere of political mobilisation

The third political sphere influencing how migrants engage in homeland politics is the diaspora sphere of political mobilisation which I define as the unbounded space where migrants interact with actors belonging to the same ethnic group. In this specific sphere, migrants engage with actors belonging to the same diaspora and with whom they share similar socio-cultural norms and who support them in finding resources to engage in homeland politics from abroad. As previously discussed, diasporas engage with their homeland because of their economic, social, or political interests which include both instrumental and emotional dimensions. Some elements of the social movement theories help us understand better how members of the diaspora bond to advocate for political causes; how their collective identity as migrants influences the political identity of their political movement; and how they find allies on the hostland to organise transnational political actions.

When studying the mobilisation of migrants in homeland politics, I decided to include this sphere as a framework that analyses exclusively diasporic dynamics for three main reasons. First, I use it to take into consideration the collective forms of identification and group belonging that might be exacerbated by the migration experience (Müller-Funk 2016; Baeza

and Pinto 2016; Dumont 2016). Second, in order to understand the complex dynamics and actors involved in the processes of transnational political mobilisation organised by a migrant population, it is important to consider the other members of their state-diaspora scattered around the world. Indeed, members of the same diaspora (actors) living in other countries might also contribute in the initiation and organisation of transnational political activities embedded in a specific hostland, by sharing political practices and norms among the global networks of the diasporic community. Last, this sphere covers the analysis of larger co-ethnic stateless diasporas whose linkages are the result of history, geographical closeness or cultural proximity (Margheritis 2018; Baeza and Pinto 2016; Taylor and Van Dyke 2004; Smith and Baker 2008; Però 2008; Lafleur and Martiniello 2010; Sheffer 2003) such as the Arab diaspora, the Sub-Saharan diaspora or the Latin American diaspora. Indeed, there are socio-cultural norms such as sharing a common historical past, speaking the same language, or having common cultural references that might bring together migrants identifying themselves as members of a specific diaspora.

Diasporas share common traits resulting from their migration experience that might facilitate their bonding as a political group. Cohen (2008) argues that members of a diaspora retain a collective and idealised memory of their homeland, a strong ethnic group consciousness, a troubled relationship with host societies as a sense of empathy with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement (Cohen 2008: 17). The intrinsic characteristics of diasporas as a consolidated group with homeland orientation might facilitate the process of political rapprochement among its members which might in turn enhance their political coalition and mobilisation.

As addressed in the previous chapter, Manzano (2007) argues that bridging and bonding activities sustained by members of the diaspora may boost political activism because, through continuous interactions, migrants share their political grievances and concerns, find common views, and have access to human resources necessary to sustain transnational political movements. In fact, the emotional and cognitive exchanges (Diani 2002b) carried out by members of a diaspora might trigger their political activism once they realise that they share

similar political norms and that they have political opportunities, resources, and affinities to engage collectively with their homeland from abroad. As Simon and Klandermans (2001) argue, the perception of shared problems, needs, goals, and interests is an important step towards the politicisation of group's collective identity.

The linkages made between migrants with actors embedded in the diaspora sphere of mobilisation such as diasporic organisations or individuals, ultimately connect people through relationships of personal friendship or acquaintance, which in turn can be transformed into informal networks of solidarity and political activism (Smith and Fetner 2010; Diani 2002b). In sum, diasporic associations can act as a vehicle to find new sympathisers of a political cause and start recruiting people with an affinity for politics. Through transnational diasporic links, migrants can thus exchange their political resources such as protest-related tools and know-how to inspire other members of the diaspora to implement them in other territories.

Diasporic associations might also accentuate the feeling of group identification among migrants wanting to advocate from abroad. Group identification is an individual process derived from the awareness of similarity, the decision to join an affiliation with pride and the acceptance of the symbols, fate, and values (norms) shared by the group members (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2010).

According to Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2010), group identification is a fundamental psychological driver for collective action. It includes shared beliefs, grievances, and emotions which in the case of diasporic actors, might be accentuated by their similar migratory experiences, a common relationship with the host society or shared lived experiences back in their homeland.

Jasper (1997) defines collective identity as the perceptions of group boundaries and interests derived from cultural, ethnic, geographical, religious or gender characteristics. In fact, collective identity does not only bring the members of a group together, but it also creates solidarity and recognition among them, which in turn helps define its potential gains and interests acting a consolidated group (Jasper 1998). The shared cultural norms among members

of a diaspora might encourage them to define a common political identity which in turn might enhance their political mobilisation.

Another relevant element to consider within the dynamics of the diasporic sphere of political mobilisation is the statelessness of certain diasporas. Sheffer (2003) defines stateless diasporas as those groups of migrants that are in host countries but remain connected to societies of their own ethnic origin. Stateless diasporas include for instance, ethno-national diasporas such as Latin-Americans (Sheffer 2003). These types of diasporas are particularly relevant for the analysis of transnational political activism since the identification of migrants from a stateless diaspora can give more strength to a transnational political movement by facilitating the access to additional resources and political strategies by enlarging the advocacy networks scope and by increasing the political opportunities of action.

In sum, the diasporic political sphere is a space led by migrants who retain a collective memory of their homeland. In this sphere, migrants share cultural and ethnic characteristics as well as common experiences that might accelerate the formation of a political movement sustained by common political beliefs and solidarity networks. For the specific case of Mexican migrants living in Europe, the diasporic sphere of political action revealed important group dynamics and tactics of transnational political engagement. Members of the Mexican diaspora in Europe coordinated political actions with both the help of other Latin Americans and other Mexican migrants scattered around the world. However, as it will be further developed in this dissertation, the Mexican diaspora did not always act as a homogeneous group. Instead, their subjectivation, personal differences and perceptions of the others pushed them to favour autonomous political initiatives developed with their close friends and acquaintances.

2.3.4. Global sphere of political mobilisation

The global sphere of political mobilisation includes norms, actors, and resources shaping the international system and affecting the way migrant communities engage in homeland politics.

International law and international regimes are the main global norms structuring the international system and having an impact on political transnationalism. International laws are the norms regulating inter-state and trans-regional relations (Margheritis 2018; Kaldor 2003; Keohane 2009). These norms include the diplomatic relations connecting either two Nations or Regions such as the European Union, MENA or Latin America. In other words, this refers to the diplomatic agenda determined by the Foreign Affairs Ministries, bureaucracies and States institutions (actors). I argue that it is relevant to consider inter-state and trans-regional relations when analysing transnational political movements organised by migrants because they might feed migrant's grievances, influence their strategies of political engagement and determine the length of their transnational mobilisation.

Regardless of transnational activism, Nations maintain bilateral diplomatic relations shaped by their history, agendas, and interests. These historical and diplomatic relations (norms) may have an impact on how migrant populations determine their tactics of transnational political engagement. Migrant populations might disagree with the official position and relations maintained between their home-nations and host-lands and respond by having a reactive attitude and mobilising politically.

It is also important to recognise the symbolical power behind national or regional actors such as Ministries, Parliaments, Embassies, Consulates, and bureaucratic buildings where official political postures are discussed, determined, and executed. Monnet (2011) explains that symbolic places are instruments of communication developed by public authorities which entail a shared meaning in a community or in a given society. In the context of transnational politics, migrants might identify the bureaucratic offices where official postures are determined as the specific places where they can protest, lobby, and directly bring their complaints. Migrants take into consideration the political symbolism of these specific places when addressing their political demands and determining their tactics of mobilisation. They portray these offices as places where their political demands are more likely to be more visible at a global level and addressed by political authorities.

For the specific case of Mexican migrants mobilising from Europe, the inter-state and trans-regional relations triggered and shaped their transnational activism. As will be further addressed in the following chapters of this dissertation, Mexican migrants decided to organise demonstrations multiple times in front of political symbolical places such as the European Institutions in Brussels or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in France. They also contacted specific officials working in these institutions to lobby for their political causes. Finally, Mexican migrants organised political events to protest against official visits organised by the French and Belgian authorities in honour of the Mexican authorities.

Besides international laws, international regimes are "implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations" (Krasner, 1983: 2). In particular, the international regime of human rights plays a major role framing social movements aiming to defend human lives and denounce human rights violations as mentioned in the previous chapter (Sökefeld 2006; Godin 2017; Kleist 2013).

Since the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 by the United Nations, the international community has built a large and complex network of legal instruments to protect the equality, rights, and dignity of human beings (Hafner-Burton 2012). These supranational mechanisms have emphasised the general need to protect human rights worldwide and now frame social movements in several parts of the world as a result of feelings of injustice and anger (Merklen and Pleyers 2011; Koinova 2011; Godin 2017; Taylor 2000; Thomson 2006; Klandermans 2004; Olesen 2014).

According to Clark and Danny, the strategies of mobilisation developed by defenders of human rights movements include actions that aim to 1) bring human rights violations to light, 2) incorporate human rights concerns and concepts into international law and institutions and 3) hold states accountable (2010: 433). The intrinsic conviction to protect human lives and ensure the respect of their rights catalyse political activism. Indeed, the international regime of human rights channels political action by framing the indignation and injustice felt by protestors. It creates a path for the moral, cognitive, and emotional attitudes (Jasper, 1998) felt

by protestors and empowers them with a simplified and condensed framework that sustains their political action.

In the literature, we can find different national and international political movements where frames embedded in this international regime sparked the will of activists (actors) to engage in political and social causes. For instance, the case of the Congolese diaspora engaging in political movements from Belgium and the UK (Godin 2017) or post-2010 activists demanding social justice from their national governments in Mexico, Turkey, Greece, Russia, and Brazil among others (Glasius and Pleyers 2013; Pleyers and Capitaine 2016).

Besides structuring the protests of activists looking for justice and accountability, the international regime of human rights might also legitimise the political mobilisation and help the recruitment process of other activists (Adamson and Koinova 2013). The generalised recognition of the human rights regime at an international level helps protestors spread their messages and goals globally in an unregulated transnational space and attract followers from different places who sympathise with their political struggle. In fact, actors connected by common moral, cognitive, and emotional attitudes may consolidate transnational advocacy networks.

Transnational advocacy networks influence the construction, development, and achievements of political activism because they may act as key vehicles for social, political, and cultural negotiations in the areas of their concern (Keck and Sikkink 1999). According to Stewart, advocacy networks include global actors such as non-governmental organisations, the media, churches, and people from the civil society who share the same values and exchange information and services (resources) (Stewart 2004).

Accordingly, advocacy networks are forms of organisation characterised by voluntary, horizontal, and reciprocal patterns of communication and exchange (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 8). Political actors use advocacy networks to promote the causes, principles and ideas supporting their movement; to find new strategic allies and to directly influence institutional procedures, states, private actors, or international organisations (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Keck

and Sikkink 1999; Stewart 2004). Through these networks, actors have access to global resources such as more connections and information embedded in the global system.

The power of the platform created by advocacy networks to influence politics relies on the one hand, on the efficiency of its members in communicating and acting jointly and on the other hand, on their ability to address their efforts cohesively to achieve their political objectives. This efficiency and ability to coordinate transnational advocacy depends on the network's topology, size, and traffic. Indeed, the success of transnational advocacy networks depends on the circulation and portability of the political messages (Boccagni, Lafleur and Levitt, 2015).

When analysing transnational networks, it is therefore important to consider the points of origin and destination of the message, the nature of the exchange, the frequency and intensity of the flow, and the infrastructure used to transfer the messages. The actors involved in the transnational advocacy networks might be political organisations, religious institutions, international organisations, political parties, ethnic associations, etc. In turn, the nature of the exchange might include norms and resources such as ideas, values, information, practices, principles, and skills (Boccagni, Lafleur and Levitt 2015; Keck and Sikkink 1998). The frequency and intensity of the flow determine the strength of the connection between the nodes of the network. Finally, the infrastructure of the network refers to the geographical, technological, organisational, and judicial structures facilitating or obstructing the circulation of the political messages (Boccagni, Lafleur and Levitt 2015).

The global political sphere of mobilisation is characterised by the porosity of its borders accentuated by the use of the internet and technology that enable the nodes to exchange messages in real time (Reddy 2014). The permeability of the borders and the adaptability of the transnational political networks can be observed in what Keck and Sikkink (1998) call the "boomerang effect". The boomerang effect is the process whereby domestic political actors bypass their state and directly search international allies to put pressure on their states from outside its borders (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003). Boomerang strategies are most common when the domestic politics or behaviour are blocked and take place

generally in states where the respect of human rights does not go hand in hand with the national political practices (Smith and Fetner 2010).

In Mexico, transnational advocacy networks sustained by the participation of global actors have become very important for the defence of human rights in multiple cases such as in 1968 after the so-called massacre of Tlatelolco, in 1994 after the conflict between the The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and the Mexican government, or more recently in 2014 after the case of Ayotzinapa (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Rovira 2009; Modonesi 2017). To a different extent and with different ranges of success, the transnational networks formed to denounce the violence perpetuated against civilians and the violation of human rights, raised awareness of national problems at the global level, which in turn pressured the Mexican government to improve its human rights practices.

Conclusion

Diasporas engage in transnational political activities when they have strong motivations to support and commit to a political cause. In this chapter I argued that migrants are at the forefront of transnational politics and they operate in four different spheres of political mobilisation, where they interact with actors, understand and adapt to multiple norms, and find the necessary resources to sustain their extraterritorial political mobilisation.

Migrants become political actors and engage in homeland politics triggered by individual motivations including both cognitive and emotional dimensions. Thus, their political subjectivity is shaped on the experiences that they have accumulated through their lives as members of multiple spaces such as their country of origin or their country of residence. Finally, their personality, skills and creativity are key elements to understand how they develop strategies of transnational mobilisation. In practical terms, migrants try to include their capacities and skills when designing the strategies of mobilisation.

The hostland political sphere of mobilisation is a space ruled by specific norms, where migrants interact with local actors and manage to create alliances to organise successfully transnational

movements. Local norms influence transnational political mobilisation because on the one hand they determine the political rights and status of migrants and on the other hand, they dictate the rules of political mobilisation. Local actors embedded in the hostland sphere (such as sympathisers, local organisations, political parties, local authorities, and the local media) may support migrant communities to find the necessary resources to organise political events and diffuse their political messages. In addition to the logistical support, hostland actors might help migrants to comply with the local norms ruling public protests.

The homeland political sphere of mobilisation analyses how norms, actors, and resources embedded in the country of origin of migrants influence their transnational political mobilisation. This sphere analyses the impact of emigration states engaging with their diasporas and how the norms ruling this relation might affect the transnational political mobilisation of migrants. Moreover, this sphere analyses how actors embedded in the home society such as family members, organisations, the media, and political testimonies affect the transnational mobilisation of migrants. Thorough the transnational links maintained between migrants and actors embedded in their country of origin, migrants have access to information and resources that might spark their mobilisation, inspire their strategies of mobilisation and feed their will to engage in transnational politics.

The diasporic sphere of political mobilisation highlighted the identity, cultural, and common norms that bring together migrants abroad. Group identification and bonding enhances the possibility of finding political allies. Indeed, the similar migratory experiences, their common ethnicity, and the idealised vision of the home country might accelerate the crystallisation of transnational political movements.

Finally, the global sphere argued that global actors and norms influence the transnational movement of migrant populations. Common and accepted norms such as the defence of human rights create a common platform among political actors around the world and enhances their access to more information and resources to start or sustain political movements.

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce an innovative analytical framework that places the migrant as the individual at the forefront of the analysis of transnational political mobilisation by recognising their capacity to engage with actors, find resources, and adapt to norms governing multiple political spaces. By introducing elements of migration and social movement theories, this framework contributes to the analysis of migrants engaging in homeland politics first by recognising that politicised migrants are the subjects who decide to understand and operate in four socio-political fields (hostland, homeland, diaspora, and global) to achieve their goals.

This framework addresses a theoretical gap in the study of migrants engaging in homeland politics by introducing the individual processes of subjectivation, usually minimised in migration studies. In turn, this framework contributes to the current analytical tools in social movements by recognising that there is a multiplication of socio-political spaces when studying the political mobilisation of migrant populations. Indeed, social movement theories emphasise the importance of conceptualising the national, individual, and global levels of analysis (*Figure 5*) but I argue that in order to provide an exhaustive analysis of the dynamics and motivations behind transnational activism organised by migrant populations, it is crucial to include the diasporic and hostland levels of analysis since these highlight specific dynamics related to the experiences of migrating.
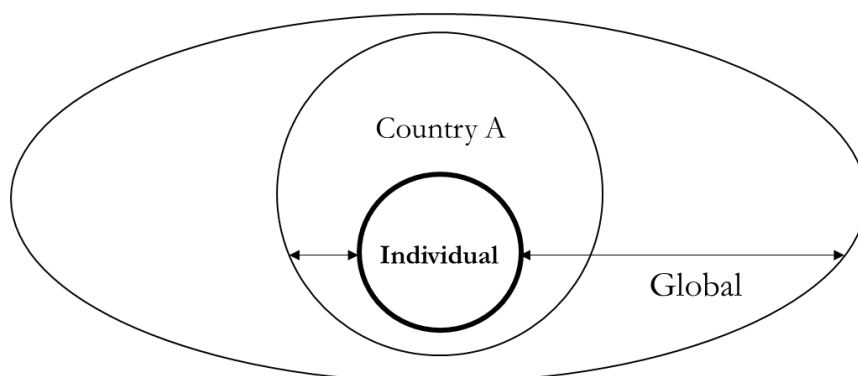
Figure 5: Individual engaging in social movements in a specific country

The theoretical framework developed in this chapter presents a structured approach to analyse transnational political activism. The four political spheres of mobilisation manage to capture the complexity of the different phases of political engagement, the motivations and political opportunities sustaining the movements, the geographical spaces where protestors interact and the role of emotions and subjectivity animating transnational political activism. Consequently, the spheres allow capturing on the one hand the role of political structures (norms) delimiting transnational political activism and on the other hand, the role of the stakeholders (actors) making use of different tools and resources to advocate, inform and make pressure for political change. In the next chapters of this dissertation, I will illustrate the relevance of using this original framework in the specific case of Mexican migrants engaging in homeland politics from two European cities.

Individuals engaging in transnational politics through political spheres of transnational mobilisation

Individual (migrant)

- **Individual processes of political subjectivation**
- Emotions
- Cognition
- Accumulated experiences in life (as migrant and as activist)
- Personal values
- Skills, will, and capacities

Hostland

Norms (e.g.):
Set of implicit or explicit principles
- Local norms of mobilisation
- Socio-cultural norms

Actors (e.g.):
- Local allies: organisations and individuals,
- Government authorities
- Media

Resources (e.g.):
- Know-how
- Information

Homeland

Norms (e.g.):
- Socio-cultural norms
- Political and legal systems

Actors (e.g.):
- Family/ friends
- State institutions and authorities
- Media
- Testimonies

Resources (e.g.):
- Know-how
- Social Capital
- Money
- Material: objects
- Information

Diaspora: State and non-state diasporas

Norms (e.g.):
- Socio-cultural norms

Actors (e.g.):
- Group of friends
- NGOs by migrants

Resources (e.g.):
- Information
- Social Capital
- Best Practices
- Material
- Information

Global

Norms (e.g.):
- International relations and regimes: (diplomacy; human rights frame)
- International law
- Political symbolism

Actors (e.g.):
- Media
- International NGOs
- European Union: regional
- Global allies

Resources (e.g.):
- Information
- Connections
- Ideas
- Inspiration from previous movements

Figure 6: Schematic Representation of the Spheres of Political Mobilisation (All the elements in this Figure will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5).

Chapter 3.

Methodology

Being an ethnographer is not a simple task. As explained by Corsino, fieldworkers engage in processes of developing new relations, asking people for information and almost inevitably experiencing anxiety, insecurity, depression, embarrassment and discomfort (1987: 276). Besides the emotional roller-coaster encountered in the fieldwork, I would describe it as an immense process of self-reflection, learning, negotiation, and adaptation[6].

In this chapter, I will present the methods that I used in my research following a chronological order. To provide a proper analysis of the research design, data gathering, treatment and analysis, I will divide this chapter in four main sections. The first section will analyse the immersion in the fieldwork as a process of negotiation between the ethnogra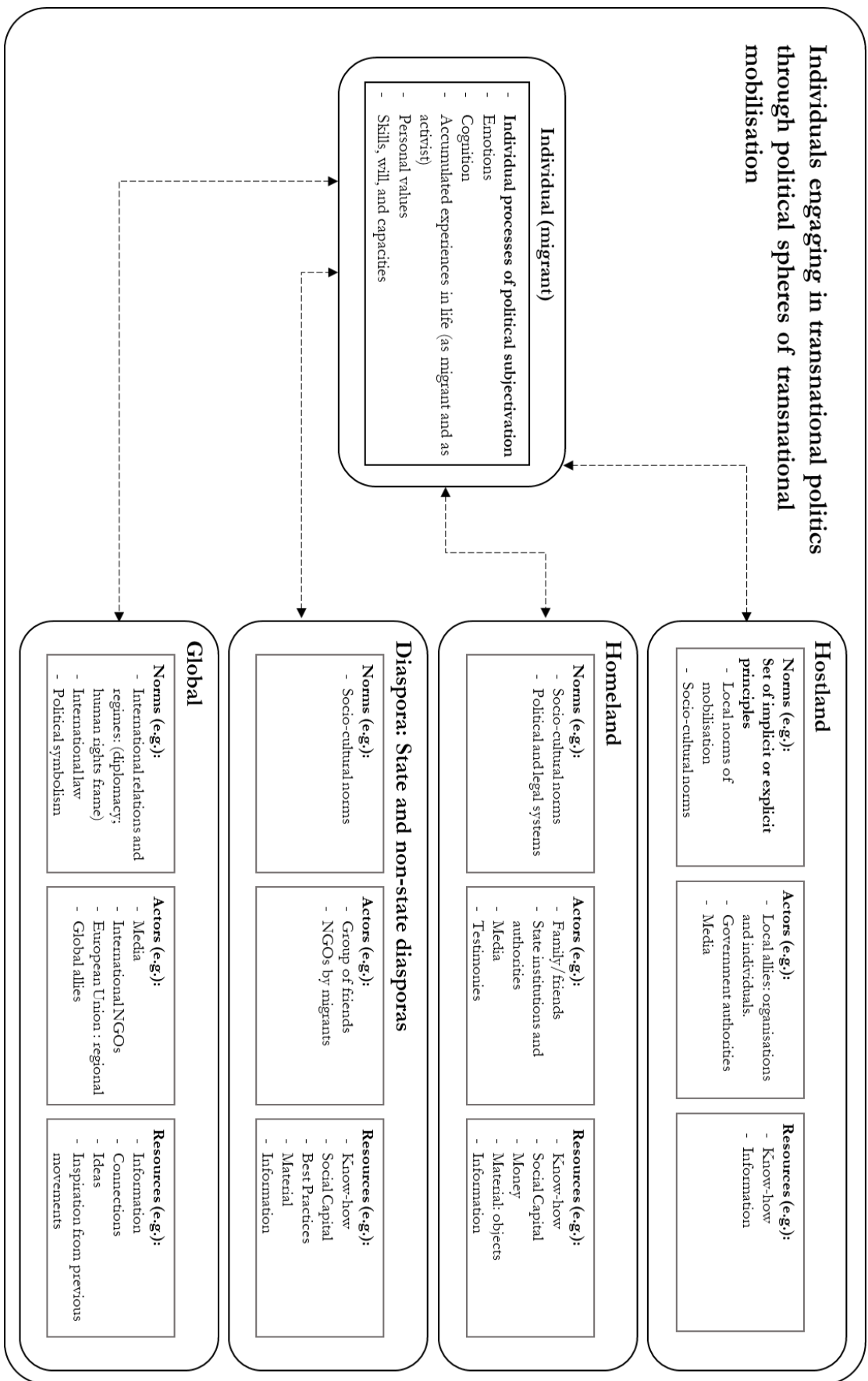pher and the participants. I will present my approach as an interpretive researcher (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012) and the relations that I established in the field. The second section presents the data sampling and the participants of this research. The third section of this chapter focuses on my reflexivity and positionality while conducting this ethnography. I make special emphasis on the fluid identity and the different roles and memberships that ethnographers adopt during their fieldwork (Williams et al. 1992; Jansson and Nikolaidou 2013). Indeed, for this research, I adopted multiple roles. Finally, the fourth main section of this chapter will focus on the data treatment and analysis with special emphasis on the ethical questions raised in this research. It is relevant to state that part of this methodological framework has been published in *Briefs on Methodological, Ethical and Epistemological Issues* prepared as part of the Cross-Migration Project (Lara-Guerrero 2019a).

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[6] Integral parts of this chapter have been published in Lara-Guerrero, L. (2019a) "Insights from an ethnographer: processes of immersion and self-reflection in the fieldwork" in Briefs on Methodological, Ethical and Epistemological Issues, No. 6, Cross Migration Project.

3.1. Entering the field and negotiating a place among the Mexican community

I started my fieldwork in Paris on the 7th of December 2014 when I attended a demonstration to denounce the case of Ayotzinapa at the *Place de la République* after an invitation that circulated on social media. At that moment, I was still defining the nature and questions of my research. I attended that political gathering wanting to know more about the response of the Mexican community in Paris to the disappearance of the 43 students of the Raúl Isidro Burgos Rural Teachers' College in Ayotzinapa. From that day on, I started following the political actions taken by the Mexican community in Paris and mapping the different groups and activities that they organised to engage in homeland politics from abroad.

After my first encounter with the Mexican community in Paris, I decided to identify the mobilised groups through online searches, a technique used by scholars studying the political mobilisation of migrant communities (Moss 2016). This first effort to identify the groups of Mexicans mobilising in homeland politics from Paris was a good starting point for my research because they use social media to diffuse their activities and I wanted to be aware of any political activity that they organised. At the beginning, it was quite easy to identify the groups: the *Collectif Ayotzinapa, Morena Francia* (National Regeneration Movement in France), *Bordamos Por la Paz París, Latir por México and a group of Zapatistas*[7]. After attending some political meetings and looking at the social dynamics among the Mexican community in Paris, I decided to conduct an ethnographic research with an interpretive approach.

Ethnography is a method used in qualitative studies to have access to the place, lives, and everyday practices of people under study (Weeden 2010; Blomberg et al. 1993; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). For my study, ethnographic methods were particularly relevant for four main reasons. First, because ethnography provides insights into the processes and meaning that sustain and motivate social groups (Herbert 2000). Indeed, through ethnographic

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[7] I use the real names of the groups because they are public associations, however in order to protect the anonymity and privacy of all the participants I use pseudonyms.

methods, it is possible to observe the composition, behaviours and organisation of social groups. Second, ethnography is used to map out the multiple layers of power involved in political structures and observe the expression of emotions linked to people's activism (Schatz 2009; Bayard De Volo 2009). Third, ethnography has been recognised as an appropriate method to study populations whose voices are not well represented in the dominant discourse and whose specific legal status, level of education, ideology, gender, age, or place of residence complicates other types of contact or interaction (Bayard De Volo 2009). Last, ethnography is a method used to examine shared patterns of behaviours, beliefs, memories, and language among members of a culture-sharing group (Creswell and Poth 2018).

Based on previous research conducted by social scientists and anthropologists, I decided to conduct an ethnography involving extended observations of the Mexican community engaging in homeland politics. Indeed, by conducting an ethnographic study, I was able to get to know the Mexican activists engaging in homeland politics from abroad and understand their motivations, political values, and emotions throughout an extended period of time. In addition, I was able to observe how they interact with other members of the Mexican and Latin-American diasporas and with local actors embedded in their respective host-societies.

Participant observation is a method often used to gain access to informants and to build rapport (Collings 2009; DeWalt and DeWalt 2011; Bailey 2007). As such, it is recognised as a strategy not only to collect data but also as a tool of analysis in ethnography. Through participant observations it is possible to: 1) actively participate in the daily routines of the informants; 2) observe them during their leisure and professional activities; 3) discover their interpersonal relations; and 4) record observations in field notes (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011; Bertaux 2016). This resulted in 26 months of participant observational data and semi-structured interviews with 41 activists involved in the organisation of political transnational movements from Brussels and Paris (23 and 18 respectively).

In addition, over the course of my fieldwork and during my participant observations, I decided to adopt an interpretive methodological approach, which enabled me to recognise on the one

side the agency and positionality of my interviewees and on the other side the impact of my presence in the field as a young, middle-class, mix-raced, woman raised in Mexico City.

According to Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, in interpretive research, human beings are understood as agents as opposed to passive individuals or victims. They are seen as active people collaborating and constructing their policies, societies, and cultures – along with the institutional, organisations, practices, language and concepts (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012: 18). Indeed, from early stages of the immersion in the fieldwork, I realised that the Mexican migrants engaging in homeland politics from Paris were not particularly vulnerable nor passive agents.

The literature on migration argues that migrants may be exposed to different type of vulnerabilities in their journey and in their host societies (París, Ley and Peña 2016; Bustamante 2002; Auguin and Levy 2007). Bustamante (2002) distinguishes a structural and a cultural nature of the vulnerability of migrants in a host society. On the one hand, the structural nature derives from the power structure in the host countries where migrants are *de facto* in disadvantage in comparison to the native population for their status as foreigners. On the other hand, the cultural nature of vulnerability derives from cultural elements such as stereotypes, prejudices, racism, xenophobia, ignorance, and institutional discrimination that might be present in host societies and affect migrants as non-nationals (Bustamante 2002: 339). In addition to this dichotomy, it is important to note that the vulnerability of migrants may change in time and nature depending on the time they have spent in the foreign country, their adaptability and their social, economic and political capital (París, Ley and Peña 2016). Finally, I would like to make the point that, migrant's vulnerability might also be influenced by the transnational links sustained between migrants and actors in their homelands since they might trigger feelings of insecurity and anxiety. For instance, in my research, some Mexican migrants admitted being careful while protesting from abroad because they feared for the integrity of their families back in Mexico.

The participants involved in my research were not living in particularly precarious conditions in their respective host countries. Besides punctual problems such as accessing a job aligned

with their abilities, experience, and diplomas, none of my interviewees experienced severe economic deprivation. On the contrary, I quickly realised that the Mexicans engaging in homeland politics from Brussels and Paris had both the social capital and the interest to navigate the political systems in their host-countries to sustain and organise transnational political movements. For instance, in Paris six of my interviewees were PhD students.

To summarise, interpretive research seeks to study how actors understand their contexts and why they conduct themselves in particular ways. An interpretive approach posits that researcher's learning evolve in the field through the interactions with its participants. As a result, researchers need an openness to adapt, reflect, and improvise in the fieldwork while co-generating data with the participants involved in his/her research. Finally, an interpretive approach insists on the relevance of overcoming the idea of "bias" in human research by focusing instead on critical reflexivity to unpack the researcher's physical, cognitive and emotional presence in the fieldwork and the engagement with the people being studied (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012: 98).

I moved to Brussels in 2015[8] and with a better idea of what I wanted to study, I started looking for Mexican groups residing in Belgium online. My aim was to track the political activities organised by Mexicans engaging in homeland politics and identify who was organising these activities. My first encounter with the Mexican community living in Brussels marking the start of my uninterrupted fieldwork in this city was in a cultural activity co-organised between a group of *Son Jarocho*[9] and a painter on the 20th of August 2016. The invitation written in Spanish and English circulated on Facebook invited the Mexican community to paint a mural displaying the current social events in Mexico on an open wall at the *Mont des Arts*, next to the Royal Library of Belgium.

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[8] As I mentioned before, I started meeting the Mexican community in Paris in winter 2014, however I had the opportunity to move to Brussels in the Spring of 2015 to work on a research project at the UNDP. As a result, I interrupted my PhD for several months until February 2016, when I got enrolled at the University of Liège for a joint programme with the University of Paris Diderot.

[9] *Son Jarocho* is a regional folk musical style from the Huastec coast in Mexico.

When I arrived at the event, I did not know anyone and felt quite shy. The wall was divided in four sections and people where painting either a tribute for the 43 missing students from Ayotzinapa, a skeleton representing the president Enrique Peña Nieto, an army solider to denounce the violence in Mexico, or the child from Aleppo who became the image of the civil conflict in Syria. I approached Matias, the painter who summoned the other participants. At first, he was reluctant to talk but eventually, he explained that he organised this activity to keep the social movement of Ayotzinapa alive and to raise awareness of Mexican issues in Europe. The event lasted around six hours and ended with a festive note with about 30 Mexicans singing and dancing to the rhythm of *Son Jarocho* from Veracruz.

That day marked the beginning of my fieldwork in Brussels as I identified key Mexican activists calling for transnational political mobilisation. I kept using the same strategy of closely following the Mexican online groups and I continued attending and observing what would be 38 events organised in Belgium from August 2016 until March 2018. These events allowed me to get to know the key political actors of my research either directly or by referrals made by other activists (Moss 2016). The events were a great opportunity to start building rapport with my interviewees, but it was not a smooth process in all the cases. As expressed by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), negotiating access is a balancing act. In my case, it was a complex and slow process that drove me to be patient and adaptable in more than one occasion.

As with my fieldwork in Paris, the first political events organised by the Mexican community in Belgium, enabled me to map out and identify the key political actors that needed to be in my study to understand the mechanisms and motivations sustaining Mexican transnational political movements from Europe.

Every time that I attended an event, I presented myself as PhD candidate doing a research in migration studies. At no point of my research did I hide my professional activity, past experiences or social background. While building trust with my interviewees, I responded openly and honestly to all the questions they had in order to avoid any type of deception and to comply with the ethical standards as a researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Indeed, as argued by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 42), negotiating access to the fieldwork also

involves ethical consideration such as asking and obtaining the permission of the participants involved in the research.

Trusting someone takes time and relies on reciprocity (Williams et al. 1992; Markova 2009). As a result, every time that I had an informal conversation with my interviewees, I showed curiosity and respect. Whenever they shared their personal stories, I listened with great interest and understanding, avoiding passing any judgement even when I was surprised by their points of views or disagreed with them.

While entering the field, I paid special attention to the body language and the tone of voice of my interviewees. According to Bailey (2007) body language provides important insights that go beyond what people say. By observing my interviewees' facial expressions and postures I was able to better understand how they interacted with each other and how they reacted to my presence. Indeed, I was very attentive to how they reacted to my presence and whether they felt comfortable around me. I started engaging in conversations more naturally with some interviewees than with others and thus trust was not established at the same pace with all the key interviewees. The level of trust and integration within the Mexican community in Europe varied for different factors, aligned with my positionality and the way that I was perceived and accepted among my interviewees. In addition, as expressed by Fine (1993), most ethnographers discover that they are incompatible with people in their field for strictly personal reasons and my case was not an exception.

After 10 months of attending political and social events organised by the Mexican community in Belgium, and once that I felt that my interviewees trusted me, I proceeded to ask them if they were interested in participating in a semi-structured interview. As explained by Empez (2009), she could only conduct her interviews and record them once she built a confidence relation with her interviewees. In France, the procedure was very similar. While I was living in Brussels, I continued attending the political events organised by the Mexican community in Paris. I observed the social dynamics of the Mexican political groups and their behaviour and continued establishing trust with the key informants that I needed to include in my research. On some occasions I made day-trips and in others I stayed in Paris for the weekend, depending

on the schedule of the political activities. These day-trips were very important for my fieldwork because I started progressively learning the Mexican community in Paris and I started to build a relationship with my interviewees. Thanks to these intermittent trips, some Mexican activists started recognising me, which accelerated the data collection process once I moved to Paris in March 2018 to conduct the semi-structured interviews in two months. Since I was already known by some members of the Mexican community in Paris, it was easier for me to ask my interviewees if they wanted to participate in this research.

Building trust with my interviewees was essential for my research for two main reasons related to the context of violence in Mexico. On the one hand, Mexican migrants were very cautious and sceptical to talk to people that they did not know. On the other hand, the main subjects of our conversations were related to Mexican politics, their perception of insecurity, and their personal experiences as activists. Talking about these specific topics triggered emotions of sadness, fear, and nostalgia among my interviewees. As a result, they needed to trust me to feel comfortable enough to share their life experiences as migrants and activists. Meeting with my participants multiple times helped me to build trust among them and overcome their shyness or restraints progressively.

Besides informal conversations held for more than a year, I collected data through 41 semi-structured interviews to ensure that all my interviewees talked about: 1) their personal experiences as Mexican migrants in Europe; 2) their connections maintained with their homeland over time; 3) their personal experiences organising political events from abroad; 4) the organisation, motivations and strategies of political mobilisation; and 5) the relations and alliances that they have developed with other Mexicans, Latin Americans, and other actors in their host societies[10]. Each of my recorded interviews were guided by these five axes to understand my interviewees' personal experiences both as migrants and political activists engaging in homeland politics from abroad. All the interviews were conducted in Spanish and lasted between one and two hours. Before starting recording, I reminded to each of my informants the purpose of my research and I explicitly told them that they could skip any

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[10] The semi-structured interview guide is included in Annex 1.

question if they did not feel comfortable answering it. I also explained to them that they were free to stop the interview at any moment and that their identity was going to be changed to respect their privacy and safety (Iphofen 2011; Barsky 2009). All my interviewees gave me oral consent to be recorded. From the 41 interviews conducted for this research, 20 were conducted personally in Belgium, 16 in France and one in Mexico City. I also conducted four interviews on Skype, a method used in migration studies (Nedelcu and Wyss 2016) to have access to interviewees that preferred that way of communication due to their availability, convenience and/or geographical location. For these virtual interviews, I applied the same ethical principles ensuring their voluntary participation, consent, and freedom to interrupt the interview if they found it necessary. Conducting interviews via Skype was handy for my participants nonetheless it is important to clarify that human contact and body language are expressed differently in the virtual and in the real world due to the framing of the camera and internet connection.

As previously mentioned, I had access to my interviewees through online searches, by participating in their events and by referrals made by other activists. On several occasions in my fieldwork, some activists I interviewed showed special curiosity to know whether I had already talked to one of their colleagues or to another actor, who they perceived as an important person to include in my research. This recurrent action among my interviewees turned out to have impacts in my research in several ways. First, by asking me if I had talked to a particular person, they unwittingly helped me identify potential activists that I had not considered before. Second, with this question I realised that the Mexican community engaging in homeland politics identify specific actors as key political leaders who organise movements even when they are not necessarily allies or coordinate activities as a homogenous group.

I was able to talk to four key informants in Belgium and to three in France with the help of gatekeepers. The role of the gatekeepers was important because I was able to talk to people that initiated movements regarding Mexican politics in both European cities, but who I was not able to identify before because they were less politically active when I conducted my fieldwork. I am aware of the implications of gatekeepers in social research, such as

overdependence on one network or the danger of interviewing people with the same experiences (Markova 2009; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). However, by adopting an interpretive approach in this research, I focused on the access and its relational dimensions to identify the actors of my study (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 12: 71). According to Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012: 70), for interpretive researchers, choices of cases and access are often intertwined. In other words, through an interpretive approach the researcher discovers her case studies in the fieldwork by focusing exclusively on the agents that matter for her study. In my case, I decided to talk to the people that I was referred to for two main reasons. First, because they had an interesting profile and experiences that I considered suitable for my study; second, because I recognised the ground-knowledge of my interviewees, who guided me in the field to include the main political activists engaging in Mexican politics from Brussels and Paris.

In the next section, I present an overview of my data and a brief presentation of my interviewees to demonstrate how the sample for this research is relevant to answer the main research question.

3.2. Sampling and participants of the study

For this research, I conducted 41 interviews, 23 of them for Brussels and 18 in Paris. The sample comprised 14 women and 9 men for Brussels, as well as 9 women and 9 men for Paris. Interviewees had lived abroad for 10.8 years on average and were mostly highly-educated. Before presenting the data that I collected for this research, I would like to reiterate the qualitative nature of my study, whose validation, in words of Lejeune (2014: 123), does not depend on the number or quantification of the cases but rather on the analysis of specific experiences of the participants. The purpose of summarising the profile of my interviewees in two tables is only to provide a quick snapshot of their sociodemographic background which by no means aims to present a statistical analysis or imply any type of generalisations[11].

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[11] Annex 2 of this dissertation presents a brief narrative summary of each of the participants involved in this research.

I collected the data for my research using a strategy used in qualitative studies called theoretical sampling (Lejeune 2014: 28) whose principle is to discover all the characteristics related to a specific research question. This type of sampling is not sequential, so it is not possible to anticipate the exact number of interviewees or places to observe in the research. Instead, theoretical sampling depends on the systematic analysis of each empirical element collected in the fieldwork by the researcher. As a result, the researcher is the one responsible of assessing when the collected data is sufficient to answer her research question. Following this principle, I conducted interviews and attended events until I considered my data to be enough to understand how Mexican migrants engage in homeland politics from Brussels and Paris. To achieve this, I included at least two members of each advocacy group that I discovered throughout my fieldwork. I made this specific effort in order to include the experiences of different members and ensure a gender-balanced representation of the activists belonging to the same group.

Most of the Mexican activists that I interviewed organised transnational political activities jointly with their closest friends or semi-structured advocacy groups. In Brussels, I identified four main semi-structured groups, while in France there were five different groups. Some activists participated in activities organised by multiple advocacy groups. Therefore, it is relevant to note that their political engagement is not limited to a group membership but rather to the nature of the political cause and the individual interest, skills, and availability of each activist.

The profile of the interviewees of this research is quite different from previous studies of transnational political mobilisation. Indeed, scholars studying transnational politics of Latin-American communities in the United States have argued that migrants who engage in transnational politics tend to be highly-educated men, in their forties, who are married and have a stable life in their hostland (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Portes, Escobar and Walton Radford 2007; Lafleur and Calderón 2011). Another study conducted in Spain and Italy to better understand the transnational political practices of Dominican and Colombian migrants also revealed that migrants with a college degree were more likely to engage in

political actions. In addition, this literature posits that the time spent by migrants in a foreign country, does not reduce migrants' interest in homeland politics. According to Guarnizo, Portes and Haller (2003) there is a likelihood that Latin-American migrants in the United States who become American citizens would become politically active in their homeland due to their capacity to cross-borders freely.

Contrary to these findings, my research revealed that Mexican women living in Brussels and Paris are as politically active as men. This can be explained for three main reasons. First, previous studies focus mainly on institutionalised and electoral politics, excluding other types of political mobilisation such as music, dance and embroidery. In my case study, Mexican women were particularly interested in engaging in politics through art, in part because some of them are professional artists. Second, according to the Institute of Mexicans Abroad, the majority (53%) of Mexican population living outside of Mexico and the United States are women (SRE 2018). Finally, the data that I collected revealed that Mexican women living in Brussels and Paris moved to Europe mainly for family reunification or educational purposes. Most of the participants of this research admitted that their working conditions and personal schedules allowed them to organise political activities.

The level of education of my participants was quite homogenous since most of them hold a university degree. Accordingly, my results support previous findings revealing that the level education is a key determinant of transnational political mobilisation (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Portes, Escobar and Walton Radford 2007). Nonetheless, I would like to clarify that even if most of my interviewees have at least a first-level university degree, some of them have not managed to align their professional career with their academic experience. In other words, some of the Mexican migrants involved in this research have had to reconvert to other jobs such as language teachers, shop assistants, or technicians, which were not originally connected to their field of studies.

The time spent abroad by my interviewees was also very variable since some activists have lived in Europe for more than 20 years, while others mobilised only six months after their arrival to their hostland. I would thus argue that the mobilisation of Mexican migrants in

Brussels and Paris is related to their individual political experiences and to their own personal networks who support them in finding the resources and in navigating the necessary norms to organise transnational political movements from their host-countries. Similarly, the age of my participants varied from 28 to 64 years old. This can be explained by the fact that some them have arrived recently to Europe, while others moved in the nineties.

Even if I tried to balance as much as possible the number of interviewees from each advocacy group, I included six participants belonging to the group of MORENA Paris. This choice can be justified for two main reasons. MORENA is a political party, thus it is the most institutionalised form of political participation since they have a structure and links with a political party in Mexico. As a result, this case study was particularly interesting to understand how Mexican migrants mobilise in homeland politics from abroad. The second reason why I decided to talk to six members of MORENA is because they were particularly active in the period where I conducted the study due to Mexican presidential elections in July 2018.

In my fieldwork I spent a lot of time with my interviewees in different settings. The next section presents a critical analysis of my self-reflexivity (Shinozaki 2012), positionality and the different roles that I overtook while collecting data in the political events, charity concerts, artistic events and gatherings organised by the Mexican community in Europe. I also make reflections on my emotions and on my identity varying and adapting to the different settings where I conducted the participant observation for my research. I make an analysis both on my positionality as a mixed-race, young, educated woman from Mexico City studying Mexican migrants in Brussels and Paris. Finally, I conclude by giving insights on how I left the field.

Table 1: Sociodemographic profile of the participants in Brussels (as of June 2018 and in alphabetical order). For further details, refer to Annex 2

	Name[12]	Age	Gender	Education[13]	Occupation	Years spent in Europe	Migratory status
1	Alicia	55-60	F	Secondary	Artist	18	Resident
2	Alma	30-35	F	Tertiary	Student	8	Resident
3	Ana	55-60	F	Tertiary	Artist	21	Undocumented
4	Antonio	35-40	M	Secondary	Artist	6	Undocumented
5	Carmen	35-40	F	Tertiary	Designer	12	Resident
6	Enrique	55-60	M	Tertiary	Artist	25	Resident
7	Eunice	30-35	F	Tertiary	Liberal profession	6	Resident
8	Fernanda	35-40	F	Tertiary	Liberal profession	12	Belgian - Mexican
9	Fidel	55-60	M	Tertiary	Liberal profession	20	Belgian - Mexican
10	Flor	30-35	F	Tertiary	Designer	4	Non-resident
11	Gustavo	30-35	M	Tertiary	Student	6	Resident
12	Ismael	35-40	M	Tertiary	Musician	5 (on and off)	Non-resident (now in Mexico)
13	Jimena	30-35	F	Tertiary	Artist	9	Resident
14	Leonel	35-40	M	Tertiary	Technician and Musician	10	Resident
15	Leonor	30-35	F	Tertiary	Liberal profession	2	Resident
16	Matias	45-50	M	Secondary	Artist	22	Belgian - Mexican
17	Natalia	25-30	F	Tertiary	Designer	1	Resident
18	Norma	40-45	F	Tertiary	Liberal profession	15	Resident
19	Raúl	30-35	M	Tertiary	Liberal profession	8	Resident
20	Rodolfo	35-40	M	Tertiary	Student	6	Resident
21	Susana	40-45	Female	Tertiary	Entrepreneur	11	Belgian - Mexican
22	Tatiana	40-45	Female	Tertiary	Designer	8	Belgian - Mexican
23	Yolanda	35-40	Female	Tertiary	Artist	15	Resident

Table 2: Sociodemographic profile of the participants in Paris (as of June 2018 and in alphabetical order). For further details, refer to Annex 2.

	Name[12]	Age	Gender	Education[13]	Occupation	Years spent in Europe	Migratory status
1	Andrea	50-55	F	Tertiary	Student	18	Resident
2	Antonia	35-40	F	Tertiary	Liberal profession	10	Resident
3	Armando	40-45	M	Tertiary	Liberal profession	8	Resident
4	Emanuel	30-35	M	Tertiary	Liberal profession	6	Resident
5	Enrique	30-35	M	Tertiary	Student	2	Resident (back in Mexico)
6	Georgina	25-30	F	Tertiary	Student	10	Resident
7	Julia	25-30	F	Tertiary	Student	8	European
8	Karen	30-35	F	Tertiary	Student	1	French -Mexican
9	Laura	30-35	F	Tertiary	Housewife	6	Resident
10	Lorena	35-40	F	Tertiary	Liberal profession	14	French -Mexican
11	Marco	40-45	M	Tertiary	Liberal profession	12	Resident
12	Martín	30-35	M	Tertiary	Student	8	Resident
13	Miguel	30-35	M	Tertiary	Liberal profession	4	Resident
14	Pedro	40-45	M	Tertiary	Liberal profession	20	French -Mexican
15	Rodolfo	60-65	M	Tertiary	Liberal profession	25	French -Mexican
16	Rosa	40-45	F	Tertiary	Liberal profession	8	Resident
17	Tomás	30-35	M	Tertiary	Student	13	Resident
18	Viviana	35-40	F	Tertiary	Student	11	Resident

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[12] The names used in this research are pseudonyms.

[13] Categories based on the International Standard Classification of Education.

3.3. Reflexivity and positionality: beyond participant observation

Entering the fieldwork was not a smooth process. This can be explained by different factors. First, because of the general scepticism of the Mexican community in welcoming new members to their political groups. This is directly linked to the transnational state repression (Moss 2016) experienced by my interviewees, taking the form of threats, surveillance, and suspected hacking attempts. In addition, the feeling of mistrust can also be explained by their perception of insecurity and the practices of some political groups insisting on protecting their confidentiality for security reasons. For instance, before conducting one semi-structured interview on the 14th of March 2019 in a public space in Paris, my informant asked me in different occasions if his anonymity was going to be guaranteed in this study. He was curious on how I was going to treat my data to ensure that his identity was going to be protected. In another interview, one of the members of an activist group in Paris told me that their official pages on social media and email have tried to be hacked several times, therefore they took security measures such as using encrypting emails for their internal communication. In another interview with one on my informants from Brussels, he stated that he felt nervous when people from the Mexican embassy took pictures when they demonstrated in front of their building and that he did not trust everybody involved in the transnational political activities.

Another factor that obstructed my access to the field were my personal characteristics and background constituting my multi-layered identity such as my gender, age, education, class, race-ethnicity, birthplace, and language mastery. According to Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012), these intersectional factors forming the researcher's identity may contribute to his access or rejection in the field. One clear example of this in my fieldwork was Gustavo's reaction when we met: "It is obvious that you are a *fresa*[14]. You are wearing a scarf indoors. In Mexico, you would have never talked to me" (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, February 8th, 2018). This quote reflects the assumptions made on my social status and education just by looking at the way I dressed but more importantly this quote mirrors the

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[14] *Fresa* is a word used in Mexican slang to describe people from an educated and upper-class family.

social gap and inequality of wealth distribution in Mexico. In addition, it highlights the cultural baggage, prejudices and behaviour influencing the interactions that I had with other Mexican migrants in Europe.

When I talked to Matias, he also referred to the Mexican multi-layered identity and cultural baggage, shaping his social encounters with other Mexicans. Indeed, he has felt in disadvantage in comparison to wealthy and educated Mexican migrants: "The Mexicans that come to study here in Europe are wealthy. And sometimes, they look down on me for being poor. I suffer for that. I was a victim of racism from other Mexicans here [in Belgium]. I insist that is racism. I am someone without academic studies." (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, September 2nd, 2017). Matias' reflection depicts that the way other Mexicans have preconceived and prejudged his multi-layered identity has affected him at a personal level. As a result, he has developed a certain degree of reticence when interacting with other Mexicans in Europe.

Besides the preconceptions of my way of dressing and my education, the fact that I was raised in Mexico City also hindered my access to the field. This can be partly explained by the "*anti-chilangismo*"[15] movement present in Mexico in the 20th century. In short, this movement rejected the centralism and political orders imposed from Mexico City to the rest of the country (Gruel Sández 2015). As a result, it triggered a rivalry between people from the capital and from other regions in Mexico based on prejudices and stereotypes against people from Mexico City. When I started meeting my interviewees, one of the first questions that they asked me was: "From which city are you from?". When they were not from Mexico City, they either reacted with disappointment, discomfort, and even compassion. Whenever this happened, I tried to attenuate their reactions by replying that my mother is from Veracruz, a state in the Gulf of Mexico, and my father from Guanajuato, a state in the centre of the country. By doing this, I was able to present myself as a Mexican with multiple identities related to the places where my family is from and where I spent most of my holidays as a child. Being able to navigate these multiple identities and sense of belonging to different places enabled me to start building rapport with some of my interviewees. In other words, the reaffirmation of certain

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[15] *Chilango* is a is a negative word used in Mexican slang to refer to people from Mexico City.

traits of my identity varied throughout my research (Horowitz 1986) for being intrinsically tied to the way I was perceived in the field and the evolution of my relationship with each of my interviewees.

As argued by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), impressions that pose an obstacle to access the field, must be avoided or countered as much as possible. As a result, being able to juggle between my multi-layered identity to minimise negative impressions and disagreements constituted a key strategy that I used in my fieldwork to avoid as much I could unpleasant interactions.

In addition to my personal multi-layered identity influencing the way I was perceived among the members of the Mexican community in Europe, it is key to analyse different roles in the field that was assigned to by my interviewees, specifically in the 55 events that I attended as a participant observant. Negotiating membership role in the fieldwork through participant observation is recognised as a key strategy in ethnographic studies (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Jansson and Nikolaidou 2013; DeWalt and DeWalt 2011).

Adler and Adler (1987) identified three membership roles for qualitative researchers conducting participant observation:

> "(a) peripheral member researchers, who do not participate in the core activities of group members; (b) active member researchers, who become involved with the central activities of the group without fully committing themselves to the members' values and goals; and (c) complete member researchers, who are already members of the group or who become fully affiliated during the course of the research." (Corbin and Buckle 2009: 55).

I would argue, that for my research, the clear cut between these three memberships was not clear. I would rather conceive my degree and level of participation as a continuum that depended on the one hand on my positionality, my personal emotions, and well-being; and on the other hand, on the direct demands and expectations of my interviewees. In addition, it is important to clarify that the intensity of the researcher's participation might increase in unexpected circumstances. In my fieldwork, the 7.2 magnitude earthquake that shook Mexico

City on the 19th of September 2017, sparked my will to actively engage in transnational events to contribute to the disaster relief in my home city in a way that I could not have anticipated at the beginning of this research.

In their research with immigrant care workers, Jansson and Nikolaidou (2013), explain that the roles that they were assigned in the field were influenced by their backgrounds as researchers and academics. Indeed, their interviewees asked them to translate and use their language skills in their fieldwork. Similarly, in my research I adapted my skills and capacities to participate in several events as a photographer, a cook, an event organiser, a cashier, a text editor, an embroiderer, a painter, a musician, and even an improvised graphic designer. I did not always perform these activities passively or only because I was assigned to them. By performing these different roles and adapting myself to the environment I managed to: 1) minimise any power relations; 2) avoid confrontations with my interviewees; 3) position myself at the forefront of the organisation of their transnational activities; and 4) recognise the agency, capacities and interests of my interviewees.

As soon as I started observing a group of Mexican musicians and activist in Brussels, I realised that I could not be a simple peripheral member without participating in the core activities of the group. The first time that I attended their *Son Jarocho* workshop, I arrived with my notebook in hand but without an instrument. Since the beginning of the rehearsal I felt out of place since I was not participating actively as a musician. I started clapping and making percussion noises with my feet to set the pace and accompany the melody they played with their guitars. Once the workshop was over and I came back home, I thought that I could bring a real percussion instrument the following Monday, so I got a pair of claves. I was not particularly good at playing music but for the rest of our interactions I felt that I was collaborating in the team and that I started to be welcome as more than just a researcher. Through music, I was able to rearrange the power hierarchy (Amelina and Faist 2012) between my interviewees and myself. Indeed, by being a complete novice in music I started receiving guidance and advice on how to accompany their guitar melodies. This transformed our social interactions since I became their apprentice and music became the domain that enabled us to

balance our power relations to a certain extent. In addition, playing music with this group of Mexican activists enabled me to learn about their political activism, their behaviour, sense of humour and attachment to our homeland.

In Paris, I had a similar experience when I decided to observe the members of *Bordamos por la Paz*. The first time that I attended one of their meetings in a coffeeshop in the north of the city, I arrived with my notebook and a pen, ready to write fieldnotes as a peripheral observer. After introducing myself to the group of five women, I was asked to embroider with them the name of one of the victims of the war on drugs in Mexico. I had little choice but to accept if I wanted to stay with them and get to know them. On that first day, I focused on embroidering the name with the "blanket stitch", the only one that I remembered from watching my grandmother as a child. Most of them were gifted and able to sew very effectively in different patterns. I was interested in the different types of stitches and the women in the group helped me improve my technique.

In both cases, my participation as a musician and as an embroiderer was largely determined by the social interactions in the field and by the expectations of my interviewees. At that moment it felt natural to join them as a participant. During both processes, I remained honest and engaged in the experience and capacities of my interviewees (Corbin and Buckle 2009). In addition, I was reflective about my positionality and considered that I did not distort my findings (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) since I did not take any important decision that altered the form, duration or impact of their activism. On the contrary, I believe that by blending into the activity, I was able to build a natural rapport with my interviewees and readjust our power relations, while recognising their social capital, abilities and agency as political actors.

Adapting myself to the environment and becoming an active participant allowed me to avoid confrontations with my interviewees. As clearly explained by DeWalt and DeWalt, an effective observation can include: noting the arrangement of physical space, analysing the specific activities and movement of people in a scene, scrutinising the specific words spoken and nonverbal interactions including facial expressions (2011: 81). While conducting my research,

paying specific attention to the body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice of my interviewees helped me improvise my role as an active participant to avoid conflicts with them. For instance, in an event in Paris I could sense that a member of a group was not particularly happy when she realised that another activist offered me a free meal. Indeed, when she noticed that I was offered a Mexican plate which included *tacos*, beans and rice she frowned and said: "are we giving free food now?". I instantly knew she reacted like that because she did not know me. After eating, I helped the group of organisers in the kitchen by washing dishes and heating tortillas. I decided to participate in the kitchen to contribute to the logistics and smooth things out with the activist that felt that I was probably abusing my position as a researcher and outsider to the group of activists.

I also decided to participate actively when an activist in Brussels asked me to review a short text in Spanish that he was going to send to a reporter about the mobilisation of the Mexican community in Belgium following the earthquake in September 2017. Just as noted by Jansson and Nikolaidou (2013), my form of participation was influenced by my background as an academic. I accepted to review the text because I did not want to jeopardise my relationship with the group of activists and because by proofreading the text, I did not change the content of the message nor did I interfere in the initiative of sending it to the media.

In addition to participating by responding to immediate requests of my interviewees, I decided to engage in some political events as a co-organiser. This decision enabled me to be at the forefront of the organising meetings of the transnational activities. Even as I became a member of the organising committee, I prioritised my role as an assistant and avoided making any crucial decision regarding the place and form of the political event in question. When I assisted Natalia in the organisation of an event to collect signatures for a presidential candidate, I helped her with the logistics, preparing food, and selling some snacks the day of the political gathering. While discussing the menu and logistics for this event, my only suggestion was to buy an electric kettle to be able to warm up the punch that Natalia wanted to offer to the attendees. Participating in the organisation of this event was very important because I was able to witness the whole process of how Mexican migrants organise events from abroad. By

attending the organising meetings, I was able to observe the decision-making processes, mobilisation strategies, and how activists determine the content, format, and aims of their political gatherings.

A similar example of my participation as a co-organiser was at the event organised by some members of the Latin-American community in response of the earthquake in September 2017. Being part of the organising committee enabled me to observe how the Mexican and Latin-American community interacted and supported each other to co-organise a fundraising concert with 108 artists performing and around 500 attendees. This event was the largest I observed in my fieldwork and was thus key to see how they divided the tasks, took decisions, and structured a larger team to achieve their goals. Once again, for this event I acted as a logistics and communication assistant. I did not make any relevant decision that affected the rationale of the event. I shared meeting minutes with the whole organising committee and created a Power Point template to enable everyone to create pamphlets for advertising the event. For the latter task, I followed a template originally designed by the communication officer who oversaw the public image and advertising of the event but who announced that she was not available to keep supporting the team from the second meeting onwards.

Finally, another element that justified my active participation in the fieldwork was the fact that I prioritised building up trust with my interviewees by focusing on their humanity and treating them as agents in and of their own settings (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). One technique that I used to approach some of my interviewees and highlight their agency was photography. As argued by Sontag (2005) photography has become one of the principal devices for experiencing something and it is more than just an activity of passive observing. Images enhance self-reflexivity in research design (Weber 2012) by simultaneously connecting and distancing the photographer and the people being shot.

In my research, I adopted a critical approach to images in order to provide a clear analysis on the context of its making, the agency of the individuals involved in the process and the effects of its circulation and viewing (Rose 2016; Wells 2015). All the images that I took in my research were taken during the political events organised by my interviewees. According to the

International Visual Sociology Association (IVSA 2009) "various research methods do not require anonymity. Among these are: community/participatory research, and individual case studies involving individuals who consent to using identifying information". In addition, the Research Ethics code explains that "Confidentiality is not required with respect to observations in public places, activities conducted in public, or other settings where no rules of privacy are provided by law or custom."

For my research, I took most of the pictures in public spaces and I tried to capture images of objects and the activities performed by the Mexican activists residing in Brussels and Paris instead of focusing on their faces. I took pictures of their faces when they were covered by make-up or masks to protect their identity, even though this is not necessary in participatory research in public spaces according to the Ethical Code of the International Visual Sociology Association. I should note that I made some exceptions by taking pictures of the political activists whenever they explicitly asked me to do so.

Visual Research Methods have been argued to be inherently collaborative (Rose 2014). Indeed, for my research, I portray photography as a synergetic and evolutive process resulting from repeated interactions. Taking pictures openly requires a certain level of trust between the photographer and the people shot. In my case, I decided to be open about my participation as a photographer in the political events that I attended because I aimed to construct an enduring relation with my interviewees while observing and recognising their interests and agency. I managed to construct an interdependent relation with the people that I shot because they accepted to be photographed repeatedly and because they were interested in obtaining the pictures to share among their own networks and acquaintances. In my case, my interviewees were keen on having pictures of their events in order to diffuse their political activism. The fact that some of my interviewees asked me to share the images with them sheds lights on their ability to act instrumentally, on their agency and on their political subjectivity. In other words, the pictures that we created allowed us to crystallise their political efforts and portray them as political subjects rather than victimised migrants (Zazur Osorio 2017; Eczet and Cometti 2017).

With my pictures, several of my interviewees obtained material to circulate on their social media networks and used it to promote their activities and in some occasions their artistic work. As explained by Zazur Osorio (2017), through the photography of migration flows, it is possible to give visibility to the real lives of migrants defying stereotypes and to capture stories of success, adaptation on empowerment in host societies. In my case, I was able to capture the strategies and mobilisation of Mexican migrants engaging in homeland politics from two European cities. In addition, I managed to provide my interviewees with a visual record of their political mobilisations, which they used at their own convenience.

The different roles that I adopted in my fieldwork underline the fact that in interpretive research, the degree, and the kind of participation of the research in events comes in different roles. As shown by this research approach, the ethnographer needs to remain flexible in the field and design his methods in relation to what he observed in the field, considering both his own and the interviewees' positionality and his self-reflexivity (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Since ethnography and participant observation involve recurring human interactions with several interlocutors, it is crucial to pay attention to the body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice to anticipate any discomfort and attenuate any confrontation that might jeopardise the relationship between the researcher and his interviewees. Thus, in my research I had to improvise and adopt different roles to get access to the fieldwork, construct a balanced-power relationship with my interviewees and collect data that enabled me to understand the motivations, dynamics, and strategies of their transnational political mobilisation.

Regarding my acceptance in the field, membership and positionality, I believe that it is necessary to clarify my role as an "insider" and "outsider" conducting research among Mexican migrants from different ages, occupations, social backgrounds, with a specific political ideology, and with different personal interests. Reducing my "insiderness" to sharing the common ethnic origin (Markova 2009) with my respondents would limit the critical analysis of both my interviewees and my multi-layered identity. I do not conceive my presence as being either an "insider" or an "outsider". Rather, I would argue that in each group of activists that

I studied and for each person that I encountered in my fieldwork, we managed to connect and construct a relation based on punctual experiences and interests (Corbin and Buckle 2009) that cannot be reduced to our shared nationality. Being Mexican enabled me to read between the lines and decipher the cultural codes to understand my interviewees' reactions when they met me. On the one hand, my "Mexicanness" allowed me to detect when my physical appearance, age, occupation, gender, and tone of voice hindered my access to the fieldwork. On the other hand, it allowed me to interact more naturally, partake in jokes and bond with some of my interviewees on different occasions.

As expressed earlier in this chapter, the form of my participation in the field was also influenced by my personal emotions and well-being. According to Corsino (1987), fieldworkers might experience anxiety, depression and discomfort while conducting their research. In my research, I experienced a number of negative emotions derived from unpleasant encounters in my field and from the earthquake that stroke Mexico City on the 19th of September 2017. Even if these emotions might be impossible to anticipate or circumvent, it is important to understand and reflect critically on them.

As suggested by some ethnographers, one way to be reflective on the emotions encountered in the field is to keep an emotional journal (Corsino 1987; DeWalt and DeWalt 2011; Van Maanen 2011). These journals are manuscripts where the researcher records her personal reactions, feelings and emotions that she experiences throughout the course of the fieldwork. In my fieldwork, there were three main episodes that affected me negatively and that I find relevant to reflect upon. By reflecting critically on these episodes, I aim to grasp and explain how anxiety, fear, sadness and a profound feeling of helplessness affected me and my attitude in the field. In addition, by reflecting on these negative feelings, I aim to present an honest, reflective and critical ethnography.

I experienced anxiety during several encounters with members of the Mexican community because I felt very uncomfortable because of things they said or did. In more than one occasion, some men made disrespectful comments about my physical appearance or insisted to dance with me during social events. Even if I never felt in real danger like other fieldworkers

(Williams 1992; Ascensio Martínez 1998), I did not appreciate whenever these types of invasive attitudes where displayed. As previously explained, I tried to be tolerant and respectful during all my data collection process but whenever I felt truly uncomfortable or harassed, I did not hold back in expressing my discontent and disapproval. Sometimes I only replied with a negative answer and with a dismissive tone, while in other occasions I preferred to be sarcastic and make fun of their insinuations. These episodes are interesting to analyse because they reflect that ethnographers need to face unpleasant situations (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007).

The second episode that made me feel fear and anxiety was the moment when I received a veiled threat in December 2017. I felt quite nervous when this happened since, as expressed by some of my interviewees and argued by Moss (2016), some governments opt to repress their diasporas from abroad to control their movements. As soon as this happened, I talked with one of my supervisors (who in turn informed the authorities of the University) and two members of my family. All of them encouraged me to keep doing my research cautiously and to keep them informed if anything else happened. Happily, this was an isolated occurrence in my fieldwork.

The third event that triggered several negative emotions was the earthquake in Mexico City. I was working on the afternoon of the 19th of September 2017 when I received a message from my mother: "There was an earthquake. It was quite strong. I am fine". I immediately started looking at the newspapers online. Without any success, I then browsed information from Twitter. I was shocked to see images of people trapped in ruins and buildings collapsing in my hometown. I felt deep sadness imagining the worse. I texted my father, some cousins, and my closest friends living in Mexico. Some of them replied almost instantly but some of them did not because the phone network was saturated. I felt slightly better when they started replying to my messages, but this feeling only lasted a few moments because the number of victims increased as time passed by. I refreshed the media feeds all night long grasping the magnitude of the damages and knowing that I was not able to assist from abroad but feeling an urge to know that was happening in real time. It was devastating to see that 38 buildings collapsed and

that the neighbourhood where I lived was looking like a war zone. I then realised that I was feeling the exact same despair and helplessness that migrants feel whenever they realise that their hometown and their people are in danger. I was 10,000 km away, in front of my computer, not being able to bring medicine, food or construction material to aid the victims under the rubble.

The following day, I kept feeling very sad. I remember that I went to buy some chocolates to get a small treat. When I was about to pay, the cashier realised that I had red and puffy eyes and asked me if I was ok. I just replied: "There was an earthquake in Mexico, and I miss my family". This moment was also quite revealing, since I realised that even if she showed compassion, she did not feel the same way as I did. Of course, I did not blame her, but I realised that I needed to face this problem with a group of people that felt the same as I did. Later that day, I received a text from a Mexican living in Brussels: "Larisa, we have to do something. What is going on back home is terrible. I need you to organise an event with a group of Latin-Americans". I read the message with relief and replied: "Of course, let's do it!".

We met on the 27th of September to start organising the large event that I have already presented in this chapter. I felt reassured that I was contributing to the disaster relief in my country without really influencing the core form of the event. Overall, I was satisfied to be able to face this difficult situation with a group of people that felt the same sadness that I did. We cried together, shared our experiences and supported each other. We felt understood and were able to send remittances collectively.

By reflecting upon my emotions, I aim to demonstrate that it is hard for a researcher to remain completely objective in unforeseen and disruptive situations. From an interpretive approach (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012), instead of aiming to conduct an objective research and recognise the potential biases while conducting fieldwork, it is preferable to unpack the researcher's reflectivity, positionality and emotions to provide an honest, open, and critical study. Indeed, according to Fine (1993) objectivity in qualitative research is an illusion. As a result, it is better to explicitly analyse one's reflections and transformations on the field.

Besides these three important events that disrupted me during the data collection phase, I felt quite uncomfortable listening to some remarks and gossip about the Mexican community, which may be common in ethnographies (Murphy 1985). However, based on Lejeune's argument that when interviewees talk about others, they actually talk about themselves (2014: 68), I decided to analyse these rumours which revealed important insights of the relations sustained among the members of the Mexican diaspora in Brussels and Paris.

In several occasions while conducting fieldwork, my interviewees implied that they have had disagreements with other Mexicans based on their attitudes, over-sensitive behaviour, and defensiveness. These attitudes, also referred to as "bad vibes" on several occasions, have discouraged some of my informants to keep organising political initiatives jointly. For instance, as expressed by one participant:

> "When I see the Mexican community here [in Belgium], I feel that they want to get involved and participate openly and in a flexible way. But then, the culture of thinking that someone wants to *screw you over*[16] permeates […]. It is like a reflex, it is like when something is itching, and you want to scratch it. We always go back to that mindset. It takes a lot of personal work and effort to avoid that. Because it is almost immediate -that one wants to *screw me up*, but I will defend myself because I have defended myself all my life and this time will not be the exception-" (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, January 25th, 2018).

Whenever I was confronted to this kind of situation, I heard cautiously and emphatically to what my interviewees shared without expressing my opinion or any type of judgement. I made this conscious choice to avoid any confrontation with my interviewees and make clear that my role was not to take any sides but only to listen what they decided to share with me.

A last aspect of my positionality that is relevant in the context of studying transnational political movements, is my personal political position. I would trace the origins of my political awareness in 1996, when I attended a demonstration for the rights of indigenous people in

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[16] In the original version in Spanish, the interviewee uses the verb *chingar*.

Mexico City with my father. When growing up, my father enjoyed telling me stories when he was young and rebellious. He attended several demonstrations as a student, for instance the so-called *Halconazo* movement, where at least 120 activists were killed on June 10, 1971 in Mexico City. As an undergraduate student in Mexico, I never attended any kind of political demonstration. I believe this can be partly explained because of my privileged position as a student in a private university, because I was cautious of getting involved in any political movement and because I moved to Europe from 2010 to 2011 and then permanently in 2012.

Despite of my lack of physical involvement in demonstrations and social movements, I have always been interested in Mexican politics. I have been particularly critical about the repression and violence exercised by authorities in different times of our history (Fernández Poncela 2014). As a result, during my research in Europe I did not experience any discontent or antagonism observing activities denouncing the human rights violations in Mexico, as opposed to the experience of other ethnographers observing xenophobic movements or other social movements that they personally condemn (Avanza 2008). I do not consider myself as a political activist who feels the need to organise collective political activities as expressed by some of my interviewees. Rather, I see myself as a critical academic interested in observing and analysing political events.

Leaving the field was not complicated. Ascensio Martínez (2018) states that is important to leave the field gradually to ensure that the participants do not feel betrayed or used. In my case, I keep having a good relationship with most of my interviewees. I sporadically attend some of their events and text some of them from time to time. All of them are aware that I am doing a PhD and that I need to spend a lot of time analysing data and writing, and they themselves also have very busy schedules. When they invite me to take pictures or attend one of their events, I make my best to be present and help them when they specifically need me. For instance, after fishing the data collection phase in July 2018, I was contacted by one of my interviewees who invited me to attend a cultural event that he organised with a couple of his Mexican friends on the 31st of August 2018 in Brussels. At the event, I accepted to act as the

master of ceremonies after their request and presented a group of musicians on stage. I also took some pictures, which I shared with them on the same day.

In January 2019, one of my articles was published in a Mexican journal analysing the transnational political practices orchestrated by Mexican women living Brussels (Lara-Guerrero 2019b). As soon as this happened, I shared the text with my interviewees and sent them a message thanking them for their participation. Most of them reacted with pride and joy to see that their participation was fruitful and recognised. Two of the participants mentioned in the research shared the article in their social media and another one contacted me to ask me why I changed her name the article when she gave me the permission to use her real name. I reiterated my gratitude and then I reminded her (as agreed the day of her interview) that researchers have to maintain the anonymity of their participants when disseminating their results. I explained to her that this was a generalised practice in academia and that it was done to protect her identity. At the beginning she was surprised with this choice, but she ended up understanding why it was important to change her name and identifiable features.

In the next section, I will explain how exactly I collected, treated, and analysed my data. In addition, I will explain the ethical implications of my research and why I decided to conduct an ethnography situated in two specific cities (Marcus 1995; Marcus 1999; Amelina and Faist 2012; Falzon 2009).

3.4. Data treatment and analysis

According to the literature (Beaud and Weber 2010; Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011) when observing and writing notes in the fieldwork it is important that researchers: 1) keep track of the chronological order of the events; 2) draw a diagram to place people, objects and the distribution of the space; 3) write explicitly what they have done, heard and felt; 4) express if they have being shocked by anything in particular; and 5) provide a provisional analysis. To keep track of all this information it is important to be systematic and rigorous while taking

fieldwork-notes. This enables the researcher to collect the same information at every event, which will be crucial for the analysis of the data.

I attended all the events in my fieldwork with a pen and a small notebook and I tried my best to keep track of the information that I considered meaningful such as the placement of objects and people, the behaviours and activities of my interviewees, as well as their interactions with each other, with me and with their audience (when there was one). As stated before, I also kept track of my emotions and things that shocked me or that I needed to reflect upon. The day after the event, I systematically took my scribbled notes to transcribe onto a table in Word where I recorded the following information (when available): the name of the event, the date, the time and venue, the invitation, a diagram, scanned versions of the documents that they distributed, a general description, my observations, notes on the interaction with the other Mexican migrants, and photos that I took during the event. Similarly, whenever I had an interview, I recorded the date, the time, and venue where the interview took place, as well as some general comments and observations. Transcribed the interviews on the day after having recorded them, I paid special attention to the tone of voice of the person talking and I introduced captions of these observations in the transcriptions.

I decided to transcribe all the material that I collected in the events and interviews the day after they took place because it was still fresh in my memory and I wanted to keep track of the small details such as the body language and tone of voice of the people involved in the data collection process. I found these details particularly relevant to reflect upon my positionality and reflexivity.

For the analysis of my data, I printed and tagged my notes manually. Additionally, I used Excel to organise the data and be able to find the relevant tagged quotes to illustrate my arguments. I processed my data using two techniques in qualitative studies: micro-analysis and labelling (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011; Lejeune 2014). The first technique is merely a descriptive exercise where the researcher reads and scrutinises in detail all her fieldnotes (in my case sentence by sentence) to pay attention to two main set of questions. The first set focuses on the actors encountered in the field and their behaviour: who are they? How do they present

themselves? What are their gestures? What do they say? The second focuses on the social dynamics observed in the field: how did the events unfold? What are the specificities of the events? What is the relation among the interviewees? How is the researcher perceived in the field? (Lejeune 2014: 54).

After finalising the micro-analysis, I proceeded to create labels and categories by focusing on the experiences narrated by my interviewees. I used Excel to create a table and took almost three months to analyse close to a thousand pages of fieldnotes including all the transcriptions of my interviews and observations. I created 27 labels to analyse the events and 33 labels to analyse the interviews from the analysis of the experiences of my interviewees (Annexes 3 and 4). As a result, my labels focused on the spaces, strategies, relationships, perceptions, norms, and emotions that the Mexican migrants in Brussels and Paris mobilised to organise transnational political movements. By intertwining both micro-analysis and labelling techniques, I was able to identify the main categories which in turn enabled me to theorise about the political subjectivation of my interviewees. I was thus also able to construct my own typologies of analysis to structure this dissertation.

The 41 semi-structured interviews of this study were recorded with the formal verbal consent of the participants. I interviewed them in places of their choosing: with some I shared a coffee at their favourite cafe, others asked me to meet them at their workplaces, while others preferred to be interviewed at their homes. I felt very fortunate whenever they invited me to their homes since they allowed me to observe how they lived, the Mexican handcrafts that they treasure and how much they miss our homeland. In several occasions, they also shared with me traditional Mexican food and drinks such as *enchiladas*, *ceviche*, *tacos*, tortilla soup and mezcal.

Before starting recording, I made sure that all of my interviewees were aware of the aims of my research and the importance of their participation. I explained that it was important for me to have a recording to be able to transcribe their data for the analysis phase. However, I always told them that if they did not feel comfortable with the recording, I could instead only take notes (which was not necessary since all of them agreed to be recorded). Before starting the interviews, I also explained to them all that they were free to refuse to answer any question

and that they could withdraw from the study at any time (Iphofen 2011). I also emphasised that in order to protect their wellbeing and safety, I was going to use pseudonyms in the published findings (Barsky 2009; Van Liempt and Bilger 2009). After explaining this in a conversational way (Zavisca 2007), I proceeded to ask them if they had any questions or request before starting with the interview. Each of them stated that the conditions were clear to them and that they agreed with the terms of the interview. One of my interviewees asked me to erase his recording as soon as I finished transcribing it, which I did.

The continuing negotiation between my interviewees and me (Horowitz 1986) during the data collection process made me realise the importance of considering power as a relational force that varies depending on the personal attitudes, perceptions, language, beliefs and impressions displayed during each social interaction. In this context, it was very important to have the oral consent of my interviewees not only to comply with the European ethical guidelines for anthropology and ethnography (Iphofen 2013) and with the disciplinary and University's requirements, but because it highlights the interdependence and trust between the researcher and his interviewees. In addition, being open about the implications of the research and recognise that the participant determines the content of the interview is key to rebalance the power relation between the researcher and his interviewees. I became particularly aware of this, when one Mexican migrant told me that he was not willing to participate in my research because he did not want to be "another algorithm". Later, I discovered that he was a very reserved person who left Mexico for security reasons and that he did not enjoy talking about his personal story. Therefore, it is important to note that researchers must accept and respect the will of his interviewees during the entirety of the study and reflect upon their positionality and ethical implications.

While conducting their fieldwork, ethnographers tend to follow people and their life stories (Marcus 1995) to unpack the phenomenon that they are interested in studying. Besides the will of the interviewees to be part of a research, the geographical space also delimitates the data collected in an ethnography. For my research, I conducted a strategically situated ethnography in two cities (Marcus 1992). Specifically, I focused on the political transnational movements

organised from Brussels and Paris by Mexican migrants. I do not conceive my research as a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995; Falzon 2009) because I restricted my in-depth fieldwork in these two cities.

However, I would like to clarify that I also conducted seven interviews with activists living in satellite cities surrounding Brussels but who travel regularly to the capital for personal and political reasons. I also conducted an interview in Mexico City with a returnee migrant that I met in Paris in 2014 and that was key for this study.

I excluded an in-depth fieldwork in Mexico for two main reasons. First, because of the nature and aims of the research. The latter is to understand how and why Mexican migrants engage in homeland politics from Brussels and Paris. In other words, the goal of this research is to unpack the local dynamics and strategies mobilised by Mexican migrants to engage in transnational movements from abroad. As a result, I concentrated my research in observing the tangible decisions and actions undertaken by migrants in their host cities. As migrants, my interviewees maintained both abstract and concrete relations with their homeland and it is important to note that I did not exclude these connections from my study. Indeed, I decided to encompass them in what I conceive as the political spheres (hostland, homeland, diaspora, and global) exploited by Mexican migrants to engage in homeland politics, furthered developed in the second chapter of this dissertation.

The second reason why I decided to exclude a fieldtrip to Mexico was to ensure my interviewees' and my own safety and well-being. Some of my interviewees expressed fear about the insecurity in Mexico. For instance, one of my interviewees talked about a political demonstration that he organised in Mexico with his family: "Obviously we were afraid. We were afraid to be killed, we were followed everyday" (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, November 8th, 2017). Another interviewee admitted being scared whenever she travels to Mexico. She explained to me that she was particularly careful with her children and that she was scared of the level of violence in her town of origin. In addition, another participant said she was having nightmares as a result of the insecurity in Mexico. From her point of view, "things are just getting worse since they are killing journalists and activists" (Semi-structured

interview, Paris, March 14th, 2018). Finally, another interviewee told me that he left Mexico in 2010 because of the level of violence in his hometown including the presence of drug trafficking organisations, kidnappings, and shootings (Semi-structured interview, Paris, March 3rd, 2018).

According to Iphofen (2013), the basic principles to be maintained in anthropology include protecting the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of all research participants. Observing the reactions and perceptions of insecurity in Mexico expressed by my interviewees, I abstained myself from conducting in-depth fieldwork in Mexico. Nevertheless, I was still able to capture how Mexican migrants interact with their homeland through their life stories, experiences, day to day activities, use of technology and sustained exchanges with their family members embedded in Mexico.

Conclusion

This chapter presents the methodological framework, ethical questions, strategies used in this research. In addition, I present the profile of my interviewees and demonstrate why their participation was crucial to answer to the main research question of this dissertation. Lastly, I justify the choices that I made throughout the research and I analyse the challenges that I faced during the data collection process.

The first part presents the challenges that I faced entering the field. I make special emphasis on the fact that the Mexican activists in Europe are particularly careful of sharing their information in part due to security reasons and previous experiences of feeling monitored as a result of their political activism. In the second part of this chapter, I present my sampling strategy and my interviewee's profile. I explain why interviewing the 41 participants of this research was relevant to understand the transnational political mobilisation of Mexican migrants from Brussels and Paris.

The third section unpacked my positionality and reflexivity. In addition, I challenge the dichotomy between "insider and outsider" by arguing that the multiple memberships and level

of participation of the ethnographer depends on the interplay between the demands and expectations of his interviewees, and his own wellbeing and positionality. I illustrate this point by analysing the different roles that I have performed in my own research.

The fourth section presents how I collected and analysed my data. Specifically, I explain how I took notes during my fieldwork, the questions that guided my interviews, how I followed an ethical protocol, and the strategies of data analysis. In addition, I specify why I decided to conduct a situated ethnography in two specific cities and why I decided to exclude long-term fieldwork in Mexico, merely to protect they safety and wellbeing of all the participants of this research including myself.

The following chapters present the different strategies developed by the Mexican migrants in Brussels and Paris to engage in homeland politics. The chapters are organised according to a typology that I developed from the analysis of my data which reflects that Mexican migrants engage differently depending on the nature of the phenomenon occurring in their homeland.

Chapter 4.

Unpacking transnational responses embedded in the homeland

Mexican migrants become transnational political actors by engaging in individual processes of subjectivation, which I define as one's ability to define her/his own political identity and political engagement. This process of subjectivation is determined by the individual's interactions with norms, actors and resources that are present in four spheres of political action (homeland, hostland, diaspora and global). The individual's interactions with these spheres, I argue, also determine the specific type of transnational political activity selected by migrants to achieve their goals.

In this first empirical and analytical chapter, I analyse the transnational political activities organised by Mexican migrants embedded in their homeland, focusing on how activists tap on resources, manipulate norms, and interact with actors in the four spheres of political action, which trigger and shape their transnational political activism and individual subjectivation. This chapter focuses primarily on the analysis of the interconnections between the individual, diaspora, and homeland spheres to understand how Mexican migrants become political subjects and engage in homeland politics from abroad.

To this end, this chapter is divided in three main sections. The first one analyses the individual processes of political subjectivation and the formation and configuration of groups of Mexican activists in Brussels and Paris. The second section explores how Mexican migrants respond to emergencies in their homelands from abroad, presenting two specific case studies. Finally, the last section focuses on Mexican migrants' engagement in homeland elections, unpacking the different strategies adopted by Mexican activists from Brussels and Paris to participate in the 2018 Mexican elections.

4.1. Processes of political subjectivation and configuration of groups of Mexican activists in Brussels and Paris

4.1.1. Subjectivation of Mexican migrants in Brussels and Paris

Subjectivation is a contested term in the fields of sociology, political theory and philosophical reflection that has evolved over time and has been mobilised by different schools of thought (Rebughini 2014; Touraine 1992; Dubet 2007; Habermas 1986). For instance, in the study of social movements, subjectivation is a term that has been used to designate and analyse the capacity of individuals to become the conscious actor of his/her own existence and political engagement (Wieviorka 2008; Boucher, Pleyers and Rebughini 2017; Wieviorka 2012).

In an effort to overcome the ambivalent status of the term and to develop an analytical framework for my research, I advance that subjectivation is one's ability to define her/his own political identity and political engagement. Notwithstanding, subjectivation is the result of an individual process of rationalisation and self-reflection, where the political subject scrutinises his/her experiences and memories, and emancipates his/herself from an institution, actor, structure or ideology (Wieviorka 2012; Dubet 2007; Martucelli 2005; Rebughini 2017; Pleyers 2016). In short, the process of subjectivation of Mexican migrants is the result of their own processes of self-reflection where they question their personal experiences and adopt a critical position towards political forces of domination. It is important to note that these personal experiences are determined by the individual's interactions with norms, actors and resources that are present in four spheres of political action (homeland, hostland, diaspora, and global). As a result, the political identity and form of activism are unique to each individual. Activists are not politicised homogenously, on the contrary, based on their individual processes of subjectivation, they decide to adhere to the specific norms and strategies of political mobilisation that they value the most.

The subjectivation of Mexican activists in Brussels and Paris is an important process that reflects their own critical thinking, which emancipates them from political institutions and triggers their transnational political mobilisation. When I met Viviana, it was clear that she

decided to engage in homeland politics from Paris after a self-reflective process where she critically assessed the electoral norms and institutions from her homeland.

Viviana is a historian who recently concluded her PhD and worked as translator when I met her. Contrary to other Mexicans that she has met in Paris, she did not have any link to Europe before 2007, when she decided to move to France to work as a language teacher. Viviana has lived in Paris for more than seven years and has participated in several political events organised by the Mexican community. When she talked about her political engagement in homeland politics, she mentioned key elements that reflected her individual processes of subjectivation: "I have no trust in any sort of politician. I have absolutely no respect for Mexican politics […] In 2012 it was the last time that I voted, and I will never vote again in my life." (Semi-structured interview, Paris, March 30th, 2018).

Viviana's subversive attitude towards the Mexican political system is the result of a critical process of rationalisation, where she reflected upon Mexican democracy and the electoral institutions in her homeland. In addition, during this process of self-reflection, she consciously took a stand in rejecting institutionalised politics after having a disturbing experience with Mexican authorities back in 2012, when she tried to participate as an observer in the counting of votes for the presidential elections near her hometown.

Similarly, Leonel's subjectivation relies on a self-reflective process through which he decided to participate in politics in a creative way and denounce the inefficiency of Mexican institutions through music. Since he was an anthropology student in his native Veracruz, Leonel started being interested in politics and music. As a result, he travelled along the Mexican coast to learn how to play *Son Jarocho* in small towns and farms. During these travels he learned about the cultural and political implications of music in society. For instance, Leonel explained to me that *Jarocho* is a tool that has empowered Mexican women through dancing and more recently by playing instruments, traditionally played only by men.

Even if I will further develop the use of art and creativity in the last chapter of this dissertation, Leonel's experience participating in *Fandangos*[17] reflects how personal experiences and memories shape individual processes of subjectivation and transnational strategies of political mobilisation. Leonel has reflected upon original forms of convincing people in Europe to advocate for Mexican political causes and concluded that music is an effective and alternative political strategy to connect with new actors in his hostland and to develop connections with members of the Mexican diaspora in Belgium through common cultural norms. This type of original political strategies show that Mexican migrants adapt the cultural norms and social capital that they acquired in their homeland prior to their departure, to become political subjects and develop transnational political strategies from Europe.

Another important element that triggers activists' political engagement are emotions and moral shocks (Jasper 1998; Olensen 2014; Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001), which I would argue, affect individual processes of subjectivation since emotions are intrinsically linked to personal experiences and memories. For instance, Georgina, a Mexican PhD in Humanities, decided to engage in homeland politics only after the case of the missing students of Ayotzinapa, which caused her deep feelings of pain and stimulated her reflection to choose a convenient way of protesting from Paris considering her profile and resources that she had at her disposal:

> "When I read the news about Mexico, I feel emotionally hurt. When the case of Ayotzinapa happened, I remember that I was in my room at the University… [*Her voice cracked. She gulped, smiled, and continued the interview with watery eyes*] I still get emotional. I remember I felt hopeless but very quickly I called my friends to do something […] It was the first time in my life that I felt that I needed to react and that I couldn't just observe what was happening. I decided to write a letter to express my solidarity and circulate it in my University." (Semi-structured interview, Paris, March 14th, 2018).

Georgina reflected upon her position as a high-skilled migrant, her personal capacities, and the resources that she had available in France to express her concern about the disappearance of

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[17] Name used for parties organised in Veracruz where people dance, sing, and play *Son Jarocho* music.

the students from Ayotzinapa. As a result, her first response was to approach the community of French academics of which she is a member, to sign a letter of solidarity. Georgina, as other Mexican political actors living in Europe exploit the available resources in their hostlands to design decentralised and alternative strategies of transnational politics.

Besides the feelings of sadness and shock experienced by Mexican migrants, some Mexican activists engage in politics because they feel a deep moral responsibility with their families and other actors embedded in their homeland who have been victims of the lack of justice and security in Mexico. Antonia left Mexico for security reasons more than eleven years ago. She started being interested in politics since she was 15 years old and she keeps organising Mexican political events from France because she is very concerned about the insecurity and level of violence back in her homeland:

> "I see all the horrors of the disappearances, the feminicides… I was reading that more than seven women are murdered daily… things like that are incredible and impressive. I have no words to understand or to explain what is happening [in Mexico] […] The moment you realise that it is not normal that students disappear, that women are murdered, and kids are raped, the moment you realise that you are not watching a Hollywood movie but that it is happening in real life, when you see mothers looking for their children in clandestine pits, in that moment, there is no going back. Either you do something, or you become their accomplice. And you must act wherever you are. Either there or here. You cannot stay with your arms crossed" (Semi-structured interview, Paris, April 27th, 2018).

As expressed in this passage, Antonia follows the news of her homeland and feels a moral responsibility to act and denounce the social injustices happening back in Mexico even if she resides in France. Over the years, Antonia has kept interest in Mexican politics, and she maintains a regular contact with her family and friends, who share with her information that enhances her individual process of subjectivation. Indeed, the personal exchanges with actors in Mexico and the critical analysis of what is happening in her homeland, in relation to human rights violations and insecurity, have intensified Antonia's process of subjectivation and

motivated her to found her own NGO in France to support specific causes back in Mexico. As a result, Antonia has managed to navigate the French normative system (hostland political sphere) and to collaborate with members of the Mexican diaspora in Paris (diaspora political sphere) to engage periodically in homeland politics and development initiatives.

In his studies on alter-activists, Geoffrey Pleyers demonstrates that activists' individual processes of subjectivation depend on the one hand on their rejection to the established norms and ideologies derived from the neoliberal global system and on the other hand on their own processes of self-reflection where actors make an effort to align their political ideals with their daily actions (Pleyers 2016). As a result, alter-activists question the norms imposed by the global system and tend to reject institutions, prioritising consistency in their ways of living and paying special attention to their individual actions and practices. In short, alter-activists prioritise their autonomy and bottom-up initiatives by focusing on the evaluation and self-achievement their own practices (Pleyers 2016 and 2018).

To a certain extent, the individual subjectivation process of Mexican activists in Brussels and Paris is similar to the one described by Pleyers (2016). Mexican migrants engaging in political activities have shown a deep disagreement with Mexican norms and institutions permeated by impunity and corruption. Their disapproval and evaluation of Mexican norms and institutions relies on the information that they retrieve from actors embedded in their homeland and on the critical evaluation of their experiences with the democratic system of their country of origin.

However, in addition to the resistance and consistency dimensions (Pleyers 2016) behind the processes of subjectivation of Mexican migrants, the experience and emotional dimensions have been very important elements in their reflective processes. Mexican migrants' processes of subjectivation are accompanied by deep processes of self-reflection which cannot be detached from an emotional dimension enhanced by their migratory experience and an idealised memory of their homeland (Cohen 2008) as members of the Mexican diaspora.

Individual processes of subjectivation have their own limits; therefore, it is not possible to assume that political subjects involved in social movements are completely conscious individuals (Wieviorka 2008). Even if in his work on alter-activists Pleyers (2016 and 2018) emphasises the special attention that individuals pay to align their political values with their daily acts, I observed that some of my interviewees were not completely coherent. In various occasions, I noticed that Mexican activists denouncing corruption and violence as a result of the war on drugs in Mexico did not follow certain norms in their respective hostlands. Some of them admitted consuming illegal drugs occasionally, while another one used the public transport without paying any fees and drove a motorcycle without any permit or insurance as stipulated by law. The purpose of providing these examples is not to judge the routines or everyday lives of my interviewees but rather to demonstrate that the processes of subjectivation are on-going and unfinished processes (Rebughini 2014) and that political subjects are not completely coherent individuals.

4.1.2. Becoming a political actor from abroad

Mexican migrants' decision to engage in homeland politics is triggered by their individual processes of subjectivation rooted in the questioning of the Mexican political norms and institutions, the sustained emotional attachment with their homeland and their emancipatory aspirations. In my fieldwork I observed that once Mexican migrants took the decision to engage in homeland politics, they proceeded to organise individual and collective initiatives.

Before analysing the different dynamics and forms of transnational political engagement, it is important to note, as explained by Wieviorka (2008), that collective identities are formed and developed by individual subjects who make the choice to join them. Nevertheless, Martucelli explains that the individual processes of subjectivation and new forms of self-construction are induced by larger processes of collective subjectivation (2005: 7). In other words, individual processes of subjectivation are not only determined by individual processes of self-reflection but they are also intrinsically affected by other actors. For instance, as I have previously

mentioned, the transnational links sustained between Mexican migrants and their families may affect their processes of subjectivation.

Indeed, as argued by De Botton (2017), subjectivation is constructed and developed through relationships and interactions with others. Individuals learn from their own experiences and become subjects as a result of their own processes of reflection which are influenced by the interactions with other actors from the communities where they belong to. Individuals who become political subjects are embedded in societies and social groups where they share experiences, values, and norms with other actors. These exchanges might contribute to everyone's processes of self-reflection, questioning and emancipation.

Individual processes of subjectivation are affected by interactions with other actors. Notwithstanding, it is important to note that individuals have also the capacity to decide with whom they interact with (Melucci 1996) and how they incorporate these exchanges into their individual processes of reflection and subjectivation. In addition, individuals have the free-will to decide to which group and community they belong. Migrants' capacity to determine to which groups they belong to is further complicated by the fact that they are members of multiple groups embedded in different spheres (hostland/homeland/diaspora/global). Migrant's subjectivity is thus influenced by the exchanges that they sustain with actors in both their hostland and their homeland.

After clarifying the interplay between individual and collective processes of subjectivation, I will now proceed to analyse how do Mexican migrants organise individual and collective transnational political activities from abroad.

In the period of my study, I observed that Mexican migrants living in Brussels and Paris had an impulse to organise individual and collective events after being moved and feeling morally obliged to respond to an event that affected their homeland affairs and personal interests. For instance, Fernanda, a Mexican graphic-designer in her forties who has lived in Belgium for ten years, attributed her transnational political engagement to the deep connections that she maintains with her homeland:

> "I come from a politicised family and I speak with them daily. Therefore, it is easy for me to get involved in Mexican affairs. How can I explain? I cannot resist myself from doing it. If I didn't, I would be against my own interests and convictions. How could I not mobilise for the tragedies in Mexico? […] I owe a lot to Mexico. All my family is Mexican. I feel morally obliged at least to react." (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, February 8th, 2018).

This quote reflects how the sustained connections with actors in the homeland and the accumulated personal experiences of Mexican migrants shape their individual processes of subjectivation. Nevertheless, in practice, Mexican migrants became political actors from abroad only when they found a small group of people who they rely on to coordinate political initiatives and to navigate the local norms from their hostlands.

Both in Brussels and Paris, I noticed that Mexican migrants organised political initiatives in semi-structured groups that they formed very organically through interpersonal relationships:

> "At the beginning it was very natural. […] We needed to organise properly the initiatives and to establish relations of mutual trust. Trust evolves over time after every [political] experience. There have been moments where trust has been broken and other moments where trust has been established. At the end, that process has been very satisfactory because I have found friends with whom I share two codes: our nationality and our language. We even share similar feelings, views about life and political views." (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, February 8th, 2018).

Mexican political actors formed semi-structured groups of activists with whom they felt particularly connected too by their shared cultural norms and political values embedded in the diaspora sphere. Miguel also decided to formally join the *Collectif Ayotzinapa* only after attending several meetings of the group and after realising that he was compatible with the values and way of working of the members of this specific group:

> "A friend invited me to their meetings. When I went, I really liked everyone, I liked their style. In part because they already had a very specific topic, well

defined and super important. And after that, I joined them." (Semi-structured interview, Paris, April 11th, 2018).

Studies on social movements have recognised the impact of interpersonal social networks and friendship in the organisation of political activities (Edwards 2014; Pleyers and Capitaine 2016; Della Porta and Diani 2006). Edwards argues that political mobilisations rely on an infrastructure of communication and interaction sustained by the networks of interpersonal ties among activists created by their overlapping memberships and friendships (2014: 157). Indeed, scholars studying both global and local social movements, recognise the crucial role that interpersonal connections, personal affinities, and friendships have in the organisation of political activities (Modonesi 2017; Pleyers 2018; Della Porta and Diani 2006). For the specific groups of Mexican migrants' friendship and trust became two key elements that shaped both their organisation and their political identity.

4.1.3. Friendship and trust shaping political collectivities

Mexican migrants have formed semi-structured and porous groups of activism that rely on trust and friendship in order to engage in homeland politics from Brussels and Paris. I characterise these groups as semi-structured (i.e. *Collectif Ayotzinapa*, *Bordamos por la Paz*, *Jaraneros* (musicians), etc.) because they have not a hierarchical structure and members have not a fixed role. In addition, I argue that these groups are porous because they are open for new members as long as they are compatible with the intra group dynamics, actors, and norms. Finally, I consider these groups to be loosely defined because they are open for collaboration with other Mexican semi-defined collectivities. This collaboration is simplified when a Mexican activist is a member of multiple groups and acts as a node to connect two semi-structured collectivities.

These characteristics such as lack of a well-defined structure, horizontality, and the rotation of tasks in the group of activists are not exclusive to the organisation of Mexican migrants. Pleyers (2010a, 2016 and 2018) and Modonesi (2017) have already observed that activists and political subjects around the world have opted for less formal structures to engage in a more

participative and fluid way in social movements. Indeed, Pleyers argues that instead of having well-defined and hierarchical structures, alter-activists mobilise for specific projects and prioritise informal networks and interpersonal affinities (Pleyers 2010).

Interpersonal affinities and friendships among activists rely on the personal appreciation that people have for each other. In the case of Mexican migrants in Brussels and Paris, I observed that personal appreciation was enhanced by common cultural norms shared among the members of the Mexican diaspora.

In my fieldwork, I noticed that most of the transnational political activities were organised by semi-structured groups of activists (each of them 5-10 members). Usually, these semi-structured groups of activists were formed by people who had experience working together, who relied on each other, and who often referred to each other as "friends".

Friendship was a core value that shaped the group dynamics inside and among the different semi-structured groups of Mexican activists. For instance, Rosa, a scientist who is activist in MORENA Paris, expressed that her closest friends in Paris were from Mexico because they share a "similar code" (Semi-structured interview, Paris, April 6th, 2018). Indeed, this "code" is constructed by a shared cultural baggage and common cultural norms shared among the members of the Mexican community. During my fieldwork, I witnessed that Mexican migrants repeatedly talked in Mexican slang, made Mexican jokes, and disclosed their will to keep feeding their national traditions and customs abroad. When talking about her homeland, Leonor explained that missed the Mexican expressions and way of communicating: "In Mexico you say anything, and people make you laugh immediately. The sense of humour, the mischievous pranks... Here [in Belgium] you have to stop and explain everything. Sometimes the communication is not as fluid." (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, November 29th, 2017).

Della Porta and Diani explain that common cultural and ideational elements such as beliefs, ceremonies, artistic forms, and informal practices such as language, daily rituals, stories, etc, constitute a cognitive apparatus which enables people to orient themselves in the world

(2006: 73). In the case of migrants, a common cognitive apparatus is important for their orientation in their hostland and the constitution of their identity as members of a diaspora.

The use specific language, expressions, humour, and common norms rooted in Mexican culture have brought together Mexican migrants in Brussels and Paris who have expressed deep feelings of attachment to their homeland, thus a sense of belonging to the Mexican diaspora (Cohen, 2008). Another example that reflects the cultural attachment between the members of the Mexican diaspora and cultural elements of their homeland aside from the way they speak and their shared humour are the way they socialise and have fun, which I witnessed when I was invited to some of their private events.

On the 3rd of December 2016, Fernanda invited me to her birthday party, where she cooked more than one hundred tacos, served tequila and mezcal to her guests, sang Mariachi songs and danced *salsa* and *cumbias* all night long.

At this private party, I realised that some of Fernanda's guests were Mexican migrants with whom she co-organised political events and with whom she has established a friendship that transcends their political activism. This behaviour was not exclusive to Fernanda, I observed repeatedly that Mexican migrants had a tendency to first talk with their closest friends about their transnational political ideas and ambitions before presenting them to other members of the Mexican diaspora (either to those who belonged to their same group or other activists). These private dynamics are important to discuss and determine the form, aim and scope of the transnational political initiatives. Through these informal conversations, the activist with the initial motivation to engage in politics from abroad manages to concretise the form of his or her idea and thus to feel reassured to present the political project to other members of the Mexican diaspora who usually accept to participate in the political activity or event.

Besides friendship, I observed that trust constitutes a key norm influencing the intra and inter group dynamics of the semi-structured collectivities of Mexican activists in Europe. On this matter, Tarrow argues that the coordination of collective action depends on the trust and cooperation among participants sharing common understandings and identities (1998: 21).

Indeed, the literature on social movements recognises trust as a key variable to study the extension and success of collective political action (Manzano 2007; Klandermans, Van der Toorn, and Van Stekelenburg 2008; Jasper 2010). For the specific case of Mexican activists residing in Brussels and Paris, I also identified trust as a key norm determining the level of closeness among the members of the Mexican diaspora.

For instance, a Mexican activist living in Brussels explained to me that in his experience trying to organise events, he noticed the lack of trust among his co-nationals: "A reality is that we do not trust each other as a community because we have suffered abuse from other people within the Mexican community" (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, November 29th, 2018). In fact, during the data collection process of this research, some participants recurrently pointed out that they decided to distance themselves from other Mexicans because they did not trust them or because they had a negative experience co-organising an event.

Another Mexican activist living in Belgium, explained to me that she preferred to organise events exclusively with her friends because in general, she does not trust other people organising political initiatives in the Mexican community (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, November 29th, 2018). The lack of trust has resulted in a deep fragmentation among the Mexican diaspora in both Brussels and Paris and their preference to form semi-structured groups based on friendship, personal appreciation, and trust.

Other elements that explain trust deterioration among Mexican activists are the negative perceptions that activists have about their fellow political actors derived from their experiences participating in the organisation of transnational political activities. These personal frictions, often referred as "ego fights" by some of my interviewees, created a fragmentation among the members of the Mexican diaspora in both Brussels and Paris. According to a Mexican activist living in Brussels, the Mexican diaspora is fragmented because the organisers want to be the protagonists of political events:

> "There are some leaders or people that believe that they are leaders. They
> have only created divisions […] It is a matter of egos and that is the problem.

Each of us is dividing… that is what is happening, and it is our fault". (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, October 17th, 2017).

Similarly, an activist in Paris expressed his concern when reflecting upon the Mexican diaspora in the French capital:

"There was a time when there were many internal fights and disagreements [between the political activists] because that is what happens with Mexicans educated by *telenovelas* [soap operas] … envy, whims, and everything. When there is something interesting happening in the community, that happens. Spotlight and protagonists. There has been a lot of that." (Semi-structured interview, Paris, April 26th, 2018).

These two excerpts reflect the unwillingness to recognise specific political leaders and the complexity of constructing a solid and inclusive network among the different transnational political initiatives organised by Mexican activists from Brussels and Paris. In addition, these extracts highlight the preference of Mexican activists to form semi-structured and porous groups based on alternative values such as horizontality, friendship, and respect for diversity (Pleyers 2018), instead of following a leader in a hierarchical organisation. In sum, subjectified Mexican political actors prefer to be involved in the whole design process of the political transnational initiative and participate whenever they can at their own rhythm, as opposed to just follow a political strategy dictated by a leader.

The clash of personalities has also affected the collaboration and trust among the Mexican diaspora as expressed by another interviewee living in Paris:

"In the first demonstrations, there were members of another group. I then realised that there were several mini organisations [of activists] that emerged sporadically. I went to some of their meetings, but it did not work because it is very hard to work together. I like the spotlight and being a leader and I find it very hard to work with incompetent people. Political activism is hard because you have to work with people…" (Semi-structured interview, Paris, March 14th, 2018).

Another interviewee in Belgium commented on the fact that she has observed that Mexican migrants do not easily reach a consensus on how to organise events jointly because some people have a personal agenda and focus on themselves instead of on the political cause (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, January 25th, 2018). Likewise, building on this idea and on her own experience, another activist articulated that she condemns when Mexicans do not collaborate because:

> "We are peers and we are doing these [events] for us, but also for the public.
> But if we are doing it only for being in the spotlight, then we have a problem.
> I believe that there is a lot of selfishness and I do not like it." (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, February 2nd, 2018).

Mexican activist's perceptions of their peers and their own personalities have had an impact on the inter and intra group dynamics among the Mexican diaspora. First, the negative perceptions and distancing between some activists has led to a lack of collation and trust among the members of the Mexican diaspora. Second, the lack of trust and personal appreciation among some Mexican activists have impacted on the way they organise since they prefer to collaborate mostly with their friends to avoid any misunderstanding or confrontation.

This section has argued that friendship and trust are two crucial elements that influence the organisation of Mexican activists in Brussels and Paris. Mexican migrants establish good friendships with other members of their diaspora which are enhanced by common cultural norms from their homeland. Nevertheless, the establishment of good relationships and friendships might be hindered by negative perceptions and the clash of their own personalities. Besides the group dynamics, the organisation of transnational political activities is also determined by the personality and interests of individuals. The next section focuses on the specific abilities and preferences of the individuals, which determine in practical terms how Mexican activists engage in political activities from abroad: either defining the political strategy, assisting in the logistics, matching potential partners, summoning people or performing in the events.

4.1.4. Division of tasks and coordination to organise political events

The literature on contemporary social movements highlights that activists are flexible on how they delegate the necessary tasks to organise events since they take these decisions in a very open and participative way (Pleyers 2010). In the case of Mexican migrants abroad, I observed that they followed a common pattern to divide the tasks among the members of the semi-structured groups.

Mexican activists discussed (either in person or through messages) very openly which tasks they needed to perform to organise a successful political event or initiative. Generally, these tasks include finding a venue, contacting local partners, obtaining a permission to protest, bringing material to the event, designing the advertisement of the event, translating or preparing specific documents, cooking or performing on the day of the event. In the open discussions, Mexican activists usually volunteer to perform the tasks that they feel the most comfortable with and qualified to do. In general, Mexican activists align their political participation with their personal competences and availability and in some cases, they manage to align their professional expertise with their activism.

For instance, Georgina, who described herself as a "professional writer", since she is doing a PhD in Humanities, has engaged in homeland politics either as a writer of critical texts or as a translator and interpret in some political events. Similarly, Roberto explained to me that he is the official translator in his advocacy group:

> "I am the official translator. If we need to translate something in French [from Spanish], I do it. Why? Because I have been here [in France] for the past 25 years and I am completely fluent in French. People who have not spend as much time here have still language difficulties, so I do it." (Semi-structured interview, Paris, May 4th, 2018).

The personal abilities of migrants shape the way they engage in transnational political activities. Martin, a PhD Candidate also admitted being the spokesperson of the *Collectif Ayotzinapa*:

> "Probably, from the *Collectif*, I am the one that reads the newspaper the most. I am aware of the news and I am usually feeding our Facebook and Twitter accounts. When I see an interesting article, I post it online. […] whenever there is a public presentation, I also take the floor because I am the most updated and I am used to doing it. As a student that presents in seminars, I do not struggle speaking in front of an audience and in the group, there are members who do not feel very comfortable doing it. On the other hand, for all the administrative tasks like responding to emails… I am a disaster." (Semi-structured interview, Paris, March 15th, 2018).

Miguel, who is an architect, has also applied his technical skills in designing the setting of a Mexican art exhibition in Paris, where he planned the arrangement of the room and managed to display the pieces of art in a very original by hanging them from the ceiling. The specialisation of tasks influenced by the professional career of migrants was a similar strategy adopted by Mexican activists living in Brussels who also align their personal abilities with their political mobilisation. For instance, Fernanda and Natalia who are professional graphic designers create the flyers and posters for their political events. Similarly, as professional artists, Alicia, Jimena, Ana, Miguel, and Leonel engage in politics through artistic performances, music and painting. Finally, Mexican migrants with experience in writing legal documents are often in charge of drafting petitions and letters to advocate for Mexican political causes from abroad. In sum, the professional expertise and technical skills of each Mexican activist became important resources and social capital that they exploited to engage in transnational political initiatives.

In addition to their personal skills, Mexican migrants choose the strategies to engage in homeland politics following their personal preferences and values shaped by their own personality and processes of subjectivation. For instance, while discussing about the different strategies of mobilisation, Viviana expressed her personal preferences:

> "Personally, I prefer demonstrations because I like to scream. It is the time when I let my anger out, even if I am far away [from Mexico]. You see all that happens in Mexico and you see that everybody goes out to the streets

and you are not there. Then, I feel the need to scream. I always feel the need to scream, just like that. Thus, I love demonstrations because I can do it." (Semi-structured interview, Paris, March 30th, 2018).

I had the chance to witness the convening power of Viviana's voice in multiple occasions. During the political events her tone and volume were key to set the atmosphere and lead other activists. At a personal level, she admitted enjoying screaming because it is a way to canalise her personal feelings of frustration from not being able to participate directly in the political events embedded in her homeland.

Viviana's case is not an isolated one, in my fieldwork I observed how the personal preferences and values of Mexican migrants influence their strategies of transnational activism. Andrea, another Mexican activist living in Paris is deeply interested in politics, communication, and propaganda. As a result, whenever she engages in transnational political initiatives, she tries to implement symbolic messages to trigger processes of self-reflection and self-questioning among the audience. In one of our conversations she declared: "I like to make people think. It is important to consider the power of images and symbols" (Semi-structured interview, Paris, March 6th, 2018). Through her activism, Andrea aims to encourage people to think, thus she enjoys introducing symbolical messages that need to be decrypted by the audience.

A clear example that portrays this preference was her recreation of a Mexican "anti-monument" in Paris. Indeed, Andrea admitted being inspired by the fist "anti-monument" in memory of the students of Ayotzinapa inaugurated in Mexico on the 26th of April 2015 (Tourliere 2015). This anti-monument is a three-metal piece sculpture (+, 4 and 3) placed in the crossing of Reforma and Bucareli in Mexico City to denounce the case of Ayotzinapa and which became a symbol of demand for justice. Andrea and some of her closest friends recreated the Ayotzinapa anti-monument in cardboard to use it the demonstrations organised in Paris (*Picture 1*). The creativity and time invested by Andrea in creating original artifacts to demonstrate from France reflect her personality, preferences and personal values to engage in homeland politics from abroad. Overall, Mexican migrants choose their own strategies of

political engagement after considering and analysing their own preferences, values, and skills. In short, they try to align their own personalities and preferences with their political activism.

In this first section I have focused on the analysis of the processes of subjectivation of Mexican activists to better understand how Mexican migrants become political actors and how they form semi-structured groups of activists. Moreover, I identified trust and friendship as necessary pre-conditions for group-level transnational political mobilisation to occur. In addition, when it comes to determining which type of activity the groups get involved in, I have shown that Mexican migrants operate a selection based on their personal experiences, values and skills.

In the following sections, I use empirical examples from my fieldwork (i.e. earthquake in Mexico City in September 2017, the 2018 Mexican presidential elections, etc.) to examine the relevance of my analytical framework on Mexican immigrants' involvement in homeland political affairs. Through the analysis of these cases, I determine how Mexican migrants navigate multiple norms and interact with actors in their host and home societies to find the necessary resources to respond to emergencies and political turmoil affecting their homeland.

Picture 1: Activists protesting in Paris with a reproduction of the anti-monument +43, July 6th, 2017, Paris.

4.2. Responding to emergencies in Mexico from Europe

By the end of our interview, Antonia's voice started cracking. Her expression darkened and tears welled in her eyes as she started telling me about the earthquake that shook Mexico on September 19th, 2017. In an effort to alleviate the effects of the quake and support the victims, Antonia decided to co-organise two events in Paris with other members of the Mexican

community. She named the events "*Canta y no llores*"[18] after a conversation that she had with her sister on the day of the earthquake:

> "My sister lives near one of the most affected neighbourhoods. It was horrible. It looked like an action movie and I could not stop crying. She broadcasted live and she showed me a Mariachi group singing while the rescuers were doing their job. I concluded that the name of the event had to be "sing and don't cry". Here we were, flogging ourselves [in Paris] and feeling terrible, while people there [in Mexico] were singing. We could not send them more sadness. We needed to send them love" (Semi-structured interview, Paris, April 27th, 2018).

Antonia was clearly affected by the earthquake, an unexpected event that triggered the mobilisation of several Mexicans living abroad. As a response, she decided to organise a gastronomic event and a concert on the 8th and 12th of October 2017. To achieve her goal, she gathered some of her Mexican friends, coordinated the efforts of the distressed Mexican diaspora, and managed to find a location in Paris, only few weeks after the earthquake. The immediate reaction to this specific emergency is one of the several examples that I observed during my fieldwork and that I develop in this section.

In this section I argue that Mexican migrants in Brussels and Paris respond to specific emergencies embedded in their homeland by manipulating resources and by navigating the norms in their host countries to achieve their socio-political goals. Furthermore, I present two concrete examples from my fieldwork to demonstrate that Mexican migrants' interaction with specific actors in their homeland was crucial to formulate efficient and short-term responses to national emergencies from abroad.

Moreover, through the analysis of these two empirical examples, I demonstrate how migrant's processes of subjectivation directly influence the form of their political mobilisation. Indeed, Mexican activists made transnational efforts to respond to emergencies after reflecting upon

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[18] The name is a verse of the song *Cielito Lindo*, a popular Mexican song commonly played by *Mariachis*.

their previous experiences as political actors and by reaffirming their detachment from the Mexican government and institutions. To illustrate my arguments, I analyse the following empirical cases: the earthquake that hit Mexico in September 2017 and the case of a Mexican migrant living in Brussels whose brother was unjustly imprisoned in Mexico City.

4.2.1. Mexicans reacting to the 7.1 earthquake in September 2017 from Brussels

The earthquake in Mexico in September 2017 sparked different forms of mobilisation among the members of the Mexican community living in Europe. As argued by Van Hear (2011), whenever diasporas perceive an emergency or crisis in their country of origin, they respond by engaging economically from abroad to foment the recovery and security of their homeland societies.

Indeed, only a few minutes after the earthquake, Mexicans living in Brussels started sharing images, videos, testimonies of the victims and messages of support and solidarity in their social media networks. As noted by Edwards (2014: 157), electronic communication is central in diaspora efforts to share information, communicate grievances and generate emotional bonds with members of their home society. Similarly, Mexican migrants used Facebook and Twitter in an effort to engage in the tragedy alleviation from abroad and participate in the circulation of information. As a first reaction, Mexican migrants called their families and friends living in Mexico to ensure that they were safe. Immediately after, they started sending messages to the members of the Mexican diaspora living in Belgium to assess the impact of the earthquake among their acquaintances and friends in Europe. One hour after the earthquake, Enrique sent a private message to a group of *Son Jarocho* musicians living in Belgium:

> "Mates, we need to organise a concert soon to send some help, the earthquake was very *cabrón*[19]. We need to do something soon to collect money and send economic aid […] let's see where. There is a lot of information circulating. So far 42 victims in Morelos, 11 in Puebla and

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[19] Mexican slang that in this context means severe.

counting. […] Listen to Radio Education" (Excerpt of a Facebook conversation, September 19th, 2017).

In this passage, Enrique expressed his concern about the critical aftermath of the earthquake and his will to organise a concert to collect funds to Mexico. In addition, he suggested to his friends to tune in to a Mexican radio station to avoid spreading any misleading information and create more chaos. When discussing how and when to organise the first concert to support the victims and to prevent any disagreement among the members of the group, Enrique intervened by saying:

> "Before the situation spins out of control, I am only asking you to help our brothers and sisters in Mexico. I think we have a duty to help them. I know how it feels, 32 years ago I experienced it personally and I know what the co-nationals are suffering now. Therefore, I am asking to whoever is willing to help, to attend the event tomorrow. The objective is to save lives, forget about your egos for a moment and let's help our brothers that need us. It is for solidarity." (Excerpt of a Facebook conversation, September 20th, 2017).

With this message, Enrique tried to unify the members of the Mexican diaspora living in Belgium to mobilise cohesively and collectively. He evoked his personal experience to testify the hardship of earthquakes and to remind the urgency to engage in the alleviation of the crisis from abroad. After briefly discussing different forms to collect funds, Bernardo, a violinist who has lived in Brussels for more than ten years asked the musicians of the *Jarocho* group if they would be interested in co-organising a concert with his *Mariachi* band. In this way, they could attract a larger group of donors and join forces to find a place to coordinate a short-term activity:

> "Hey guys, I have talked to my Mariachi band and we would like to collaborate. The proposal is the following: let's organise a joint concert, a *Fandango-Mariachi* jam session Saturday evening in a bar. I thought about the *Via Via,* which is frequented by people with financial means. Once we have the confirmation from the place, we can make a call on social networks to invite people to attend. We will name the event after the earthquake: Help

Mexico. […] Leonel and everyone else [in this group]: Look for alternative places [where to organise the concert]. We will be only available from 19:00 onwards so we need to make the decision today. None of the Mariachis will be available during the week. Therefore, short-term actions. Mates, less "*blah blah*" and more action." (Excerpt of a Facebook conversation, September 21st, 2017).

This passage reflects important elements to understand how migrants react to emergencies in their homeland from abroad and how they decide to co-organise events in accordance with their individual skills, previous experiences, capacities and personal relations with specific actors in both their host and homeland societies.

First, this extract reveals the importance of considering the hostland environment when deciding where to organise the event (hostland sphere of political mobilisation). Indeed, Bernardo suggested a trendy bar in the centre of Brussels popular among young professionals who could donate funds for his homeland. Second, it reflects that Mexican political actors align their abilities and skills with their activism. As a professional violinist, Bernardo decided that he could play music to contribute to the emergency relief in Mexico. Third, this excerpt suggests that time is a crucial variable to consider when studying the transnational engagement of migrant populations in homeland affairs. On the one hand, Bernardo encouraged the Mexican musicians to be proactive and take decisions as soon as possible to respond to the emergency. On the other hand, he stressed his availability to engage in the activity only when his personal schedule allowed him. In short, Bernardo reacted to an emergency embedded in his homeland by contacting his Mexican friends in Belgium to jointly design a strategy to alleviate the crisis caused by the earthquake in Mexico City. He used his personal contacts (actors), social capital accumulated through previous experiences (norms), and skills as resources to respond to the crisis as soon as possible. He first got in touch with actors that he relied on to ensure that he had the support of a small group of people to divide the logistical responsibilities to organise the charity concert.

Few hours later, Bernardo confirmed the exact place and time where the concert was going to take place. He asked all the members of the private group to share a flyer that he had prepared with the details of the event taking place on September 23rd, 2017 at the Cultural Centre Bruegel in Brussels. The *Mariachi* group managed to organise the open-air concert in this privileged place because one of their closer collaborators (ally) worked in the Cultural Centre an offered the venue free of charge. This reveals the importance of the personal relations built between migrants and members of the host society, which enlarge the scope of where and how to organise events. Once the official invitation started circulating in social media, the Mexican diaspora showed enthusiasm to be able to have a space to act collectively and more importantly, where they were able to share and unload the tension and sadness caused by the earthquake. What started as a humanitarian fundraiser evolved rapidly into a political event as a result of intra-diasporic disagreements; the circulation of misleading information regarding the veracity some rescue groups in Mexico; and the will of Mexican diplomatic authorities to participate in the grassroots activity organised by migrants in Brussels.

While discussing the division of tasks for the events, two issues rooted in the homeland sphere arose. First, one member of the Mexican diaspora living in Brussels draw attention to some irregularities in the rescue process back in Mexico. Indeed, after receiving some messages from her family in Mexico witnessing what was happening in the rescue missions, Jimena asked the Mexican musicians to help her to denounce the fact that the Mexican government was planning the debris removal without ensuring the survival of the trapped victims. The information (resources) sent by Mexican actors (embedded in the homeland sphere) to the members of the Mexican diaspora living in Brussels influenced their perceptions and thus their strategies of transnational mobilisation. In this specific example, once Jimena received information from her family at the forefront of the emergency, she decided to take action to denounce from Belgium that the Mexican government was violating the norms to rescue the victims of the earthquake.

In parallel to the organisation of the concert, Jimena and other members of the Mexican diaspora in Brussels prepared a statement[20] arguing that the Mexican government was not following the Guidelines for Emergency Response to Structural Collapses (Willis et alt. 2006). This advocacy action was a collective effort drafted by Alma, who as a lawyer, has experience in analysing and collecting testimonials to write political and legal statements. In order to write a consistent statement and provide examples of the anomalies of the rescue process and in line with previous observations made by Sicilia and Vázquez (2016), Alma asked the Mexican diaspora to provide her with explicit examples that their families in Mexico had witnessed to give more legitimacy to their advocacy effort:

> "Hello colleagues. It is very important to get organised. We need to speak about this to take concrete actions. It is very important that you collect evidence from your contacts in Mexico (videos, pictures, testimonies). What is happening is very serious and we must denounce it. I am also in contact with Amnesty International in Belgium to explore the possibility of sending donations from here" (Excerpt of a Facebook conversation, September 22nd, 2017).

While the statement presented some of the irregularities of the Mexican government rescuing victims in the collapsed buildings it created divisions among the Mexican diaspora in Brussels. Alma and Jimena planned to attend the concert co-organised by Mexican musicians. They believed that it could have been a great opportunity to collect signatures for their petition since it was going to be attended by a large portion of the Mexican diaspora in Belgium. However, Bernardo, one of the main organisers of the concert did not particularly support the idea to present political initiatives in a humanitarian event. From his point of view, the only objective of the concert was to raise funds for the victims.

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[20] Petition avaible in Spanish online here:
https://colectivo43.wordpress.com/2017/10/06/comunicado-desde-europa-sismos-y-derechos-humanos-en-mexico/

This short passage reflects a clear fragmentation among the Mexican diaspora. On the one hand there is a lack of cohesion on the objective and form of their transnational initiatives. On the other hand, this passage shows a lack of communication between the different Mexican

groups trying to contribute to their homeland's recovery. This type of behaviour was not isolated, during my fieldwork I could observe that the members of the Mexican diaspora had a preference to organise events and initiatives with people that they were close to, thus the relevance of considering interpersonal networks in the study of transnational political mobilisation as highlighted by social movement scholars (Pleyers 2010a; Edwards 2014).

The second major issue that created discrepancies within the Mexican diaspora in Brussels was the participation of Mexican diplomatic figures in the fundraising event, in other words, actors from the homeland sphere. When discussing the concert's logistics, Bernardo mentioned that people from the Mexican Embassy contacted him to ask if they could help in the organisation of the event. The organisers of the concert expressed their concern of including diplomatic figures in the charity concert because they preferred to maintain the deinstitutionalised aspect of their initiative. In addition, a musician expressed his concern that by recognising the Mexican authorities as official organisers, they could have a saying when deciding where to send the financial aid. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, the musicians agreed that the personnel of the Mexican Embassy could only donate food and beverages and help in the diffusion of the concert.

The fact that the Mexican musicians showed particular caution in establishing links with the Mexican authorities displays their lack of trust in their homeland institutions and their preference to organise deinstitutionalised initiatives, where they have the freedom to decide the form of their mobilisation. This emancipatory attitude towards governmental actors crystallises the individual processes of subjectivation of Mexican migrants through which they decide to detach their political initiatives from institutions and structures (Wieviorka 2012; Martucelli 2005; Rebughini 2017; Pleyers 2016). In addition, by preventing the official engagement of governmental institutions in the organisation of the concert, the Mexican musicians decided how and where to send the collected funds. In short, this example reveals the individualisation of transnational social mobilisation and the will to engage in homeland politics through private, horizontally organised, and decentralised initiatives.

Nevertheless, even if the group of musicians clearly restricted the engagement of Mexican authorities to food donations and advertising, this relation fragmented the unity of the Mexican diaspora on the day of the concert. On the 23rd of September 2017, I arrived early to the Bruegel Cultural Centre to help with the logistics and decorations of the open space. I helped in the preparation of some colourful banners to indicate the aim to the event.

During the event, I had the chance to play some music, take pictures, and talk to several members of the Mexican diaspora. The concert was attended by at least 200 people and served as a cathartic release for the Mexican diaspora, who sang and danced to traditional music from their homeland. The so-called "moral shock" (Jasper 1998 and 2010) caused by the earthquake triggered the will of the attendees to contribute financially to the cause, who raised a total amount of 4,507 euros in only four hours. In this event I could observe the role of emotions in social movements. In this specific context of emergency, the emotional dimension triggered a strong reaction among the Mexican community in Brussels to act jointly and promptly to contribute to the seismic alleviation in their homeland.

Despite the joyful and welcoming atmosphere experienced by most attendees, some guests did express their disagreement regarding the participation of Mexican diplomatic authorities. Specifically, a singer confessed to me that she was surprised that the musicians accepted donations from the Mexican Embassy. Another attendee mentioned that some of her Mexican friends decided to leave or even not to attend the concert because they did not want to participate in an event co-organised with the Mexican authorities:

> "Some people came and left immediately. News circulate quickly. It is not fair what the Mexican government is doing in Mexico. Here they are doing the same, they want to claim that they are helping us. It is a different level, but I do not think that it is fair that the [Mexican] authorities just come with a donation and claim that they are helping the country. It is important to keep listening to the rest of the Mexicans that are informed. Some of us are very well informed" (Extract of a conversation, Brussels, September 23rd, 2017).

This quote reveals the connection between the alignment between activists' political postures, their personal values and their actions (Juris and Pleyers 2009; Pleyers 2017), all embedded in the individual sphere of political activism. As theorised by Pleyers (2017), new alter-activists try to maintain a certain level of coherence between their actions and personal values. By not attending the concert, some Mexican migrants made clear that they rejected the involvement of Mexican authorities in the cultural event.

The decision to engage in political activism is determined inherently by the individual processes of subjectivation of political actors which encompass processes of reflection on previous political experiences and emotions. Nonetheless, this extract also demonstrates the relevance of considering the homeland sphere of political activism when analysing transnational political movements. The interaction between Mexican migrants with actors in Mexico (family friends and media) shaped their perception about the aftermath of the earthquake and fed their grievances to denounce how Mexican authorities reacted to this emergency.

After analysing the way that the Mexican diaspora reacted to the earthquake, we can observe that Mexican migrants created different strategies and forms of mobilisation in alignment with their individual subjectivation and skills. Some of them tried to focus on the humanitarian response and organised a charity concert, while others focused on developing an advocacy initiative to denounce the irregularities of the Mexican authorities rescuing people from collapsed buildings aiming to get the attention of European authorities. Both groups were supported by their group of friends and closest acquaintances. Even though the coordinators disagreed on the level of engagement Mexican authorities should have in the organisation of extraterritorial activities, they all maintained a critical view on the role and implication of the Mexican state responding to the earthquake from Belgium. In order to engage transnationally in an emergency in their homeland, activists collected information and testimonials from their homeland society, adapted the resources available in their hostland to support the victims of the earthquake, summoned the members of the Mexican diaspora and tailored their strategies of extraterritorial activism in relation to their individual preferences, values, and skills.

After the concert, I spent the evening with the main organisers of the event to discuss about their motivations and decision-making processes regarding their initiative. On this matter, Bernardo commented, "When the decision is taken, it is taken. We then pick the place". Leonel immediately added "When we took the decision, I immediately made calls to determine the venue. Then, I sent the invitation to the *Son Jarocho* group [on Facebook] to check if they were available this weekend. We put all the eggs in one basket, but we didn't have anything". Finally, Ismael noted that "At the end it is the joint effort of many people. It is not only one person's credit. It is the credit of the community, the organisation and good communication. It is everybody's credit…" (Conversation in a restaurant September 23rd, 2017).

During this evening, and later in my fieldwork, I observed a repeated behaviour among the Mexican community in Europe when engaging in homeland affairs. Most extraterritorial initiatives start with the idea of a member of the Mexican diaspora who discusses their objectives with their closest friends. Once a core team of organisers is constituted, they invite their acquaintances to test their availability and will to participate in the initiative. The core team of organisers is in constant communication. They act as nodes in the activist network and they are usually in charge of taking the major logistic decisions regarding the event such as the date and time, the venue, and the structure. It is important to note that usually the members of the core group of organisers do not seek to be labelled as "leaders", as highlighted by Matias: "my aim is not to be a leader. I call for action because it is in my opportunities" (Interview, September 2nd, 2017).

Transnational political activism of Mexican migrants in Europe echoes to the social movement theories advanced by Pleyers (2010a) that qualify post-2010 activism as decentralised and multi-layered sustained by alternative values of subjectivity such as horizontal organisation, strong participation, and friendship.

In cases of emergencies, Mexican migrants canalise their emotions and take the decision to contact other actors to organise events and engage in homeland affairs collectively. By sharing their individual concerns and political ambitions with members of their diaspora, Mexican migrants manage to concretise their political goals. Once they agree on the organisation of the

collective activity, each member of the Mexican diaspora reaches out to their personal contacts to gather all the necessary resources and material for their event. This shows that Mexican activists do not act as a homogeneous group, indeed, they value the different ideas and strategies of transnational engagement.

It is relevant to note than even if the decision to engage in transnational activities is predominantly rooted in the individual sphere of political engagement, the choice on how to engage in homeland politics is also influenced by actors embedded in other spheres of political activism. In the specific case of national emergencies, I observed that migrants' political engagement is influenced by actors belonging to the homeland, hostland, and diaspora spheres of political activism. The information and resources that actors embedded in these three spheres share with migrants impacts on how the engage in homeland politics in two ways. First, by influencing migrants perceptions of what is happening in their homeland and thus their urge to react. Second, by providing migrants with a range of resources such as recommendations, personal contacts and material on how to mobilise more efficiently. As a result, migrants rely on the information shared by actors in these spheres, specially from the ones in the homeland sphere who are at the forefront of national emergencies.

In the next section, I keep analysing how the interplay between migrants and actors embedded in the homeland, hostland, and diaspora spheres of political activism influences how migrants respond to personal emergencies. In order to do so, I present the story of a Mexican migrant living in Brussels and whose brother was imprisoned in Mexico City.

4.2.2.   Advocating from Brussels for the liberty of a Mexican

Jimena is a Mexican artist who arrived in Europe in 2009. As a professional dancer and choreographer, she has managed to develop several independent projects and to work as a theatre illuminator in prestigious productions in Brussels. Jimena is a determined woman, well-known by the Mexican community in Belgium as a result of her cultural projects and her political activism. The first time that she engaged in homeland politics from abroad was in 2012 as part of the *#YoSoy132* movement.

The *#YoSoy132* movement was a protest organised by students in Mexico to denounce the collusion between the two largest TV groups, the economic elite, and the former president Enrique Peña Nieto during the 2012 presidential elections campaign (Glasius and Pleyers 2013). Across the country, students orchestrated demonstrations in public places and expressed their disapproval through social networks (Pleyers 2018). These actions even gathered Mexicans living in different cities across the world.

For instance, on that occasion, Jimena mobilised with a group of Mexican activists with whom she shared common political ideals and who became her close friends from Brussels:

> "I met Alma during the *#YoSoy132 movement*. At that time, I realised that the Mexicans here [in Belgium] have a very strong political consciousness. If you are right-wing or left-wing it is quite evident. […] I remember that in the 132 movement I met four other women and we started a blog together. We did several events to get the attention of people. We did [political] statements and letters to the European Parliament to explain what was going on in Mexico. Then, we started the demonstrations on Schuman roundabout[21] and in front of the [Mexican] embassy. […] It was the first time that people of our age, in their 20s, 30s or 40s were mobilising. Before the 132 movement, older people were mobilising. At that time there were demonstrations with 100 people. It was a very good time, we managed to do a small movement from here. At that time, we were very productive and made a lot of connections. We had such a good reputation than even Amnesty International contacted us." (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, November 8th, 2017).

The *#YoSoy132* movement triggered Jimena's interest in politics and impacted directly on the organisation and form of her transnational mobilisation. Through this specific movement embedded in her homeland, she managed to meet other Mexican activists who became her close friends and supported her in the organisation of subsequent political activities from

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[21] The Schuman Roundabout houses one of the main buildings of the European Commission in the European Quarter in Brussels.

Belgium. Jimena became particularly close to a group of Mexicans with whom she shared common cultural and political norms.

Jimena and her friends developed specific strategies of political engagement after taking into consideration the political weight of their hostland and its relevance for global politics. As a result, they tailored their strategies of political mobilisation in relation to the norms, resources, and actors available in their hostland. For instance, they addressed advocacy letters to European Parliamentarians, they demonstrated in emblematic spaces and created alliances with global institutions such as Amnesty International Belgium. Jimena and other Mexican activists in Brussels as Paris valued the interaction and endorsement of global institutions mainly because of their political weight, reputation, and position in global politics.

As a result of these strategic forms of mobilisation, Jimena and her friends managed on the one hand to diffuse their political messages and on the other hand, to accumulate resources, navigate the Belgian political norms and establish important connections with global political actors that supported her in the case of the unjust imprisonment of her brother in the following months.

Jimena's activism started as an echoing of a Mexican movement rooted in her homeland. As a result of this experience, she managed to construct a solid network of activists and friends that help her discover and navigate the European and Mexican political contexts. This know-how and social capital were key elements to respond to the sudden and unjust imprisonment of her brother in Mexico City in 2013:

> "What happened to my brother is very interesting. He went to a bus station at night and he was detained. [The police] told him that he was dressed like a thief that they were looking for and that he just needed to go to the Ministry[22] to declare, that it was only a routine process. […] When he arrived at the Ministry, he was put in prison and we didn't see him until he was freed 72 days later. […] In Mexico it is very difficult to find honest lawyers. In less than a month we tried 28 lawyers. Sometimes we had two or three per day.

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[22] Ministry in this case refers to the Public Prosecutor's Office.

From those 28, four scammed us. Some of them asked for money in advance, some of them did fishy things, or just wrong things. My brother had three trials, the fourth didn't happen. Along the way [to achieve my brother's liberty], it was challenging to organise ourselves as family and friends. I already had a network of friends here in Belgium, Ana and Alma and other people helped me to publish statements. Things that we could publish here [in Belgium] and in Mexico. That was very important, this vision from abroad, because in Mexico they want to hide the things that happen there. Then we realised that the advocacy efforts were working." (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, November 8th, 2017).

Jimena responded to a personal critical situation by advocating from Belgium with the help of her Mexican friends in Brussels. The experience that she had as an activist in Belgium was very useful for her brother's case because she had the support of a global network of political actors, including her Mexican friends in Belgium and members of Amnesty International. In addition, she managed to organise her family and friends back in Mexico following the same strategies that she learnt in Brussels:

"We were a team like a little enterprise. Alma did the letters and the bulletins. Sofia made the invitations because she is a graphic designer. I, Ana and Martha did the artistic part [of the mobilisation] and Camila was the photographer, that was very important. She did all the visual record that we diffused. With that it was possible to share what we did here [in Belgium]. We did about four demonstrations and two large events when we worked with Amnesty International. We didn't do this much for the #132 movement. We did one or two large events. One of them in the House of Latin America. We summoned around 100 people, which is rare for political events. But we were attractive because we included artistic performances. After what happened to my brother, I implemented the same idea to catch the attention of people [through performances]. My brother was set free because I also did a little enterprise with my family. Someone was in charge of the texts, someone else organised the performances, someone else did the

press conferences, someone else did the photocopies…" (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, November 8th, 2017).

This passage highlights two important aspects on the strategies of political mobilisation implemented by Jimena to advocate for her brother's freedom in both Brussels and Mexico. First, it shows how a personal emergency enhances the transnational circulation of resources, information and strategies of political mobilisation. As soon as Jimena knew about her brother's imprisonment, she travelled to Mexico to help her family to cope with this emergency. Nonetheless, at the same time she kept in touch with her friends in Brussels, who helped to expose the case to influential global actors such as European Parliamentarians or Amnesty International Belgium. In addition, the extract highlights how Jimena's individual process of political subjectivation influenced the organisation and content of her political mobilisation in Mexico. By reflecting on her previous experiences as a political actor in Brussels, Jimena was able to organise her family in Mexico, her friends in Brussels, and assign specific tasks to everyone to advocate efficiently for her brother's case. Finally, Jimena's creativity derived from her skills, interest and past political experiences. She decided to include artistic performances in her political demonstrations after reflecting on its relevance to attract people and diffuse political messages.

The nexus between arts and political mobilisation has been explored by scholars who recognise the different roles of arts in social movements. In the next chapter I will further develop the impact of using artistic representations as a strategy of transnational political mobilisation since as highlighted by the literature, art can act as a catalyser of sentiments of group belonging and cultural memory (González 2004; Nájera Ramírez 1989; Lafleur and Martiniello 2010; Baily and Collyer 2006), a challenger to the dominant culture and prevailing ideologies (Danaher 2010; Eyerman and Jamison 1998; Martiniello and Lafleur 2008; Godin 2016), and as a tool for recruitment visibility and diffusion for social movements (Eyerman 2002; Garlough 2008; Martiniello 2015).

In the case of Mexican migrants in Europe, I observed in multiple occasions, the role of art as an emotional and instrumental resource in political demonstrations which also enhanced the

individual processes of subjectivation of political actors. On the one hand, Mexican migrants use art to express their political demands in an original form while detaching themselves from institutions. On the other hand, by using art in political mobilisations, Mexican migrants have managed to present their political demands in a recreational form to attract other actors to join their fight and reflect upon Mexican politics.

For instance, Jimena managed to integrate creative and visual elements in her political mobilisation to advocate for her brother's liberty in Mexico:

> "I had the idea that we needed to so something visual [for the case of my bother]. We are in an era that if you do not sell something visual, it just doesn't work, nobody cares about you. For each trial, I prepared a sort of performance. I already had with me everything that I learnt here [in Brussels]. We did these performances before the trials. The judge was tense because we were outside [the court] with the press. The media knew what we did and what we wanted. […] My brother made a cartoon of himself escaping from the prison with balloons. Thus, the first performance was with balloons. For the second one we had butterflies. We asked people to draw butterflies and then we pasted them outside the prison. Everything was full of butterflies and people that passed by asked: 'Why are there butterflies?' – 'Well, it is because my brother'…We did the same here in Brussels" (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, November 8th, 2017).

As an artist, Jimena is aware of the impact that visual material and performances have on people. With her family, they managed to integrate elements that symbolised her brother's liberty in their political mobilisation. They used artistic elements to protest in an original form to get the attention of the media, the judge and the public opinion both in Mexico City and in Brussels. Even if she was aware of the potential of integrating art in politics, the fact that she used it as a vehicle to put pressure in the Mexican media and authorities crystallised her process of subjectivation:

> "All of this made me a more confident individual, personally and professionally. Everything worked and was useful and not only for aesthetic

purposes but for political ones. For purposes that go beyond the aesthetics. Art is political on its own." (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, November 8th, 2017).

Jimena managed to adapt some political strategies that she learnt in Belgium to the Mexican context. However, in addition to the performances and press conferences in Mexico, she also advocated for the liberty of her brother by collecting signatures of European Parliamentarians:

"One of the days that we made a lot of progress, was when I came to Belgium to explain to my managers that I was probably not going to be back, and that I was here [in Brussels] only to look for signatures of European Parliamentarians. I was lucky that day. I came back and went to the Commission and Parliament. Coincidentally, on that day, there was a fair where you can talk to Parliamentarians, you only need to queue. It was like an open doors fair to the Parliament[23]. Now I know that it is done every year, but I casually ended up there. On that day of "open doors" I saw all the Parliamentarians or at least the most important ones, who were directly talking to people. So, I queued and told them about the case of my bother. I took pictures with all of them. Some of them signed a petition, not all of them did but I had pictures. Then, a friend whose grandfather is a former parliamentarian, promised me a signature of a group of former parliamentarians and she gave it to me. I went back to Mexico with three signatures, one from the group of former parliamentarians and two that I obtained in the fair. […] The day when I talked to the attorney in Mexico City, I explained to him that the case of my brother was being heard in the [European] Parliament. […] I told him: – 'we are looking for the possibility of exposing the case there. So, it is up to you if you want this to escalate. We will take this to the last consequences. But here are the first signatures and we are waiting for more'–. When they saw the document, I swear to you that they were shocked!". (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, November 8th, 2017).

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[23] The event is officially called "Open-Day of the European Institutions": http://www.europarl.europa.eu/visiting/en/brussels/open-day-2019

Jimena took advantage of her personal connections and political opportunities available in her hostland to advocate for the case of her brother from Belgium. She knowingly exploited the Open Day at the Parliament to obtain signatures of European politicians to persuade Mexican authorities to set her brother free. In other words, Jimena navigated the European norms and convinced specific actors to support her for the cases of her bother. As a result of these efforts, she obtained the necessary resources to put pressure on the Mexican authorities.

Overall, Jimena was able to respond to an unexpected personal crisis on the one hand because she relied on a solid support network in Belgium and Mexico, and on the other hand because she managed to adapt multiple resources and navigate the norms in two different countries to respond to a personal emergency embedded in her homeland.

In this section, I presented two case studies from my fieldwork to shed light on how Mexican migrants respond to emergencies embedded in their homeland. For the two cases, Mexican migrants reacted in a similar way. They first assessed the magnitude problem and they contacted their closest friends both in the hostland and their homeland to develop a strategy to alleviate the emergency as soon as possible. Then, they navigated and exploited the norms from each political sphere where they belong to, to determine the most efficient way to respond to the emergency embedded in Mexico. They formed strategic alliances with actors belonging to their hostland, homeland, and diaspora, which supported them to enhance their political goals. Indeed, these actors provided them with more resources to accelerate the organisation, visibility, and intensity of their transnational political mobilisation. Through these alliances, Mexican migrants could engage in a more effective and pertinent form to achieve their political goals.

It is important to clarify that although Mexican migrants rely on the transnational links between actors embedded in different spaces as well as on the circulation of information and resources among them, their individual processes of subjectivation also influence their mobilisation. When deciding how to respond to emergencies in their homeland, Mexican migrants reflect upon their previous political experiences and consider their emotions to then develop decentralised and creative initiatives to achieve their political goals.

In addition to the transnational response of members of the Mexican community in Europe to emergencies embedded in their homeland, I observed that Mexican migrants also get involved in institutionalised politics, for instance in the 2018 presidential elections. In the next section of this chapter, I unpack how Mexican migrants organised events to get involved in the 2018 electoral period in Mexico from Europe. Through the analysis of different political mobilisations in this specific period, I show how Mexican norms and institutions have an impact on the strategies of transnational mobilisation designed by migrants. Notwithstanding, I demonstrate that despite this influence, Mexican migrants manage to organise original events where they showcase their political subjectivation, their ability to create transnational networks with key actors, and their capacity to adapt to political norms and exploit resources in various political spheres, mainly in the homeland, hostland and diaspora spheres.

4.3. Engaging in homeland elections from Brussels and Paris

4.3.1. Supporting an independent candidate in the Mexican elections from Brussels

On the 1st of July 2018, Mexico held elections for many government positions including the presidency and both state and federal congress seats. As already mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, Mexican migrant vote was granted in 2005 (Lafleur and Calderón Chelius 2011). However, the 2018 election introduced important changes after an electoral reform in 2014 which enabled migrants to vote not only to the President but also to Senators and Governors of their state of origin (Wilson Centre 2014).

In addition, the 2018 elections in Mexico were particular because for the first time independent candidates, not affiliated to any political party, were able to run for the presidency as long as they fulfilled the legal requirements established by the National Electoral Institute (INE for its acronym in Spanish) (INE 2018a). The INE establishes that in order to be recognised as presidential contenders, independent candidates must be supported by at least 1% of the registered voters or 866,593 people for the 2018 election (INE 2018b). As a result, Mexican citizens were able to express their support through their official registration as a voter and by

giving their signature between the 16th of October 2017 and the 19th of February 2018 (a total of 127 days) (INE 2018a).

In order to accelerate this administrative procedure and reduce costs, the INE decided to create a mobile app. Through this electronic system, Mexican citizens were able to register and scan their electoral IDs using their mobile phones to express their support for the independent candidate of their choice worldwide. It is important to note that even if the INE App was available for everybody to download, only authorised "electoral assistants" were able to officially register the support of Mexican citizens for independent candidates (INE 2018b). In order to become an electoral assistant, it was necessary to fill in an electronic form with personal information to obtain the INE's approval and comply with the Mexican electoral norms. Once this procedure was done and after receiving an operating manual, electoral assistants were able to use their phones to register the signature and electoral ID of other Mexican citizens. In other words, electoral assistants served as nodes who centralised the registrations for independent candidates.

Among the independent candidates that needed to obtain the citizen support before being officially recognised as a presidential candidate was María de Jesús Patricio Martínez, also known as Marichuy. Marichuy, a founding member of the National Indigenous Congress (CNI) was chosen as the indigenous spokeswoman for the 2018 national elections. Marichuy became the first indigenous woman to run for president in Mexico. She based her political agenda on the recognition of the autonomy of people and on the creation of bottom-up solutions for gender inequality, violence, lack of good-governance, environmental protection, and poverty (From a Marichuy intervention in an event, January 20th, 2018, Brussels). The novelty of the political project of Marichuy caught the attention of Mexican citizens living outside of Mexico who supported her campaign.

When Natalia learned that she could support Marichuy from Belgium, she organised several events to collect support signatures for the candidate though before moving to Brussels, she had never organised events with political purposes:

"In Mexico I did not participate in political movements as actively […] I guess I was more in the background. Taking pictures. For instance, once I published some pictures in the newspapers on the movement *#YoSoy132*. I was very active then. I managed to publish some of my pictures in the newspaper, but that was all. Collaborating, marching, taking pictures and looking for information […] Before leaving Mexico I participated in a group that organised *conversatorios*[24]. These are dynamics where everybody speaks. Here in Belgium, I was surprised to see the number of social movements. Movements of resistance. That was a big inspiration. In my city [in Mexico] there are similar movements. But I think that resistance movements vary on the context and where you are" (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, November 24th, 2017).

Before moving to Belgium, Natalia was already attracted to autonomous and participative forms of political activism, such as *conversatorios* or protests through music. In her homeland, she had the chance to be exposed and participate to this type of autonomous and creative initiatives. In addition, she claimed to have a special affinity with indigenous movements, rituals and traditional medicine. She was also exposed to grassroots and local movements in her hostland. Inspired by these movements and once Natalia had a couple of Mexican friends in Brussels, she decided to become an electoral assistant for the Mexican presidential elections:

"I want to support [Marichuy]. I want people to know about [the movement]. It is a movement that does good to humanity and that is similar to many local movements from [Brussels]. The movement has similar values such as the respect of the land, autonomy and anti-capitalism." (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, November 24th, 2017).

As noted by Pleyers (2010a; 2016; 2017), global social movements integrate social justice and democratic demands aligned with the activists' values. Indeed, Natalia's political subjectivation reflects an alignment between her own values and the political agenda presented by Marichuy.

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[24] *Conversatorios:* portmanteau of conversation and observatory. These are spaces where people discuss and reflect upon different topics or ideas openly.

However, she took the initiative to organise transnational political events only after a conversation with a Mexican friend in Jalisco who explained to her how to become an electoral assistant from abroad. This exchange of information (resources) and the fact that Natalia fully supported Marichuy's political agenda encouraged her to organise political events from Belgium. Inspired by the Belgian local initiatives empowering citizens (norms), Natalia organised three events to collect signatures for Marichuy: a *Posada*[25], a global conference between the National Indigenous Congress and the Mexican diaspora in 13 different countries, and a signature collection rally.

Shortly after moving to Belgium, Natalia realised there was a group of Mexican musicians that played *Son Jarocho* on Mondays. Since she missed the "*Mexican ambience*" and her friends with whom she used to play *Jarocho* music in Mexico, she started attending the music workshops in September 2017. Only two months after joining the group, she sent a proposal to the musicians explaining her project to organise a *Posada* to support Marichuy. In her email, she included a draft of the programme which included: live music, *piñatas*, Mexican food, punch, a *conversatorio* and a film projection. In addition, she presented Marichuy's political proposal and included a short explanation justifying the organisation of this event. After reading the email, Leonel, Raúl, and I replied that we wanted to help her in the organisation of the Posada.

The organisation of the event was very smooth, we met twice and exchanged some emails to discuss the divisions of tasks. Natalia suggested some ideas, but she was open for suggestions and changes. Leonel agreed to be in charge of the music, Raúl decided to take care of the documentary projection and Natalia and I were in charge of the logistics and food for the *Posada*. As for the other events, even if we constituted the core team of organisers, the other Mexican musicians helped us prepare some decorations, making two *piñatas* and diffusing the event, which took place on the 2nd of December 2017 in a library and coffeeshop cooperative in Brussels called *La Vieille Chéchette*.

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[25] *Posadas* are traditional parties organised in Mexico before Christmas. They usually include traditional food, drinks, and a *piñata*.

One day before the event, I went to Natalia's house to help her with the preparation of a vegetarian *ceviche* and punch. After the four-hour cooking session, Raúl arrived to present the short documentaries that he picked to screen at the *Posada*. He also decided that he would prepare some notes to talk about the context of inequality and violence in Mexico. In particular, his aim was to raise awareness about the situation of the Mexican indigenous people who have been excluded from mainstream politics in Mexico and who suffer from racism and discrimination. As a result, after the short-documentaries screening, Raúl presented his personal experience as a member of an indigenous community from Oaxaca and made emphasis on the importance of recognising local activism and autonomous organisation as two key components of policymaking.

The *Posada* lasted five hours and was attended by about 60 people of different nationalities. Even though Natalia could only collect three signatures, she was satisfied to having created alternative spaces to raise awareness, to socialise, and to exchange political ideas. Existing literature has pointed out that alter globalisation-gatherings are original spaces where activists socialise, celebrate, and create alternative forms of dialogue that enhance their political subjectivation (Pleyers 2017; Naveau and Pleyers 2012; Glasius and Pleyers 2013; Pleyers 2010a). The *Posada* is a clear example of the creation of alternative political space. Mexican migrants had the chance to present their political vision, to raise awareness about the situation of indigenous communities (in their homeland) while having a good time dancing, singing and sharing Mexican traditions with members of the Belgian society. In addition, by adapting Mexican parties in the Belgian context, Mexican migrants created a space where they managed to reaffirm their identity through music, gastronomy, and other traditions.

In sum, this event illustrates how migrants engage with actors, navigate norms, and exploit resources embedded in multiple political spheres (homeland, hostland, diaspora). The *Posada* depicts how Mexican cultural and political norms shape transnational political actions. In addition, through this example we can also observe that Natalia relied on actors of the Mexican diaspora to concretise her initiative, find a venue, and summon potential supporters in Belgium.

Once Natalia became an electoral assistant, she became part of the global network of Mexican electoral assistants engaging in homeland politics from around the world. Specifically, she became part of *Con Marichuy Sin Fronteras*[26], a group coordinated from Mexico and where Marichuy electoral assistants worldwide were able to exchange messages. The aim of this group was to gather members of the Mexican diaspora and connect them directly with Mexican political actors.

Extract of my fieldwork notes of December 2nd, 2017

The event started at 19.30 and we played music until 22.00. I arrived early at the venue to start helping with setting-up and decorating. I was in charge of preparing the table to serve and sell the *ponche*.

The projections lasted approximately one hour and a half. Raúl intervened after each video to explain the context of violence and inequality in Mexico. Attendees listened to his explanations attentively.

Once the film screening was over, we played five *fandangos* (songs). As usual, I only accompanied the main musicians by setting the beat with my wooden keys. The attendees were very happy to listen to Mexican traditional music and little by little the mood turned festive. Everybody in the room was either dancing or clapping. Once we finished the live music session, we went out of the venue to break three *piñatas*: one shaped like Donald Trump, another one shaped like the eagle on the Mexican flag and the third one shaped like a traditional star. All attendees participated and enjoyed this moment. For some of them, it was their first time breaking a *piñata*, thus I observed how some Mexicans happily explained the process with a little smile of pride and joy on their faces.

After the experience of the *Posada* and feeling more confident about her capacities for calling for political action, Natalia volunteered to chair a conference call between members of the CNI including Marichuy and the members of the Mexican diaspora living in 13 countries who

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[26] With Marichuy without borders.

supported the indigenous candidate. Natalia found a local coffeeshop in Brussels that hosts grassroots events organised by activists and artists. The online meeting which took place on the 20th of January 2018, crystallises the relevance of considering the individual at the forefront of transnational political activism since it is the individual who navigates the hostland, the homeland and the diaspora spheres of political engagement to find resources and allies to organise transnational political activities.

Natalia's decision to become the chair of the online-meeting is the result of her individual processes of political subjectivation enhanced by her political experiences, self-confidence, and self-awareness. Indeed, through the *Posada* and as an electoral assistant, she accumulated resources (knowledge and social capital) and had the chance to meet new political actors in Belgium, Mexico, and globally. As a result of this, she invited the Mexican community in Brussels to participate in the online meeting with Marichuy, coordinated among thirteen electoral assistants, who in turn summoned the Mexican diaspora in their own hostlands.

Natalia chaired the online meeting that brought together more than 100 people scattered in 20 cities around the world. In some cities, only one representative of the *Marichuy Sin Fronteras* movement joined the meeting, while in other cities such as Brussels at least ten activists participated in the activity:

> "We are Mexicans who currently do not reside in Mexico, but we have the urge to respond to the call of National Indigenous Congress to gather the necessary elements to obtain the official registration of our *compañera* Marichuy, as a presidential candidate and spokeswoman of indigenous people. We are electoral assistants that live abroad, some of us work individually while others collectively. We identify ourselves by the name "*Con Marichuy Sin Fronteras*" to forge links in different countries that will enable us to trigger joint actions from our spaces and according to our possibilities. To achieve this, we have created links with several scattered [Mexican] communities and who are fighting and resisting against the same issues. We have thus invited you to this meeting. We are transmitting to the communities in Barcelona, Marseille, Valencia, The Hague, Lyon, Brussels,

Ecuador, Cauca, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Montreal, Santiago, Dortmund, Sevilla, Zaragoza, Hamburg, Guatemala and Exeter." (Welcoming words in the online-meeting, Natalia, January 20th, 2018).

During the one-hour meeting, attendees had the chance to present themselves and to ask questions and raise concerns to Marichuy and the other members of the CNI regarding her independent candidacy. Some electoral assistants made reflections about the context where they lived and where they believe that the "neoliberal model" oppresses indigenous people and minorities. Other sympathisers asked Marichuy to talk about her experience as spokesperson, her political agenda and her perception of how the Mexican society has responded to the indigenous political movement. In sum, the members of the Mexican diaspora were curious to know about the personal experience of the indigenous candidate and expressed their support, admiration, and excitement whenever they had the chance.

Through the online conference, Mexican migrants had the opportunity to be directly in contact with Marichuy, which fuelled their emotions and individual processes of political subjectivation to keep advocating for the candidate from abroad and collecting signatures. Indeed, as previously pointed out in social movement literature (Stewark 2004; Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001; Sicilia and Vázquez 2016; Keck and Sikkink 1998) testimonies constitute an important element in political mobilisation since they reinforce the grievances, emotions and legitimacy sustaining the movement. In this particular case of transnational politics, technology enabled to establish a direct communication between the Mexican diaspora, Marichuy and other members CNI who expressed their solidarity with the movement and their determination to support the candidate in the timeframe established by the INE. The conference concluded with people smiling, clapping and cheering their mobilisation: "Do not give up! We are with you! We love you! Resistance! *¡De este a oeste, seguiremos esta lucha cueste lo que cueste!*"[27]

After the event, Natalia felt very happy and satisfied by her role as facilitator in the exchange between the Mexican diaspora and alternative political figures in Mexico. Nevertheless, she

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[27] This is a political slogan used in social movements in Mexico. It can be translated to: From east to west, we will keep fighting whatever the costs!

was conscious that she only could collect signatures until the 19th of February 2018, the deadline established by the National Electoral Institute in Mexico. Thus, the electoral Mexican institutions influenced the transnational political strategies implemented by Natalia in the following month. Existing literature (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Margheritis 2011; Guarnizo and Chaudhary 2014; Tabar 2014; Délano 2011; Morales and Pilati 2013) has already highlighted the impact of homeland political and legal structures shaping transnational political actions from diasporic populations. For the case of the Mexican diaspora engaging in homeland politics, this was no exception as Natalia collected signatures on every Tuesday of the following month before the 19th of February 2018, the electoral norm established by her homeland. She used her skills as a professional designer to create an online campaign inviting the Mexican community in Belgium to meet her on the 30th of January, and on the 6th, 9th and 13th of February in a Mexican restaurant in Brussels owned by Susana, a Mexican entrepreneur.

When I arrived at the venue, I saw Natalia siting on a table with political flyers that she downloaded directly from the CNI's official website. The pamphlets explained the political agenda and purposes of the CNI and her candidate Marichuy. Natalia and I spent five hours waiting for people to come to the improvised political stand. While we were eating some tacos, a Mexican woman approached us to ask what where we were doing. Natalia stood up and quickly introduced Marichuy and the purpose of collecting signatures. The Mexican woman seemed very interested but since she did not have an electoral ID, she was not able to support the indigenous candidate. Natalia did not show any sign of discouragement or disappointment, on the contrary, she seemed happy to be able to present the political ideology and norms promoted by Marichuy to other Mexicans in Belgium.

The fact that by the beginning of the year 2018, some Mexican migrants did not have an electoral ID meant that they no longer had the right to officially participate in the presidential elections. However, even if these norms limited their official engagement, I observed that Mexican migrants in Brussels and Paris were still able to participate unofficially in extraterritorial voting activities by campaigning for their favourite presidential candidate and political party even when they were not registered as voters. These "unofficial" forms of

political engagement are possible to understand through the analysis of the individual processes of subjectivation of migrants who are able to develop autonomous political initiatives.

4.3.2. Supporting a Mexican party candidate from Paris

Armando is a Mexican citizen who arrived in Paris in 1993 and works as a professor and researcher in an Engineering School. From 2005 to 2010 he moved back to Mexico with his family to work as a researcher and as a specialist in human rights for a local governmental office in his state of origin in the south of the country. When we discussed his interest in Mexican politics, Armando explained to me that he started to be interested in politics when he arrived in France as he was 23 years old and became a sympathiser of the Zapatista movement.

According to Rovira (2009), the Zapatista Army of National Liberation was an important transnational movement because it was not limited to Mexican borders. Sympathizers around the world who supported the political values of the group joined the mobilisation and thus created transnational strategies of political mobilisation. For instance, the international Zapatista network included left-wing activists who mobilised against the Neoliberal system and to defend the rights of indigenous communities, ecology, and women (Rovira, 2009).

During the rise of the Zapatista movement in Europe, Armando lived in the House of Mexico at the *Cité Universitaire*[28], where he had the opportunity to meet other Mexicans and organise fundraising parties:

> "I arrived here [in Paris] in 1993 and I witnessed the Zapatista insurgency from here. We were students and we lived in the Mexican Residence at that time. There were many students from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) who had already participated in strikes [back in Mexico]. They were very politicised, very left-wing people, even a very extreme left". (Semi-structured interview, Paris, March 10th, 2018).

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[28] The House of Mexico is a student residence at the *Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris*.

Armando started being involved in Mexican political activities in France when he started exchanging political ideas and participating in events organised by other Mexican students. As mentioned before, De Botton (2017) argues that subjectivation is constructed through relationships and interactions with others. Indeed, the reflective experience enhanced by the politicised Mexican students triggered Armando's political interest, consciousness and subjectivation.

However, it was not until 2011, after he decided to return to France indefinitely and after attending a meeting organised by a group of Mexican students, that he decided to officially become part of the National Regeneration Movement (Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional, MORENA in Spanish):

> "Let's say that the 'MORENA seeds in France were sowed in the House of Mexico. The first people who called for action were young students and employees who started the mobilisation. […] They organised an event in a room where they showed some information posters and they presented the project. They also cooked. That day, I got in contact with them and I became part of the movement […] I have been a member of the group since then because the others go back [to Mexico] and I am rooted here [in Paris] together with Pedro."[29] (Semi-structured interview, Paris, March 10th, 2018).

Armando and Pedro are two of the core members of MORENA France[30]. Since 2011, they have been in charge of organising meetings, protest marches, film-screenings, and political debates, setting up a radio station, recruiting new members and advocating for Andres Manuel López Obrador[31] from Paris. Their stable position as residents in France (hostland) and their political sympathy for MORENA's[32] ideology, crystallised their position as official

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[29] Pedro is another Mexican activist who has resided in Paris uninterruptedly since 1998.

[30] Any group at least five Mexican citizens living abroad can form a committee and register officially as MORENA sympathisers and become part of *MORENA exterior*, an official global network of Mexican migrants supporting the political party in their city of residence.

[31] Andres Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), candidate for MORENA, was elected president of Mexico in 2018. He was also candidate for the presidential election in 2006 and in 2012.

[32] MORENA was founded by AMLO as a non-profit organisation in 2011 and formally registered as a political party in 2014. MORENA is a left-wing party whose aim is to "change the political regime of

representatives of the political party in Paris. Both activists have witnessed the changes in the political group and its evolution over time as a result of the rotating members who move back to Mexico and the internal discrepancies in the group resulting from the transformation of MORENA from an NGO to a political party.

When MORENA became an official political party in 2014, the group of Mexican activists living in Paris called up for a meeting to discuss the implications of the change. The institutionalisation of the Movement transformed the internal dynamics of the group by triggering internal divisions among its members as pointed out by Enrique, a PhD student who started engaging in institutionalised politics in Mexico since 2006:

> "The discussion about the [transformation into] a political party irritated me because, for me, it was clear that we needed to be a party and that the agenda was already established. I perceived that discussion as pointless. The necessities in [Mexico] were very clear and we were discussing our ideological purity. You know? I thought that we were wasting time for urgent matters. I understand that I was feeling that because of my extensive institutionalised political experience and because I believe in the institutionalised framework." (Semi-structured interview, Mexico City, May 16th, 2018).

This passage reflects the relevance of considering the accumulated political experience and the individual processes of subjectivation of migrants engaging in homeland politics. Enrique started organising political events in Michoacán when he was 20 years old. Before moving to Paris in 2013, he participated in political campaigns and coordinated several political movements in Mexico. His experience as a political actor in Mexico and in France were completely different in terms of the size, the planning, and the perceived impact of the political mobilisation:

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corruption, anti-democracy, injustice and illegality that has taken Mexico to its current state of economic, political and social crisis." Official political manifesto available at:
https://lopezobrador.org.mx/programa-del-movimiento-regenarcion-nacional/

"I had political experience from Mexico, and I knew about the dynamics of political activism. But when I arrived [in France] it was very disturbing in terms of the planning and asking for permissions to do events. [In Mexico], we just meet in a *plaza* and that's it. [In France], we had to ask the police for permission. Also, another question was to prepare the material. The banners for instance. In Michoacán, everybody has a garage or even in the living-room of your house, you move the furniture and that's it, [you can paint a banner]. In Paris that is not the case. These basic things were disturbing. The rhythm and the logics of organisation are different (Semi-structured interview, Mexico City, May 16th, 2018).

When Enrique lived in Paris, he kept comparing his political experiences with the ones he had in Mexico. In France, he had to readapt to new norms and to a new political environment. Indeed, he had to understand and navigate the local norms of doing politics including asking for a permission[33] to the French authorities to organise a public event at least two months in advance or to find a cheap place to print.

In addition to the protest permit that Mexicans had to obtain organise public events in Paris, activists interested in voting from abroad in the 2018 elections had to navigate the Mexican administration to get their electoral ID before the 31st of March (INE 2018). In short, if Mexican migrants wanted to participate in their homeland elections and advocate from abroad, they had to comply with the norms established by both their host and home states.

As previously demonstrated by Lafleur and Calderón Chelius (2011), Mexican migrants living in the United States were critical of the external voting system. In numerous occasions, Mexican migrants living in Europe complaint about the complexity of registering to be able to vote from abroad:

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[33] According to the French government, the organisers of any public gathering in Paris must notify the *Préfecture de Police* of their event at least 2 months prior to the event. However, the French law establishes some exceptions in case of unforeseen events, or major national or international events. Further information available at:
https://www.demarches.interieur.gouv.fr/associations/organisation-manifestations-defiles-rassemblements-voie-publique

"I voted in 2006, the first time I voted for AMLO and I also voted from [Paris] in 2012 and now I will vote again. In 2006 and in 2012 it was easy. Now they have made the system even more complicated. For instance, in 2006 and in 2012 I could vote with my electoral ID from Mexico. I only had to make a registration and they sent me the ballot. Now, [for the 2018 elections], I had to ask for a new electoral ID, complete the registration […] and honestly it was a mess because they ask you to register online and to call them on the phone. The procedure is not clear. The process is complex and to be completely sure that I was properly registered and that they were going to send my ballots, I called the INE three or four times to be sure that they were going to send my documents" (Semi-structured interview, Paris, April 9th, 2018).

The procedure to obtain the electoral ID from abroad was not always easy to follow, Mexican migrants in Europe expressed the lack of trust in the institutions, thus they felt the need to follow up their procedure closely to ensure that they would obtain their ballot on time. Some of my interviewees expressed their anger and disappointment when they realised that they were not going to be able to vote from abroad as a result of the confusion around the administrative procedure and the "incompetence of the authorities". Armando was particularly annoyed since he was the first Mexican to go to the consulate in Paris to fill out the forms to obtain his electoral ID and yet he was not able to vote in the 2018 presidential elections. However, he did not limit his political engagement in homeland politics to his ballot since he co-organised several events to support AMLO's campaign which officially lasted from March 30th to June 27th 2018[34].

On the 1st of April, MORENA France organised a political meeting at the Trocadero to celebrate the start of AMLO's electoral presidential campaign. The event was a part of a "global action" coordinated by *MORENA exterior*, an advocacy network composed of committees organised by Mexican migrants residing abroad who support the political party mainly from

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[34] Electoral Calendar INE 2018 available at:
https://www.ine.mx/voto-y-elecciones/calendario-electoral/

the United States, Canada, Cuba, Argentina, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and France (MORENA Exterior 2019).

I arrived early to the meeting in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris. The political gathering lasted about two hours during which an actor pronounced a speech in French and in Spanish, Armando read a poem by Ricardo López Méndez entitled "Mexico I believe in you" and a musician sang a traditional Latin American song. The speech included a brief presentation of the current social and security problems in Mexico and invited the attendees to vote for MORENA in the elections. Moreover, the host presented the political efforts done by MORENA globally by introducing the international commissions and congratulating the efforts done by the Mexican diaspora to maintain and feed the political links with Mexico.

Indeed, the official start of the presidential campaign announced by the INE, triggered the mobilisation of the Mexican diaspora supporting AMLO. On the 8th of April 2018, I participated in an online meeting convened by Francisco, a coordinator of a MORENA Committee in a city in the United States. The aim of the online call was to discuss the different experiences that the MORENA committees around the world had on the start of the Mexican presidential campaign (the event of April 1st). As moderator, Francisco asked all participants to share experiences from their own political gatherings. He insisted that it was important to identify the good practices and the potential challenges to improve their political strategies for the rest of the presidential campaign. It was interesting to observe that Francisco invited all the MORENA sympathisers to organise their political activities on the days of the presidential debates in Mexico. Once again, I observed how the political norms in the homeland framed the transnational political activism.

The attendees summarised the different gatherings that they organised around the world. People were particularly impressed by the event held in Paris as expressed by one Mexican activist residing in Germany: "The most viral video was the one from Paris. At least in Europe, right? The video of the Eiffel Tower […] On Twitter, I read that the opposition in Mexico started saying that we used Photoshop. That it couldn't be [real]…". Indeed, the political symbolism of certain landmarks is often taken into consideration by Mexican migrants

engaging in homeland politics from France and Belgium. Migrants try to organise their events in symbolic venues in their hostlands to be more visible and get the attention of a broader public in case pictures of their mobilisation circulate on the media.

Francisco insisted on the fact that the following transnational political events had to be more inclusive and gather more people in each host-city:

> "It is very important to invite more people. Not only the members of the committees and people already involved in the movement, but normal people, neighbours, friends that live in the same city who are worried about Mexico […] The last thing that is important for any protests is to involve the attendees. Don't let them be only spectators. Nobody wants to go and clap to the organisers. Thus, every time someone gets there, ask them to do banners, to collect personal data of the other attendees, to take the microphone or to do a performance. Everybody needs to participate.". (Excerpt of the online meeting organised by the international committees of MORENA, April 8th, 2018).

Besides the political objective to diffuse MORENA's project, the fact that Francisco insisted on creating spaces of political participation based on an a horizontal organisation, the rotation of tasks and a strong participation of people portray the alternative ways of subjectivity previously highlighted in the literature of alter-globalisation gatherings (Pleyers 2010a, 2016). It is important to note that even in electoral politics Mexican migrants have privileged the creation of spaces of socialisation where everybody had the opportunity to engage in politics at their own rhythm, including actors from the hostland and diaspora political spheres. MORENA's sympathisers made an effort to go beyond advocating for votes for their candidate by organising events with a festive and artistic character that triggered the creativity of the attendees. By doing this, people like Armando who were not able to vote, had still the opportunity to engage in homeland politics through other channels that enhanced their individual processes of subjectivation.

The last event organised by MORENA France in relation to AMLO's presidential candidacy was held on the 2nd July 2018 after the official results confirmed him as the winner of the presidential elections in Mexico. The event was organised at the *Place de la République* in the centre of Paris and gathered at least 100 people. The event was divided in three parts: a political speech to celebrate AMLO's victory, a participative activity to pledge alliance to Mexico and finally, an improvised concert. The event was very emotional. Mexican migrants were able to celebrate together the unexpected outcome of the elections. People were incredulous since AMLO tried to become president in 2006 and in 2012 and they could not believe that they were witnessing what they described as a "historic moment".

During my fieldwork, I tried to follow as many groups and individuals engaging in Mexican political events as I could. As previously explained in the methodological chapter, I identified these political groups in public events and through electronic platforms. After observing the political activities in relation to the 2018 Mexican elections, I would like to clarify that I did not gather information from other official parties or candidates contending for the presidency besides Marichuy and AMLO. This was not done voluntarily, on the contrary, I also tried to identify the political practices done to support other political candidates and parties. Nevertheless, these activities were organised in a much more private and confidential way. For instance, I attended an official event held in a university in Paris where I saw a high-level Mexican politician who gave a seminar held under the Chatham House Rule[35]. The attendees in this event where either Mexican authorities or people who had a link with the university and could complete a registration form. In addition, the information shared in this event was not explicitly linked to the Mexican elections but to the government's performance of the then President Enrique Peña Nieto.

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[35] Chatham House Rule: "When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed". Available at: https://www.chathamhouse.org/chatham-house-rule

This sort of closed-door practices was echoed somewhat by one of the members of MORENA Francia while he was telling me about the importance of organising transnational political events:

> "Why don't we hear about the political support given from France to other candidates [besides AMLO]? To Meade [from the PRI[36]] or to Anaya [from the PAN[37]]? I have not heard anything about them from them yet." (Semi-structured interview, Paris, April 9th, 2018).

This reflects two important aspects of Mexican transnational electoral politics organised from France. On the one hand, an individual tendency to highlight the activities executed by the political group which one belongs to. On the other hand, an apparent lack mobilisation for all presidential candidates. This can be explained by the fact these activities were possibly organised in more private settings less accessible to the general public.

In this last section, I shed light on the capacity of Mexican migrants to engage in electoral politics from abroad. I presented empirical examples to show that Mexican migrants are able to navigate norms, pair with actors and exploit resources in multiple political spheres (primarily homeland, hostland, and diaspora) to achieve their political goals. In addition, I demonstrated the importance to consider the individual processes of subjectivation when studying the mobilisation of migrant populations from abroad. Indeed, through this process, it is possible to capture the will of migrants to emancipate themselves from institutions and their reflective efforts to create original political actions even in electoral periods. In the cases discussed in this section, it was possible to observe that although Mexican norms determine the key dates and influence the frequency of migrant's mobilisation, they do not regulate how the Mexican diaspora engages in formal politics from abroad. As long as Mexican migrants find the necessary allies and resources who help them navigate the local norms, they are able of developing their own emancipated forms of political activities.

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[36] PRI: Institutional Revolutionary Party (centre-right)

[37] PAN: National Action Party (right)

Conclusion

This chapter unpacked how Mexican migrants respond to socio-political events embedded in their homeland form Brussels and Paris. I focused on the interplay between three main political spheres (homeland, hostland and diaspora), which migrants navigate and exploit to engage in transnational politics.

In the first section, I argued that Mexican migrants engage in homeland politics through individual processes of subjectivation and once they pair with actors who they trust and who help them navigate socio-political norms and obtain resources to organise their transnational activities. I recognised friendship and trust as two core intra-diasporic values (norms) constituting the small groups of activism formed by Mexican migrants residing in Europe and through which they engage in homeland affairs. In addition, this section demonstrates that Mexican migrants tend to align their values and skills with their political activism.

The second part of this chapter presents two examples of my fieldwork when Mexican migrants had to respond to emergencies embedded in their homeland: the 2017 earthquake and the imprisonment of the bother of one my interviewees. In both cases, Mexican migrants in Brussels contacted their closest Mexican friends to design a short-term strategy that enabled them to collect funds and to advocate for the liberty of the young man respectively. For both emergencies, Mexican migrants were able to contact strategic actors and tap on the necessary resources in multiple political spheres to respond effectively to the cause they supported.

The third section of this chapter focused on electoral politics and on the transnational engagement on this specific matter considered predominantly by migrant scholars as formal and institutionalised politics. I argued that through individual processes of subjectivation, Mexican migrants have been able to get involved in the 2018 electoral period from Brussels and Paris. Even if their political activism was limited by Mexican and to some extent by French and Belgian norms, Mexican migrants were able to develop creative forms and spaces of political mobilisation including a *Posada*, a signature rally, and poetry reading.

In this chapter, I scrutinised how Mexican migrants respond to socio-political affairs embedded in their homeland. Nevertheless, their transnational political activism is not limited to issues concretely rooted in Mexico. In the next chapter I argue that Mexican migrants engage in homeland politics from their host societies by responding to European actors, by developing synergies with local partners and organisations, and through artistic representations. These strategies of transnational engagement are not an instant response to an event embedded in Mexico but rather the result of autonomous initiatives orchestrated by Mexican migrants interested in homeland affairs.

Chapter 5.

Engaging in Mexican politics from the hostland

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that Mexican migrants engage in homeland affairs after collaborating with specific actors who help them understand and adapt to norms in different contexts (mainly in their homeland and hostlands) and exploit resources to achieve their political goals. The last chapter unpacked how Mexican migrants engage in homeland affairs embedded in Mexico. Overall, these activities were either an extension of a political movement or an initiative originated in Mexico.

However, Mexican migrants living in Brussels and Paris have not restricted their transnational activism to respond to political causes embedded in their homeland. On the contrary, Mexican migrants engage in Mexican politics also by reacting to European actors and norms (in particular to European political authorities and to official political postures) embedded in Brussels or Paris. In addition, Mexican migrants are also able to find allies in the global political sphere who help them tap on resources and use norms to develop strategies of transnational political mobilisation.

In this chapter, I show that Mexican migrants can also engage in homeland affairs from their hostland by collaborating with actors embedded in the global and hostland political spheres. In addition, I explore how Mexican migrants tap on resources (mainly social capital and political know-how available) in the global, diaspora, and hostland political spheres in order to organise transnational political activities. Moreover, I demonstrate that actors and norms embedded in the global, hostland, and diaspora spheres of political activism have an impact on the strategies of transnational mobilisation of Mexican migrants residing in Brussels and Paris. Lastly, throughout the chapter I analyse empirical examples that I collected in my fieldwork to demonstrate the importance of placing the individual and its subjectivation processes at the forefront of migrants' transnational political mobilisation. Indeed, through their individual processes of subjectivation, Mexican migrants are able to reflect upon their

previous experiences and develop autonomous and horizontal initiatives of transnational mobilisation.

The chapter is divided in three main sections. The first section analyses how Mexican migrants adapt to European norms to engage in Mexican politics from abroad. The second one focuses on the study of the synergies that Mexican migrants have developed with local and global actors. Finally, the last part explores how Mexican migrants have used artistic representations as a strategy of transnational political activism.

5.1 Adapting to European norms to engage in Mexican politics from abroad

5.1.1. Hostland norms and actors framing transnational politics in Paris

French norms and actors impacted on the strategies of transnational political mobilisation developed by Mexican migrants from Paris. As mentioned in the previous chapter, public protests in Paris need to be authorised by the French police otherwise they have the right to terminate the event. In my fieldwork, I realised that Mexican migrants are aware of this norm and that they take into consideration when organising their events.

Permissions for public gatherings triggered different feelings and reflections among my interviewees. Some of the activists considered them just as a bureaucratic form to fill out, while other saw these regulations as an obstacle for their political mobilisation. Although democratic regimes are generally considered to be favourable for social movements, as argued by Silva (2015), some of my interviewees expressed that the bureaucratic burden of requesting permission to organise a demonstration from local authorities hampered their activism. On this, Roberto mentioned:

> "Honestly, I do not like to go to the police. It is like going to an airport and they look at you as if you were a potential criminal. […] I do not feel conformable when I need to ask for permission to do a public event in the street. […] You feel like a potential terrorist. It is not normal, it is annoying, but I do it for the cause. In the end they are kind. They are just very strict,

and you need to follow the rules" (Semi-structured interview, Paris, May 4th, 2018).

Roberto's annoyance to get the permission to organise public events could be explained by his perception of feeling unwelcome in a foreign country and his personal rejection of formal institutions.

When I asked my interviewees about their strategies of mobilisation, French norms were at the core of our discussion. For example, during our conversation, Julia, a European PhD candidate and a member of the *Collectif Ayotzinapa,* remembered her experience when organising a spontaneous protest to denounce the visit of the former president Enrique Peña Nieto to Paris in 2015 from a boat (*Picture 2*):

> "Once, we did something very fun. When Enrique Peña Nieto came, and [the authorities] made a Mexican Exhibition in *La Villete*. It was very touristy; they gave flowers in the entrance to every woman. It was for free and co-financed by both governments [France and Mexico] and we didn't like that at all. At the beginning we tried to go to the exit, but they kicked us out. We even had to run because they wanted to take the camera of one of us taking pictures. […] Then we had the idea of renting a boat. We rented it, we dressed up and we came back in front of the event to protest [from the boat]. [The organisers of the Mexican Pavilion] couldn't do anything. They were very frustrated, and they only increased the volume of the music. They played the music out loud […] When we went out of the boat, we got controlled [by the police]. They asked us for our identity cards. In general, they let you go if you didn't do anything really bad." (Semi-structured interview, Paris, March 6th, 2018).

This extract reveals the pertinence of considering the norms and actors from the homeland and global spheres when analysing the transnational engagement of migrants in homeland politics. The Mexican Pavilion, installed to commemorate the diplomatic relations between Mexico and France, triggered the mobilisation among the members of the Mexican community in Paris. In this case, Mexican migrants reacted to a global norm resulting from the diplomatic

relations sustained by both states. As explained by Julia, members of the Mexican diaspora, did not appreciate the rapprochement between both nation-states. On the one hand, Mexican activists were particularly critical of the fact that the Mexican Pavilion presented only an attractive and touristic image of their homeland, disregarding the security and political issues. On the other hand, the activists condemned the fact that the French government co-financed the project and thus that they supported the Mexican state. As a result of their discontent, Julia and her group of Mexican friends, decided to protest spontaneously from the water with some banners and with their faces covered with masks to protect their identity. Both the Mexican and French authorities reprehended this action. The first by trying to cover it and the second one by asking for the personal details of the activists.

Besides the reaction of Mexican activists to the official postures of both Mexican and French authorities, Julia mentioned that once the members of the *Collectif* concluded their political happening, the French police approached them to get their personal details. This type of vigilant attitude displayed by French actors affects how Mexican migrants engage in transnational politics by enhancing their individual processes of subjectivation. In short, after this type of experiences, Mexican activists reflect upon how to refine their strategies of mobilisation by being more cautious about the norms and potential repressions. In addition, repressive attitudes from the State reinforce activists' rejection to institutions.

As expressed by Julia later in our conversation, in some cases, the *Collectif Ayotzinapa* has been particularly careful in considering the French norms and legislation when deciding their strategies of political mobilisation:

> "I am already checked [by the French police]. Once, we tried to do a political action, but I went alone because I was the only European citizen and Mexican citizens couldn't approach the venue where the event took place. [The security guards] looked and me, they recognised me and asked me to leave the venue immediately. It was a meeting at the UNESCO[38]. It was a

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[38] The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) agency is based in Paris.

very private meeting and we got the information that Peña Nieto was going to be there with some ambassadors. The UNESCO has a library, which is possible to access quite easily. I accessed it but there was an incredible body of security. I was with a French colleague and we pretended to be chatting, but the security agents took us pictures and then they approached me to ask me to leave." (Semi-structured interview, Paris, March 6th, 2018).

Picture 2: Protest in a boat organised by a small group of activists sensitive to the social political situation in Mexico, July 22nd, 2015, Paris.

This extract highlights the impact of both the global and hostland norms in the strategies of mobilisation of Mexican migrants. Even if their political act was diffused, Mexican migrants were aware that they could not enter the UNESCO building with their own identity cards (Mexican passports or residence cards). As a result, they discussed about an alternative to ask a European citizen to access the UNESCO library. This strategy shows that Mexican migrants try to find allies and tap on the available resources to decide how they mobilise politically.

Additionally, this quote reflects the importance of considering the global political sphere and its political symbolism when analysing transnational political mobilisation orchestrated by migrant populations. Mexican migrants were informed (probably by another ally in the hostland) that an important event between global authorities was going to take place at the UNESCO, including the former president Enrique Peña Nieto. After considering the relevance of the event in relation to global politics and the media, Mexican migrants decided to take advantage of this opportunity and react by sending one activist of their group.

Mexican migrants are aware that they do not have the same political rights as European citizens to protest. According to Martiniello (2006) migrant's political integration in Europe contains four dimensions. The first dimension refers to the rights granted to migrants by the host society (Martiniello 2006: 84). The second dimension encompasses the identification that migrant populations have with their host societies. The third dimension includes the adoption of democratic norms and values by migrant communities. Finally, the fourth dimension involves the political participation of migrants in either conventional or non-conventional forms of politics (Martiniello: 2006). This typology sheds light on the stratification of political rights between European and non-European migrants. Residents of the European Union do not all have access to the same political rights as they are linked not only to residence status but also to citizenship.

For the case of Mexican migrants mobilising from Brussels and Paris in homeland politics, I observed that they considered their rights and their position as foreigners before engaging in demonstrations or any type political event. In general, they were cautious to follow the French regulations and cover their identity for security reasons, nonetheless sometimes they made some exceptions as expressed by Viviana.

Viviana is a historian who recently concluded her PhD and worked as translator when I met her. Contrary to other Mexicans that she has met in Paris, she did not have any link to Europe before 2007, when she decided to move to France to work as a language teacher. Viviana tries to be very careful when organising events, for instance she uses a pseudonym in public events and encrypted emails to communicate with the other members of the Mexican diaspora that

she collaborates with. However, in some cases, she has responded after being emotionally triggered by anger, for instance during the official visit of the former Enrique Peña Nieto in 2015:

> "When you demonstrate, you put yourself in danger. When Peña Nieto came [to Paris], we tried to do a demonstration, but it did not work and 12 of us ended up detained. Maybe it is silly but instead of doing my thesis that morning I was at the police for five hours. I don't know what else could have happened […] maybe they could have expelled me from the country. In the end they didn't do anything else, we were only retained like idiots for five hours. But yes, my biggest fear at that moment was 'I will get expelled' […] I know that in Mexico it is more dangerous [to demonstrate] but there is always that rage that encourages me to do things, so sometimes I do not really care [about my security]. You must be careful, but I am not. When Enrique Peña Nieto came, I knew that we were going to be caught but I had to do it and that's it. (Semi-structured interview, Paris, March 30th, 2018).

The official visit of the former Mexican president outraged the Mexican diaspora not only because they disapproved his government but in particular because of the warm reception given by the then French President, François Hollande. During his official visit, Peña Nieto was the Guest of Honour at the military parade of the French National Holiday on the 14th of July and received the Medal of the Sorbonne University. When the military parade was taking place, Viviana and some of her Mexican colleagues tried to protest with banners and gloves with red paint to symbolise the violence in Mexico. Despite of their efforts to be discreet and blend in pairs with the crowd on the *Champs-Élysées*, the French police recognised them and put them in detention for five hours.

This example reveals important dynamics of transnational political mobilisation. Indeed, Mexican migrants designed a strategy to protest against an official event organised by French political authorities but in connection with Mexican politics. In other words, Mexican migrants tried to demonstrate against an action orchestrated by actors embedded in their hostland and whose political posture was favourable to the Mexican government.

As soon as the official visit was confirmed, the Mexican community tried to persuade the French authorities and the public opinion to rescind their invitation. Julia, talked to me about the group's reaction to the official visit of Peña Nieto in France:

> "We did a series of events during the visit of Peña Nieto in 2015. When he was Hollande's guest of honour for the 14th of July, Bastille Day. The Mexican army participated in the parade in the *Champs Élysées* and that outraged us. Months in advance, we wrote a letter to Hollande asking him to reconsider the invitation. We knew that he was not going to do it, but it was a symbolic act. It was a very long letter. It narrated all what had happened [in Mexico] regarding the violations and the things we have already talked about [insecurity and human rights violations]. We circulated the letter in an online platform called Change.Org[39]. We collected many signatures and some of them of important people. From Mexico, France and other places in Europe. Then, we went to the *Élysée*[40] to leave it and nothing happened afterwards. The letter circulated a lot. During those months we also sent press releases and summaries to the French media about Enrique Peña Nieto [and his government]. The press coverage was very critical. If you look for the articles published then, you will see how critical they were regarding human rights. Almost all the French media covered it in that way. We were interviewed everywhere and that was really cool." (Semi-structured interview, Paris, March 6th, 2018).

The letter addressed to François Hollande entitled "Opposition to the presence of the Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto at the commemorations of the 14th of July"[41] signed by more than 70 associations, 90 important personalities (including journalists, political figures, human rights defenders, professors and analysts) and more than 5,500 people is a clear example of how the Mexican community responded to an event embedded in their hostland but intrinsically linked to their homeland politics.

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[39] Change.org is a petition website.

[40] The Élysée Palace is the official residence of the French President.

[41] The letter is available here: https://big.assets.huffingtonpost.com/lettrecommentaires.pdf

In this example, members of the Mexican community in France and some of their closest European friends, managed to reach authorities, politicians, international organisations, diasporic groups, and human rights advocacy groups in France, Mexico, and Europe. They navigated the hostland, homeland, diaspora, and global spheres of political activism to express their repudiation to an event embedded in Paris and held by the French government. Julia mentioned that the letter did not prevent the official visit to happen, however she expressed a sense of satisfaction since her activism had an impact on the French media.

This sense of self-satisfaction was further developed by Martin when we met in a local café in the north of Paris:

> "We did a letter addressed to Hollande. That letter was signed also by people from Amnesty International and ACAT[42]. The letter was published in the newspapers and it had a lot of advertising. And then when I read the [French] media, I realised that the editorial line was the one that we set. That is, a very critical editorial line regarding Enrique Peña Nieto's visit and the military. The press coverage during his visit [in France] was very critical, and we like to believe that it is in part the result of our campaign." (Semi-structured interview, Paris, March 15th, 2018).

Both Julia and Martin have the perception that their advocacy efforts had an impact on the editorial line in charge of reporting Peña Nieto's visit in France. In addition to the advocacy networks mobilised by the *Collectif Ayotzinapa*, they managed to influence the local media by sending them reports and by participating in interviews.

Lastly, another outcome of Peña Nieto's visit was the negotiation with the French government to buy 50 Airbus helicopters for the Mexican military (Barraza 2015). This diplomatic and military rapprochement between both States enhanced the political mobilisation of the Mexican community in Paris, who used this negotiation as an argument to denounce the

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[42] Christian action for the abolition of torture

collaboration between both governments in the military sector in other political events organised in the French capital.

As demonstrated in the multiple examples analysed in this section, norms, and actors from the hostland and global political spheres have an impact on how migrant populations engage in homeland politics. In general, migrants follow the regulations and norms established by their hostland to organise public events. Nevertheless, there are exceptions when they decide to protest spontaneously and without any formal approval of local authorities. For instance, Mexican migrants residing in Paris decided to organise mobilisations without following the protocol established by the French police whenever they believed that they would not get the official approval. Nevertheless, when Mexican migrants considered that the French police would not authorise their mobilisation, they tapped on their local alliances and resources to adapt to the local norms and find new strategies to still attempt to organise a political action. In sum, the alliances developed by Mexican migrants with local actors are key to have access to new resources and strategies of political mobilisation. In these cases, local, diasporic, and global actors give recommendations and help migrants to achieve their political goals.

Moreover, migrants might organise undeclared demonstrations whenever they condemn the political position of their hostland government in relation to politics in their country of origin. Indeed, in the case of the Mexican migrants in France, who disagreed with the posture of François Hollande's government in relation to Mexican politics, we observed that Mexican activists reacted by circumventing certain local regulations to achieve their political purposes. In addition, Mexican migrants designed strategies of mobilisation involving actors in the hostland, diaspora, and global political spheres to diffuse their messages to a larger audience.

In this section I unpacked how Mexican migrants react to political acts embedded in their hostland, but which are intrinsically related to the politics of their homeland. Mexican migrants are aware that their transnational political mobilisation is to a certain extent limited and influenced by the norms and actors embedded in their hostland. Nonetheless, they find ways to use and adapt those norms for their political purposes. In the next section, I explore how

Mexican migrants define their strategies of mobilisation to take advantage of the norms and political symbolism of the hostland and global political spheres.

5.1.2. Tapping on hostland and global resources to advocate from France and Belgium

In my fieldwork, I met Mexican migrants who were conscious about the potential of refining their strategies of transnational mobilisation by taking into consideration the political norms and resources available in their hostlands. In this section, I present empirical cases from my fieldwork to demonstrate how Mexican migrants adapt to and take advantage of norms and resources embedded in their hostlands to engage in homeland politics from Europe.

In the process of reflecting upon the most effective ways to engage in transnational politics, some of my interviewees assessed the resources and political opportunities available in their hostland to diffuse their political message and advocate for their political causes at the French, Belgian, Mexican, European, and global political spaces.

During my research, I met two Mexican women who have founded their own NGOs in Europe to engage in homeland politics and affairs. Antonia has lived in Paris for more than ten years and in all those years she has never lost her interest in homeland affairs and in particular in helping disadvantaged communities in Mexico. Her will to support women in Mexico inspired her to found an organisation in Paris to help indigenous women back in her homeland:

> "In reality, *Latir por México*'s aim is to fight against extreme poverty, for human rights, and for the empowerment of deprived women in Mexico. That is what we try to do at the moment with a group of Mazahua women in the State of Mexico. They are embroiderers and seamstresses. We are not going to give them money but we are planning to send them the material for them to be able to form their own group to be autonomous and be able to teach to their own children how to embroider [...] *Latir por México* wants to provide them with the material to enable them to learn and access to their own employment and resources in the medium and long term." (Semi structured interview, Paris, April 27th, 2018).

Antonia decided to register her NGO in France for practical reasons since through this formality she had access to more legitimacy and a functional organisational structure that simplified the transnational connections with her homeland:

> "If I ever leave [France], I would like the NGO to keep existing and functioning. […] I have all my [NGO] papers in order. It was easy, we had to write the statutes but most of them are predefined. There is a sort of model where you only have to specify few things. Everything is online in the *Journal Officiel de la Federation des Associations en France*[43]. We have a number, and everything is in order. Thanks to this, everything is transparent, and I can send money to Mexico directly through an official account in a French Bank that doesn't belong to a person but to a recognised association." (Semi-structured interview, Paris, April 27th, 2018).

Once Antonia analysed the utility of registering a formal NGO, she took the decision to register her organisation after complying with the requirements and formalities established by the French authorities. This decision had important impacts on Antonia's transnational engagement in homeland affairs.

First, by complying with the French norms, Antonia's organisation became legally recognised by the French authorities. Being recognised as a formal organisation is useful when organising public actions in France since according to my interviewees, formal organisations recognised by European authorities have an easier access to permissions and venues to organise public events than informal groups or individuals without any legal recognition. In sum, having an official registration as an organisation expanded the political opportunities, access to resources, and legitimacy of Antonia's NGO in France.

In addition, by registering as a formal organisation, Antonia secured the longevity of her organisation which according to her could keep existing event if she left France. Finally,

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[43] Le Journal Officiel des Associations et Fondations d'Entreprise is published by the French Directorate of Legal and Administrative Information to inform the public of the creation and status of organisations in France. More information available at:
https://www.journal-officiel.gouv.fr/association/

through the official registration of her NGO she gained more trust among her donors. By becoming a formal organisation, Antonia's legitimacy as a political actor increased among members of the Mexican diaspora and of the French society who participated in her events.

Before forming an NGO, Antonia analysed her previous political experiences as an informal group. With the French recognition and by complying with the French norms, she realised that she could expand her access to resources and increase her legitimacy and trust among her donors in France and her beneficiaries in Mexico. Even if the tendency among Mexican activists engaging in homeland politics is to emancipate from institutions, Antonia decided that she could have more benefits and visibility registering as a formal institution in France.

Tatiana is another Mexican activist who lives near Brussels and who decided to found an NGO to give visibility and support the initiatives sustained by Latin American women in Belgium and to engage in development projects in Mexico. When Tatiana lived in Mexico, she travelled across the country to document the textile techniques of indigenous communities. As part of her work, she visited several Mexican states to make a diagnosis of the artisan techniques used by indigenous women to produce embroideries. In these trips, Tatiana gained technical knowledge and became conscious about the difficulties that women have in deprived communities in Mexico:

> "Everything was part of my diagnosis. I needed to find venues were women could work. The projects were not only related to the textile industry but also to initiatives of development. These projects were key for women's lives. They were lacking very simple thing in these communities, for instance having access to a stove. Therefore, in the projects we needed to first guarantee access to a gas stove to be able to work on the textiles. […] Women are polyvalent, they are not only embroidering and sewing, they are also mothers and farmers. For them, embroidering represents a financial resource. They embroider and when they need money, they sell the tablecloth." (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, January 25th, 2018).

Once she moved to Belgium, Tatiana realised that migrants face administrative and integration challenges in their host societies. Her personal experience adapting to a foreign country and the different stories of discrimination against migrants that she has heard, inspired her to found an NGO to provide legal advice and defend the rights of migrant women in Belgium. Through this NGO, Tatiana has been able to organise activities to give visibility to the cultural, academic and scientific initiatives developed by the Latin-American women, to provide legal assistance to migrant women in Belgium, and to keep supporting development programmes in back in her homeland through an institutionalised channel:

> "We have an organisation. We started stating some issues with a voice that is legally recognised. I can say whatever I want but being heard it is another thing. When there is a legal structure recognised by a state it is different. As an organisation, I must follow the rules set by legal frameworks. [...] The only way of participating [in political and social activities] is through the rules and legality that the [authorities] recognise." (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, January 25th, 2018).

Tatiana believes that through a recognised structure, she has more rights and capacities to advocate for Latin-American women in Belgium and to keep engaging in development initiatives in Mexico. In Belgium, she has also identified her local partners and organisations with whom she shares knowledge and strategies of mobilisation. Through these partnerships, Tatiana has been able to learn more about development programmes implemented in other countries such as Senegal and Brazil, which have inspired her to design her own projects to support Mexican communities in the states of Veracruz, Puebla, and Hidalgo.

Similarly, to the case of Antonia in Paris, Tatiana believed that she could benefit from establishing a formal organisation recognised by Belgian authorities to engage in transnational projects. She learnt to manipulate the Belgian local norms to achieve a legal recognition that enabled her to have access to more resources (social capital, venues, etc.) to develop her engagement in homeland affairs. Though her organisation, Tatiana has been able to reach new

allies (agencies, actors, other migrants, etc.) embedded in her hostland to share experiences and good practices to support development and equality initiatives globally.

Both Antonia and Tatiana decided to engage in homeland affairs through a formal organisation, fully recognised by the French and Belgian authorities respectively (embedded in the homeland sphere). Their decisions highlight their will to explore and use the norms in their hostland to reach new actors, gain more legitimacy, and portray themselves as trustworthy actors engaging in Mexican affairs from abroad. The endorsement of French and Belgian actors amplified their personal networks and image in both their host and host countries and among the members of the Mexican diaspora and French and Belgian societies.

Mexican activists looked for the endorsement of French and Belgian authorities to show that European governments were interested in Mexican politics, to attract a larger audience, and to gain more legitimacy and visibility. Another relevant example that I observed in my fieldwork showing this, was during the celebration of Andres Manuel López Obrador's victory in the Mexican presidential elections organised in Paris. On the 2nd of July 2018, members of MORENA invited a member of the French National Assembly for the left-wing party *La France Insoumise* to pronounce a speech to congratulate AMLO's supporters:

> "Dear friends, dear colleagues. Today we live joyful moment at the *Place de la République* because a leftist president was elected. And we recognise this president as one of ours, a leader of the citizen's revolution. Yes, today is a joyful day because this candidacy will fight against inequality and corruption also from a patriotic stand against the American imperialism" (Excerpt of the speech pronounced by a Member of the Parliament from the *La France Insoumise*, Paris, July 2nd, 2018).

The fact that MORENA Francia invited a political figure from *La France Insoumise* illustrates the collaboration between migrants and local authorities (actors) who share a similar political ideology (norm). As previously highlighted in the literature, ideological frameworks have an impact on the diffusion and duration of social movements (Adamson 2012; Adamson and Koinova 2013; Tarrow 1998). In this case, the French deputy expressed his support for

AMLO, acting as an ally for the Mexicans celebrating the victory of the new elected president. After his intervention, Mexicans who attended the event, felt pride and joy to observe that a French politician expressed his support to the new president of their homeland.

Norma, another Mexican migrant that I met in Belgium was also conscious about the impact of obtaining the endorsement of European authorities. By focusing on the global sphere of political activism, Norma decided to engage in homeland politics through specific meetings with European parliamentarians.

Norma prefers to directly contact European parliamentarians to expose the problems of insecurity in Mexico:

> "I am one of those people who likes to go with politicians. I prefer to talk to politicians. I have had meetings with parliamentarians, and I have given them letters and information that they did not have. I lobby, I prefer that instead of going to protest in front of the [Mexican] embassy. […] I prefer to pick a subject, I do my own research, I write a letter and then I do a meeting with a politician to give it to him or her. That strikes me the most, and that is what I do. […] We present the information to parliamentarians and there have been concrete results. It is a work that takes a lot of patience and it is not visible. You cannot publish that on Facebook for instance, because they ask you to be discreet and you cannot openly say 'I have been with this parliamentarian'. No, you cannot do that. And that is also a disadvantage because other co-nationals think that I am not doing anything and that is not the case. It is another type of job, another strategy" (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, December 2nd, 2017).

Norma engages in homeland politics through specific meetings with European parliamentarians. According to her, these lobbying meetings require a lot of preparation since she needs to draft documents, get informed about what is happening in Mexico to be able to expose all the relevant information in a critical and assertive way to the members of the European Parliament. She believes that this strategy of political mobilisation is not for everybody since it requires a lot of patience and persistence, especially because the results are

not immediate, and they have not the same visibility and diffusion as other public activities may have. This particular strategy demonstrates that Mexican activists do not act homogenously, Norma adapted her personal interests and political values to design her own strategy of transnational political mobilisation.

Norma is aware of the relevance of obtaining the endorsement and support of European parliamentarians. By creating alliances with these actors embedded in the global sphere, she has managed to advocate for specific causes and raise awareness about the insecurity problems in Mexico among European policymakers. As discussed for the other cases in this section, Mexican migrants look for the endorsement and interest of European authorities (including French, Belgian and EU actors) to diffuse their political messages to larger audiences, engage with new political actors and enhance the potential results of their mobilisation.

In the following section, I analyse how Mexican migrants create synergies with actors in their hostland and in the global political spheres. Through these alliances, Mexican migrants have been able to have access to more resources and expand their transnational advocacy networks.

5.2 Developing synergies with local, diasporic, and global actors

5.2.1. Partnering with local actors in France and Belgium to engage in homeland politics

One of the main strategies implemented by Mexican activists engaging in Mexican politics from France is developing partnerships with local actors and supporting their political causes. This strategy is adopted by Mexican migrants for three main reasons. First, by partnering with local partners, Mexican migrants have access to more resources and allies in their hostland. Second, by engaging in local politics, Mexican activists, create new spaces of reflection and political engagement, where they exchange new political ideas and norms to enhance their individual processes of subjectivation. Third, by creating synergies with French political actors, Mexican migrants were able to diffuse their political demands in new spaces and with local actors with similar political values.

The contact with the local actors in France has been very important for the visibility of the movement for justice in Mexico. Specifically, the *Collectif Ayotzinapa* has worked with French organisations and local actors with whom they have built a strong relationship of support. Through these networks, the *Collectif* has had more visibility and access to more resources and support for their own political movements.

As explained by Martin a new strategy undertaken by the members of his group is to attend local protests to keep the Ayotzinapa movement alive and to have more visibility:

> "What we currently do is to attend demonstrations against police violence in France and we bring our Ayotzinapa banner. We take pictures and post them in the social media. We also distribute pamphlets to the attendees, and we do not need to ask for any permissions in those cases. That [strategy] was particularly useful during the *Nuit Debout* movement[44], when the *Place de la République* was occupied for three months, there we didn't need to ask for any permission. We went there once, and we talked during an assembly. There were a lot of people, and honestly people reacted very positively. Then, for a second occasion we went to the *Nuit Debout* during an International Day, where many foreign groups went to expose their struggles. We went and we made the audience shout "*Zapata Vive, la lucha sigue!*"[45] and all of this is recorded. That was very beautiful, and the reaction of the people was incredible. Moreover, we went to those events with our banners and people stopped by to talk with us. People were interested and I think this was one of the most efficient events since we established contact with a public that does not attend regularly our own events" (Semi-structured interview, Paris, March 15th, 2017).

The partnerships made between members of the *Collectif* and local activists hence their exposure in French political events is a strategy that has helped the Ayotzinapa movement to be more visible in France. In addition, through these synergies, the *Collectif* has managed to

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[44] *Nuit debout* is a social movement that began in France on March 31st, 2016 to protest against labour reforms.

[45] This slogan, very popular in Mexico can be translated as "Zapata lives, the struggle continues".

build up a reputation in their hostland, in their homeland, and among members of the Mexican diaspora scattered around the world.

The reputation of the *Collectif* has made them a point of reference regarding Mexican politics in France. An example that illustrates this was the visit of John Gibler, an American journalist who writes about the insecurity and social movements in Mexico, on the 29th of April 2017. Gibler travelled to Europe from Mexico to present the French translation of his book "*Rendez-les-nous vivants! – Histoire orale des attaques contre les étudiants d'Ayotzinapa*"[46] translated by Anna Touati and published by Editions CMDE. The book tour in several French speaking cities was co-organised by the Mexican diaspora and by the French publishing company. The event in Paris summoned members of the *Collectif Ayotzinapa*, a PhD student working on the Mexican Drug War, and people interested in state violence.

The conference started with a short academic presentation on state violence and war on drugs in Mexico and Colombia. Then, a member of the *Collectif* talked about her experience in Veracruz, where she worked in a brigade formed by the Mexican civil society whose aim was to find the corpses of family members who disappeared as a result of the wave of violence in Mexico. Lastly, John Gibler introduced the argument of his book and talked about the institutionalised regime of disappearances in Latin America. Through their personal stories, the three speakers managed to present a holistic perspective of the insecurity crisis in Mexico, where students, migrants and women disappear and where criminals are not persecuted as a result of the lack of rule of law in the country. Gibler was particularly critical denouncing the perpetrators of violence in Mexico who according to the author "act as businessmen of death and terror and who have institutionalised models of disappearing people". In addition, the author blamed the Mexican political structures and institutions from being unable to provide trustworthy investigations and prosecutions on the numerous cases of murders and disappearances in the country. The event also included the screening of two short videos that illustrated the arguments developed by the speakers. The event ended in a more optimistic

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[46] Bring them back to us alive! – Oral history of the attacks against the students of Ayotzinapa.

tone with a dinner where attendees ate couscous and had the chance to socialise and exchange ideas.

The book presentation highlights the relevance of the synergies built and sustained between French actors, members of the Mexican diaspora and key activists living in Mexico. John Gibler was invited by a French publishing house to participate in 13 conferences in France and Belgium. In Paris, the *Collectif Ayotzinapa* participated in the organisation of the event by hosting the speakers in an alternative space used by local organisations who pay an annual fee to become member of a larger network of French associations. Indeed, during her interview, Julia explained to me that having access to this collective venue has been possible through the partnership that the *Collectif Ayotzinapa* has developed with local political actors:

> "We have a lot of contacts in the militant world in Paris. The alliance [with the people from the collective venue] was established when we constituted the *Collectif*. When we organised the *Eurocaravana*[47], we established a link with the activists denouncing police violence in Paris. […] We kept working with those groups, we went to their events to support them and eventually we became friends. That opened a lot of doors to this 'underground world' for us. That type of place enables us to organise events without paying because it is a communal venue, little by little we interested ourselves in this world. It is like a big family. Actually, we were so involved in their cause through the past years that I don't think that there is any activist denouncing the police violence in Paris who is not aware of the case of Ayotzinapa. We are always at their events and we also take the floor. They already identify us: 'Ah! the Mexicans'. That worked for us. I think that it was a very strong strategy: to get to know and establish alliances with local actors and local fights [in Paris]." (Semi-structured interview, Paris, March 6th, 2018).

According to Julia, the synergy established between the members of the *Collectif Ayotzinapa* and political local actors in Paris is important for the organisation and diffusion of the activities

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[47] The *Eurocaravana* was an event organised by multiple groups of Mexican activists in Europe who denounced the case of the 43 students of Ayotzinapa in 2015.

related the Ayotzinapa movement in France. Julia explained to me that through the alliances with local actors in the hostland, members of the Mexican diaspora have been able to know more about the strategies of mobilisation of Parisian political actors and as a result, the members of the *Collectif* have had access to more resources, venues, and know-how to diffuse their political messages.

Besides the utility of establishing local partnerships, the communal venue where the book presentation took place in Paris is usually frequented by people interested in local initiatives and alternative political and cultural events. This specific venue is a meeting point for activists and local political stakeholders where they share their experiences and enhance their processes of subjectivation as social and political actors.

The transnationalisation of Mexican politics in Europe and the processes of collective subjectivation (De Botton 2017) of activists are reinforced by the presence of personalities who have witnessed violence in the field and who have the legitimacy and power to share their personal stories and create free spaces for dialogue.

According to Touraine (2007), the creation of a subject (subjectivation process) is not only a notion constructed through a general intellectual initiative, but it must be observable. During my fieldwork, I repeatedly observed how testimonies such as John Gibler's moved and triggered the interest, awareness, and processes of reflection among the attendees. Undoubtedly, the stories of horror and violence shared by special guests shocked both the Mexican and European audience, who could not believe the atrocities committed on Mexican soil and who responded with tears, sobs, and gasps. Thereafter, attendees reacted with questions to the panellists which crystallised their concerns and processes of self-reflection. In some events, the questions and answers sessions were followed by informal conversations in which attendees approached personalities and testimonials directly. For instance, on the 5th of May 2017, after a short-film screening and a talk by John Gibler in Brussels at the *Cinema Nova*, Ana, Daniel, and I had the chance to talk to the author for about an hour over a drink.

During our informal chat, Ana expressed her admiration to the journalist, who narrated his experience in the field during his investigation in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero. Private talks enable people to exchange personal information and to feel free to share their points of view and opinions. These private moments have an impact at the personal level since they enhance the establishment of personal and honest relationships. In addition, it is important to note these spaces of authentic discussion and networking might establish personal relations with the potential of being mobilised in future transnational political activities.

Gibler's book tour organised by its French publishing house and co-organised by the Mexican diaspora in Paris and Brussels reveals the importance of personal connections and the ability of migrants to use different norms embedded in multiple political spheres. Through the development of local alliances, Mexican activists have been able to expand their visibility and build up a reputation in their hostlands. Indeed, some groups (and even individuals) have become the point of reference regarding Mexican politics in Europe and as a result, they are usually contacted by European actors include them in the organisation of any political event concerning Mexican politics.

In sum, through the synergies created between Mexican migrants and European actors, Mexican activists have managed to be included and participate in several initiatives embedded in their hostland but in relation to their homeland. It is important to mention that depending on the nature of the event, Mexican political activists adapt the form and intensity of their political engagement. Sometimes they lead the whole organisation of the events (initiative, logistics, and diffusion), but they might also act as assistants and contact nodes between the guests visiting from Mexico and local stakeholders. In other words, Mexican political activists in Europe may act as bridges between the homeland and the hostland since they have accumulated the necessary know-how to organise events and summon people in the places where they reside and they are capable of adjusting the intensity and form of their political participation.

The alliances developed with French and Belgian actors have expanded the political scope of Mexican migrants and their ability to engage in Mexican politics in events embedded in their

respective hostland. Although synergies with local actors have triggered and enabled the transnational political activism of Mexican activists, Mexican migrants living in France and Belgium have also developed important connections with members of the Latin-American diaspora. In the next section, I focus on the how Mexican migrants have established and exploited the alliances with actors embedded in the diaspora political sphere to engage in homeland politics.

5.2.2. Engaging with actors embedded in the diasporic political sphere

An event I attended early on during my fieldwork was a demonstration organised by different groups of activists against the former president Enrique Peña Nieto on the *Place des Martyrs,* in the centre of Paris on the 14th of July in 2015. On that day, I realised that Mexican migrants in Paris had Latin-American allies (diaspora sphere) that lent them material (e.g. speakers) for their demonstrations, gave them advice on how to get the attention of French people and sometimes they even helped them finding venues and getting the permission to demonstrate publicly. After the demonstration, I attended a debate organised by MORENA France in the *Centre International de Culture Populaire*[48] (CICP) a community centre that Mexican activists had access to through a Latin-American friend who lent them the room with a projector, chairs, and the necessary material for their event.

The personal relations between Mexican activists and members of the Latin-American diaspora enable them to have access to more resources, social capital, and, strategies to diffuse their political messages. The personal relations between Mexican migrants and members of the Latin-American diaspora, which became in most cases essential for the conception and deployment of transnational strategies of political organisation, were the result of friendships that originated in both public and private settings. These friendships were facilitated by shared cultural codes and norms common among Mexican and other Latin American migrants which transcend their nationality.

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[48] International Centre of Popular Culture.

For instance, when I asked Armando how he met his Latin-American friends who support him regularly in the organisation of Mexican political events, he explained that he met them during a public event organised by the French Left Party:

> "If I remember correctly, Pedro and I were the first Mexicans to participate in political events organised by Latin-Americans who were part of the French Left Party. At that time, the Left Party was member of a larger group that included other left-wing parties who called themselves *"Front de Gauche"*. Inside of that group, there was a Latin-American core named *"Front de Gauche Latino"* with a majority of Argentinian and Chilean activists." (Semi-structured interview, Paris, March 10th, 2018).

Before even starting organising Mexican events and engaging in homeland politics, Armando attended French political events aligned with his personal beliefs and values. In his case, these public events acted as networking hubs where he bonded with Latin-American people with the same ideals and political convictions and with whom he developed a long-lasting friendship. Armando's case was not isolated. Marco, an activist from MORENA France met Pedro in a public meeting in his neighbourhood:

> "I had the opportunity to demonstrate here in France mostly because I met Pedro and he was already involved in MORENA. I was living the north of Paris and there I met Pedro, because he was a neighbour. Well… neighbour, we lived in the same area. We met in different events in the area [organised by neighbours] and he talked to me about MORENA and how he was involved in politics and then I started participating too". (Semi-structured interview, Paris, April 9th,2018).

In addition to their common political values, similar cultural norms, and feelings of group identity brought together members of the Latin-American diaspora and Mexican activists. Indeed, their similar cultural baggage and norms enhanced their friendship, solidarity and support to denounce cases of violence committed to members of the Latin-American community in Europe.

One of the most moving stories that I heard in my fieldwork was the story of a Mexican woman who was murdered as a result of domestic violence in the province of Antwerp in Belgium. As a result of this aggression, the Mexican and Latin-American community mobilised in order to raise awareness about this problem in Belgium and to support the family of the victim[49].

The case moved the Mexican and Latin-American community in Belgium. The Mexican Embassy confirmed that the young woman lost her life on the 9th of January after a domestic confrontation. The Mexican authorities also explained that they were in contact with the Belgian local authorities and with the family of the victim in Mexico. In addition, they clarified that the local judicial authorities and police forces were in charge on the investigation.

Despite the very cold weather, several Latin-American activists and organisations called for a demonstration to protest in Antwerp against domestic violence on the 21st of February 2018. They used Facebook to invite the Latin-American community to show solidarity for the women that have been victims of domestic violence in Belgium. The event started around 18:00 and lasted about two hours, during which women pronounced speeches of support, shared poetry with messages of resilience and sang emotive lyrics to honour the Latin-American woman who have lost their lives abroad.

In the welcome speech, one of the main organisers introduced the purpose of the political gathering:

> "We are all united here because we all feel trapped in a mixture of feelings
> such as fear, impotence, indignation, and profound grief and sadness. We
> are here together because we are here for the same cause. We are here to say
> enough. To stop psychological abuse, to stop harming children, to stop
> abuse, to stop feminicide. In Belgium, there are almost three deaths per week

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[49] I will restrict my analysis to the information available online and to the public events that I attended on the 21st of February and on the 10th of March 2018. I decided to do so for three main reasons: to protect the security and identity of the people involved in the mobilisation of this case; to avoid any type of controversy; and to respect the identity of the victim and her family.

caused by domestic violence. With this demonstration, with this protest, we would like to create consciousness in our society but most of all, to spread to new generations that these acts are not normal. These acts are unacceptable and punished by the law. We want to highlight that gender equity is essential to exterminate this social evil. We want to underline the importance of teaching and learning. We do this, in the name of those who are suffering right now. In the name of the survivors and those who are still fighting. We are doing this for them and of us [women]". (Mexican activists, *Event Por ellas y por Nosotras*, Antwerp, February 21st, 2018).

As previously showed in the literature (Margheritis 2018; Baeza and Pinto 2016; Smith and Bakker 2008; Sheffer 2003), ethnic based diasporas such as the Latin-American may bond and act collectively as a result of their similar migratory experiences and cultural proximity. As argued in the second chapter of this dissertation, the diasporic sphere of mobilisation thus becomes a relevant space of analysis where migrants find allies and develop important relations based on similar experiences and common socio-cultural norms.

When introducing the purpose of the meeting, the Mexican woman highlighted that domestic violence is a challenge that the Latin-American community is facing, thus she invited all the attendees to act jointly to support the victims and to prevent future cases through education.

One of the most emotive moments in the demonstration was the poetry reading section, which enabled a few women in the audience to raise their voices for gender equality and frame their fight with a feminist discourse (a norm embedded in the global political sphere):

> "I would like to share some texts written by Latin-American feminists. We need to stop thinking that we are enemies. My own experience has shown me that whenever I need help, there has always been a woman to support me. We need to interiorise that we are sisters. We need to raise men that respect us. […] This is a work of everyday and equity of genders is essential to eradicate [domestic violence]. Respect needs to be taught" (Latin-American activist and poet, *Event Por ellas y por Nosotras*, Antwerp, February 21st, 2018).

By nightfall, the fervent environment transitioned into a solemn tribute for the victims and their families. Attendees lightened candles and sang together in memory of the Latin-American women who have been victims of domestic violence. In addition, the organisers asked for a minute of silence in memory of the Mexican woman whose case triggered their mobilisation and whose mother was among the crowd. After a collective prayer, the mother of the Mexican victim urged the audience to be vigilant, to denounce, and to keep advocating for the respect and safety of women.

Besides the event in Antwerp, I attended a debate co-organised by Tatiana, a Mexican migrant who registered an NGO to advocate for the rights and visibility of Latin-American women in Belgium. The debate was led by five women from Mexico and Argentina, who addressed different questions about cases of feminicides in Belgium. For three hours, the women unpacked this topic from a socio-legal perspective. They specifically made emphasis on the relevance of understanding and applying the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (also known as the Istanbul Convention). By analysing critically some of the main articles of the Convention, the speakers aimed to raise awareness of the disadvantageous position of migrant woman in relation to their legal status:

> "With this Convention, we aim to protect migrant women. Migrant women have to face do not have access to certain social services. […] It is very important to understand that for migrant women, gender violence represents a big threat. They are not only exposed to be exploited and to be physically aggressed but migrant women are usually victims of blackmail. They also face the risk to having their residence permit revoked and thus to becoming undocumented migrants. There are many women who become slaves to their husbands because they bear violence and live threatened for their residence permit in Belgium" (Latin-American activist, *Debate: Migrant women and feminicides in Belgium*, Brussels, March 10th, 2018).

This event showcases several specificities of the strategies of mobilisation of Mexican and Latin-American women from Belgium. The debate was convinced as a space of dialogue where

a group of experts in law and domestic violence presented their points of view. Four experts focused on the feminicides in Belgium, while an academic specialising in structural violence and gender, who joined the debate online, presented the Mexican case study to demonstrate the urgency to address this matter in Latin America. After their presentations, people from the audience from Dominican Republic, Mexico, Argentina, and Belgium, participated in an open dialogue.

Indeed, this debate is a clear example of an horizonal place of reflection, where Latin-American women in Belgium had the chance to learn about their rights as migrant women and to share their experiences with the intention of preventing femicides, thus their individual processes of subjectivation. This event was triggered by the case of the Mexican woman who lost her life in January 2018 and by the desire of the Latin-American women to share their stories and knowledge to protect women from their community. The feminicide of the Mexican woman in Antwerp sparked the mobilisation of different groups of Latin-American women throughout Belgium. The two groups of Latin-American women responded by organising a demonstration and a debate. Whilst the form of their mobilisation differed, their aim was similar since both groups were looking to raising awareness and sharing knowledge to prevent any future cases of domestic violence. Overall, both events managed to enhance the subjectivation Latin-American migrants who learned about their rights and reflected about their positionality as migrants, women, wives, and mothers residing far from their families and their country of origin.

Previous research has shown that the Latin-American diaspora in Europe mobilises through migrant organisations focusing predominantly on the local needs of migrants (Margheritis 2018; Margheritis 2011; Bermúdez 2010; Bermúdez 2016). In the case presented in this section, we can observe than the Latin-American diaspora reacted jointly to the feminicide of a Mexican woman living in Belgium. Their mobilisation was triggered by feelings of sadness and solidarity. Even if some women did not have any experience as activists, they got involved in the organisation of two punctual events to raise awareness of this problem affecting woman both in Belgium and in their places of origin. Though their personal connections, the

organisers of both events managed to find the necessary resources such as the venues, material, speakers, and attendees among members of the Latin-American diaspora, who participated in their protest and their debate.

In this section, I presented two cases from my fieldwork to demonstrate that the interaction between Mexican activists and members of the Latin-American diaspora is an important strategy to engage in homeland politics and to protest against cases of violence committed against members of the Mexican community. More generally, migrants who share similar socio-cultural norms and who self-identify as members of a collective ethnic group (Müller-Funk 2016; Baeza and Pinto 2016; Dumont 2016) might create relevant alliances to support common political struggles.

Mexican migrants have managed to develop important relationships with other Latin-American migrants who support them in organising protests and events embedded in their hostland to denounce cases of injustice. Mexican migrants are able to tap on the resources and norms provided by the Latin-American community to enhance and diffuse their political activities. In addition, through these alliances, Mexican migrants have been able to enhance their individual processes of subjectivation by creating emancipated strategies of political action and spaces to share experiences that allow them to reflect upon similar political experiences that also affect their fellow Latin-Americans. Mexican migrants deployed strategies to tap on the resources available in the diasporic political sphere as well as in the global political sphere, as argued in the next section.

5.2.3. Creating alliances and synergies with global actors

Mexican activists residing in Brussels and Paris have established important links with global actors and organisations. Some of the strategies of transnational political mobilisation developed by Mexican migrants in Europe, highlight the role of global actors. For example, during the visit of Enrique Peña Nieto in France, Martin emphasized the impact of having coordinated advocacy efforts with Amnesty International in Paris and co-signing a petition against the official visit of the former president of Mexico.

Alliances with actors embedded in the global political sphere have been useful for Mexican activists to engage in homeland politics for three main reasons. First, by pairing up with global actors, Mexican activists have access to a larger public to spread their political messages. Second, through these alliances, Mexican migrants have been able to use norms and exploit resources embedded in the global political sphere. Lastly, the political symbolism resulting from collaborating with global actors has impacted on the legitimacy and reputation of the Mexican groups engaging in homeland politics from Europe. In this section, I present empirical data to demonstrate how Mexican migrants have paired with global actors as a strategy to engage in homeland politics from Brussels and Paris. It is important to note that these synergies are also the result of the individual subjectivation processes of Mexican migrants who reject national and governmental institutions and who prefer to include international organisations in their mobilisation.

Mexican activists residing in Paris have developed and established personal relations with agents working in international NGOs such as International Amnesty or ACAT (*Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture*). Mexican migrants built personal relationships with agents working on specific international organisations whose interest and work was related to the extraterritorial demands of justice sustained by the Mexican diaspora in Europe. Julia explained to me that, at the beginning, the members of the *Collectif Ayotzinapa* tried to get in touch with international organisations to have more visibility and diffuse their political messages among international, recognised, and symbolical global actors:

> "The contact with NGOs evolved a lot with time. At the beginning they didn't really care about us. At the beginning we wrote to them about our events, but they didn't reply. Then, little by little we kept inviting them and they started knowing us. Now we have a very close relationship with the spokesperson of Amnesty International France. She is very involved in what we do for Mexico. When she organises events, we attend them, and we have even done events together. We exchange information. Amnesty is very complicated. We are also in contact with the responsible of the Americas from ACAT. It was a very progressive process and she is a wonderful

woman. We once wrote all together a statement for the visit of Enrique Peña Nieto". (Semi-structured interview, Paris, March 6th, 2018).

This excerpt reveals that Mexican migrants recognise the political weight and legitimacy that international organisations may have for their political mobilisation, thus one of their strategies has been to include them in their initiatives. As Julia explained, the personal relationships with specific figures working for international organisations have been built over time. These relationships depend on the personal interest of individuals working on international organisations to denounce the cases of violence in Mexico. In addition, the proximity between Mexican activists and other stakeholders also rely on their accumulated positive experiences and self-perception of accomplishment resulting from the synergies to denounce the multiple cases of insecurity, impunity and violence in Mexico. The fact that people enjoy and feel that their political activism has positive outcomes enhances their will to keep participating in social movements.

Besides including global actors in their protests, Mexican activists have also exploited and adapted global norms and resources to their political initiatives. On the 26th of April 2018, Antonia decided to organise a demonstration in the *Hôtel de Ville* in Paris to commemorate the 43-month anniversary of the disappearance of the 43 students in Guerrero. The event was co-organised by *Latir por México* and the *Collectif Paris-Ayotzinapa*, two groups that decided to participate in an international action summoned by the families of the students and supported by the global artistic initiative called Inside Out Project[50] (Pictures 3 and 4).

The event lasted a couple hours during which activists gave short speeches to denounce the state violence in Mexico, Nicaragua, and in the Mediterranean. During the event, attendees held the portraits of the 43 students to show their support and solidarity with the families of the victims. The gathering concluded with a message in honour of the students of Ayotzinapa and with the roll call of all their names, a practice that started in Mexico during the first protests

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[50] Inside Out Project is a photographic global movement inspired by JR's large format street portraits. JR's work has supported global actions around 129 countries. Inside Out Project has inspired activists across the world to protest through art and diffuse their political messages through portraits. More information available at: http://www.insideoutproject.net/en/about

in 2014. The event was successful since the organisers managed to give visibility to the case of Ayotzinapa by gathering members of the Mexican and Latin American diasporas and by attracting global stakeholders in their hostland such as reporters and members of Amnesty International France. On the one hand, this event crystallises the intertwinement of the different spheres of political activism, where an individual calls for a collective action and manages to accommodate the agenda, logistics, allies, and media coverage for a successful political activity. On the other hand, this event shows how Mexican activists can exploit and adapt global resources to their political initiatives.

Picture 3: Protest in Hôtel de Ville with the portraits of the students from Ayotzinapa from the Inside Out Project, April 26th, 2018, Paris.

Picture 4: Activists holding portraits of the students from Ayotzinapa from the Inside Out Project, April 26th, 2018, Paris.

On the following day of the political gathering, I had the chance to talk to Antonia, a Mexican migrant who has lived in Paris for the past eleven years and who moved from Mexico because of the rising violence in her hometown. She explained to me that she took the initiative to organise the event for the students of Ayotzinapa after talking to a Mexican friend living in Spain who told her about the Inside Out Project and the possibility to get the printed portraits of the students free of charge. Antonia contacted the managers of the artists project and received the package with all the pictures only few days later. Soon after, she decided to call one of the members of the *Collectif Ayotzinapa* to ask them if they would be interested in co-organising the event. Antonia decided to include this group of activists because their political events specialise in the case of Ayotzinapa and state violence, so she believed it important to include them in the organisation of the activity.

Antonia chose the *Hôtel de Ville* (city hall) as the venue for the political gathering because she was very moved the case of Marielle Franco, a Brazilian politician and human rights activist who was murder on the 14th of March 2018 and whose portrait was hung in the main entrance

of the Parisian City Hall. The symbolism of the square and the portrait of a Latin-America victim influenced her decision to organise this in the heart of Paris.

The members of the *Collectif Ayotzinapa and Latir por México* have managed to create alliances with global actors and exploit global resources to give more visibility to their political causes and expand their political scope. Mexican activists living in Paris value the connections with global actors because they get to know political actors with global political recognition and as a result gain more legitimacy as political actors.

In practical terms, the connections with global actors have also helped Mexican migrants to understand and manipulate global and local norms by facilitating them the access to more resources, as expressed by Alma, a Mexican migrant who decided to engage in Mexican politics to denounce the cases of *#YoSoy132* and Ayotzinapa:

> "Agustina from Amnesty International has definitely helped us with the logistics. She has already contacts and the name of 'Amnesty' is useful to get discounts while renting venues [to organise the political events]. When you say "Amnesty International" doors open. They also have a group of people, which helped us enhance our convening power. We collaborated and were able to summon more people." (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, January 5th, 2018).

Mexican migrants are aware of the political symbolism and relevance of establishing synergies with international organisations. They value the establishment of these global advocacy networks because they have access to more resources, social capital, and other type of practical advantages to organise their events. Indeed, through this type of links, Mexican migrants in Europe have been able to legitimise their political struggles and diffuse their messages among a larger public attracted by the reputation of their global partners in their respective hostlands. As argued in the second chapter, migrants seek alliances with global actors with whom they share similar norms such as the defence of human rights (Sökefeld 2006; Godin 2017; Kleist 2013). Through these global alliances, migrants are able to find more resources, to legitimise the political mobilisation and to recruit more sympathisers (Adamson and Koinova 2013).

As members of a diaspora, Mexican migrants have also made use of their common cultural norms and traditions to enhance their political activism. In the last section of this chapter, I argue that Mexican migrants have used artistic representations as a strategy of transnational political activism. These artistic manifestations reflect on the one hand migrant's individual processes of subjectivation and on the other hand, they showcase the cultural attachment and homeland orientation that Mexican migrants maintain as members of the Mexican diaspora. Furthermore, the cases presented in the following section demonstrate the ability of migrants to cooperate with actors and exploit resources and norms available in multiple spheres of political activism to achieve their goals.

5.3 Artistic representations as a strategy of transnational political activism

5.3.1. Art and transnational advocacy efforts embedded in France

I met María de Jesús Tlatempa, the mother of one the students from Ayotzinapa on the 1st of April 2017 in Paris during an event organised by the *Collectif Ayotzinapa*. When I saw her for the first time, I felt a deep sensation of sorrow since I could not stop thinking about her son and how she became a symbol of the struggle for justice in Mexico. Very soon my feelings of sadness were replaced by admiration once I saw her on stage advocating for the case of Ayotzinapa with a resilient stance and a powerful voice. The literature on social movements explains the key role that testimonies play in the life and legitimacy of the movement (Estrello 2011; Pleyers 2018; Kaldor 2003; Maihold 2012; Bosco 2006). Specifically, for the case of Mexico, Maihold (2012) has argued that the emergence of public figures or testimonies representing the victims of violence and injustice have become very important for the visibility, legitimacy, and symbolism of the national social movements. Indeed, he explains that through emblematic figures such as Javier Sicilia, whose son was murdered by drug gang members, the Mexican society has been able to protest collectively against the impunity and violence in their country.

María de Jesús travelled with the artist Alfredo López to Europe to inaugurate his art exhibition entitled *Huellas de la Memoria* (Traces of Memory) and to advocate with European authorities such as politicians, journalists and public figures working in NGOs and IGOs for justice and peace in Mexico. During their stay in Paris, they attended several meetings with local authorities, journalists and an official of the United Nations to give visibility to the multiple cases of violence in Mexico. In addition, the members of the *Collectif* organised four days of activities including conferences, theatre plays, film-screenings, a concert, a gastronomic event, and the art installation *Huellas de la Memoria*.

The relation between Mexican activists and local allies (actors) in Paris were key for the organisation of the private advocacy meetings and the public political events held in the north of the city on the first two weekends of April 2017. Indeed, with the help of their personal connections, the members of the *Collectif* managed to arrange the meetings between María de Jesús and Alfredo López, and local political figures as well as to find a venue for their event, to design a varied programme and to provide accommodation for their important guests visiting from Mexico.

The cultural programme included a play written and performed by four European actors who had never travelled to Mexico but who were deeply moved by the case of Ayotzinapa. With their theatre play, the artists aimed to denounce the inconsistencies of the official investigations conducted by the Mexican authorities around the case of Ayotzinapa and commonly known as the "historic truth". After the performance, the actors established an informal dialogue with the audience to express their points of views and the rationale behind the dialogues of their parody. One of the actresses explained that she was very moved by the case of the missing students, which she described as "grotesque and outrageous" as a result of the incoherence and cynicism behind the explanations sustained by the Mexican government. These informal and horizontal spaces of dialogue are important to enhance the political subjectivation of the attendees since through this type of activities they are exposed to new ideas and arguments that might trigger their will to engage in transnational politics.

One of the main elements of the programme was the art installation *Huellas de la Memoria* by Alfredo, an artist from Mexico City who receives shoes of people that have disappeared or lost their lives as a result of the violence in Mexico including women, men, children, students, and migrants from Central America. *Huellas de la Memoria* is an exhibition of the shoes that families send to Alfredo and whose soles are carved with the personal information of the victims. In the exhibition of Paris, Alfredo decided to hang the shoes accompanied by a print of their sole in green so that people could read the personal stories of the victims (*Picture 5*).

Picture 5: María de Jesus, mother of a student of Ayotzinapa in the inauguration of Huellas de la Memoria, April 1st, 2017, Paris.

During the opening, some French people who were not aware of the level of violence in Mexico attended the exhibition and asked questions to some of the Mexican attendees. For instance, a Franco-Mexican migrant engaged in a conversation with three visitors of Congolese descent who wanted to know about the rationale behind the exhibition and to exchange some words with María de Jesús. The Franco-Mexican migrant explained the Mexican context to the visitors and acted as a translator between them and María. The three visitors were very pleased

and surprised to meet a mother of one of the students of Ayotzinapa and to be able to congratulate and encourage her for her advocacy efforts through the improvised translator. This episode of my fieldwork was revealing in terms of the impact that political transnational activism has at the individual level. Inadvertently, the Franco-Mexican migrant became a bridge of communication between two people who managed to pass and receive messages of awareness and encouragement that fed their individual processes of political subjectivation. This specific example showcases that through the creation of open spaces of dialogue, migrants are able to engage directly with actors from their hostland and exchange their political concerns and demands.

The event organised by the *Collecif Ayotzinapa* was popular among actors from the hostland but also among members of the Mexican diaspora, who travelled from third countries to attend the multiple cultural activities related to Mexican politics. On the 8th of April 2017, I met members of the Mexican diaspora who reside in New York and in London and who travelled to Paris to document and contribute to the efforts done by the Mexican community in France to denounce the violence, insecurity, and impunity in Mexico.

Gabriel, a Mexican reporter based in New York travelled to Paris to conduct a journalistic project for his master's degree. When we met, he explained to me that he engaged in Mexican politics from New York, where he met Jorge Antonio Tizapa, an undocumented migrant who is the father of one of the missing students of Ayotzinapa. Gabriel was very moved by Tizapa's mobilisation to raise awareness about the case of the students in the United States and he decided to do a short documentary to tell his story. In the documentary, which was also shown at the event in Paris, Gabriel presents the strategies of mobilisation that Tizapa has undertaken to advocate for the case of his son through sports and political gatherings outside of the Mexican Consulate in New York City. In the short film *Running for Ayotzinapa: A father's marathon to find his son*, Gabriel presents images of Tizapa running marathons as a way to protest silently for the safe return on his son (Martínez 2016). After the screening of the short film, Gabriel shared his experience filming it and engaging in Mexican politics from the United States. The small talk was interrupted by eight activists wearing green t-shirts with the message

Running for Ayotzinapa 43 who went on stage to support the message given by the film director. The t-shirts were brought and donated by Lucia, a Mexican migrant who at the time lived in London and who met Gabriel and Jorge Tizapa in New York at a political gathering. Tizapa gave the t-shirts to Lucia before her moving to Europe in case she had the opportunity to advocate from abroad and give more visibility to the case of Ayotzinapa.

The fact that members of the Mexican diaspora travelled to attend and participate in the event organised by activists from the *Collectif* demonstrates an intertwinement between the different spheres of political activism and the capacity of Mexican migrants to navigate them in order to engage in politics transnationally. The *Collectif* has become a point of reference among Mexican activists engaging in homeland politics from abroad as a result of their political trajectory and their capacity to organise meaningful events with key testimonies from Mexico and actors embedded in both the global and hostland political spheres with the power to influence global politics. As a hostland, Paris is a key city for global politics since it is an important hub for diplomacy and political movements where stakeholders coordinate global policies and norms. Indeed, as noted by Adamson and Koinova (2013), metropolitan spaces such as "global cities" are important hubs of resources and actors for political mobilisation.

The members of the Mexican diaspora who participated in the events organised in Paris in April 2017 showcased their attachment to Mexico and their interest to keep engaging in homeland politics despite the distance. As members of the Mexican diaspora, activists try to integrate cultural elements and norms in their political mobilisation. For this specific event, the members of the *Collectif* decided to cook traditional Mexican food and make a toast at nightfall with *mezcal*. They also decorated some rooms with Mexican paintings and women wore colourful headbands with flowers and *huipiles*[51].

Lastly, by taking the initiative of protesting through art, Mexican activists in France display their individual processes of subjectivation. Indeed, Mexican migrants have managed to create free recreational spaces where attendees are exposed to new sensations and ideas that boost

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[51] Colourful embroidered shirts.

their reflection upon Mexican politics. In sum, the *Collectif* in Paris has been able to create original strategies of transnational political engagement after learning how to manipulate local norms, cooperate with actors embedded in multiple political spheres, and accommodate their resources (including art) to enhance the processes of political subjectivation of individuals looking for new experiences.

In my fieldwork, I observed that the strategy of accommodating artistic practices into political events was a common approach among Mexican migrants in both Paris and Brussels. In the next section, I present an original strategy developed by a Mexican painter who managed to summon members of the Mexican diaspora in Belgium to create a common wall painting with political messages.

5.3.2. Mural painting as a tool to engage in transnational politics from Brussels

On the 20th of August 2016, I attended an event organised by Matias next to the Royal Library of Belgium in Brussels. The artist circulated an invitation on Facebook among his contacts to participate in the painting of a collective mural followed by a small concert. An objective of this event was to pay tribute to the students from Ayotzinapa and to Omran Daqneesh, a young Syrian boy whose image shocked the global public opinion by becoming the international symbol of the horrors of the war (Specia and Samaan 2017) (*Picture 6*). As I mentioned previously in Chapter 3, this event marked the beginning of my fieldwork in Brussels and during the activity, I had the chance to exchange only a few words with Matias, who explained to me that for him it is crucial to keep the Ayotzinapa movement alive to bring justice to Mexico while at the same time denouncing global injustices, such as the war in Syria.

This artistic initiative illustrates the entanglement among the different spheres of politics that migrants exploit and navigate to create original strategies to engage in homeland politics. Matias acted as a node to summon members of the Mexican diaspora to participate in a political event that he designed taking into consideration his personal resources, skills, and interests. Indeed, Matias managed to invite Mexican migrants through his social networks to join him

to paint a large and colourful mural to commemorate the students of Ayotzinapa and protest against State violence and repression.

Picture 6: Mexican artist painting in a collective mural, August 20th, 2016, Brussels.

Through this event, Mexican activists engaged in homeland politics creatively while discussing with pedestrians from the hostland who were curious enough to stop by to ask for more information about the mural and its significance. Matias brought around twenty aerosol spray cans and other materials to create a large mural that included a cartoon skull of the former president Enrique Peña Nieto, a soldier with a machine gun, a large "43" and an image of Omran, the refugee from Syrian that made the headlines in the media at the time. Matias specifically decided to include the image of Omran in the mural to denounce a global injustice and to captivate more people in the audience who were already aware of this image and who consequently showed more interest and empathy for the injustices in Mexico. In other words, he managed to adapt an image that triggered the indignation of the global population to

denounce State violence and repression in Mexico. With this image, Matias adapted a common reference (norm) among the European population to protest against the Mexican government.

Matias reflected upon an effective way to align his personal experiences, skills and values to organise an artistic activity to engage in Mexican politics that he repeated the next summer. On the 2nd of July 2017, Matias summoned the Mexican in the centre of Brussels to participate in the second edition of a mural whose main topic was censorship. As for the first edition of the activity, members of the Mexican diaspora and their families participated in the painting of a large mural portraying an image of Frida Kahlo with covered eyes, a camera covered in blood, a newspaper denouncing the number of killed journalists in Mexico, and a representation of then-president Enrique Peña Nieto and Donald Trump kissing (*Picture 7*).

Picture 7: Mexican artist painting in a collective mural, July 2nd, 2017, Brussels.

The main figures of the mural were drafted by Matias, who arrived at the Open Wall early to stick big poster boards with the silhouettes of the main characters that he planned to paint and prepared in advance. The paperboard sketches were used to delineate in just a few movements

the faces of Frida Kahlo, Peña Nieto and Trump. For the second time, Matias used the images of famous and recognisable people that people passing by could comment on.

Members of the Mexican diaspora attended the event despite the rain and while Matias was teaching a kid to paint, a reporter residing in Brussels and working for a Mexican magazine interrupted him to ask him if he would agree to participate in a short interview to be shared social media. Matias accepted and explained the relevance of organising transnational political events regarding from abroad in a public video:

> "I think that it is important to sensitise the Belgian people and the tourists that pass by. The message is to express that Trump is selling us and making negotiations with a very despicable man [EPN]. The "kiss of the death" [name that Matias gave to the kiss between EPN and Trump] is to denounce the censorship against journalists in Mexico who have been killed. We also want to raise awareness on the oppression against the Mexican people. It is very important that the Belgian people and the European Union realise this situation. Specially because Brussels is key for European politics. I think that since we are far from Mexico, we tend to be more shocked to see what happens there. We have the responsibility to inform the Belgian population and to sensitise them" (Excerpt of a public interview done by a Mexican reporter to Matias, Brussels, July 2nd, 2017).

This extract reflects important insights of the political engagement sustained by Mexican migrants from Belgium and the different political spheres that activists navigate to achieve their goals. The fact that a Mexican reporter interviewed Matias shows the interest of the media to inform the Mexican society about what people from their diaspora do from abroad to engage in their homeland politics. In the interview, Matias mentioned the symbolic value to mobilise from Brussels because of the European Institutions. In other words, he recognised the relevance of his hostland as hub for global politics where European policymakers discuss and take joint actions at a global level.

The mural was painted in an allocated space for urban art by the Belgian authorities, therefore Mexican migrants used the available venues (resources) in their hostland to mobilise

transnationally. According to Shank and Schirch (2008), art is a tool with the potential to transform how people act and think. For this case, I observed that painting impacted differently artists and observers. Active participants managed to depict and canalise their political demands through a creative channel. In addition, by being exposed to this type of recreational activity, younger members of the Mexican diaspora (second-generation migrants) had the chance to learn more about the political context of their homeland. As a result, members of the Mexican diaspora who painted all together had the chance to discuss about the current situation in their homeland and express their discontent with the context of violence and insecurity in Mexico.

Conversely, people who did not paint and who were just observers had also the opportunity to interact with Mexican activists and question them about their painting and politics in Mexico. In order to raise awareness about what happens in Mexico also among the Belgian population, Matias decided to include in the mural very well-known people. This strategy triggered the curiosity of people walking around the *Mont des Arts* who in several occasion stopped by to know more about this unconventional form of protest.

Overall, painting enabled Mexican activists to canalise their emotions and frustrations triggered by the socio-political situation of their homeland. Moreover, with this activity, Mexican migrants to exchange their experiences, to reflect upon new ways of engaging in homeland politics and to get to know each other better. Though painting, Mexican activists in Brussels have been able to express their creativity and as a result enhance their individual processes of political subjectivation. In this case art functioned both as an expression and as a catalyser of their political subjectivation since on the one hand they managed to create an alternative and horizontal strategy of transnational mobilisation and on the other hand, they generated interesting discussions among the participants and observers of the event. In the next section, I focus on the role of music in politics by analysing different examples from my fieldwork, where music and in particular *Son Jarocho* was used as a tool for political mobilisation, coalition and socialisation among members of the Mexican community living in Brussels.

5.3.3. Mobilising transnationally through Son Jarocho and fandangos[52]

Academics have recognised the role of music as a key component of social movements (Dahaner 2010; Eyerman 2002; Martiniello and Lafleur 2008). Overall, this literature demonstrates that music has an impact in creating a grounding collective identity among protesters, in mobilising cultural representations and traditions, and in disseminating political messages in a creative and emotional way (Martiniello and Lafleur 2008; Baily and Collyer 2006; Roy and Dowd 2010).

For the specific case of *Son Jarocho*, a traditional music genre from south-east Mexico, Hernández-León (2019) has contended that Mexican-American activists have reinterpreted this musical genre and introduced it as the sound for the immigrant rights movement in the United States. Indeed, the Mexican and Latin American diasporas in the United States have readapted *Son Jarocho* lyrics and music to their context to protest against detention, deportation and separation of immigrant families (Hernández-León 2019). *Son Jarocho* has become a tool of organisation and expression against the common socio-political challenges faced by migrants as a result of the restrictive immigrant policies and environment in the United States. In order to practice, teach, and create new songs, Mexican activists in Los Angeles have exploited and adapted the existing infrastructure to organise their musical workshops in Latin-American cultural and community centres.

In the case of Mexican migrants in Belgium, I observed some similarities, nonetheless, the Mexican diaspora in Europe relied on organisations and cultural centres also from their hostland since the Mexican population and infrastructure is not as solid and expanded as it is in the United States. In addition, Mexican migrants used Son Jarocho to engage in homeland politics and denounce the cases of injustices and violence in Mexico.

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[52] Fandango is the name given to a festive performance where people sing and play *Son Jarocho* music and dance on a low wooden stage (*tarima*) to accompany the melody (Pérez-Montfort 2015).

Very early in my fieldwork in Brussels, I realised that a group of *jaraneros*[53] engaged in politics through a workshop where they practised *Jarocho* music all together and performing in political events that they organised or attended as guests. As explained in the methodological chapter, I decided to participate in both their workshops and in the organisation and performances of the events where we played *Jarocho* music.

One of the first times that I observed a *Son Jarocho* performance in Brussels was during the mural painting organised by Matias on the 20th of August 2016 which included a small concert where musicians sang original lyrics using traditional Mexican folk melodies such as *La Bamba*. As argued by Rolston (2001), lyric drift and the reinterpretation of traditional songs are an important component of political mobilisation. Literature in migration studies and social movements has argued that music has an impact in the diffusion and composition of political protests since it brings people with a common fight together while creating a sense of belonging and collective empowerment (Danaher 2010; Eyerman and Jamison 1998; Martiniello and Lafleur 2008; Hernández-León 2019).

The attendees started dancing as soon as they recognised the traditional melody from Veracruz and even if they could not fully accompany the singer, who replaced lyrics with political messages and social demands, they enjoyed the familiar rhythm that set a festive and joyful atmosphere.

The original lyrics written by Carmen emphasised the case of the students of Ayotzinapa and violence in Mexico and presented her own story as a migrant in a foreign country. As observed by Hernández-León (2019), Mexican migrants adapt the lyrics of their song to narrate their experiences as migrants. Indeed, in the case of Mexican migrants in Brussels, the songs referred to their political fight, to their mobilisation, and to their condition as migrants.

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[53] Women and men playing *jaranas*, eight-string guitars that provide the instrumental accompaniment of Son Jarocho (Hernández-León 2019: 975)

Lyrics of the 'Political Bamba' written by Carmen
August 20th, 2016

Original (In Spanish)	Translation
De todos los colores De todos los colores Me gusta el verde Porque las esperanzas nunca se pierden. Yo no creo en fronteras, yo cruzaré.	From all the colours From all the colours I like green Because hope never dies I don't believe in borders; I will cross them.
Soy migrante del mundo Crucé la mar, de la tierra fecunda para luchar Sin fronteras, los sueños, la vida doy.	I am migrant of the world I crossed the sea, of this fertile land to fight Without borders, the dreams, I give my life.
Cada vez que te veo Se me endereza la pupila del ojo Con tu belleza Yo no he sido casada ni lo seré.	Every time I see you My eye pupil dilates With your beauty I am not married, and I will never be
Hoy estamos reunidos De corazón Por el [Matías] y por su pasión Aparezcan ya ¡Justicia Ayotzinapa, Queremos ya!	Today we are reunited Form the heart and for [Matias] and his passion Show them now! [the students] We want Justice for Ayotzinapa now!
Fue el Estados señores quien los mató Organízate y lucha con este son.	It was the state, Gentlemen, who killed them Organise and fight along with this rhythm
Vivos se los llevaron, Vivos se los llevaron sin corazón, Y gritamos ¡Justicia! con mucho amor	They took them alive; they took them without remorse And we yell: Justice with all our love!
Desde Bélgica amigos decimos ¡ya! Basta de asesinatos. Porque nadie soporta ni uno más.	From Belgium, my friends, We say enough murders! Because we cannot tolerate a single more.
Organiza tu rabia. Despierta ya De ese horrible letargo ¡No seas cómplice!	Organise your rage Wake up now From this horrible lethargy Don't be an accomplice.

Moreover, through her words she invited the Mexican community to keep raising their voice to denounce the cases of impunity and injustice in her homeland. Through the lyrics and the music, the attendees danced and sang connected through a shared cultural reference acquired before migrating that sparked their joy and interest. In other words, members of the Mexican diaspora aligned their common cultural norms with their political activism and used their cultural baggage as a resource for political mobilisation.

In my fieldwork I realised that music was a very important tool of political mobilisation that enhanced the processes of political subjectivation and creativity among the Mexican activists and the people that attended their events. According to Leonel, a Mexican migrant living in Belgium for almost ten years, music is a tool to do politics from a more original approach:

> "*Son Jarocho* is political, original and alternative. I think it is important to keep this Mexican tradition alive and to create spaces for music. I use music as a channel to inform the people in Europe about what is happening in Mexico. This is the least that I can do for my country. Music and art are weapons for the future, and we can use them for our benefit. Through art, it is possible to raise awareness, more so than with a political banner […] I think my *jarana* [guitar] is my rifle, I see it that way" (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, September 6th, 2017).

In addition, he explained to me that he perceived music as an original, direct, and empathic vehicle to deliver political messages to an audience "face-to-face". Leonel has been deeply disappointed by Mexican politicians and institutions; thus, he values autonomous and local initiatives as a new source of social change and political engagement:

> "Here [in Brussels] what I do for my country is informing people through a tool that is accessible and appealing. I make people from here attracted to my culture and with my culture I tell them what is going on in Mexico. For instance, through art and music. I think that is important, right? What I have seen in the political mobilisations [organised by other Mexicans] here [in Belgium] is that they tend to give many political discourses "blah, blah blah…" and that is saturating and tiring for people that are not from Mexico.

> If we want outsiders to react… these outsiders from Mexico have already a lot of information from what Europe is doing wrong in Syria or what is going on in Venezuela… It is a mega super saturation of information that makes people not being actually informed. Don't you think? I would say that the best way is through personal approach, face-to face, interacting with each other. Little by little the people surrounding you start understanding what is going on in your country and what moves you". (Semi-structured interview, Brussels, September 6th, 2017).

When explaining his approach to engage in homeland politics and his strategies of mobilisation, Leonel recognised the instrumental use of art that enables him to attract people from the host society instead of only addressing messages to the Mexican community. Leonel highlights an important characteristic of the transnational political strategies implemented by the Mexican community from abroad by arguing that actors in the host-society should be sensitised through personal contact and arts. In this passage, Leonel reveals that free spaces are important to enhance people's political interest and subjectivation since in these spaces, actors (from the hostland and diaspora spheres) interact and explore new ideas, values, and political norms. Indeed, Leonel posits that through face-to-face contact and alternative ways of politisation such as music, Mexican activists have managed to catalyse processes of subjectivation among members of the host-societies by exposing them to new spaces of socialisation and new cultural experiences.

In sum, Mexican migrants have used music to reinforce their identity as members of the Mexican diaspora and transnational political actors. Mexican activists in Brussels and Paris have been able to convey political messages to audiences in their hostland by creating spaces of socialisation where actors interact, dance, and exchange political ideas freely. As reflected in the literature on social movements, alter-activists (and in this case migrants) engage politically through original and creative channels, where they value the conviviality, creativity and diversity (Pleyers 2010a; 2017; 2018).

Another strategy that Mexican migrants have implemented to mobilise in homeland politics from abroad, is to celebrate Mexican national holidays from Europe. In the next section, I

present how Mexican activists take advantage of Mexican national days to organise cultural festivals where they convey political messages and denounce the violence and impunity in their country of origin.

5.3.4. Aligning national celebrations and protests in the hostland

On the 25th of September 2016, I attended a cultural festival organised by Mexican activists in the district of Ixelles to commemorate the Day of the Mexican Independence, usually celebrated on the night of the 15th of September. Nevertheless, on that occasion, the organisers dedicated the national celebration to the students of Ayotzinapa.

When I arrived at the venue, I noticed that the rooms were decorated with very colourful flags, banners, balloons, and strings of *papel picado*[54]. On the first-floor, guests could purchase Mexican snacks and enjoy their meal in a sitting area. The second floor included a stage for the cultural activities prepared by members of the Mexican diaspora. The event included activities for children such as a painting workshop and a short play. By night fall, adults had fun with a *Marachi* band and a dancing performance (*Picture 8*).

The event also included political speeches to denounce the number of victims, human rights violation and impunity in Mexico. For instance, a traditional folk-dancer created a graffiti on stage with the following message "Imagine if St Gilles disappeared". The aim of this tag was to make a parallelism between the number of deaths in Mexico and the population of a district in Brussels to enable the public to gage the dimension of violence in Mexico. Through this analogy, the Mexican dancer managed to shock the Belgian audience who could imagine the impact of the war against drugs that started in 2006.

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[54] *Papel picado* is a colourful sheet of paper with cut-out shapes traditionally used in festivities and celebrations in México.

Picture 8: Mexican artist dancing on stage, September 25th, 2016, Brussels.

This event crystallises a strategy implemented by Mexican migrants to engage in homeland politics. Mexican activists use key dates in Mexico to organise political events in their hostlands. In other words, they take advantage of a common cultural norms among members of the Mexican diaspora to call for political action. Besides the recurrent references to Mexico done by the artists, an organiser gave a speech to commemorate the Independence Day in a similar way to what the president does in Mexico. Traditionally, every 15th of September at 11 pm, the president of Mexico stands on the balcony of the National Palace in Mexico City to re-enact the so-called "*Grito de Dolores*". During the patriotic act the president holds a Mexican flag, rings the bell that was rang in 1810 as a call-to-arms to fight for independence, pronounces the names of the national heroes and shouts *¡Viva México!*[55] three times. In Brussels, a Mexican activist adapted this ritual (norm) to denounce the security conditions in Mexico. She pronounced a small speech to commemorate the national heroes and concluded by shouting "Long live an inclusive Mexico without disappearances and without torture!".

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[55] Long live Mexico!

The re-adaptation of specific political norms from the homeland highlights some characteristics of the transnational political acts orchestrated by migrant populations. Indeed, it is important to recognise that national rituals and political manifestations inspire the form of the transnational political actions sustained by migrants. Migrant activists make use of the common cultural baggage among the members of their diasporas to design their strategies of protest. On some occasions, activists presume that they share the same socio-cultural background with the people witnessing their mobilisation and thus they do not hesitate to include and exploit cultural references from their country of origin such as political slogans, jokes, rituals, and songs. These common cultural references among diasporic actors set the tone in political protests and reinforce the collective identity among the migrants protesting from abroad. Indeed, as expressed by Stekelenburg and Klandermans, social movements do not invent ideas from scratch but rather they build on an ideological heritage that enhances a feeling of collective identity (2010: 188).

Another example crystallising the diligence of Mexican migrants protesting in their homeland national dates are the events that they organised on the 5th of November 2016 and on the 2nd of November 2017 to commemorate the Day of the Dead from Belgium. I attended an event co-organised by Ana and several members of the Latin American diaspora, to celebrate the Day of the Dead in Brussels in 2016. As for all the events that I attended, the room was decorated with colourful *papel picado* and Mexican paintings by Guadalupe Figueroa and Sergio Zepada. In the centre of the room, the organisers placed the traditional altar with fruit, flowers, traditional food, small skulls made of sugar, *pan de muerto*[56] and a drawing of one of the missing students of Ayotzinapa.

The programme also included an original theatre play called *Calaveritas* performed by Ana, two musicians, and children from the public. According to scholars, creative initiatives developed by diasporas in conflict, might influence the processes of peacebuilding and conflict-recovery (Shank and Schrich 2008; Brinkerhoff 2007; Godin 2016). For instance,

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[56] *Pan de muerto* or Bread of the Dead is a sweet pastry decorated with boned-shaped pieces baked in Mexico in November for Day of the Dead celebration.

Shank and Schrich (2008) documented how art-based strategies such as music, painting, theatre, yoga, and sculpture have helped individuals recover from conflict in Sri Lanka, Venezuela, and Palestine. Indeed, these art initiatives constitute a very original way to communicate and channel emotions, ideas, and feelings, which in the long-term help alleviate the societal traumas derived from the conflict (Shank and Schrich 2008). While this literature highlights the impact that art initiatives for actors embedded in the homeland, artistic activities initiated by migrant communities may also have affect second-generation migrants and actors in the host-country.

The original theatre play created by Ana relied on the participation of children from the audience who were exposed to Mexican traditions in Belgium. Through the play, children from the Mexican diaspora living in Europe were able to learn some facts about the insecurity conditions in their homeland while being exposed to cultural aspects of the Day of the Dead such the altar or the *Catrina*[57]. In addition, this original form of activism enabled attendees (actors from the hostland and diaspora political spheres) to have a space to socialise and exchange ideas, which in turn, enhanced their processes of political subjectivation and knowledge about Mexican politics.

In 2017, I attended and participated as a musician in another ritual protest in a local art gallery in the centre of Brussels. This event illustrates the relevance of developing synergies between migrant populations and local partners in their places of origin to spread political messages to a more diverse public. Matias arrived at the gallery early to install an altar made of handcrafts, flowers, food and pictures of Mexican journalists who have been victims of the wave of violence in Mexico. As part of the event, we dressed up as *Catrinas* and performed a couple of *Son Jarocho* songs outside the art gallery (*Picture 9*) followed by a small ceremony inspired by Pre-Hispanic rituals of spiritual cleansing which included *copal* incense.

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[57] The Catrina is the allegory of death painted by José Guadalupe Posada in the form of an elegant skull that has become the referential icon the Day of the Dead.

Picture 9: Mexican artist dressed up as Catrina for an event, November 2ⁿᵈ, 2017, Brussels.

Later in the night, we conducted a small ceremony to honour the women and journalists that have been murdered in Mexico. Natalia gave a small speech in Spanish to contextualise the Day of the Dead and explain the meaning of this festivity in Mexico. In addition, she added a few words in memory of the victims of violence in Mexico:

> "Today, we also want to remember our brothers and sisters that have been taken away from us by the ones holding the power in Mexico and around the world. We dedicate this altar to each and all of the 1,505 women that have been murdered in Mexico. Let's also remember the 109 journalists that have been killed. Let's remember all our siblings in the South that have died in their journey as migrants, crossing imposed borders with the desire of finding a roof in a country without war or a better quality of life" (Excerpt of a speech given by Natalia in Brussels, November 2ⁿᵈ, 2017).

The words pronounced by Natalia, then translated into French by her wife, created a solemn and emotional ambience in the gallery. The public was shocked to realise the magnitude of the

insecurity in Mexico, showing interest and curiosity to know more about Mexican traditions, rituals and politics.

The events organised by Mexican activists on symbolic national dates highlight their inclination to sustain and exploit cultural norms and resources embedded in their homeland. In addition, these strategies portray their preference to organise political events that create possibilities for exchange, socialisation, and amusement. Indeed, as previously highlighted in the literature, ritual protests and the contemporary strategies of social mobilisation tend to encompass a festive and convivial character (Pleyers 2018; Inclán and Almedida 2017). On the one hand, the cheerful atmosphere appeals to the public in the hostland and on the other hand it strengthens the ties between the activists who enjoy having a good time with their peers who share similar political values and norms. Finally, it is important to note that Mexican activists in Brussels have managed to celebrate their national holidays from abroad because they have developed specific alliances in their hostland who have helped them accommodate their resources and norms to achieve their political goals.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that Mexican migrants can engage in homeland from their hostland through creative strategies of political mobilisation. Mexican activists in Brussels and Paris have managed to navigate multiple political spheres (hostland/homeland/diaspora/global) to raise awareness about Mexican politics and advocate for specific political causes from Europe. In each of these spheres, Mexican migrants have been able to build relationships with key actors, tap on resources and exploit norms to engage in transnational activism.

In the first section, I demonstrated how norms embedded in both the hostland and global political spheres shape the transnational political activism of Mexican migrants. Since Mexican activists condemned the official posture of the French government regarding Mexican affairs, they reacted by organising a series of mobilisations including undeclared protests and advocacy letters. These mobilisations were possible because Mexican migrants have developed a solid

network with French and global actors who support their political cause and assist them in giving visibility to their political demands abroad. In addition, Mexican migrants have assessed the political norms in their hostland to maximise their political opportunities to mobilise transnationally. Indeed, Mexican activists have realised that obtaining the endorsement and recognition from the authorities from their hostland can impact they activism. Through the support of French and Belgian actors, Mexican migrants have gained more legitimacy and credibility among actors in both Mexico and Europe which in turn has given more visibility and diffusion to their political mobilisation.

In the second part of this chapter, I argued that Mexican migrants residing in Brussels and Paris have created synergies with actors embedded in the hostland, diaspora, and global political spheres to improve their transnational strategies of political mobilisation. Through these partnerships, Mexican migrants have been able to obtain more resources, legitimacy and knowledge to engage in homeland politics from abroad. Indeed, through the alliances with local, diasporic, and global actors, Mexican migrants have managed to diffuse their political messages to larger audiences and as a result expand their political scope. Finally, I demonstrated that for the partnerships developed with members of the Latin-American diaspora, common cultural norms have accelerated the rapprochement between Latin-American and Mexican activists, who identify themselves as members of the same identity group mobilising for similar political challenges.

In the last section of this chapter, I argued that Mexican activists in France and Belgium use artistic practices as tools to engage politically from abroad. Mexican activists have adapted their personal skills to initiate creative forms of protest where besides expressing their political demands, they have managed to develop free spaces for dialogue that enhance the individual processes of political subjectivation. Through artistic representations such as music, theatre, dancing, and painting, Mexican migrants have been able to reinterpret cultural representations of their homeland and adapt them in their hostland to mobilise transnationally. Mexican migrants recognise the instrumental use of the arts when mobilising politically since the originality of their artistic representations are appealing to actors embedded in their hostland.

In addition, art-based strategies also enable them to reinforce their cultural identity as members of the Mexican diaspora while creating spaces for political reflection and socialisation.

By placing the individual at the forefront of the analysis it is possible to understand how migrants living abroad engage in transnational political movements through their individual processes of subjectivation and by navigating the hostland/homeland/diaspora and global spheres of political activism. Through their individual processes of subjectivation, migrants are able to define their political identity and to reflect upon their political values and experiences to be able to decide how and when they want to engage in transnational politics. In turn, these decisions are influenced by the actors, norms and resources that migrants are in direct contact with and that are embedded in the multiple spheres of political mobilisation. Migrants take into consideration the actors that they know or are able to reach, the norms that they can use for their cause, and the resources that they can exploit and adapt to their transnational political cause.

Final Conclusions

This research raised the questions about how migrants engage in homeland politics from abroad. By looking at the specific case of the Mexican immigrant community in Brussels and Paris, I managed to understand how individuals organise political initiatives related to their homeland affairs from abroad.

This research presents two main theoretical contributions to migration studies and in particular to the study of transnational activism. First, I introduce the notion of subjectivation to shed light on the individual processes that migrants undertake before engaging in homeland politics from abroad. So far, the concept of "subjectivation", developed predominately in French sociology and in the study of social movements, has been absent from the studies of diaspora mobilisation and transnational politics. In this dissertation, I prove the utility of introducing this concept into the study of transnational politics by placing the migrant (individual) at the forefront of the analysis and by demonstrating that migrants are able to organise political initiatives regardless of the links that they have with state institutions. In other words, through the analysis of the individual processes of subjectivity of migrant activists, it is possible to understand how migrants engage in non-institutional and non-electoral politics such as demonstrations, social movements, and artistic practices.

In addition, by introducing the concept of subjectivity, I present a new take on how to study diasporas mobilisation instead of only focusing on the Political Process Model developed by McAdam et al. (1996), which is limited to the analysis of political opportunities, mobilising structures and cultural frames. Indeed, migrants are able to engage in politics, once they reflect upon their political experiences, living conditions, and access to rights as members of multiple societies. The individual processes of subjectivation are thus accompanied by continuous reflections where migrants define their political identity, and which crystallise in individual or collective political initiatives. Even if the processes of subjectivation are individual, they are not isolated processes. Migrants interact and exchange information with actors embedded in

multiple social spaces which may in turn enhance their processes of self-reflection and influence their strategies of mobilisation.

Second, this dissertation presents an original analytical framework that captures the social spaces where migrants operate and are influenced by to be able to become political transnational subjects. As a result, I argue that migrants are members of four political spheres of mobilisation: the hostland, the homeland, the diaspora, and the global. Indeed, I demonstrate that both the processes of subjectivation and the decision-making processes undertaken by migrants to engage in homeland politics are influenced by actors, norms, and resources embedded in these four political spaces. By interacting with actors, manipulating the norms, and adapting the resources in these four political spheres, migrants are able to engage in homeland politics. Overall, this framework is useful because it provides a systematic way of analysing the interactions sustained by migrants and other actors in other political spaces that influence their transnational political strategies and practices. Furthermore, this framework considers the explicit and implicit norms ruling the different political spaces which influence on the one hand migrant's political identity and on the other hand, which delimit their strategies of political mobilisations. As members of multiple political spaces, migrants are exposed to multiple norms that they need to understand and adapt to achieve their political goals. Finally, this framework considers the different resources (i.e. information, social capital, etc.) that migrants manipulate and integrate into their transnational political initiatives.

Besides its theoretical significance, this dissertation presents original empirical data collected among a relatively unknown migrant community in Europe. I focused on the Mexican community living in two European cities for four main reasons. First, as a Mexican citizen, I have an intrinsic interest in Mexican politics and Mexican migration. Second, the complexity of the Mexican political context is a matter of interest in the study of transnational politics. Specifically, during the period when I conducted this study (2014-2018), the Mexican society faced important political junctures and social transformations as a result of the continuing violence triggered by the so-called "war on drugs", the earthquake in 2017, and the presidential elections in 2018. The Mexican case study thus encompasses a wide range of political

mobilisations, making it interesting to provide a holistic and systematic analytical framework applicable for the study of other migrant communities.

Third, by focusing on a small population size, I managed to fully identify the Mexican migrants who orchestrate political transnational activities. By engaging with a small group of activists, I was able to collect data exhaustively among all the key actors reacting to Mexican politics from Brussels and Paris. Indeed, I was able to attend almost all the political organised by the Mexican community in Brussels and Paris during the data collection period and I was able to interview most of the political activists who initiated a movement or a protest related to Mexican politics from abroad.

Lastly, by analysing the Mexican migrant community in Europe, I shed light on the different political strategies developed by the politicised members of the Mexican diaspora in an understudied geographical area. Most of the studies of the Mexican diaspora have been conducted in North America, thus, by focusing on two European capitals, I contributed to the study of pioneer Mexican migrants with very different profiles and who belong to a smaller immigrant community. In other words, I managed to broaden the knowledge of the Mexican diaspora in Europe.

Regarding the methodology, it is important to note that even if I used traditional methods in anthropology such as participant observation and semi-structured interviews, I conducted this research from an interpretive approach (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). As a result, I acknowledged the agency and positionality of my interviewees and most importantly, the impact of my presence in the field as a young, middle-class, mix-raised woman raised in Mexico City. Besides being particularly critical about by positionality, the interpretive approach allowed me to learn and adapt my behaviour to the field in relation to the multiple interactions that I sustained with my interviewees. By paying attention to their body language, tone of voice, and reactions, I was able to determine if we have developed a trustful relation and thus if they would feel comfortable to answer the semi-structured interview.

Throughout the fieldwork, I performed different roles through which, I was able to adapt myself to the different requests and scenarios that I faced during my data collection phase. In addition, I was able to spend more time with my interviewees and participate directly in the organisation of multiple political initiatives. Finally, by adapting my role to the circumstances of the field, I was able to rebalance the power relations with some of my interviews in multiple occasions.

During my fieldwork, I realised that overall Mexican activists living in Brussels and Paris engage in homeland affairs by either replicating or responding to events embedded in Mexico or either by organising independent political initiatives that were not echoing Mexican events but that were intrinsically linked to Mexican politics. In addition, contrary to previous findings indicating that Latin-American migrants engaging in homeland politics from North-America tend to be mostly married highly educated men in their forties with a stable life in their hostland (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003; Portes, Escobar and Walton Radford 2007; Lafleur and Calderón 2011), my results showed that Mexican women living in Europe are as politically active as men. This could be explained by their migratory trajectory, their availability, and their choice to mobilise in politics through non-institutional channels such as embroidery, cultural events, advocacy efforts, and other type of demonstrations.

This ethnography was conducted during an extended period of time, as a result, I had the opportunity to fully map the transnational political activities organised by Mexican migrants residing in two important European capitals. I decided to focus on Brussels and Paris because of their political symbolism and relevance. By focusing on these two cities, I was able to depict the impact of global norms such as political symbolism in the formation of transnational political activities. In addition, by collecting data in these two specific European capitals, I demonstrated the relevance of local norms and actors in the hostland since they have a significant influence in how migrants determine their strategies of transnational politics. Furthermore, I was also able to demonstrate that politicised migrants do not engage homogenously in transnational politics. On the contrary, they think about the position and political opportunities in their hostland and adapt their capacities and skills to mobilise

transnationally, including the creation of alliances with specific organisations with global political weight.

This research presents an original perspective on how to study transnational politics by placing the individual (micro-level) at the forefront of the analysis and by focusing on the individual processes of subjectivation. Although this allowed me to understand how Mexican migrants decide to engage in homeland politics, how they interact with other Mexican migrants in Europe, and how they determine their political strategies, before concluding, I would like to reflect upon the limits of this research and recommendations for future research.

As I stated previously, this qualitative research analysed a small migrant community in Europe, therefore a quantitative study would be very complex to conduct. Nevertheless, in order to further demonstrate the relevance of subjectivation theories in migration studies and the utility of the political spheres of mobilisation as an analytical framework to study transnational politics, it could be interesting to either analyse how Mexicans engage in homeland politics from other European cities such as London or to conduct another study among other migrant communities.

Another further question that was not developed in this research is the impact of the political mobilisations organised by migrants living from abroad. Even if this research did not address this specific question, I would argue that the political spheres of mobilisation could represent an interesting analytical tool to further answer to this question. The impact of transnational political mobilisations and activism is complex to measure. Nevertheless, by applying the theoretical contributions developed in this dissertation, we could look at the impact of transnational politics at the individual, hostland, homeland, diaspora and global levels.

The framework developed in this dissertation contributes not only to the understanding of individuals engaging in transnational politics but also to the recognition of the multiple social spaces they navigate. Thus, beyond the scope of this specific research question, this framework is versatile enough to replace rigid dichotomies such as "electoral and non-electoral politics",

"institutionalised and non-institutionalised politics" and "traditional and alter-activist movements" as well as to better understand the growing importance of online activism.

I would like to conclude by stating that though this dissertation is based on political and sociological theory, I would suggest integrating social psychological or phenomenological psychological analytical tools in order to better understand how migrants take the decision to engage in homeland politics and to what extent this decision depends on their emotions, perceptions, or values. Indeed, I believe that since international migration is such a complex and interdisciplinary phenomenon, it is relevant to recognise that further research on political transnationalism focusing on the individual level and human behaviour could benefit from theories developed in social psychology and other humanities such as philosophy. In addition, by using this type of analytical tools, we would be able to better understand the progressive and imperfect nature of individual processes of subjectivation. A process through which political actors try to align their values with their daily actions while facing contradictions and inconsistencies in their behaviour.

Annex 1.
Semi-structured guide for interviews

I. Socio-demographic data
Gender
Age
Education
Occupation
Speaks French/Dutch/English
Time spent abroad
Reason to migrate to Belgium/France
Migratory status
II. Spheres of interaction
A) Homeland
Do you talk with your family and friends regularly?
Do you read the Mexican news?
Do you share information with friends/family about what "is going on in Mexico"? (in terms of politics)
How often do you travel back to Mexico? Where do you stay?
What is your perception of the current situation and national politics?
Has the Mexican government pronounced itself in relation to your protest/event?
What are your plans for the future? (Moving back to Mexico, moving to another country…)
B) Hostland
Do you participate in local/national/European politics? (Vote, protest, boycott, political rallies…)
How would you evaluate your experience abroad?
Do you have Belgian/French friends engaging in this type of political events?
Do you need a specific permission to demonstrate/organise this type of event?
How did you decide to organise the event in this particular place?
Why did you pick this specific venue to demonstrate?

C) Diaspora
Do you participate in other Latin-American events?
Do you interact with other Latin-Americans in Brussels/Paris?
Do you participate in other Mexican events?
D) Transnational
Have you been in contact with international organisations that support your political cause?
Have you found support from international agencies protecting human rights?
III.   Social movements and motivations
Did you participate in political events in Mexico? (pre-migration)
What motivates you to organise political events in Brussels/Paris? (Emotions - Rationale)
Since when do you participate in this type of events?
How do you decide which type of event to organise?
What do you expect from your participation in these events?
How do you organise these events?
How do you collect resources to finance this type of event?
Do you participate in other organisations or political movements?
Do you meet with the other members of the group regularly?
How do you divide the tasks with the other members of the group to organise these events?
How would you describe your experience organising these types of events?
Why do you think it is important to organise and participate in political events like this one?
Do you invite people to participate in these events? Who do you invite?
How would you describe a successful event?
Besides organising these types of events, do you engage with Mexican politics in another way?
What does it mean to you to include traditional Mexican elements in these types of events? (Cultural artifacts, folklore, music, gastronomy)

Annex 2.
Narrative presentation of the interviewees of the research

Matias is a Mexican artist in his late forties, who arrived in Belgium 23 years ago and has worked as luthier, ceramist, carpenter and artist. He invited me to his house to have lunch with his family. After lunch, we talked for a couple of hours and he explained to me that he engages in homeland politics from Belgium to denounce the injustices and human rights violations in Mexico. He uses painting as a tool to raise awareness of the political issues in Mexico because in that way he feels connected to his roots. In addition, he believes that art is an inclusive and original way of engaging in politics regardless of the social background of the people.

Leonel, a 37-year-old anthropologist who works as a music technician also uses art as a repertoire to engage in homeland politics. During his interview, Leonel expressed strong disappointment in Mexican institutions and politicians, which he channels through music and organises concerts with some friends to denounce what is going back in his home country.

Ismael, a professional musician who spends half of the year in Mexico and half of the year in Belgium usually helps Leonel in the organisation of charity concerts or playing music in political gatherings. Ismael is in his late thirties and travels constantly between the two countries to visit this girlfriend, and for job opportunities and projects.

Rodolfo has also organised social movements from Brussels, in particular to denounce the case of Ayotzinapa. When he arrived in Belgium six years ago, he struggled to find a job and worked in the construction industry, as a Spanish teacher, as a technician and as a seller in a chocolate shop in the centre of Brussels. He moved to Europe with his Belgian girlfriend and eventually completed a master's degree in marketing before returning to Mexico in September 2018 for personal reasons.

Fidel originally moved to Europe when he obtained a scholarship to pursue a master's degree in design in Finland. Eventually, he moved to Belgium where he has been living with his wife for 20 years. Fidel is a very spiritual individual and approaches his activism from that angle by using traditional medicine and performing pre-Hispanic rituals at the Mexican political events.

Similarly, Enrique lived in Holland for 25 years and then moved to Belgium to find better job opportunities in acting. He enjoys engaging in Mexican politics through performing purification rituals with incense and herbs.

Alicia is an actress originally from Mexico City who has been living in Belgium for the past 18 years with her Belgian husband. She is 60 years old and works as a farmer in a rose plantation while looking for opportunities to work as an actress. She is concerned by the political and social situation in her homeland, thus she organises private concerts to collect funds and send them back to Mexico to support specific social causes. In addition, she has participated in larger political events acting in order to raise awareness on the security problems of her country of origin.

Ana is a singer deeply worried about the political and social issues in Mexico. She has lived in Europe for 21 years as an undocumented migrant but this has not prevented her to be politically active and organise charity concerts, cultural events and political demonstrations to raise her voice to denounce what she describes as the consequences of a "war" in her homeland.

Jimena is another Mexican activist who uses art and performing to advocate for justice in Mexico. She arrived in Belgium in 2009 looking for better job opportunities as a professional dancer and as a scenographer. She has always been interested in Mexican politics, but she became particularly active when one member of her family was imprisoned in her hometown and she decided to advocate from Europe for his freedom.

Alma also advocates for a political change in Mexico from Belgium, where she moved eight years ago to start her PhD in Law. Over these years, she has been involved in several transnational movements either organising events, supporting presidential candidates, writing

petitions, and collecting signatures to denounce cases of corruption and human rights violations in Mexico.

Norma has also engaged in Mexican politics thorough lobbying activities. She moved to Belgium 15 years ago for family reasons and has always been interested in organising Mexican events. Besides the cultural events that she organises with a specific group of friends, she also has also made individual efforts to meet with European authorities to advocate for a political and social change in Mexico.

Tatiana is in her mid-forties and is very interested in development, social and poverty issues in Mexico. She studied fashion design and arrived in Belgium eight years ago with her family. Besides collaborating with an NGO in Mexico protecting indigenous people, she has decided to form an organisation in Belgium to help migrant women from Latin America.

Natalia, a 28-year-old graphic designer who has been living in Brussels since 2017, she is very interested in the protection and empowerment of indigenous people from Mexico. As a result, she organised several events to support María de Jesús Patricio Martínez, also known as Marichuy, an independent candidate for the presidential election in Mexico in 2018.

Raúl is from Oaxaca and moved to Belgium eight years ago with his family. He works as an IT-engineer and in his free time he organises political events or conferences to talk about Mexican politics, the situation of indigenous communities and the insecurity and violence affecting the whole country. From time to time, he collaborates with other Mexicans to organise fundraising private events. He usually collaborates with Eunice, a scientist concerned with the insecurity in Mexico and who moved to Belgium in 2011 with her partner to complete a PhD. What motivates her to engage in homeland politics is to raise awareness about the Mexican situation with her Belgian friends and family. Together with Carmen, a 40-year-old freelance graphic designer, they have organised several private events where they invite their friends and acquaintances to inform them about what is going on in their homeland and to collect funds to support specific social programmes.

Flor, a graphic designer in her mid-thirties now lives in Mexico, however when she lived in Belgium for four years, she was concerned about the social and political situation in her home country. She initiated the *#YoSoy132* movement[58] from the European capital using social media and organising demonstrations.

Gustavo has also protested and contested the Mexican authorities in Belgium. He is a PhD student who has lived abroad for six years. He started engaging in Mexican politics after the case of Ayotzinapa and prefers to protest through contentious individual actions instead of organising events collectively.

Susana is an entrepreneur from the south of Mexico who moved to Brussels 11 years ago for family reasons. She supports her Mexican friends and acquaintances in the organisation of political events because she worries about her family that lives in Mexico.

Fernanda also supports in the organisation and attendance of specific political events that are aligned with her interests and ideology, she arrived in Brussels 12 years ago after concluding an MBA in another European country.

Yolanda lives in Brussels since 2002, she is in her early forties and since she left Mexico, she has noticed that there has been a deterioration in her country of origin in terms of security, corruption, and poverty. She attended several political meetings in 2015 and 2016 and took the initiative to organise the Mexican community after the earthquake of the 19th of September 2017 to contribute to a disaster relief through remittances. These events inspired her and Leonor to organise meetings to get to know better the Mexican community in Brussels.

Leonor is a 32-year-old Mexican who moved to Europe with her husband. Before moving to Brussels, they lived in the south of France, where she learnt about agriculture. She holds an MA in Ecology but has only found short-term jobs such as babysitter, waitress and cooker.

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[58] The #YoSoy132 movement was a protest organised by students in Mexico to denounce the collusion between the two major TV groups, the economic elite and the former president Enrique Pena Nieto during the 2012 presidential elections campaign (Glasius and Pleyers, 2013).

Antonio has also had small and informal jobs in the construction industry, giving massages and cooking. He arrived in Brussels in 2011 as a tourist and overstayed his permit. He is aware of the social and security problems in Mexico and has thus participated and attended some Mexican political events.

As mentioned before, once I concluded conducting the semi-structured interviews in Belgium, I moved to France for two months to collect the data for my research in Paris. There, I met Emanuel, a 33-year-old journalist sharing a flat with a close friend. He holds an MA in journalism from a University in Spain but has had difficulties finding a permanent contract in France, and thus works with clients in Mexico. He has helped organise events concerning Mexican politics including demonstrations and an artistic exhibition.

Pedro also organises political demonstrations and conferences in support of Andres Manuel López Obrador, the current president of Mexico. He moved to Paris 20 years ago to study a master's degree in engineering. Nowadays he works as a Spanish teacher and has managed together with Armando to form a political branch of the Mexican political party MORENA (National Regeneration Movement) in France.

Armando is a political scientist enrolled in a PhD programme and giving classes in an engineering school in the south of Paris. He has lived in France on and off since 1993, when he was a student at university. From 2005 to 2010 he moved back to Mexico with his family but decided to return to Paris because of the level of violence in Tabasco, his home-state. Besides being two official representatives of MORENA in France, Armando and Pedro engage in Mexican politics through a Radio program, where they share their analysis and points of view on Mexican issues.

Enrique was also a member of MORENA France when he lived in Paris for two years when he was doing his PhD in History. He helped the organisation of several events and demonstrations in the *Place du Trocadero* and near the Mexican Embassy.

Also from MORENA France, I met Rosa, a scientist in her forties who arrived in Paris nine years ago for job purposes. Together with her husband, they participate in the planning and demonstrations organised by the group.

Marco is also an active member in MORENA France. He left Mexico in 1998 to study his PhD in the UK and then moved to Paris, where he has been living for the past 12 years. What motivates him to engage in homeland politics from France is to have an impact in the Mexican society through the media coverage of the activities organised by the group. He believes that the political symbolism of organising this type of events in Paris can trigger a social change by inspiring members of the Mexican society to join the movement back in Mexico.

Tomás is 35 years old and arrived in Paris 13 years ago. He is currently enrolled in a master's programme but works in a fast-food restaurant in the north of Paris. He has experience as a cook but would like to start a business in tourism. He stressed that he enjoys the social aspect of organising events and political gatherings because he likes to have a good time with Mexicans and Latin Americans.

Miguel is a 32-year-old Mexican architect who arrived in Paris four years ago. He became member of the *Collectif Ayotzinapa* through a friend. This group organises cultural activities, exhibitions, debates, political gatherings, and conferences to denounce the case of Ayotzinapa, the use of violence, and the to raise awareness about the human rights violations in Mexico and in other parts of the world. He enjoys organising these types of activities because he thinks that it is important to inform the French population about what is going on in Mexico. Moreover, he likes to share emotional and social moments with his teammates.

Martin is also a member of the *Collectif Ayotzinapa*. He is currently enrolled in a PhD programme and spends his free time reading the news from Mexico to keep track of the political environment in his homeland. He has lived in Paris for the past 8 years but only started engaging in politics after the case of Ayotzinapa in 2014.

Georgina, a 29-year-old PhD student was also outraged by the case of Ayotzinapa. Her first reaction was to write an article for a French newspaper to canalise her frustration and

denounce the Mexican authorities for their inaction. Today, she supports the *Collecif* as a translator or as an interpreter in the events that they organise.

Julia is also a PhD student. She is European, but she participates in the organisation of events in the *Collectif* because her closest friends are Mexican. She has visited Mexico a number of times and has developed a special interest to denounce the cases of extreme violence and human rights violations. She is mainly in charge of the public relations of the group and she is in constant communication with local and transnational NGOs based in Paris, organisations in Mexico and the media.

Lorena moved recently to the United States after living 14 years in Paris, were she studied a master's degree in urbanism. The case of Ayotzinapa sparked her desire to engage in homeland politics from abroad, therefore she decided to join the *Collectif Ayotzinapa*, where she helped in the logistics and coordination of the team.

Viviana has also been in charge of the coordination and organisation of the activities done by the *Collectif* and by a group of Zapatista sympathisers. She is 37 years old and recently finished her PhD in History. She has been living in France for the past 11 years, but she would like to go back to Mexico to start social programmes for development in marginal communities. She likes to organise different kind of political events, but she mostly enjoys demonstrations because she likes to scream and canalise her anger and pain of being abroad and not being able to participate in events in Mexico.

Andrea has been living in Paris for the past 18 years. She is in her early fifties and has managed to engage in Mexican politics through collective and individual actions. She believes that political activism should include relevant, transcendent, and symbolic messages. As a result, besides organising demonstrations, she enjoys including other repertoires of protest such as embroidering, pacific walks and addressing letters to Mexican authorities. Together with Laura, they organise a group of activists who embroider the names of the victims in Mexico since the declaration of war against drugs in 2006. Laura arrived in Paris six year ago after concluding her PhD in sciences in the UK. She is now married and enjoys taking care of her young son.

Antonia moved to Paris from Mexico for security reasons in 2008. She is in her forties and works in an administrative job in the centre of Paris. Her love for Mexico has inspired her to establish an NGO in Paris aiming to support local initiatives for development, indigenous groups and to defend human rights in her homeland. Together with a group of friends, they organise concerts, fundraising events, and demonstrations to support the Mexican society from abroad.

Roberto has supported Antonia in the organisation of these events. He is 64 years old and arrived in France in 1983. He currently works as a language teacher and decided to engage in homeland politics after the case of Ayotzinapa. What motivates him to organise activities are his feelings of anger and rage against the Mexican authorities. He usually supports Antonia translating documents or in the logistics of the events.

Karen arrived from Mexico very recently to start a master's degree in cinema. She is a professional dancer and decided to move to Paris to recover from the violence that she has witnessed in her homeland. Once in Paris she decided to organise a small event in support of Marichuy by collecting signatures to support her to become an official presidential candidate for the elections on July 2018.

Annex 3.
List of labels used in the data analysis (interviews)

1. Diaspora
2. Homeland
3. Hostland
4. Transnationalism
5. Reason to move
6. Strategies of mobilisation
7. Ideology
8. Resources
9. Material
10. Motivations to mobilise
11. Cultural artifacts/symbols
12. Relation with other Mexicans
13. Impact of mobilisation
14. Social background
15. Studies/Occupation
16. Political Awareness
17. Job conditions
18. Foreign Languages
19. Spanish
20. Experience Abroad
21. Local Politics
22. Plans for the Future
23. Media
24. Perception of insecurity
25. Organisation
26. Electoral Politics
27. Objects in the House
28. Personality
29. Political Symbolism
30. Moral Obligations/ Feelings
31. Arts and Politics
32. Earthquake
33. Technology (ICT)

Annex 4.
List of labels used in the data analysis (events)

1. Diaspora

2. Homeland

3. Hostland

4. Transnationalism

5. Repertoires

6. Ideology

7. Resources

8. Material

9. Motivations

10. Cultural Artifacts

11. Relation with Mexicans

12. Impact of mobilisation

13. Political Awareness

14. Strategies of Mobilisation

15. Foreign Language

16. Spanish

17. Experience Abroad

18. Local Politics

19. Media

20. Perception of Insecurity

21. Organisation

22. Electoral Politics

23. Political Symbolism

24. Moral obligation/Feelings

25. Arts and Politics

26. Atmosphere

27. Duration

Annex 5.
Résumé (en français)

Introduction et questions de recherche

Les populations migrantes ont le pouvoir de s'engager dans la politique de leur pays d'origine une fois qu'elles l'ont quitté. En effet, les migrants sont des agents ayant la capacité et l'aptitude à développer des stratégies transnationales pour répondre depuis l'étranger aux crises humanitaires et autres problèmes sociopolitiques survenus dans leur pays d'origine. Les migrants ont la possibilité de s'engager politiquement à travers des campagnes transnationales, des votes extraterritoriaux, des efforts de sensibilisation, des manifestations et même des performances artistiques. Afin de mettre en œuvre des stratégies politiques transnationales, les migrants doivent comprendre et s'adapter à différents contextes sociopolitiques et interagir avec des acteurs de différents espaces sociaux.

Cette thèse est une recherche multidisciplinaire dans les domaines de la sociologie et de la politique. Elle s'appuie sur du matériel ethnographique recueilli auprès de la communauté mexicaine de Bruxelles et de Paris pour répondre à la question de recherche suivante : comment les migrants mexicains en Europe s'engagent-ils dans la politique de leur pays d'origine ?

En examinant comment les migrants mexicains s'engagent dans la politique de leur pays d'origine, cette recherche avance trois idées principales. Premièrement, elle place les migrants au premier plan de l'analyse. Les migrants sont reconnus comme des individus avec des dimensions cognitives et émotionnelles qui décident quand et comment participer à la politique de leur pays d'origine depuis l'étranger. Deuxièmement, la recherche montre que les motivations et les décisions des migrants dépendent de leurs processus individuels de subjectivation (Pleyers 2016), que je définis comme la capacité d'une personne à définir sa propre identité politique et son engagement politique : les sujets réfléchissent à leurs expériences de vie, déterminent leur propre identité politique et ainsi développent leurs propres

stratégies originales de participation à la politique transnationale. Troisièmement, la recherche définit quatre espaces sociaux dans lesquels ils opèrent, à savoir le pays d'accueil, le pays d'origine, la diaspora et l´espace mondial.

Ces espaces influencent non seulement la décision des migrants de s'engager dans la politique transnationale, mais ils déterminent également leurs stratégies. En effet, les migrants sont des individus qui ne peuvent s'engager dans la politique transnationale que s'ils s'adaptent aux normes, créent des alliances avec des acteurs clés et trouvent des ressources propres à chacun des quatre espaces sociaux dans lesquels s'inscrivent.

Cette recherche contribue à une meilleure compréhension de la politique transnationale et des mouvements sociaux organisés par les communautés migrantes, principalement en introduisant la notion de « subjectivation » dans les études sur les migrations internationales. Ce concept, développé par des chercheurs sur les mouvements sociaux et − comme je le montrerai − largement absent des travaux sur la politique transnationale et les mobilisations diasporiques, rend compte du rôle prédominant des individus dans l'élaboration et la mise en œuvre des stratégies politiques transnationales. En particulier, ce concept permet de comprendre comment les migrants s'engagent dans la politique de leur pays d'origine en entreprenant des actions politiques créatives, tout en se détachant de leurs institutions étatiques.

L'étude du cas mexicain me permettra d'éclaircir les questions d'organisation politique et les dynamiques sociales entre les membres de la diaspora mexicaine habitant à Bruxelles et à Paris, et ainsi de déterminer comment les migrants développent des stratégies de mobilisation désinstitutionnalisées et originales, telles que les manifestations, les efforts de plaidoyer et les manifestations artistiques.

Le contexte spécifique d'insécurité au Mexique fait de ce pays un cas d'étude pertinent, en particulier de 2014 à 2018, période où j'ai recueilli les données pour cette recherche. En effet, depuis la militarisation et la « guerre contre la drogue » déclarée en 2006, le niveau de violence et les cas de violations des droits de l'homme au Mexique ont explosé et ont déclenché

l'engagement transnational des migrants mexicains habitant à l'étranger (Pérez-Armendáriz 2019). De décembre 2006 à fin 2015, plus de 150 000 personnes ont été tuées intentionnellement au Mexique (Open Society Foundations 2016). L'Office des Nations Unies contre la Drogue et le Crime a indiqué que, de 2007 à 2010, le Mexique a été le pays où le taux d'augmentation des homicides intentionnels a été le plus élevé. L'année 2017 a d'ailleurs été l'année la plus meurtrière des deux dernières décennies, avec un total de 29 000 meurtres (Pérez-Armendáriz 2019).

La « guerre » contre le crime organisé a créé un contexte d'insécurité ainsi qu'une escalade de la violence, de l'impunité et de la corruption dans tout le pays (Bailey 2014). En raison de ce contexte politique, les membres de la société civile mexicaine ont organisé des mouvements nationaux et transnationaux (par exemple #YoSoy132 en 2012 et Ayotzinapa en 2014) pour dénoncer l'incapacité du gouvernement mexicain à respecter l'État de droit et à assurer la sécurité de ses citoyens. Outre la volonté de la société mexicaine de dénoncer le contexte de violence et d'impunité qui touche leur pays, les Mexicains se sont également mobilisés de manière intensive après le séisme meurtrier de septembre 2017 et les élections présidentielles de juillet 2018. En résumé, les diverses raisons politiques qui ont déclenché la mobilisation politique de la société mexicaine montrent l'intérêt de considérer ce pays pour l'étude du transnationalisme politique. En effet, en examinant la diversité des causes politiques qui ont déclenché la mobilisation transnationale des migrants mexicains résidant à Bruxelles et à Paris (c'est-à-dire l'insécurité et la violence, un tremblement de terre et les élections), j'ai pu créer un cadre analytique systématique en me concentrant sur les actions et les processus entrepris par les migrants.

Cette recherche est également une contribution aux études sur les migrations par l'analyse de données empiriques originales recueillies au sein d'une communauté de migrants encore peu étudiée. Comme la plupart des migrants mexicains résident aux États-Unis et au Canada, seules quelques études portant sur cette population spécifique ont été menées dans d'autres zones géographiques. J'ai décidé de mener cette étude à Bruxelles et à Paris pour deux raisons principales. D'une part, le choix de Bruxelles est particulièrement pertinent en ce qui concerne

l'étude des mouvements politiques transnationaux en Europe. Considérée comme la capitale de l'Union européenne, Bruxelles accueille les sièges des principales institutions européennes et est donc un lieu privilégié pour organiser des manifestations et des pétitions au niveau européen. D'autre part, Paris est historiquement un pôle d'attraction pour les migrants latino-américains (Streckert 2012) : depuis plus d'un siècle, la capitale française attire des intellectuels, des hommes politiques et des membres de l'élite sociale latino-américaine, y compris des réfugiés des régimes militaires. En outre, Paris a été historiquement le siège de plusieurs mouvements politiques organisés par des migrants latino-américains et d'autres minorités, et représente donc une ville pertinente pour enrichir la collecte de données pour cette recherche.

L'objectif principal de cette recherche est donc de comprendre comment les migrants mexicains s'engagent dans la politique de leur pays d'origine. Ainsi, en plus de répondre à cette question principale, cette recherche permettra d'apporter des éléments de réponse aux sous-questions suivantes :

– quelles actions les migrants mexicains entreprennent-ils pour s'engager dans la politique de leur pays d'origine depuis l'étranger ?

– quels types d'activités et d'évènements politiques organisent-ils ?

– dans quels espaces sociopolitiques œuvrent-ils pour atteindre leurs objectifs politiques ?

Structure et chapitres de la thèse

Afin de répondre aux questions de recherche, cette thèse est organisée en cinq chapitres.

Chapitre 1 : Rapprochement entre les théories de la politique transnationale, de la mobilisation des diasporas et des mouvements sociaux

Le premier chapitre présente la littérature existante sur le transnationalisme politique (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003 ; Lafleur 2013 ; Délano et Gamlen 2014 ; Lestage 2015), la mobilisation des diasporas (Koinova 2017a, 2017b, 2017c) et les mouvements sociaux (Pleyers 2016 ; 2018). En joignant les études sur les migrations et celles sur les mouvements sociaux, je montre que le concept de subjectivité est utile pour comprendre les processus de décision individuels et l'organisation des mouvements sociaux transnationaux.

Le chapitre est organisé en trois sections. La première présente les contributions de la littérature sur les politiques transnationales et extraterritoriales. La deuxième passe en revue la littérature sur la mobilisation des diasporas et les mouvements sociaux transnationaux. La troisième présente la littérature sur la subjectivation et l'individualisation de l'activisme politique pour montrer que les migrants se détachent des institutions de l'État en créant de nouveaux espaces d'engagement politique transnational par rapport à la politique de leur pays d'origine. Tout au long de ce chapitre, je m'appuie sur des exemples tirés de mon travail sur le terrain pour illustrer l'importance de la reconnaissance de la position et du rôle des migrants au premier plan de l'organisation des mouvements sociaux transnationaux.

Il ressort que la littérature sur les études de migration a donné la priorité à l'utilisation du « Modèle de Processus Politique » de McAdam et al. (1996) pour analyser la mobilisation politique des populations migrantes et diasporiques. Néanmoins, la littérature la plus récente sur les mouvements sociaux privilégie une « approche ascendante » et insiste sur l'individualisation des mouvements sociaux. Les théories du mouvement alternatif de mondialisation (AGM), principalement développées par Pleyers, présentent quelques avancées pertinentes pour l'étude des populations migrantes s'engageant de l'étranger dans la politique

de leur pays d'origine. Premièrement, ces théories soulignent que les mouvements sociaux sont influencés et façonnés par des transformations sociales plus importantes, telles que la mondialisation et les nouvelles technologies. Deuxièmement, les théoriciens de l'AGM centrent leur analyse sur le niveau individuel et reconnaissent l'impact des initiatives autonomes et ascendantes. Troisièmement, cette littérature reconnait que certains militants ne ciblent plus les institutions, mais créent plutôt de nouveaux espaces de réflexion et d'engagement politique tout en renforçant leur capacité de subjectivation. Quatrièmement, cette approche insiste sur le fait que les militants organisent leurs mouvements en s'alignant « sur les valeurs alternatives de la voie de la subjectivité » (Pleyers 2010a). En d'autres termes, les sujets politiques privilégient une organisation horizontale, une forte participation, une rotation des tâches et le respect de la diversité (Pleyers 2010a). Enfin, l'approche de l'AGM reconnait le rôle essentiel des relations interpersonnelles et amicales dans le développement et l'organisation des mouvements sociaux.

L'organisation, la dynamique et les tactiques déployées par les migrants mexicains en Europe pour s'engager dans la politique de leur pays mettent en évidence l'importance d'examiner les théories de la subjectivation et de la créativité (Pleyers 2010a, 2017). Comme le montreront les exemples empiriques des chapitres 4 et 5 de cette thèse, les migrants habitant à Bruxelles et à Paris s'engagent dans la politique intérieure du Mexique depuis l'étranger : 1) en renforçant leurs processus individuels de subjectivation ; 2) en se détachant des institutions de l'État ; 3) en se concentrant sur des formes créatives de mobilisation politique ; 4) en créant de nouveaux espaces de réflexion, d'engagement politique et de socialisation.

Cependant, il est important de préciser que, même si les migrants mexicains ont donné la priorité aux formes subjectives et créatives de mobilisation (Pleyers 2010a) pour s'engager dans la politique de leur pays d'origine, ils n'ont pas complètement ignoré les canaux institutionnalisés de l'engagement politique.

En effet, les migrants mexicains ont également ciblé certaines organisations et acteurs internationaux pour atteindre des objectifs spécifiques, tels que diffuser leurs messages, trouver des alliés et faire pression sur le gouvernement mexicain dans le domaine politique

international. En s'engageant ainsi dans la politique de leur pays d'origine, ils deviennent des acteurs politiques transnationaux par les deux moyens décrits par Pleyers : « l'une axée sur la subjectivité et la créativité et l'autre sur la raison et la rationalité » (2010 : 12). Néanmoins, je ne conçois pas l'activisme politique des migrants comme le résultat de ces deux catégories bien définies et d'une approche dichotomique. Au contraire, je montre que les processus individuels de subjectivation des migrants leur permettent de réfléchir et de créer des initiatives politiques transnationales originales depuis de leurs pays d'accueil. En effet, grâce à l'analyse de leurs expériences politiques accumulées et de leurs trajectoires migratoires, les migrants mexicains ont pu exploiter les ressources, manipuler les normes et interagir avec des acteurs appartenant aux différentes sphères sociopolitiques mobilisées pour s'engager dans la politique de leur pays d'origine. En conséquence, je considère que l'individu – militant migrant – est au cœur de la mobilisation politique transnationale, car, à travers ses propres processus individuels de subjectivation, les acteurs parviennent à naviguer dans plusieurs espaces sociaux et politiques pour trouver des alliés et diffuser leurs messages, à créer des cellules horizontales de militantisme politique fondées sur les relations interpersonnelles, à entretenir des liens transnationaux avec leur pays d'origine et à adresser des demandes politiques à des acteurs institutionnels spécifiques. Par l´analyse critique de leurs expériences de vie pour définir leur identité politique et déterminer leurs stratégies d'engagement politique transnational dans de leur pays d'origine complexifiées par le fait d'habiter à l'étranger, s'opère une transformation permanente de la subjectivation chez ces migrants mexicains résidant à Bruxelles et à Paris.

Chapitre 2 : Sphères politiques de l'activisme transnational : représentation des espaces politiques utilisés par les migrants pour s'engager dans la politique de leur pays d'origine depuis l'étranger

Dans ce chapitre, je présente un cadre d'analyse original développé à partir de l'articulation des théories de la politique transnationale avec celles de la subjectivation, combinée avec l'analyse critique du matériel empirique que j'ai recueilli tout au long de mon travail sur le terrain. Il ressort de l'analyse de ces données que les migrants en tant qu'individus sont à la base de la

politique transnationale. En conséquence, j'ai développé mon cadre théorique selon trois axes : celui de l'individu au premier plan de l'analyse de la politique transnationale ; celui des processus de subjectivation politique des migrants influencés par leurs expériences accumulées dans de multiples sphères politiques ; celui de l'engagement des migrants dans la politique transnationale une fois qu'ils ont réussi à forger des alliances avec des acteurs spécifiques, à manipuler les normes et à exploiter les ressources ancrées dans les sphères politiques du pays d'accueil, du pays d'origine, de la diaspora et de l'espace mondial.

Dans ce cadre, il est possible de comprendre comment leurs expériences, émotions, valeurs et intérêts individuels déclenchent et façonnent la mobilisation politique transnationale des migrants. En outre, en plaçant les migrants et leur subjectivité politique au centre de l'analyse, je reconnais leur volonté et leur capacité à développer des formes innovantes et créatives de mobilisation transnationale sans avoir besoin exclusivement d'institutions formelles ou d'organisations locales. Néanmoins, il est important de noter que les migrants sont influencés par des contextes sociopolitiques différents dans leur pays d'origine, dans le pays où ils résident et dans d'autres endroits auxquels ils se sentent attachés. En outre, les migrants, comme tout autre acteur politique, sont exposés à des idéologies mondiales qui peuvent influencer leur activisme politique. Par conséquent, je soutiens que la subjectivité politique des migrants et leurs stratégies de mobilisation transnationale ne sont pas seulement modelées par leurs expériences accumulées, mais aussi par leurs interconnexions soutenues avec un système complexe de normes, d'acteurs et de ressources ancrés dans les sphères de mobilisation politique dans lesquelles ils interviennent.

Les migrants deviennent des acteurs politiques et s'engagent dans la politique de leur pays d'origine en fonction de leurs motivations individuelles, y compris les dimensions cognitives et émotionnelles. Leur personnalité, leurs compétences et leur créativité sont des éléments clés pour comprendre comment ils développent des stratégies de mobilisation transnationale. Concrètement, les migrants tentent d'inclure leurs capacités et leurs compétences dans la conception des stratégies de mobilisation.

La sphère du pays d'accueil est l'espace où, selon des normes spécifiques, les migrants interagissent avec les acteurs locaux tels que les sympathisants, les organisations locales, les partis politiques, les autorités et les médias. Ils parviennent à créer des alliances avec des acteurs locaux qui les aident à trouver les ressources nécessaires (par exemple, l'information) pour organiser des évènements politiques et diffuser leurs messages politiques.

La sphère du pays d'origine est l'espace où les normes, les acteurs et les ressources du pays natal influencent la mobilisation politique transnationale des migrants. Cette sphère concerne également l'impact de divers acteurs, tels que les États d'émigration, les organisations, les médias, les membres de la famille, les réseaux amicaux qui donnent accès à des informations et à des ressources facilitant leur mobilisation, inspirant leurs stratégies de mobilisation et alimentant leur volonté de s'engager dans la politique transnationale.

La sphère diasporique est l'espace où l'identité, la culture et les normes communes rassemblent les migrants à l'étranger. L'identification des groupes et la création de liens entre eux augmentent la possibilité de trouver des alliés politiques. En effet, les expériences migratoires similaires, leur ethnicité commune et la vision idéalisée du pays d'origine pourraient accélérer la cristallisation des mouvements politiques transnationaux.

Enfin, la sphère mondiale est l'espace où les acteurs et les normes internationales influencent les mouvements transnationaux des populations migrantes (par exemple, l'Union européenne ou Amnesty International). Des normes acceptées par tous, telles que la défense des droits de l'homme, créent une plateforme commune entre les acteurs politiques du monde entier et améliorent leur accès à davantage d'informations et de ressources pour lancer ou soutenir des mouvements politiques.

Ce cadre comble une lacune théorique dans l'étude des migrants qui s'engagent dans la politique de leur pays d'origine en introduisant les processus individuels de subjectivation, généralement minimisés dans les études sur les migrations internationales. En retour, ce cadre contribue aux outils d'analyse actuels dans les mouvements sociaux en reconnaissant qu'il y a une multiplication des espaces sociopolitiques lors de l'étude de la mobilisation politique des

populations migrantes. En effet, les théories des mouvements sociaux soulignent l'importance de conceptualiser les niveaux d'analyse national, individuel et mondial, mais je soutiens que, pour fournir une analyse exhaustive des dynamiques et des motivations derrière l'activisme transnational organisé par les populations migrantes, il est crucial d'inclure les niveaux d'analyse diasporique et du pays d'accueil, car ceux-ci mettent en évidence les dynamiques spécifiques liées aux expériences migratoires.

Chapitre 3 : Méthodologie

Ce chapitre présente les méthodes utilisées pour la conception de la recherche, la collecte des données et leur analyse. La première section étudie l'immersion dans le travail de terrain comme un processus de négociation entre l'ethnographe et les participants. Je présente d'abord mon approche en tant que chercheuse interprétative (Schwartz-Shea et Yanow 2012), puis les relations que j'ai établies sur le terrain. La deuxième section présente l'échantillonnage des données et les participants à cette recherche. La troisième section se concentre sur ma position sur le terrain et sur le retour réflexif que cette position implique. Enfin, la quatrième grande section se concentre sur le traitement et l'analyse des données, en mettant l'accent sur les questions éthiques soulevées par cette recherche.

Pour cette recherche, j'ai effectué 41 entretiens, soit 23 à Bruxelles (14 femmes et 9 hommes) et 18 à Paris (9 femmes et 9 hommes). Les personnes interrogées ont vécu à l'étranger pendant 10,8 ans en moyenne et ont pour la plupart suivi des études supérieures.

Cette recherche ethnographique m'a amenée à adopter plusieurs rôles, par exemple, celui de photographe, de musicienne ou de brodeuse. L'approche interprétative implique en effet une flexibilité de la part du chercheur (Schwartz-Shea et Yanow 2012), qui se caractérise par différents degrés et types d'engagement (Williams et al. 1992 ; Jansson et Nikolaidou 2013) lors de l'observation participante des évènements politiques auxquels j'ai assisté. J'ai dû construire une relation équilibrée avec mes interlocuteurs pour pouvoir collecter des données qui m'ont

permis de comprendre leurs motivations, les dynamiques et les stratégies de leur mobilisation politique transnationale.

Il est ainsi crucial, pendant la collecte des données et l'observation des participants, de prêter attention au langage corporel, aux expressions faciales et au ton de la voix pour anticiper tout malaise et atténuer toute confrontation qui pourrait mettre en péril la relation entre le chercheur et ses interviewés.

Selon la littérature (Beaud et Weber 2010 ; Emerson, Fretz et Shaw 2011), il est important que les chercheurs observent et rédigent des notes lors du travail sur le terrain 1) en suivant l'ordre chronologique des évènements ; 2) en dessinant un diagramme pour situer les personnes, les objets et la répartition de l'espace ; 3) en écrivant explicitement ce qu'ils ont fait, entendu et ressenti, notamment à l'occasion d'évènements dramatiques ; 4) en fournissant une analyse provisoire. Pour garder une trace de toutes ces informations, il est important d'être systématique et rigoureux en prenant des notes sur le terrain. Cela permet au chercheur de recueillir les mêmes informations à chaque évènement, ce qui sera crucial pour l'analyse des données.

J'ai assisté aux 55 évènements comprenant des rassemblements politiques, des manifestations et des festivals artistiques, gardant à chaque fois une trace des éléments que je considérais comme significatifs, comme le placement des objets et des personnes, les comportements et les activités de mes interviewés, ainsi que leurs interactions entre eux et avec moi.

J'effectuais la transcription dès le lendemain, en prêtant une attention particulière au ton de la voix de la personne qui parlait et en consignant les informations et documents liés à ces évènements.

J'ai traité mes données en utilisant deux techniques dans les études qualitatives : la microanalyse et l'étiquetage (Emerson, Fretz et Shaw 2011 ; Lejeune 2014). La première technique est simplement un exercice descriptif où le chercheur lit et examine en détail toutes ses notes de terrain (dans mon cas, phrase par phrase) pour prêter attention à deux séries de questions principales. La première série se concentre sur les acteurs rencontrés sur le terrain et leur

comportement : qui sont-ils ? Comment se présentent-ils ? Quels sont leurs gestes ? Que disent-ils ? La seconde série porte sur les dynamiques sociales observées sur le terrain : comment les évènements se sont-ils déroulés ? Quelles sont les spécificités des évènements ? Quelle est la relation entre les personnes interrogées ? Comment le chercheur est-il perçu sur le terrain (Lejeune 2014) ?

La deuxième technique concerne l'élaboration de catégories relatives aux espaces, aux stratégies, aux relations, aux perceptions, aux normes et aux émotions que les migrants mexicains ont mobilisés pour organiser des mouvements politiques transnationaux. J'ai ainsi créé 27 catégories pour analyser les évènements et 33 catégories pour analyser les entretiens (annexes 3 et 4).

C'est donc en mêlant à la fois la microanalyse et les techniques d'étiquetage que j'ai pu construire les deux typologies d'analyse qui structurent cette thèse.

Chapitre 4 : Réponses transnationales à des enjeux politiques dans le pays d'origine

Afin de comprendre comment les migrants mexicains deviennent des sujets politiques et s'engagent dans la politique de leur pays d'origine depuis l'étranger, ce chapitre se concentre sur l'analyse des interconnexions entre l'individu et la sphère de la diaspora, d'une part, et entre l'individu et la sphère du pays d'origine, d'autre part. Je m'attache en particulier à décrire la manière dont les militants exploitent les ressources, utilisent les normes et interagissent avec les acteurs des quatre sphères d'action politique.

À cette fin, ce chapitre est divisé en trois sections principales. La première analyse les processus politiques de subjectivation ainsi que la formation et la configuration des groupes de militants mexicains à Bruxelles et à Paris. La deuxième explore la manière dont les migrants mexicains répondent aux évènements survenus dans leur pays d'origine depuis l'étranger, en présentant deux études de cas spécifiques concernant le tremblement de terre de 2017 et l'emprisonnement considéré injuste du frère d'une des personnes interrogées pour cette

recherche. Enfin, la dernière section se concentre sur l'engagement des migrants mexicains dans les élections de leur pays d'origine, en examinant les différentes stratégies adoptées par les militants de Bruxelles et de Paris pour participer aux élections mexicaines de 2018.

Dans ses études sur les « alter-activistes », Pleyers montre que les processus individuels de subjectivation dépendent, d'une part, du rejet des normes et des idéologies établies dérivées du système mondial néolibéral et, d'autre part, des processus d'autoréflexion au cours desquels les acteurs s'efforcent de mettre en accord leurs idéaux politiques avec leurs actions quotidiennes (Pleyers 2016). Enfin, les alter-activistes donnent la priorité à leur autonomie et aux initiatives ascendantes en se concentrant sur l'évaluation et l'autoréalisation de leurs propres pratiques (Pleyers 2016 ; 2018).

Dans une certaine mesure, le processus de subjectivation des militants mexicains de Bruxelles et de Paris est similaire à celui décrit par Pleyers (2016). Ceux qui s'engagent dans des activités politiques ont montré un profond désaccord avec les normes et les institutions mexicaines qu'ils estiment imprégnées d'impunité et de corruption. Leur désapprobation et leur évaluation des normes et institutions mexicaines reposent sur l'évaluation critique de leurs expériences antérieures dans le système démocratique mexicain et sur les informations qu'ils obtiennent à partir du Mexique.

Les processus de subjectivation (Pleyers 2016) des migrants mexicains s'accompagnent de processus profonds d'autoréflexion qui ne peuvent être détachés d'une dimension émotionnelle renforcée par leur expérience migratoire et une mémoire idéalisée de leur pays d'origine (Cohen 2008) en tant que membres de la diaspora mexicaine.

La décision des migrants de s'engager dans la politique du Mexique relève de processus individuels de subjectivation ancrés dans la remise en question des normes et des institutions politiques mexicaines, dans l'attachement émotionnel soutenu à leur pays d'origine et dans leurs aspirations émancipatrices. Dans mon travail sur le terrain, j'ai observé que c'est après avoir pris la décision de s'engager dans la politique de leur pays d'origine que les migrants mexicains ont commencé à organiser des initiatives individuelles et collectives.

Les migrants mexicains ont formé des groupes d'activisme semi-structurés et poreux qui s'appuient sur la confiance et l'amitié pour s'engager dans la politique intérieure du Mexique depuis Bruxelles et Paris. Je qualifie ces groupes de semi-structurés (par exemple : le Collectif Ayotzinapa, Bordamos por La Paz, les musiciens Jaraneros, etc.), car ils n'ont pas de structure hiérarchique et leurs membres n'ont pas de rôle fixe. En outre, ces groupes sont poreux parce qu'ils sont ouverts à de nouveaux membres, à condition que ces derniers soient compatibles avec les dynamiques, les acteurs et les normes intra-groupales. Enfin, je considère que ces groupes sont définis de manière vague parce qu'ils sont ouverts à la collaboration avec d'autres collectivités mexicaines semi-définies. Cette collaboration est simplifiée lorsqu'un militant mexicain est membre de plusieurs groupes et agit comme un nœud pour relier deux collectivités semi-structurées.

La perception qu'ont les militants mexicains de leurs pairs et de leur propre personnalité a eu un impact sur les dynamiques inter et intra-groupales au sein de la diaspora mexicaine. Dans un premier temps, les perceptions négatives et la distance entre certains militants ont conduit à un manque de collaboration et de confiance entre les membres de la diaspora mexicaine. Dans un deuxième temps, ce manque de confiance et d'appréciation personnelle envers certains activistes mexicains a eu un impact sur leur façon de s'organiser, car ils ont préféré collaborer principalement avec leurs amis pour éviter tout malentendu ou tout conflit.

L'amitié et la confiance sont deux éléments cruciaux qui influencent l'organisation des militants mexicains à Bruxelles et à Paris. Ils nouent avec les autres membres de leur diaspora de bonnes amitiés qui sont renforcées par les normes culturelles communes de leur pays d'origine. Néanmoins, l'établissement de bonnes relations et d'amitiés peut être entravé par des perceptions négatives et le choc de leurs propres personnalités. Outre la dynamique de groupe, l'organisation des activités politiques transnationales est également déterminée par la personnalité et les intérêts individuels de chaque migrant.

Dans la première section de ce chapitre, je souligne que les migrants mexicains s'engagent dans la politique de leur pays d'origine par le biais de processus individuels de subjectivation. Une fois qu'ils se sont associés à des acteurs en qui ils ont confiance et qui les aident à naviguer

dans les normes sociopolitiques et à obtenir des ressources, ils arrivent à organiser leurs activités transnationales. L'amitié et la confiance sont donc deux valeurs (normes) intra-diasporiques fondamentales constituant les petits groupes d'activisme formés par les migrants mexicains résidant en Europe. En outre, cette section montre que les migrants mexicains ont tendance à aligner leurs valeurs et leurs compétences sur leur militantisme politique.

La deuxième section présente deux exemples de mobilisation liée aux évènements mexicains (aide aux victimes du tremblement de terre et défense d'un accusé). Dans les deux cas, les migrants de Bruxelles ont contacté des acteurs clé de leurs réseaux amicaux pour concevoir une stratégie, tout en exploitant les ressources nécessaires dans de multiples sphères politiques, ce qui leur a permis de collecter des fonds.

La troisième section se concentre sur l'engagement transnational politique électoral, une question considérée principalement par les experts en migration internationale comme une forme d'engagement politique formelle et institutionnalisée. Je montre que, à travers des processus individuels de subjectivation, les migrants mexicains ont pu s'impliquer dans la période électorale de 2018 depuis Bruxelles et Paris. Même si leur activisme politique était limité par les normes mexicaines et dans une certaine mesure par les normes belges et françaises, les migrants mexicains ont pu développer des formes et des espaces créatifs de mobilisation politique, notamment une Posada (fête en décembre), un rassemblement de signatures et une lecture de poésie.

Chapitre 5 : Engagement dans la politique mexicaine depuis les pays d'accueil

Dans ce chapitre, je montre que les migrants mexicains peuvent également s'engager dans les affaires politiques de leur pays en collaborant avec des acteurs des sphères politiques mondiale, de la diaspora et du pays d'origine. J'examine aussi comment les migrants mexicains exploitent les ressources (principalement le capital social et le savoir-faire politique disponibles) dans les différentes sphères politiques afin d'organiser des activités transnationales. En outre, je montre

que les acteurs et les normes de ces différentes sphères politiques ont un impact sur les stratégies de mobilisation transnationale des migrants. Tout au long du chapitre, j'analyse les exemples empiriques que j'ai recueillis dans mon travail de terrain pour montrer l'importance de placer l'individu et ses processus de subjectivation au premier plan de la mobilisation politique transnationale des migrants. En effet, les migrants mexicains sont en mesure de réfléchir à leurs expériences antérieures et de développer des initiatives autonomes et horizontales de mobilisation transnationale.

Ce chapitre est divisé en trois grandes sections. La première analyse comment les migrants mexicains s'adaptent aux normes européennes pour s'engager dans la politique mexicaine depuis l'étranger. La deuxième se concentre sur l'étude des synergies que les migrants mexicains ont développées avec les acteurs locaux et mondiaux. Enfin, la troisième met l'accent sur une des stratégies d'activisme politique transnational des migrants mexicains, en l'occurrence l'utilisation des représentations artistiques.

Aussi bien à Bruxelles qu'à Paris, les militants ont dû s'approprier les normes implicites et explicites des activités politiques et des relations avec les autorités européennes (par exemple, déclaration en préfecture ou préparation logistique). Les relations créées entre les migrants mexicains et des acteurs européens ont facilité la participation des militants mexicains à certaines activités de leur pays d'origine.

Selon la nature de l'évènement, les militants mexicains adaptent la forme et l'intensité de leur engagement politique. Parfois, ils dirigent l'ensemble de l'organisation des évènements (initiative, logistique et diffusion), parfois, ils jouent le rôle d'assistants et de nœuds de contact entre les visiteurs venus du Mexique et les acteurs européens locaux. En d'autres termes, les militants politiques mexicains en Europe peuvent servir de pont entre leur pays d'origine et leur pays d'accueil, puisqu'ils ont accumulé le savoir-faire pour organiser des évènements et inviter les personnes nécessaires à leur bon déroulement.

Les alliances développées avec des acteurs belges et français ont élargi le champ politique des migrants mexicains et leur capacité à s'engager dans la politique mexicaine lors d'évènements

organisés dans leurs pays d'accueil respectifs. Bien que les synergies avec les acteurs locaux aient déclenché et permis l'activisme politique transnational des activistes mexicains, les migrants mexicains vivant en France et en Belgique ont également développé des liens importants avec les membres de la diaspora latino-américaine.

Les relations personnelles entre les activistes mexicains et les membres de la diaspora latino-américaine leur permettent d'avoir accès à plus de ressources, de capital social et de stratégies pour diffuser leurs messages politiques. Les relations personnelles entre les migrants mexicains et les membres de la diaspora latino-américaine, qui sont devenues dans la plupart des cas essentielles pour la conception et le déploiement de stratégies transnationales d'organisation politique, sont le résultat d'amitiés qui ont pris naissance dans des cadres tant publics que privés. Ces amitiés ont été facilitées par le partage de codes et de normes culturels communs aux migrants mexicains et aux autres migrants latino-américains, qui transcendent leur nationalité.

En outre, les alliances avec des acteurs intégrés dans la sphère politique mondiale ont été utiles aux militants mexicains pour s'engager dans la politique mexicaine : en s'associant avec ces acteurs de la sphère mondiale, les militants mexicains ont accès à un public plus large pour diffuser leurs messages politiques et, grâce à ces alliances, ils utilisent les normes et exploitent des ressources au niveau de la sphère politique mondiale. Enfin, le symbolisme politique résultant de la collaboration avec des acteurs mondiaux a eu un impact sur la légitimité et la réputation des groupes mexicains qui s'engagent dans la politique mexicaine depuis l'Europe.

Les migrants mexicains sont conscients de la symbolique politique et de la pertinence d'établir des synergies avec des organisations internationales. Ils apprécient la création de ces réseaux mondiaux de défense des droits, parce qu'ils ont accès à davantage de ressources, de capital social et des moyens pratiques pour organiser leurs évènements. En effet, grâce à ce type de liens, les migrants mexicains en Europe ont pu légitimer leurs luttes politiques et diffuser leurs messages auprès d'un public plus large attiré par la réputation de leurs partenaires mondiaux dans leurs pays d'accueil respectifs.

Enfin, les militants mexicains de Belgique et de France utilisent les pratiques artistiques comme outils pour s'engager politiquement depuis l'étranger. Grâce à des représentations artistiques (musique, théâtre, danse et peinture), les migrants mexicains ont pu réinterpréter les représentations culturelles de leur pays d'origine et les adapter dans leur pays d'accueil pour se mobiliser au niveau transnational. Les migrants mexicains se rendent compte de l'intérêt d'utiliser l'art dans la mobilisation politique, car l'originalité de leurs représentations artistiques attire les acteurs ancrés dans leur pays d'accueil. En outre, les stratégies basées sur l'art leur permettent également de renforcer leur identité culturelle en tant que membres de la diaspora mexicaine, tout en créant des espaces de réflexion politique et de socialisation.

Les migrants prennent en considération les acteurs qu'ils connaissent ou qu'ils peuvent atteindre, les normes qu'ils peuvent utiliser pour soutenir leur cause, et les ressources qu'ils peuvent exploiter et adapter à leur cause politique transnationale. Ils ont ainsi adapté leurs compétences personnelles pour initier des formes créatives de protestation où, en plus d'exprimer leurs revendications politiques, ils ont réussi à développer des espaces de dialogue qui renforcent les processus individuels de subjectivation politique.

Conclusions

À partir de questions portant sur la manière dont les migrants mexicains s'engagent dans la politique de leur pays depuis l'étranger, cette recherche présente deux contributions théoriques aux études sur les migrations et, en particulier, sur l'activité politique transnationale.

Premièrement, cette thèse introduit la notion de subjectivation pour éclairer les processus individuels dans lesquels sont pris les migrants en s'engageant dans la politique du pays d'origine depuis l'étranger. Jusqu'à présent, le concept de « subjectivation », développé principalement dans la sociologie française et dans l'étude des mouvements sociaux, a été absent des études sur la mobilisation des diasporas et la politique transnationale. Dans cette thèse, je montre l'utilité d'introduire ce concept dans l'étude des politiques transnationales en plaçant le migrant (individu) au premier plan de l'analyse. J'ai ainsi pu comprendre comment

les migrants s'engagent dans des politiques non institutionnelles et non électorales, telles que les manifestations, les mouvements sociaux et les pratiques artistiques.

Deuxièmement, cette thèse présente un cadre analytique original qui permet de saisir les espaces sociaux dans lesquels les migrants opèrent et qui les influencent pour devenir des sujets politiques transnationaux. En effet, ils sont parties prenantes de quatre sphères politiques de mobilisation (pays d'accueil, pays d'origine, diaspora, espace mondial).

Ce cadre est utile parce qu'il fournit un outil d'analyse systématique des interactions entretenues par les migrants et les autres acteurs dans d'autres espaces politiques qui influencent leurs stratégies et pratiques politiques transnationales. En outre, ce cadre prend en compte les normes explicites et implicites qui régissent les différents espaces : ceux-ci, d'une part, influencent l'identité politique des migrants et, d'autre part, délimitent leurs stratégies de mobilisations politiques.

En tant que membres d'espaces politiques multiples, les migrants sont exposés à de multiples normes qu'ils doivent comprendre et adapter pour atteindre leurs objectifs politiques. Enfin, ce cadre prend en compte les différentes ressources que les migrants utilisent et intègrent dans leurs initiatives politiques transnationales.

En me concentrant sur une population de petite taille, j'ai réussi à identifier pleinement les migrants mexicains qui orchestrent les activités politiques transnationales. En m'engageant avec un petit groupe de militants, j'ai pu recueillir des données exhaustives sur tous les acteurs clés qui se mobilisent pour la politique mexicaine depuis Bruxelles et Paris. En effet, j'ai pu assister à presque toutes les manifestations politiques organisées par la communauté mexicaine à Bruxelles et à Paris pendant la période de collecte des données (2014-2018) et j'ai pu interroger la plupart des militants politiques qui ont lancé un mouvement ou une manifestation liée à la politique mexicaine. Enfin, en analysant la communauté des migrants mexicains en Europe, j'ai mis en lumière les différentes stratégies politiques développées par les membres politisés de la diaspora mexicaine dans une zone géographique peu étudiée. En effet, la plupart des études de la diaspora mexicaine ont été menées en Amérique du Nord. Ainsi, en me

concentrant sur deux capitales européennes, j'ai contribué à l'étude de migrants mexicains pionniers, ayant des profils très différents et appartenant à une communauté immigrante plus restreinte, et donc à l'élargissement des connaissances sur la diaspora mexicaine en Europe.

Cette recherche présente une perspective originale sur la façon d'étudier la politique transnationale en plaçant l'individu (au niveau micro) au premier plan de l'analyse et en se concentrant sur les processus individuels de subjectivation. Bien que cela m'ait permis de comprendre comment les migrants mexicains décident de s'engager dans la politique de leur pays d'origine, comment ils interagissent avec d'autres migrants mexicains en Europe et comment ils déterminent leurs stratégies politiques, avant de conclure, j'aimerais m'arrêter sur les limites de cette recherche et envisager des pistes pour de futures recherches.

Comme je l'ai dit précédemment, cette recherche qualitative a analysé une petite communauté de migrants en Europe, une étude quantitative serait donc très complexe à mener. Néanmoins, afin de mieux montrer la pertinence des théories de subjectivation dans les études sur la migration et l'avantage d'un cadre conceptuel articulant quatre sphères de mobilisation politique pour étudier la politique transnationale, il pourrait être intéressant d'analyser la façon dont les Mexicains s'engagent dans la politique du pays d'origine à partir d'autres villes européennes comme Londres.

Une autre question qui n'a pas été développée dans le cadre de cette recherche est l'impact des mobilisations politiques organisées à l'étranger sur la politique mexicaine. Même si cette recherche n'a pas abordé cette question spécifique, je dirais que les sphères politiques de mobilisation pourraient représenter un outil d'analyse intéressant pour répondre davantage à cette question, malgré la difficulté d'une telle évaluation.

Le cadre développé dans cette thèse contribue non seulement à la compréhension des individus qui s'engagent dans la politique transnationale, mais aussi à la reconnaissance des multiples espaces sociaux qu'ils traversent et manipulent. Ainsi, au-delà de la portée de cette question de recherche spécifique, ce cadre est suffisamment polyvalent pour remplacer des dichotomies rigides telles que « politique électorale » vs « politique non électorale », « politique

institutionnalisée » vs « politique non institutionnalisée » et « mouvements traditionnels » vs « mouvements alter-activistes », et mieux comprendre l'importance croissante de l'activisme en réseau.

Je conclurai en suggérant d'intégrer, bien que cette thèse soit basée sur la théorie politique et sociologique, des outils d'analyse issus de la psychologique sociale ou phénoménologique afin de mieux comprendre comment les migrants prennent la décision de s'engager dans la politique de leurs pays d'origine et dans quelle mesure cette décision dépend de leurs émotions, perceptions ou valeurs.

En effet, puisque la migration internationale est un phénomène complexe et interdisciplinaire, il est pertinent de reconnaitre que des recherches plus poussées sur le transnationalisme politique, axées sur le niveau individuel et le comportement humain, pourraient bénéficier des théories développées en psychologie sociale et dans d'autres sciences humaines telles que la philosophie. En outre, en utilisant ce type d'outils d'analyse, nous serions en mesure de mieux comprendre la nature progressive et imparfaite des processus individuels de subjectivation – processus par lesquels les acteurs politiques tentent d'aligner leurs valeurs sur leurs actions quotidiennes, tout en faisant face à des contradictions et des incohérences dans leur comportement.

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