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Case of the Mexican diplomats in Vienna and
Barcelona.

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Abstract

English

Diplomats are privileged migrants. However, their type of migration also entails certain hardships and rewards that have barely been academically explored. Their lives take place simultaneously between different countries at the same time, as their professional and personal interactions go beyond only one location and a single time zone. Supported by transnational theory and through qualitative interviews to Mexican diplomats working at the Embassy of Mexico in Vienna and at the Consulate of Mexico in Barcelona, several aspects of their lives are revealed as bearers of either significant hurdle or significant benefit in the way they carry on their day to day, as well as how they understand themselves as individuals. They live unconventional lives, as they constantly renegotiate identifications and connections towards their home country as well as towards their ever-changing receiving country.

Keywords: diplomat, privileged migration, transnational, cross-border experience, Mexico, connections, identifications, multi-locality awareness.

Español

Los diplomáticos son migrantes privilegiados. Sin embargo su tipo de migración también implica ciertas dificultades y recompensas que muy poco se han explorado académicamente. Sus vidas tienen lugar simultáneamente en diferentes países al mismo tiempo, ya que sus interacciones profesionales y personales van más allá de un solo lugar y un único huso horario. Con respaldo de la teoría transnacional y por medio de entrevistas cualitativas a diplomáticos mexicanos que trabajan en la Embajada de México en Viena y en el Consulado de México en Barcelona, se han revelado varios aspectos de sus vidas ya sea como obstáculos significativos o como beneficios significativos en su forma de llevar adelante su día a día, así como en la forma en que se entienden como individuos. Tienen vidas poco convencionales, ya que continuamente renegocian identificaciones y conexiones hacia su país de origen, así como hacia su país receptor en constante cambio.

Palabras clave: diplomático, migración privilegiada, transnacional, experiencia transfronteriza, México, identificaciones, conciencia de multilocalidad.

Deutsch

Diplomaten sind privilegierte Migranten. Allerdings beinhaltet ihr Migrationstyp sowohl Hürden, als auch Belohnungen, die akademisch sehr wenig ausgeforscht wurden. Deren Leben passiert mehr oder weniger zur selben Zeit an zwei verschiedenen Ort. Das persönliche und berufliche Zusammenspiel streckt sich hingegen nur über einen Ort und die selbe Zeitzone. Unterstützt von transnationaler Theorie und durch qualitativ geführte Interviews mit mexikanischen Diplomaten, welche in der mexikanischen Botschaft in Wien und im mexikanischen Konsulat in Barcelona beschäftigt sind, deckt die vorliegende Studie einige Aspekte deren Lebens dar. Zum einen sind sie Vermittler einer bedeutenden Hürde und zum anderen Vermittler eines wesentlichen Nutzens. Dies geschieht insofern, indem sie sich von Tag zu Tag weiterentwickeln und sich somit als Individuen sehen. Ihr unkonventionelles Leben zeichnet sich aus, indem sie sich mit dem Heimatland, als auch mit dem ständig ändernden Bezugsland jedes Mal neu identifizieren müssen.

Stichwort: Diplomat, privilegierte Migration, transnational, grenzübergreifende Erfahrung, Mexiko, Verbindungen, Identifikationen, multi-lokale Bewusstsein.

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I. INTRODUCTION

When talking about international movements of people, the word globalization might immediately come to mind. However, international migration is not an invention of the late twentieth century, nor even of modernity in its twin guises of capitalism and colonialism. Migrations have been part of human history from the earliest times (Castells & Miller, 2003: 4); that is how, in the first place, the different geographical areas of our planet became populated. Nevertheless globalization has indeed induced significant change in international migration patterns due to the proliferation of transnational networks that link people from one country to another.

Migration movements take many forms: people migrate as manual workers, highly-qualified specialists, entrepreneurs, refugees or as family members of previous migrants (Castells & Miller, 2003: 3). However, not all kinds of migration have been contemplated in the migration studies spectrum. The case of diplomatic migration seems to be floating in a theoretical limbo, considering that it has different causes and motivations than traditional migration. It is a form of privileged migration, yet in stark contrast with the ones studied so far: skilled workers, sojourners, students and retirees. Hence it requires a specific academic consideration.

As an intern at the Embassy of Mexico in Vienna, I started to notice comments, jokes, and attitudes related to “what being Mexican is” among my colleagues. I started to reflect if I was somehow that kind of Mexican they were talking about and in a parallel manner reflecting whether or not I agreed with those comments. Then I realized that even though I had travelled a lot and lived abroad for a while during my bachelor studies, the majority of my life had taken place in Mexico; while many of my colleagues had years and years of living abroad and might only go for short holidays to Mexico, if lucky, once year. It was then when I realized that those diplomats did not perform the idea and feelings of being Mexican in the same way as I did or as of others I had seen in Mexico. These people at the Embassy seemed to have a different way of

negotiating the self through a series of exchanges that made possible for their lives to intertwine between Mexico and Austria.

The relevance of this project is found precisely on that previous observation. In the world today, where understanding movements of people is so significant socially, politically, economically and culturally; paying attention to the different types of transnational ways of living is fundamental. The diplomats' experiences forms part of one of the many different facades of what we understand as transnationalism.

Therefore, the unit of analysis of this research project is the diplomatic agent or diplomat. Consequently it constitutes a person that represents a national government in a diplomatic mission in another country. For this specific project when I use the term diplomat, I refer to the person that is currently credited in Vienna or Barcelona to be representing the Mexican government.

As explained before, these two cities have different status in terms of diplomatic representation, however, that is not relevant for this study since the subjects of study are the people working there as representatives of Mexico regardless of the functions that each mission carries on and the power they have. Perhaps the only relevant issue that the differentiation between missions brings about, is the number of diplomats working on each one of the offices. It means that the universes of study are different in size from one place to the other. Nonetheless, that doesn't impact the quality of the study, as all those diplomats belong to the same space of study.

The evident geographical differentiations between Vienna and Barcelona take on a new dimension when view with a transnational lens (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Both locations are connected through another location, Mexico. Therefore, they all belong to the same transnational space (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Consequently, for the purposes of this study, all diplomats interviewed belong to the same group, whether working in Vienna or Barcelona, as they all carry on their lives as transnational migrants in a shared transnational space.

This analysis aspires to the possibility of taking a closer look at people living abroad by assignment, which means that they have not really chosen where they have to live, however, they have to find a way to cope with the struggle to exist in different geographically located social contexts.

The main research question of this study is posed on **how do the cross-border social experiences shape diplomats' lives**. I am interested in understanding how diplomats live their lives, how they feel about the social contexts, as well as the impact that living in foreign lands has on them.

Additionally, these are some specific objectives aiding in the approximation to the main research question:

- To find out the fluxes in terms of social relations, that occur from the diplomat's receiving country (Austria/Spain), to Mexico or any other country.
- To determine if they are conscious of maintaining relations in more than one location, multi-locality awareness.
- To identify if they behold more than the Mexican heritage by birth, and the role that such multiplicity plays.
- To assess if they have identifications to other countries beside Mexico.
- To enquire about the possibilities for them to develop more than one heritage during their assignments abroad.
- To determine the role of partners or family for their connection to the receiving country.
- To visualize the different social spaces they interact at, in their receiving country (Austria/Spain/others).

My personal experiences as well as my training in social and cultural anthropology have shown me that identity appraises people's whole lives, it is plural, non-essentialist, and with the potential for adaptability. And on this premise, and in accordance with my observations as intern, it appears that diplomats have a very particular performative agenda that shows traces of socio-cultural and political interests. Therefore, the diplomatic body seems to

come up with different and creative ways of adapting their cross- border lifestyles in order to fulfill their obligations as professionals and also be able to be the individuals they choose to be.

It is of an outstanding relevance to point out that the feasibility of this study relied on the willingness of the authorities of the Embassy and Consulate to allow the collaboration, as well as the personal disposition of the diplomats to give the interview and to speak their minds openly.

As I have elaborated extensively in the theoretical framework chapter, this study has relied on the concepts and insights of the field of transnational migration. I have relied on works of anthropological researchers since my aim was to produce a final work that serves as a first approximation to diplomacy through the lenses of transnational migration and anthropology. I would like to emphasize again that this work is barely a first encounter with diplomacy as a facet of transnational migration from anthropology's point of view. There is still much work that needs to be done, perhaps for subsequent research enterprises, and perhaps this line of research could develop as a specialization for anthropological migration scholarship.

Not much has been written about the life of diplomats from an anthropological perspective. However, there is plenty of literature from other disciplines, predominantly history, international relations, and political science. There are also quite many memoirs that have been written by diplomats as a way of sharing what their profession has enabled them to experience, but mostly they part from a political and historical point of view.

Correlatively there has been a written take on diplomacy from the point of view of the wives of the diplomats. Where they mostly talk about the cultural clashes between their country of origin and the new country of residence, also tell some tales from their social gatherings, and of course they talk about how life is for those who have to do with the diplomatic line of work. They are less political and more oriented towards family life.

As well, we find governments that have published the personal notes and diaries of certain diplomats. For example the Mexican Government through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs offers a serial publication titled *Historia Oral de la Diplomacia Mexicana* (Oral History of the Mexican Diplomacy) that presents in every issue the story of a different diplomat in every issue. I have taken this example because the subjects of study are also Mexican diplomats. However, these publications are not a scientific source, as they only present the personal writings of the diplomats, which are mainly loaded with expressions of thoughts and feelings that were thought to remain private inside the pages of a diary.

All of the above mentioned sources do not add up to the theoretical angle, yet, they are important to bear in mind just to have a more holistic view of what the approaches towards diplomacy have been so far.

It is fundamental to point out that diplomacy traditionally has been approached mainly from an international relations point of view, and anthropology hasn't done much in relation to diplomats in general. Nonetheless there are a couple of anthropologists that have taken an interest on diplomats and their families from the perspective of transnational migration like Lucija Katulić's and Marina Lukšić Hacin, while Sarah J. Mahler approaches the topic from the perspective of non-state actors agency in diplomacy.

Lucija Katulić's¹ article *Women in Diplomacy: their private transnational practices* (2008), talks about women in diplomacy; but not strictly only diplomats as it also includes diplomat's wives. Her focus is on how those women establish and maintain their day-to-day normality in the new place of residence. Her ethnographic research was conducted through in-depth interviews. She interviewed five highly educated Croatian women in their forties, with whom she shared some sort of personal connection as friends or friends of a friend. Such personal connections to the diplomatic field and her long time involvement with such community, allowed her to also use her own experience as ethnographic material as well. She sustains that diplomats, although privileged, are still

¹ Now Lucija Mihaljević. PhD in Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology. Postdoctoral fellow at the

migrants. Which implies being affected by boundaries especially in the challenge of homemaking. She concludes with an idea of home that is created and constantly modified based on the person's objects, practices, memories and experiences.

Marina Lukšič Hacin² in *Children of diplomats in (re)socialisation turbulences of migration* (2010), is concerned with how kids experience integration to a new social life when moving abroad. Her researches was part of the research programme National and Cultural Identity of Slovenian Emigration, and the research project Professional Bases, Strategies and Theoretical frameworks of Education for Intercultural Relations and Active Citizenship from the European Social Fund EU and the Ministry of Education and Sport. She discusses some examples of turbulence that the children suffer due to the process of resocialisation when moving abroad; such as language competence, split personality, stigma, status of foreigner, to name a few. The article is based on Berger and Luckmann's theory of social construction of reality, Redfield's theory of acculturation, Althusser's concept of hegemony, and Goffman's processes of stigmatization. She sustains that children undergo identity crises when moving abroad, and in that sense their experience is no different from other migrant children. Nevertheless the experience very much depends on the country they move to. Furthermore, as a final remark she points out that the migratory experience is not all negative. The diverse experiences to which children are exposed by moving from one country to another, can also improve their abilities with languages and their adaptability skills to diverse people and places.

Sarah J. Mahler's³ paper titled *Constructing International Relations* (2000), explores the relationship between diplomacy and non-state actors, such as

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migrants, students, and tourist. The earlier versions of her paper were presented at the conferences of the University of California, Davis, and Florida International University. Mahler argues that diplomats are not the only agents in the construct and effect of relationships between nations. She points out that migration influences and also structures diplomacy. However, not all migrants can be classified as transnational migrants, only those that live across borders. And it is precisely on those, the non-state transnational agents, the focus of her analysis. The actions carried out by those agents, whether subtle or not, have impacts on multiple levels (personal, family, community) and can be positions of resistance or empowerment that call for the need of diplomatic relations. As a closing remark she urges for a re-envision of migration as a fundamental part of diplomacy.

Furthermore transnational migration studies focused solely on diplomats as the one proposed here, haven't been conducted so far. Therefore, it is a first attempt to study the lives of diplomats, not their spouses, children or other transnational agents, but only the professionals from an anthropological viewpoint and through the lens of transnationalism.

The structure of this thesis consists of five sections. The first one contains an introduction to the diplomatic world, starting by its genealogy and further on particularizing on the way diplomacy is organized today specifically in Mexico. It also provides a context on the Mexican diplomatic services from both cities that were approached during this study, Vienna and Barcelona.

The second section presents the theoretical framework that sustains this work. Starting with an introduction to migration studies and mobility, and then detailing on transnational theory, which is the core theory around which this entire study is constructed.

The third section clarifies the methodology followed to conduct this research. It elaborates on the applicability and utility of the results, the research's scope, why and how the sample was selected, data analysis techniques, and finally the limitations and difficulties that I encountered.

The fourth section has to do with the exposition of the results and their analysis. This section was first organized with a presentation of each of the interviewees, followed by five subsections by topic. Each of the topics was identified during the interviews as a main topic of interest for the interviewees: The Mexican Foreign Service, family, friends, activities besides work, Mexico, and the cities/countries they have lived at, mainly about Vienna and Barcelona.

Finalizing with a conclusive section with some closing remarks.

II. A FIRST GLANCE AT DIPLOMATS

Some migration studies have underestimated the role and power of the nation-state. Widening the migration lens beyond marginality confirms that states are still central players in international migration -whether as entities that open and close borders, bestow and withhold membership, or regulate markets and labor (Croucher, 2012: 11), or even send its own people overseas to protect particular political and economical interests, as well as their citizens living abroad. Those entrusted with negotiating and implementing international accords are designated diplomats (Mahler, 2000:198).

A diplomat's life implies frequent movement across national borders, and it thus incorporates continuous practices of transnational journey of people as well as material objects (Katulić, 2008:181). It is precisely under that context where diplomats as a distinctive group of transmigrants call for special attention.

It is safe to say that their main characteristics are:

- Working professionals living temporarily abroad;
- Officially representing the government of the nation they hold citizenship from;
- Part of a bureaucratic arm of their country overseas;
- Not part of the labor market of the host country;
- Maintain constant communication, at the very least work related, with people at the country of origin;
- Hold a special set of rights (immunity, diplomatic passport, etcetera);
- Relatively privileged persons whose migration experiences are not characterized by economic or political hardship as individuals;
- Bound to eventually return to their country of origin.

In the context of the transnational practices of diplomats, to be a migrant could be conceptualized as part of their job. However, they migrate in a specific way and in specific conditions. Diplomats are usually considered as privileged transmigrants. They have guaranteed jobs in their country of placement and they are entering a relatively safe environment about which

they are well informed. In addition to their legally privileged diplomatic status, diplomats are better paid when they are abroad than when at home. Therefore, diplomacy is considered a profession with a high economic and social status. (Katulić, 2008: 182).

Those particularities, among others, bring about some reflection on the causes for migration. Some scholars have pointed to the deep relationship that most migration kinds have with markets (Gungwu, 1997: 12). However, diplomats are one of those migration types that are not precisely market related, and that might entail more than just personal desires to go abroad. Diplomacy is generally seen as the domain of the elite- leaders, career professionals, and the like- whereas international migrants are usually characterized as the opposite of the elite- people seeking enhanced opportunities in foreign lands (Mahler, 2000:198).

Migration can have different motivations, and according to Gungwu there are three broad categories according to historical periods:

The first was migration within kingdoms and principalities, and empires of the three Old World continents, which shared similar cultures, religions, and languages. The second was emigration to distant lands that were conquered or colonized, which lead to the formation of migrant states, notably in the Americas and Australasia. The third centered on immigration to states with fully developed or nascent historical identities. (...) The study of history enables us to trace the different stories of settlement and mobility and distinguish among the distinctive experiences. When it became clear that the modern world was being defined in terms of nationalities, nation-building stages, and nation-states, the many types of migration stories began to converge (1997: 3).

Following Gungwu's considerations of history as an important factor to understand migration, it is necessary to look into the past to identify the reasons that drove nations to have diplomatic services as a stepping stone to determining the patterns of this precise type of privileged transmigrants. The

reasons for diplomacy might help clarify today's special character, experiences and identifications of the diplomatic agents within the migration spectrum.

II.I Diplomacy and its genealogy

A standard definition of diplomacy is the conduct of negotiations between nations (Barston, 1997; Freeman, 1997; Mahler, 2000: 197). However, Der Derian (1987) states that diplomacy has been resilient to theory since the beginning. Its history as well as its practices and ideals have been mainly sketched out from anecdotal works of diplomats. Contemporarily speaking diplomacy has branched into two, the behaviouralist or scientific school and the traditionalist or classical school.

The genealogy of diplomacy as a "system of regulated and organized contacts between states which Europe had evolved by the early twentieth century" (Anderson, 1993: X) has much been studied by political science and international relations. Even going back as far as the medieval times in order to trace the first ways in which monarchs maintained contact and relationships. "The four centuries or more between the end of the middle ages and the First World War (...) saw the development of a body of generally accepted rules which defined and safeguarded the position and status of diplomats" (Anderson, 1993: ix). But it was not until the late XIX and beginning of the XX century that diplomacy became a profession as such.

Nonetheless, not all academics agree with the classical view on diplomatic history. Der Derian says that "the value of the analysis of diplomacy's origins should be weighed by its ability to devalue the accepted truth or theory that diplomacy has an essence of common sense, and an origin that can be chronologically and geographically fixed" (1987: 200). Instead he proposes that "diplomacy does not have an historical origin, and that it emerges as the mediation of men estranged from an infinite yet abstracted power which they themselves have constructed" (1987: 199).

Therefore, an analysis of power could be helpful in order to understand diplomacy. In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Foucault elaborates on the modes of power, on the shift from sovereignty that is visible, coercive and acts through the punishment of the body; to governmentality (bio-power) that is invisible, productive, and aims to discipline the soul. Therefore, power as described by Foucault (1976) is invisible and omnipresent, it employs polymorphous techniques through normalization and control, and it is not a thing but a relation. “It is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society” (1976: 93).

He also points out that power is intimately linked to knowledge. On *History of Sexuality Volume I* (1976), Foucault argues that the effects of power as well as the discursive productions serve as the support and instrument of truth; while the mechanisms of power produce knowledge and further reinforce the application of power.

However, it might be insufficient to focus only in power. Martin Wight points out that:

Powers have qualitative differences as well as quantitative, and their attraction and influence is not exactly correlated to mass and weight. For men possess not only territories, raw materials and weapons but also beliefs and opinions. It is true that beliefs do not prevail in international politics unless they are associated with power (...). But it is equally true that power varies very much in effectiveness according to the strength of the beliefs that inspire its use (1995: 81).

If the aim is to understand the dynamics between diplomacy and power, as a relationship that has tried to govern through cultural and discursive practices, it becomes evident that there is need for diplomatic theory that could enables us to work through the hidden network that determines the way things confront one another and the way they develop.

Etymologically speaking, alienation plays an important role in the understanding of the need for diplomacy. It is a word that comes from the latin *alius* that means “other”. Nowadays the term has expanded to include more meanings, as “the separation between individuals; between individuals and society, supernatural beings, and states of mind; between peoples; and between states” (Der Derian, 1987: 14).

In social sciences the use of alienation as a concept has been broad and might cause confusion. Some might even associate it straight away with Marx, but as a matter of fact it can be traced back to the social contract writers, the Lutheran and Calvinist dogmatists, and some scholars like Wight in his book *Power Politics* might even theorize that the terms goes back as far as Plato: “Plato and Aristotle remarked that philosophy begins in wonder or perplexity. We could also say that it begins when something suddenly strikes us as strange- or that philosophy is born of estrangement” (1946: 81; quoted by Der Derian, 1987: 12).

Der Derian relies mainly on the theory of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit to construct his approach on alienation for diplomatic genealogy. It is not the intention to elaborate here on Hegel’s theory, as it is neither on the entire genealogic theory from Der Derian. But it is to point out that “a neglected area of diplomacy [is] its origins and transformations which are related to conditions of alienation, and the attempt to mediate those conditions through systems of thought, law, and power” (1987: 7). And following up on the foundations of his theory, where individuals and consequentially nations become alienated instead of being solidary with each other, the need of countries for diplomatic agents that could help reduce the gap between them emerged.

Diplomacy plays the mediator role in power politics as it minds for the relationship between sovereign independent power units. Power politics “is a translation of the German word *Machtpolitik*, which means “the politics of force” (Wight, 1995: 29). Therefore, diplomacy can be defined as the mediator between estranged persons, groups, or entities.

II.II Diplomacy Today

Nowadays diplomacy is the conduct through which formal country to country relations are conducted. When diplomatic relations between countries are active and ongoing, countries involved will establish diplomatic representations in the forms of embassies and consulates inside the other country's territory.

As I learned during my internship, there are different forms of diplomatic representation. The most known to people outside the diplomatic context are embassies and consulates; however, those are not the only ones and they all have different attributions.

Embassies are to be established in the capital city of the host country. The functions of the embassy are to represent a country's government in another country. Some of its main duties are:

- Promote economic engagement between the home country and the host country.
- Forward messages between the home country's government and the host country's government and vice versa.
- Elaborates international treaties and carries on the negotiations with the host country.
- Prepares official state visits from the host country's representatives.
- In some cases when the military has its especial attaché or representative, the contact between both countries' armed forces is also conducted by the embassy.
- Promotes its culture in the host country.
- Perform the functions of the consulate.

Nevertheless there are some special cases necessary of consideration:

- Permanent mission: diplomatic representation to an international organization. Some times an embassy is at the same time a permanent mission.

- High commission: is how an embassy of a member country of the British Commonwealth inside another member of the Commonwealth is called.
- Nunciatura: it is the name of the embassy from the Vatican.

Consulates are to be established in other major cities from the host country. The functions of the consulate are mainly to provide assistance to its fellow citizens living or travelling in the host country. Among the primary duties that a consulate must perform are:

- Provide assistance and help in cases of emergency or distress to its country's nationals.
- Issue and renew passports and other official documents.
- Formally register and issue certificates for marriages, births, adoptions, divorces, and deaths.
- Look after its citizens in situations of confinement, as in detention or incarceration.
- Perform notarial functions.
- Issue visas for foreign citizens that wish to travel into their territory for work, holiday, or studies.

In a capital city the consulate is normally part of the embassy. Therefore, being called consular section. However, there are other types of consulates according to the range of its functions.

- Consulate general: is an important consulate with a lot of activity, mostly located in larger cities.
- Honorary consulate: it is managed by an honorary consul. Which means that the functions are very limited, as it is not a diplomat by career but rather only a distinguished person or important businessperson that not necessarily beholds the nationality of the home country.

II.II.I Embassy of Mexico in Vienna

The Embassy of Mexico in Vienna is a very special case. It is an embassy for representation towards the governments of Austria, Slovakia, and Slovenia; while at the same time it is a Permanent Mission to the United Nations.

Mexico and Austria established diplomatic relations the 30th of July of 1842, with the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce. However, there was a rupture between both countries as a consequence of the Second Mexican Empire under the reign of Emperor Maximilian I (1864-1867), and to be reestablished in 1901.

Mexico and Slovakia established diplomatic relations on January 1st of 1993. In October of that same year the first Ambassador to Slovakia was appointed. Nevertheless, in 1996 because of the nearness between Vienna and Bratislava, the Mexican government decided to appoint the Ambassador for Austria and Slovakia from Vienna. From then on the Embassy of Mexico in Slovakia ceased to exist but instead there is an Honorary Consulate of Mexico.

Mexico and Slovenia established diplomatic relations on May 22nd of 1993. And as the case of the Embassy in Slovakia, in 1996 the Embassy in Slovenia moved to Vienna. Leaving in Ljubljana only a Honorary Consulate of Mexico.

The Permanent Mission to the United Nations headquartered in Vienna includes representation of Mexico in the following organisms:

- International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
- Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBTO)
- United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL)
- United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
- United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA)
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

- The Wassenaar Arrangement
- International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA)
- The Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)

II.II.II Consulate General of Mexico in Barcelona

Mexico as a former Spanish colony is undeniably and intimately connected to Spain. The Spaniards arrived to the territory now called Mexico in 1519, nevertheless the downfall of the Aztec Empire happened in 1520. Approximately 300 years later, the 16th of September of 1810, Mexico declared its independence which was formalized in 1821. From that point onwards, diplomatic relations with Spain were broken for a considerable time, until they were reestablished on the 28th of March of 1977.

Due to the colonial ties, shared language, and nowadays, the close economic ties and friendship between Mexico and Spain; there is a constant flux of people in both directions. Barcelona's location, economic power, atmosphere and cosmopolitanism, makes it a very attractive city to live and work. Therefore, the Mexican community in Barcelona is quite large, calling for the need of having a consulate that could attend to the needs of all those people.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: MIGRATION, MOBILITY, AND TRANSNATIONALISM

Studying migration is a fascinating aspect of human life that has diverse ramifications, motivations, and aspirations. The term migration refers to a broad demographic phenomenon that can signify people going into another country (emigration) and people coming into a country (immigration). For this work when I use the term migration I am referring to international migration. Therefore, this section discusses some of the most relevant theoretical works and approaches that constitute migration studies. It starts, in the first sub-section, with a broad approximation to migration, its main characteristics, the diverse theories that have tried to explain it, as well as the identification of certain categories that are relevant for the study of diplomats through the migration lens, such as the expatriate. The second sub-section discusses the aspect of mobility, and the implications that such concept entails for migration studies. Furthermore, it explores the relationship between place, space, and time; and how they are socialized creating habitats of meaning and reinforcing imagined communities. Within migration studies, mobility can be interpreted and studied from various angles. However, the one of interest for this occasion is the transnational one. And it is in the third sub-section, where transnational migration is examined. Transnationalism is a term that has changed meaning over time. Today we broadly understand it as the connections and links among people and institutions that transcend national borders; and where at the same time communities, as well as personhood, are negotiated. Moreover, here is where the core conceptual premises of transnationalism are analyzed; which are fundamental for this thesis project.

III.I Migration

Migration is a complex demographic phenomenon. It might result hard to precisely define it, as it depends from the discipline's renewable and reversible characteristics; which at the same time make it's study and accounting more difficult. It is problematic to keep accurate records, as the movement of people

can be temporal or permanent, and not all of it occurs within the scope of the law, in fact a considerable amount of international migration takes place on the margins of national and international migratory legal frameworks.

Clandestine migration occurs when people cross over a border in an undocumented manner, which is without having the necessary permissions and without going through the established border points of entry. Illegal migration happens when people that have entered a country as tourists extend their stay without permission.

It is widespread understood that migration, as moving from one place to settle in another one, is temporal when it is between 3 months to less than a year. It becomes permanent when the duration of stay in the new place is from one year and beyond.

Due to its complexity, there is more than one migration theory. The theories from Ravenstein (1880s) serve as a base for the Push-Pull model that dominated until the 1950's. Push alludes to shove or abandonment conditions in the sending country, while pull to the advantageous conditions that attract people to the receiving country. This theory builds on rationalist explanations of human behavior. Conversely, it is criticized that calculations should not only be based on the rational aspects, but it is also fundamental to calculate in the emotional factors (Arango, 2003). Also it is a phenomenon that is not individual, it is collective or social.

From the 1960's on, new theories emerged; which are important to briefly mention.

- Neoclassic Theory: the motivating cause for migration is a calculation between cost-benefit. That means that migrants estimate that the cost and benefit of moving to another country is greater than staying at the country of origin (Arango, 2003).

- The New Economics of Migration Theory: migration as a collective enterprise, migration as a family strategy to diversify income sources. The analysis of migration is not made individually, but to households and other units of production/consumption (Arango, 2003).
- Dual Labor Market Theory: market segmentation, like race and gender, plus the structural demand in advanced capitalist economies are the main causes of migration. Natives reject non-qualified jobs because of the lowering social implications, therefore, the need for foreign workers. The foreign labor force at the same time will raise its status at the society of origin (Arango, 2003).
- World System Theory: the world is organized into three spheres: center, periphery, and semi-periphery. Migration of cheap labor force from peripheral zones with colonial links to hegemonic centers (Arango, 2003).
- Social Capital Theory: migrant networks as a form of social capital that aids any people that wishes to migrate, with the purpose of minimizing the hardship (Arango, 2003).

However, neither of the mentioned theories is sufficient to solely explain the phenomenon of migration in its entirety, all of them are useful and tend to coexist. Arango (2003) considers that migration theories should also consider immobility and not just mobility, as well as the forces that push people to stay instead of only focusing on the ones that push people to go. He further explains that in order to fill in those gaps in the study of migration, it would be useful to pay more attention to the types of families, kinship systems, social systems, and the general social structures.

Within migration studies, there are two general typologies according to the causes of migration: voluntary and forced. Voluntary is when it is motivated by economic, touristic, or familiar reasons. According to the The office of the

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), forced is when it has to do with political or environmental refuge and asylum situations (2016).

Then those two can as well branch out into three subcategories according to external criteria, more specifically sociodemographic: age, sex/gender, and professional category.

Furthermore, Cohen (1977) elaborates another subdivision of the general typology according to the socio-economic status. There are three main types: low-status, middleman, and high-status (also known as expatriate). Cohen explains that those types of migrant minorities thus form a continuum, in which the extent of their temporariness is inversely related to their status in the host society: the lower their status, the more permanent their migration (1977:80).

The term expatriate nowadays is commonly used, but it might be confusing to understand the difference between an expatriate and an immigrant. Ultimately there is no difference, an expatriate is a type of migrant. However, the term has been created to specifically refer to that kind of migration that is voluntary, temporary, mostly from rich countries, that live abroad for at least one of the following reasons:

Business- private entrepreneurs, representatives, managers and employees of foreign and multinational firms, foreign employees of local firms, professionals practicing abroad.

Mission- diplomatic and other governmental representatives, foreign aid personnel, representatives of foreign non-profit organizations, military stationed abroad, missionaries.

Teaching, research and culture- academics, scientists, and artists.

Leisure- owners of second homes abroad, the wealthy, the retired living abroad and other “permanent tourists”, bohemians, and drop-outs.

(Cohen, 1977:80).

Cohen (1977) explains that the main challenge for, as well as the key element in the expatriate’s experience is the strangeness of the foreign environment. Expatriates all over the world create their own “enclaves”- ecological ghettos

and institutional frameworks- which shelter them off from the environment of the host society (Cohen, 1977: 16), by providing social and cultural satisfaction to the members. Those “environmental bubbles” try to reproduce the home environment, but since it is not possible they tend to be distorted or exaggerated. However, not all expatriates shelter themselves in equal degree in those bubbles.

Interestingly, expatriates, unlike other types of migration, actually increase their status when moving abroad, instead of losing it. They also obtain a varied array of privileged aid or compensations for the inconvenience and troubles of moving abroad. For example they may receive from their sending institutions housing, cars, subsidy for their children’s education, etcetera.

III.II Mobility

It is also necessary to keep in mind that there are some key aspects to studying and understanding the phenomenon of migration:

- It is delineated by space and time;
- It is a collective phenomenon;
- It is a mental construction, us (natives) vs. others (immigrants);
- Permanence in a place paradoxically also helps explain in great part mobility.

Mobility is an emerging concept that attempts to give a more in-depth description of migration.

The study of mobilities must be able to simultaneously normalize an array of forms of mobility but not minimize the ways in which legal status, as well as global racialising categories, can make a world of difference in terms of the ease of travel, the repercussions of trying to move, and whether or not the traveler gains or loses status from being from elsewhere (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013: 188).

Therefore, Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) propose the use of the term regimes of mobility instead of mobility studies. They argue that it is necessary to be able to analyze the privileged movements as well as the movements of the poor and powerless. Consequently, they also argue in favor of examining movement not only as connection, but also as the possibility to modes of exploitation and confinement. Specifically for the cases of asylum-seekers and undocumented people. Asylum-seekers after being forced to leave their homes, they find themselves restricted to settle only in certain new locations. Whereas migrants with no legal status, as they have no papers to back their stay in the country, live with fear of being caught and, therefore, reduce their movements and outside home social interactions to the minimum.

Tim Cresswell explains mobility by distinguishing two metaphysical dimensions of mobility. Sedentary metaphysics, term first used by Liisa Malkki, sees mobility through the lens of place, rootedness, spatial order, and belonging. The second type [nomadic metaphysics]... has little time for notions of attachment to place, and reveals in notions of flow, flux, and dynamism (2000: 26). The first type has been the most dominant in academia; however, it is important to keep in mind that it is hard to detach completely one dimension from the other because people's experiences and beliefs are a mixture of both ways of thinking. Furthermore nowadays the academic tendency has been pointing more towards the second approach.

On the other hand, representation of space in the social sciences is heavily marked by ideas of discontinuity, separation, and disjunction. What makes any society or nation different from others is based on the obvious and seemingly straightforward division of space. The representation of the world as a collection of "countries", as in most world maps, sees it as an inherently fragmented space, divided by different colors into diverse national societies, each rooted in its proper place (Gupta & Ferguson, 2006: 6).

However, space and time are themselves socialized and localized through complex and deliberate practices of performance, representation, and action.

We have tended to call these practices cosmological or ritual (Appadurai, 1996: 180).

The irony of these times, however, is that as actual places and localities become ever more blurred and indeterminate, ideas of culturally and ethnically distinct places become perhaps even more salient. It is here that it becomes most visible how imagined communities (Anderson, 1983) come to be attached to imagined places, as displaced peoples cluster around remembered or imagined homelands, places, or communities in a world that seems increasingly to deny such firm territorialized anchors in their actuality (Gupta & Ferguson, 2006: 11).

Hylland Erikssen states that there is rarely, if ever, a perfect correspondence between the state and the 'cultural group' (2001: 282). There is not only one fixed way of being that can entirely portray a certain national identity, there are variations according to the region, the history, the languages or dialects, etcetera. However, if it is already fairly imprecise within the national boundaries, the equation seems to become even more complicated once migration happens. Groups or categories of persons may be located analytically in a grey zone between nationhood and ethnic identity (Hylland Erikssen, 2001: 281), and for some of those groups this uncertainty might pose some interesting questions in relation to their professional profile.

There is now a world culture, but we had better make sure we understand what it means: not a replication of uniformity but an organization of diversity, an increasing interconnectedness of varied local cultures, as well as a development of cultures without a clear anchorage in any territory. And to this interconnected diversity people can relate in different ways (Hannerz, 1996: 102).

In this matter Hannerz points out the need to consider the notion of agency, as the individual will of people to act a certain way. That is to bring human beings back in (Hannerz, 1996:22) our understanding of culture, without losing sight of the bigger picture and getting lost in the small-scale. Zygmunt Bauman suggests that a notion of agency should be combined, not with system, but with

a flexible sense of habitat; a habitat in which agency operates and which it also produces, one where it finds its resources and goals as well as its limitations (Hannerz, 1996:22). As an adaptation of that concept, Hannerz (1996) suggest the term *habitats of meaning* for cultural analysis.

Habitats can expand and contract. As they can overlap entirely, partially or just possibly not at all, they can be identified with either individuals or collectivities. (...) Much of the time, cultural processes will be shaped rather by the way that fairly different habitats of meaning are made to intersect. (...) Some people may indeed share much the same habitats of meaning, but these can also become quite idiosyncratic. The places we have been to and the people we have met in them, the books and newspapers we read, the television channels we can zap to, all these make a difference Hannerz, 1996:23).

III.III Transnational Migration

I will complement these discourses on new habitats, cultural diversity and globalization with a particular take of migration studies: the transnational perspective. Migration has never been a one-way process of assimilation into a melting pot or a multicultural salad bowl but one in which migrants, to varying degrees, are simultaneously embedded in the multiple sites and layers (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007:130) of the different facets of life across borders. Even after leaving home many migrants have continued to be actively participating in the social, political, economic, and religious life at their homelands. Persons can engage simultaneously in more than one nation-state and a nation-state does not delimit the boundaries of meaningful social relations (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004:1029).

The word transnationalism didn't always mean what we understand from it today. It was at first coined with reference to relations between nation-states and national groupings that did not automatically fall under the heading of traditional military encounters (Clavin, 2005:433). But the most significant change in the use of the term happened in the 1970s, as it became a relevant

topic of study for the social sciences. Yet, it does not represent an altogether new theoretical approach, but one that inherently builds upon a number of preceding ones (Vertovec, 2001:576).

Vertovec states that most scientists working in the field may agree that transnationalism broadly refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states (2011: 2). Those interactions, within the context of my research, I denominate as the *cross-border social experiences*.

The study of the cross-border social experiences brings an interesting insight into the intricacies of life when migrants happen to be socially engaged in different places, as the fluid social spaces are constantly reworked through migrants' simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Pries, 2005; Smith, 2005; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007:131). Therefore, since most migrants maintain important ties to their places of origin, to study the relationship between the community of origin and the socio-cultural environment in the host country (Georges, 1990; Olwig, 1993; Hylland Erikssen, 2001: 286), is fundamental to shed some light into the complexities of migratory life experiences. Transnational migrants live their lives across international borders and, therefore, only a subset of people who migrate can be classified as transnational migrants (Mahler, 2000:1999). And according to Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton, immigrants who build such social fields are designated transmigrants (1992b: 1).

Transnationalism has been a diverse, contested, cross-disciplinary intellectual movement that in some of its manifestations has been bound together by a particular insight: in place of a long and deeply embedded modernist tradition of taking the nation as the framework within which one can study things (literatures, histories, and so on and so forth), the nation itself has to be a question- not untrue and, therefore, trivial, but an ideology that changes over time, and whose precise elaboration at any point has found effects on wars, economies, cultures, the movements of people, and relations of domination (Briggs, McCormick, & Way, 2008:628).

When removing the blindfold of such methodological nationalism, it is possible to observe that social life is not solely restrained by nation-state boundaries; but also by social and religious movements, criminal and professional networks, and governance regimes as well as flows of capital [that] also operate across borders (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004:1007). However, it is important not to discard the nation-state as an important factor when examining international migration. Nation-states do participate in the formation and legitimation of globe-spanning regimes of mobility by imposing barriers on the emigration and immigration of some individuals and facilitating the movement of others and by using national identities and nationalist ideologies to justify the exclusion or inclusion of those who cross state borders (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013:192).

Technology plays a crucial role in transnational migration. The possibilities of social engagement thanks to today's communications take many forms. People have the opportunity to travel more often and faster to their places of origin, but most importantly to keep in touch with friends and family through chat, voice and video applications on their mobile phones or computers. These possibilities of communication have helped them to maintain their relationships home, while at the same time develop new ones at the latest place of settlement. As a result migrants are part of multiple social networks, at the new place of residence and maybe at more than one former place of residence.

But regardless of the technological advancements that help people keep in touch with their loved ones far away, living in two or more worlds is certainly not an easy task; transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992b: 1-2). All those actions are embedded in a global system where flows from different directions act upon or interact with other flows, where negotiations have to take place in order to make sense of the personhood and the community.

Ulf Hannerz (1996), for instance, discusses people who live in diverse "habitats of meaning" that are not territorially restricted. The experiences gathered in these multiple habitats accumulate to comprise people's

cultural repertoires, which in turn influence the construction of identity- or indeed multiple identities. Each habitat or locality represents a range of identity-conditioning factors, geographies of cultural difference and class/ethnic segregations, racialised socio-economic hierarchies, degree and type of collective mobilization, access to and nature of resources, and perceptions and regulations surrounding rights and duties. (...) These identities play out and position individuals in the course of their everyday lives within and across each of their places of attachment or perceived belonging (Vertovec, 2001:578).

In the case of identity studies it turns out to be very helpful to look at Jenkins' theory of identity. Her approach has to do with how identity is located in actual social contexts and how it comes to materialize in the practice of every day life (Gazzah, 2008: 51). Jenkins calls them *identifications* and describes them as fluid processes of observable manifestations of the identity that are influenced by external factors. In a context of constant exchange and interconnection, like it occurs in transnational migration, to talk about identifications can be helpful and insightful to understand people that affiliate themselves with what some times are conflicting worlds. The term identity and ethnic identity have strong political dimensions and these words are used by political actors in their contests of power. (...) Identification clearly suggests that we are talking about classification process, not about primordial essence (Lubbers, Molina & McCarty, 2007:722). Therefore, the terms identifications or ethnic identification are preferable.

And as Fechter points out, one must not forget about boundaries since we are talking about the mediation of different worlds, insofar as they mark out what is regarded as self and other, and representations play a key role in this process (2007:103). Fechter also suggests that the relocation to a different country engenders the intensified drawing of such boundaries, specifically in terms of belonging to a certain ethnic, national, and social group (2007:103). Therefore, identifications happen to be negotiated according to the context of the bubble, within and towards the outside too. The image also suggests, though, that the membrane which separates Inside and Outside [of the bubble] is also artificial, fragile, and permeable (Fechter, 2007: 151). Flows and boundaries are not

oppositional, but complementary. (...) Notions of identities are always based on a notion of difference, the Other, or what lies beyond the boundaries (Fechter, 2007: 27).

Strathern's notion of *partial connections* (1991) is also useful when approaching groups that at first glance might seem homogeneous like the diplomats, but in fact are composed by various kinds of people, genders, ages, diverse skills and backgrounds. Nonetheless the group's heterogeneity, such notion allows for meaningful connections to be established while at the same time acknowledging that they might not apply for all the members of the group. The aspects related to the transnational lives of diplomats are the key connections amongst this group of professionals; meaning that although they all have diverse backgrounds and life situations while abroad on assignment, the experience of transnational migration is shared by them all.

Transnationalism is first and foremost about people: the social space that they inhabit, the networks they form and the ideas they exchange (Clavin, 2005:422). It is about exploring connections, how they are sustained and how they change.

The approaches on transnationalism can vary, but according to Vertovec (2011:2) there are six main conceptual premises: social morphology, type of consciousness, mode of cultural reproduction, avenue of capital, site of political engagement, and (re)construction of place or locality. Those categories seek to encompass as precisely as possible the main areas of life where transmigrants can develop various forms of identifications.

Social morphology: It has to do with social formations traversing borders. The exemplary community in this case is the ethnic diaspora. They are composed by a triadic relationship between people globally dispersed yet collectively self-identified ethnic groups, the territorial states and contexts where such groups reside, and the homeland status and contexts whence they or their forebears came. Another feature central to the analysis of transnational social formations are structures or systems of relationships best described as networks

(Vertovec, 2011: 3). New technologies reside at the core of those network connections, as they allow the creation and maintenance of social patterns.

Type of consciousness: it focuses on multiple identifications. Depictions of individuals' awareness of decentered attachments, of being simultaneously "home away from home", "here and there" (Vertovec, 2011: 5); linking people to more than one nation-state. Transnational bonds can also be strengthened or recreated through the mind, through cultural artefacts and through shared imagination.

Mode of cultural reproduction: transnational is often associated with a fluidity of constructed styles, social institutions and everyday practices. These often described in terms of syncretism, creolization, bricolage, cultural translation, and hybridity. (...) Is specially to be found among youth. (...) Facets of culture and identity are often self-consciously selected, syncretized and elaborated from more than one heritage (Vertovec, 2011: 6). Processes mostly observed in music, fashion, cinema, television, and visual arts.

Avenue of capital: Leslie Sklair (1998) proposes that there has risen a transnational capital class comprised of transnational corporations' executives, globalizing state bureaucrats, politicians and professionals, and consumerist elites in merchandizing and the media. (...) They constitute a new power elite whose interests are global, (...) and who thereby control most of the world economy.

Site of political engagement: nowadays there is a good amount of political activity that happens transnationally. The new technologies have helped information disseminate and reach simultaneously people in opposite sites of the world. Non-governmental organizations (NGO's) like the United Nations or the Red Cross are the best examples of political engagement beyond borders. There are also Transnational Social Movements (TSMO's), where people in different parts of the world join in order to promote changes in certain areas, like the environment, human rights, etcetera. Furthermore we find that relations between immigrants, home-country politics and politicians have always been

dynamic. Political parties now often establish offices abroad in order to canvass immigrants, while immigrants themselves organize to lobby the home government (Vertovec, 2011: 12).

(Re)construction of place or locality: Practices and meanings derived from specific geographical and historical points of origin have always been transferred and grounded. Today, a high degree of human mobility, telecommunications, films, video and satellite TV, and the Internet have contributed to the creation of trans-local understandings (Vertovec, 2011: 13). Transnationalism has modified the way people relate to space, as people are now able to connect and position themselves in more than one country.

IV. METHODOLOGY

When it was time to think about the possibilities of obtaining information for this research project, due to my experience as an intern at the Mexican Embassy in Vienna, I quickly realized that it would be a difficult task. Proper to the nature of the diplomatic field, gaining access to it can result quite difficult. It is a sensitive job that involves a lot of responsibility towards the home country and host country, and some times requires the making of very delicate decisions. However, in contrast to other jobs this one shadows the rest of the person's life. It can be in a positive or negative way, but inevitably influences the way diplomats carry on their lives. So when considering the most appropriate methodology for conducting my study I had to reflect on all of the above.

Therefore, I understood that I would have to go for a qualitative research method that would be realistic and as rich as possible. Realistic in the sense that the authorities of the embassy/consulate would be comfortable participating with and that they would actually allow me to carry it on with the rest of the personnel. It needed to be something that would not be invasive or threatening to their job's sensitivity, but also at the same time give me a real opportunity of obtaining worthwhile information.

And given that, the focus is the diplomat as a person and not the embassy or consulate, I decided to use qualitative interviews as a means of information gathering technique. By allowing the interviewee to speak freely about the topic on the table. A semi-structured interview would help me gain a more in-depth insight to the diplomat's life.

The following section presents the fundamentals of the methodology I used to conduct this study.

IV.I Applicability and practical utility of the expected results

The main applicability value of this project resides on the better understanding of the diplomatic community. There is a popular imaginary revolving around the

kind of lives that these people have, mainly of glamour, elite and somewhat leisure. However, it is necessary to take a serious look into the intricacies of the mobility aspect of their line of work and the accompanying consequences (positive and negative) that jumping from one country to another imply for them as individuals and for their families.

IV.II Research type

This project followed a design of qualitative description and interpretation, since it is aiming to approximate a phenomenon that is already known to exist, that being transnational migration; but that has not yet been directly and sufficiently addressed from the perspective of anthropology, with the diplomat as a transnational migrant.

It is also important to point out that the data collection was conducted within a specific point in time, from June 2014 to March 2015, and, therefore, looking at the phenomenon at a very specific moment while keeping in mind that it might change in the future over the course of time.

The locations of the selected diplomatic representations for my study were Vienna and Barcelona. They were chosen due to convenience of my master study trajectory, no other reason. The country to which those diplomatic representations belong is Mexico; and the reasons for that were, first of all, that it is my home country and, second, due to the higher possibilities I had to gain access the subjects of study.

IV.III Interviews

The data collection technique was strongly intertwined with the size of the sample. Therefore, the selected data collection instrument was the interview. A survey would reveal very concrete but dry aspects of diplomats lives. The best way to get a more cohesive and in-depth understanding of the personal lives of the diplomats, their backgrounds, their families, as well as personal feelings, was in this case pursuing personal semi-structured in-depth interviews.

In-depth interviewing has been described as a conversation with purpose (Kahn & Cannell, 1957: 149; Marshall & Rossman, 1995: 80). It is a conversation where the researcher points to specific topics of interest for the study, yet still allowing the interviewees the freedom to structure and formulate their own path through the responses. The advantage of this methodology is that interviewees can open new topics, approach aspects differently and in general shed light on issues that perhaps the interviewer was unaware of. It also can evidence what topics matter most to each individual.

The format was semi-structured. I prepared a couple of topics and questions beforehand in order to give some direction by trying to “naturally” guide the conversation towards them; but still with the hopes of allowing a free flowing conversation. Especially because in this type of environment it is important to avoid any feelings of pressure or else they don’t feel it’s appropriate to share.

The interviews were conducted on any diplomat willing to talk to me. Like I mentioned before, only eight responded to my plea for an interview. As for the rest some were on holidays, busy, one in maternal leave, or simple didn’t wanted to participate.

Regardless of the small number of interviewees, all together they comprise over seven hours of audio material. Therefore, the average duration of the interviews was of a little more than fifty minutes. Which is quite long considering how busy they are. In some cases, it was even necessary to briefly interrupt the interview, as they urgently needed to attend some pressing matters.

It is essential to mention that all of the interviewees gave an oral consent to being recorded at the beginning of the interviews, which was also recorded. The main reason for recording was that it would allow me to fully pay attention to the conversation without being distracted taking notes, while at the same time further on being able to retrieve details without worrying on having to rely on my memory or a couple of notes. Those diplomats trusted me with their stories,

experiences and ideas; therefore, I wanted to treat their words with respect and be as accurate as possible to them.

Each interviewee has a pseudonym, as I assured them that the interviews would be anonymous and entirely for academic reasons. The results are not in any way affected by the change of names.

All the interviews were conducted in Spanish because it is my native language as well as of most of the interviewees; it was the natural thing to do. It is also important to mention that the transcripts were never translated to English. I only loosely translated a couple of fragments in the result and analysis section as footnotes of the original versions, in order to facilitate their understanding to a broader audience.

The places where the interviews were conducted were the Embassy of Mexico in Vienna and the Consulate of Mexico in Barcelona. All of the diplomats, except one, kindly invited me to their offices so we could have a private space for the interview. That one exception took place at a common area of the Mexican Consulate in Barcelona.

At the beginning of the interviews most of the diplomats seemed a little uncomfortable or unsure to what they were about to do. Which is completely understandable as they are representing a country and they need to be careful of what they say and to whom. But once the conversation started and they fully realized that the types of questions and topics were non-work related, they were able to relax and speak more freely.

However, some of the people I met earlier during my internship experience at the Embassy of Mexico in Vienna were more open and not worried about talking to me, as perhaps because they knew me already. Yet, it was not the same with everyone, even though I knew them from before. Also it would be unfair to say that at the Consulate of Mexico in Barcelona it was difficult to talk to people. In fact even though they didn't know me at all, they were happy to participate in an academic project and get to share their experiences. So after

the initial caution, I can honestly say that all of my interviewees were enthusiastically engaged in our conversation.

IV.IV Selection of the sample

The context where the subjects of interest are to be found, supposes a very closed and highly guarded environment. This fact, together with the small universe of study, determined by the limited number of diplomats working at a diplomatic representation, strongly restricts the possibilities of selection of the sample. In Vienna at the moment of the study there were twenty diplomats, while in Barcelona there were only five.

Due to the reduced number of diplomats in both representations, my aspiration was to be able to include as many people as possible as part of the sample. However, in the end, my sample consisted of eight diplomats, five from Vienna and three from Barcelona.

By gender the sample comprises five men and three women. However, gender was not a focal criterion for me. My main requirement was, instead, for the subjects, male or female, to have strong ties with Mexico as an indicator of a possible transnational space.

IV.V Data analysis technique

Once the information was properly collected, transcribed, and organized, the first task was to try to make sense out of it by following the parameters of qualitative content analysis.

Therefore, findings were not done through statistical methods; rather discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through organized data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 1995:23). It took careful dissection of the information given by the interviewees, so I could then start identifying broad generalizations from specific observations.

I parted from a general area of study to afterwards point out what had merit. Which proved helpful for this particular work as there are barely any previous studies related to transnationalism and diplomacy, there was no specific departure point to build upon. Therefore, I understood that when starting from barely anything, if theory is faithful to the everyday reality of the substantive area and carefully induced from diverse data, then it should fit that substantive area. Because it represents that reality, it should also be comprehensible and make sense both to the persons who were studied and to those practicing in that area (Corbin & Strauss, 1995:23).

However, it is important to point out that this whole process was not a linear one, insight and further understanding of the phenomenon came up at different points of the process; causing me have to read and re-read the interviews several times, as well as to go back and forth on more than one occasion when identifying certain aspects and later on its grouping under smaller categories. Overall, systematic categorization proved very helpful to me as a visible thread to guide my analysis, as well as afterwards to give a coherent structure to my final results.

IV.VI Difficulties and limitations

I believe that the main difficulty was the topic of transnationalism by itself. While conducting literature research and review, it gives the impression that it is one of anthropology's "trending topics"; therefore, there is a big risk of getting lost with the amount of existing material and the diverse directions they take.

Another point to keep in mind was to proceed carefully when generalizing during the analysis of the results, since not every diplomatic experience entails the same kind of environment and political situation.

The depth of this analysis relied completely on the openness of the interviewed diplomats to talk about not only the positive aspects but also the difficulties of their life abroad. Since they were interviewed as "diplomats" and not as regular

persons on the street, the pressure of their post casted certain shadow on their opinions towards some topics.

Also the limitations regarding the sample should be mentioned in this section. As I discussed before, it was difficult to have access to the people for interviewing as not everyone consented to giving me an interview; therefore, the sample was much smaller than I had hoped to. Therefore, the best I could do was to adjust to my possibilities and work within them.

IV.VII My internship

Even though my internship experience can't be considered participant observation because it took place even before I started my Master's studies, it was indeed my greatest inspiration to focus in this topic for my thesis.

Many of my observations during my time at the Embassy of Mexico in Vienna regarding my colleagues and their lives, as well as many that rose from my own experience there; were not a surprise when they come up as results of my research.

However, because I am not a diplomat, even though I got the opportunity to experience a bit of their world, it would be far fetched to say my findings were also a result of autoethnography.

Which is when researchers do autoethnography, they retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity. However, in addition to telling about experiences, autoethnographers often are required by social science publishing conventions to analyze these experiences (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010).

Yet, I feel compelled to point out the value of my internship for this research. It allowed me to gain an insight of diplomatic life that helped me become emphatic and familiarized with their circumstance; which I believe was

invaluable help at the moment when I had to analyze all the information I gathered during the interviews.

By being a transnational migrant myself plus thanks to my internship opportunity, I gained first hand insight into transnationalism and diplomacy. Therefore, every paper or book I read about those topics, made my personal experience more significantly relevant for my own research project.

V. RESULTS & ANALYSIS

I identified seven main areas through which the diplomats I interviewed described and talked about their lives. These are:

- 1) Background;
- 2) The Mexican Foreign Service;
- 3) Family;
- 4) Friends;
- 5) Activities besides work;
- 6) Mexico;
- 7) Vienna, Barcelona, and other locations of assignment.

It is very important to mention that I have decided to leave the fragments of the interviews that are presented on this work in the original language, Spanish. I consider important to preserve them as they were originally made by the interviewees. However, for those that are not familiar with the language I have also made a loose translation to English that can be found as a footnote of each quote.

V.I Background

This section approaches the aspects grouped as cultural background. I will present all of the interviewees by including only what they shared during the interview as part of their early life memories and experiences, family constitution, place(s) of upbringing, language(s) spoken at home, studies, and what inspired them to join this branch of the government.

The importance of having an introduction to each interviewee relies on the point that although they constitute the group known as diplomats, they have very diverse stories, motivations and backgrounds. It would be a mistake to treat them as if they were internally homogeneous, externally bounded groups, even unitary collective actors with common purposes (Brubaker, 2004a: 164).

But even though they are being looked as individuals, recognizing their uniqueness; I focus on the partial connections that allow a meaningful treatment as a group. In this case the aspects related to their transnational lives described throughout all the results section.

i. Catalina

Catalina was born into a diplomatic family; her father was part of the Mexican Foreign Service. She became a diplomat herself in 1991. She is divorced and has a daughter in primary school living in Vienna with her.

Catalina grew up in Germany. Moved there from Mexico when she was only 3 years old. German language comes natural to her and it is still present in her every day, for example when she uses the numbers or for swearwords. Interestingly one of her friends tells her that she is Mexican in theory but not in practice:

“Para mí lo mexicano es lo que me enseñó mi mamá, no es lo mexicano que viví en la calle o en la escuela, porque no fui a la escuela en México. Entonces por eso me dice mi amigo que soy mexicana teórica, porque conozco la cultura mexicana por lo que me enseñaron mis padres o por lo que yo leí”⁴.

She spoke Spanish at home, ate Mexican food that her mom cooked, but she was already 10 years old when she learned to read Spanish. Today besides German and Spanish, she also speaks fluent English and French.

When she went back to Mexico, to enroll at university, she didn't know what the Mexican Revolution was or the important historical figures or anything about literature or even the characters from television programs. People would make jokes and she wouldn't understand. Catalina recognizes it was a difficult

⁴ For me what it is Mexican is what my mother taught me, it is not the Mexican that experienced on the street or school, because I did not go to school in Mexico. Therefore my friend tells me that I'm a theoretical Mexican, because I know the Mexican culture from what my parents taught me or I read.

transition for her because people would see her differently. She studied a Bachelor in International Relations and has postgraduate courses on Foreign Policy and International Security.

She has served in diverse posts at the Mexican Foreign Ministry in Mexico City as part of her early career. Abroad she has held several posts, which include Deputy Consul in Hamburg, Germany. Then she went to Paris, France, as Deputy Permanent Representative at the Mexican Mission before the United Nations Office for Education, Culture and Science (UNESCO). Afterwards she became Chief of Chancellery in the Mexican Embassy in Austria, Slovenia and Slovakia, and at the same time Deputy Permanent Representative at the Mexican Mission before the International Organizations based in Vienna, Austria.

ii. Salvador

Salvador entered the Mexican Foreign Service by his own inspiration, but not without having already had a taste of foreign cultures and cross-cultural life. He was born and raised in Mexico City in a family composed by a Mexican father and a Swiss mother. He went to Switzerland for family holidays, for work during holidays and also for three years for studies. He feels both countries as his, but perhaps more Mexican than Swiss because he spent all his early life in Mexico.

He attended the Swiss College in Mexico City; therefore, he always had a close relationship with Switzerland besides the connection his mother provided at home. There his studies were conducted in German and he also learned French.

Nowadays he is married and has two daughters.

iii. Ulises

Ulises' entire early life takes place in Mexico City. He studied at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). Afterwards he joined the Mexican

Foreign Service, and has been part of it already for 10 years, and only 2 of those have taken place in Mexico. His first mission was in Iran where he spent 5 years; during which he met his wife:

“Ella es Iraní. Yo la conocí en Irán y ahí formamos nuestra relación. Nos casamos ahí”⁵.

Afterwards he was transferred to Vienna, where he has been already for 3 years. He is now father to a girl born in Vienna.

He speaks fluent Spanish and English, and a bit of German. The language spoken at home is Spanish and gastronomically speaking there is a good deal of Mexican food as well as Iranian.

iv. Lorena

Lorena is a young diplomat from Mexico City. Before entering the Mexican Foreign Service she did an exchange during her studies that allowed her to experience life abroad, outside her comfort zone:

“Cuando me fui de intercambio, el poder adaptarme a otra cultura y entenderla me gustó mucho”⁶.

She studied International Relations in Mexico City and after graduation entered the Mexican Foreign Service. She worked two years at the central offices in Mexico City and then she was sent to her first mission abroad in Vienna.

Lorena is single, but already in a committed relationship with a man that currently lives in Mexico City.

She is fluent in Spanish, English, and German.

⁵ She is Iranian. I met her in Iran and there we formed our relationship. We married there.

⁶ When I went on Exchange, I liked a lot being able to adapt to another culture and understand it.

v. Ramón

Ramón was born in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Practically, since he was accepted in the Mexican Foreign Service, 7 years ago, he has been working outside Mexico. His first appointment was in the United States at the Mexican Consulate in Fresno, California. Afterwards he was assigned to his current mission in Vienna.

He is currently single and speaks Spanish, English and learns German. He particularly emphasizes the role languages have taken in his life since he moved outside Mexico, especially to Austria, because in Fresno there are many Spanish speakers:

“El poder comunicarte ¿no?. Cada vez yo lo pensaba, incluso lo hacía tres veces, del español lo pasaba al inglés, y del inglés lo pasaba al alemán. No sé por qué. (...) Entonces decía –buenos días, good morning, jah, Guten Morgen!-. Pero así, súper rápido ¿no?. Pero obviamente pues sí es complicado el no poder expresar lo que realmente quieres”⁷.

vi. Nora

Nora was born in Mexico City, although her parents are originally from the state of Zacatecas. Her last name has a Chinese origin, as her paternal grandfather was from China. She doesn't feel a strong connection with China, beyond the gastronomy that has always been present in her life and the stories her grandfather told. Nora speaks Spanish, English, and French. She considers that her father is right when he says that culture and language are prominently transmitted by the mother. Therefore, her connection to China was very thin and doesn't consider herself in any way Chinese.

⁷ Being able to communicate, right? Every time I would think, even I would do it three times, from Spanish to English, and from English to German. I don't know why. (...) Then I would say –buenos días, good morning, jah, Guten Morgen!-. Like that, super fast, right? But obviously it is complicated not being able to express what you really want.

She lived all her early years in Mexico City, until she decided to go to university in the state of Puebla. Nora chose to study International Relations because she felt that would increase her chances of getting into the Foreign Service, it was always clear for her that diplomacy was to be her career path:

“(...) Desde niña decidí que quería estar en el Servicio Exterior Mexicano. Y lo decidí en primera instancia porque la hermana de mi padre, mi tía, está en el Servicio Exterior Mexicano. Ella entró, pues bueno ella dice que de casualidad, buscando trabajo se encontró la convocatoria en el periódico de la rama administrativa. Necesitaba trabajar, y pasó el examen de ingreso y al día siguiente la mandaron a Nicaragua, su primer destino. Entonces bueno, ya se quedó en el Servicio Exterior, y para mí de niña se me hacía wow”⁸.

When the time came to do her professional practice, she had the chance to do part of it with an internship in Hungary where her aunt was stationed at that moment. Afterwards she returned to Mexico City to finish her professional service at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She then applied for a job at the Ministry and soon after made the exam to become a diplomat. She didn't succeed after round two of examinations, but didn't discourage and tried once again a year later and passed.

After a year of working at the Ministry, in 1993, she was sent to her first mission abroad in the Netherlands. She was there for 5 years and then she was moved for 3 years to Poland. Afterwards she was transferred to Washington for 6 years. At that point she had been already 14 years outside Mexico; therefore, she asked to be moved back to Mexico. After 4 years at home, she was sent to her current post in Barcelona.

⁸ Since I was a kid I decided that I wanted to be part of the Mexican Foreign Service. I decided that because the sister of my father, my aunt, is part of the Mexican Foreign Service. She entered, she says it was by chance, looking for a job in the newspaper she found the announcement for the administrative branch. She needed to work, and passed the entrance examination and the next day she was sent to Nicaragua, her first destination. So well, she stayed in the Foreign Service, and for me as a girl I was wow.

vii. Pablo

Pablo is from Mexico City, from a longstanding tradition of family roots there. His studies were also made in that city, at UNAM, where he studied a Bachelor and a Master both in International Relations. He also has a specialization in Cultural Promotion and Diffusion by the Metropolitan Autonomous University and the Organization of American States (OAS).

He joined the Mexican Foreign Ministry in 1989 by invitation from a Professor who was at that time the General Director of the Diplomatic Historic Collection. Pablo started working as research director. He initially considered having a temporal experience abroad by managing to get appointed as an article 7, which is a temporary assignment inside the Mexican Foreign Service without the need to pass the exam. However, after two years of working at the Ministry he decided instead to apply, and succeeded passing the exam. So what was supposed to be a temporary experience became a career of more than 20 years.

His first assignment was El Salvador for 6 years as Cultural Attaché. Afterwards it was Brazil in the areas of Internal Policy and Scientific and Technical Cooperation. Then on he went to Costa Rica for 7 years as director of the Mexican Cultural Institute and afterwards as Minister. After he went back to Mexico for 3 years, to be appointed as Deputy Director General for Africa and the Middle East. As last assignment before retiring, he is in Barcelona as Protection Consul. He was also at some point, Academic Director of the *Instituto Matías Romero*.

However, before the Foreign Service he was already a professor at his university, UNAM. Therefore, his career has been divided in two, his academic trajectory and his diplomatic trajectory. Up until today he still teaches through distance learning.

He is married and has two children, a woman and a man, professional young adults now. Both live in Mexico City.

viii. Raúl

Raúl is a young and single diplomat, born and raised in Mexico City. However, he has a diverse family background. His mother is originally from the state of Hidalgo and from her father's side he has Basque heritage, as his great-grandparents came from Spain to establish their family in Mexico City. Therefore, his last name is actually from Basque origin.

Growing up Raúl didn't really have any connection to the Basque Country or Spain, therefore, he doesn't speak Euskara. However, he does speak Spanish, English, French, and currently learning Catalan.

He has almost two Bachelor Degrees, International Relations, which he finished, and Law, which he couldn't conclude because he had to go abroad.

Raúl started his career more than 10 years ago when he started doing his social service at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Afterwards there he also did his professional practice. He presented the entrance exam not long after graduating from his first degree, however, he had to try out a couple of times more before finally getting accepted.

Peculiarly his interest for the Foreign Service was sparked by sports:

“(...) Soy un apasionado de los deportes, me gustan mucho los deportes pero nunca fui bueno para ninguno a excepción del fútbol. Entonces busqué mucho por el lado de la natación, no fui bueno. Busqué un poco por el lado del basquetbol pero mi estatura es muy promedio, el basquetbolista de 1.75 no es nada. Y en el fútbol probé y tuve buenas aptitudes, buenos consejos, buenos maestros, y a partir de ahí empecé a jugar en Pumas. Estuve en Pumas un tiempo, desde niño. Pero eso me dio la oportunidad de viajar mucho. Gracias a ellos conocí gran parte de la República Mexicana. Gracias a la Universidad Club de Fútbol ¿no?. Y posteriormente al extranjero. Entonces a partir de ahí, siempre tuve esa espina de querer salir porque me gustaba eso ¿no?. De joven como le llamaba a uno la atención eso, salir y salir y salir. “Bueno me tengo que dedicar a algo que me haga salir y salir y

salir". Entonces bueno pues al ver que también es complicado combinar el deporte, sobre todo el ya semi-profesional, con la escuela, o no tenía esa capacidad porque hay algunos afortunados que la tienen, decidí estudiar algo que también me diera esa oportunidad, que si no fuera por el deporte fuera por la escuela ¿no?. Entonces a partir de ahí fue mi primer decisión de haber tomado relaciones internacionales"⁹.

His first assignment was to the United States, at the Consulate in Las Vegas. Afterwards he was moved back to Mexico for a while and then sent to his current post in Spain, at the Consulate in Barcelona.

V.II El Servicio Exterior Mexicano

The Mexican Foreign Service segment elucidates on aspects related to their professional life in terms of experiences, insights concerning the advantages and disadvantages of this line of work, as well as some thoughts regarding gender equality.

First of all, as Ulises notes, people that join the Foreign Service have to think twice about the implications such career line would bring to their lives:

"Bueno, antes que nada el Servicio Exterior, si hay que pensarle bien para entrar, ¿no?. Eh, la vocación al servicio, porque es una carrera difícil, estamos lejos del país y más en nuestras circunstancias de México que no tenemos un programa de rotación o de estancia definido. Hay un gran déficit de funcionarios en las embajadas. Tenemos muchas embajadas y pocos

⁹ I am passionate about sports, I like sports a lot but I was never good for any other than soccer. So I looked a lot to the swimming side, I was not good. I looked a little to the side of basketball but my height is very average, the basketball player of 1.75 is nothing. And in soccer I tried and I had good skills, good advice, good teachers, and from there I started playing in *Pumas*. I was in *Pumas* a while since I was a child. But that gave me the opportunity to travel a lot. Thanks to them I saw much of the Mexican Republic. Thanks to the *Universidad Club de Fútbol*, right?. And then abroad. So from there, I always had that thorn of wanting to leave because I liked that, right? As youngster how appealing is that, go out and go out and go out. "Well I have to dedicate myself to something that makes me go out and get out and go out." When I saw that it was difficult to combine sports, especially the semi-professional type, with school, or I did not have that ability because there are some lucky people who have it, I decided to study something that also gave me that opportunity, that if was not for sports it would be because of school, right?. Then that was my first decision to have taken international relations.

funcionarios, entonces no es tan fácil como en un programa como el Brasileño o el Uruguayo, que hay 5 años de misión y forzosamente tienen que regresar a México, digo a su país de origen, no a México. (...) Entonces no pierden tanto el arraigo como nosotros, nosotros si tenemos compañeros que han llevado 15 años fuera de México sin regresar”¹⁰.

Joining the Foreign Services involves choosing a path that encompasses all other aspects of the personal life with a direct and permanent impact. Therefore, it is not a choice for everyone. In this sense, Catalina thinks that the profile of people that are in this line of work has to do with a special craving for the foreign. She mentions that most people have traveled or have lived outside Mexico before joining the Mexican Foreign Service.

However, having a job that implies traveling the world and living in many different countries does have many benefits compared to other jobs where mobility is not in question.

The first advantage recurrently identified by the interviewees, has to do with the opportunity that they have of immersing themselves in other cultures and being able to experiment a different style of daily life and of course diverse context of work life. Which in short opens their minds to enjoy diversity and acquire a wider perspective of the world.

Raúl, enthusiastically spoke about the benefits of meeting people in different locations:

“Las ventajas yo creo que son conocer a muchas personas en diferentes partes del planeta ¿no? incluidos colegas mismos. Haces una red de contactos y de amistad, porque al final entre todos nosotros pues nos

¹⁰ Well, before anything the Foreign Service, you do have to think long about it before entering, right? Uhm, the vocation to service, because it is a difficult career, we are far from our country and more in the circumstances of Mexico because we do not have a program of rotation or defined stay. There is a large deficit of officials in the embassies. We have many embassies and few civil servants, so it is not as easy as in a program like the Brazilian or the Uruguayan, where there are five years of mission and then necessarily have to return to Mexico, I mean to their country of origin, not to Mexico. (...) So they do not lose as much rooting as we do, we have colleagues that have been 15 years outside of Mexico without returning.

apoyamos porque cuando a uno lo trasladan a una ciudad diferente, bueno pues sabes que puedes recurrir a tu colega que está ahí o que se está yendo de ahí o que estuvo ahí; te puede dar esa información que te ayuda a tener esta red de contactos por todas partes del planeta. Y esa es una gran ventaja”¹¹.

The opportunity to contrast Mexico and being able to put it into perspective is also a common idea considered as a gain. They feel it becomes inevitable to compare Mexico with the country in which they currently live, and such reflections allow them to comprehend Mexico from a more neutral perspective; identify all the positives that when living in the country they don't realize, as well as the opportunity areas for betterment. In the words of Nora:

“Esa como experiencia personal, me da todos los elementos como para tener una evaluación de las cosas y sobre México más concretamente, más objetivas y sin tanto apasionamiento. En donde estamos bien, en donde estamos mal como sociedad, como individuos, como país, como gobierno. Y no nada más ser críticos o ser los extremos; o ser críticos o ser súper positivo, que tampoco viene al caso. Hay muchas cosas muy valiosas de México, pero seguimos teniendo muchos retos. Entonces el tener otras experiencias, el ver otras formas de gobierno, de sociedad, de educación, etcétera; pues comparativamente y de una forma sobre todo constructiva, ayudan a ver un poco, a tener un balance más equilibrado de lo que somos, ¿no? como personas, como mexicanos, como sociedad, gobierno y país”¹².

In terms of work conditions, it was not until the 90s that the Mexican Foreign Service started giving additional aid to its officials. Before there was no help

¹¹ I believe the advantages are to meet many people from different parts of the planet, right? Including colleagues. You make a network of contacts and friendship, because in the end among all of us we support each other because when one is transferred to a different city, you know that you can turn to your colleague that is there, is leaving from there, or was there; they can give you information that helps you have this network of contacts around the planet. That is a great advantage.

¹² Like personal experience, it has given me the elements to make an evaluation of about things and more concretely about Mexico, more objectively and less passionately. Where we are doing well, where we are not doing well as society, as individuals, as country, as government. And not only be critical or be the extreme; or being critical or being super positive, which also is not the point. There are many very valuable things in Mexico, but we still have many challenges. Therefore having other experiences, seeing other types of government, of society, of education, etcetera; comparatively and mainly in a constructive way, help you see a bit, to have a better balance of what we are, right? As persons, as Mexicans, as society, government and country.

with the moving costs (*menaje de casa*), no aid with education costs for children of diplomats, the health insurance was not included, no financial aid with travel expenses, as well as neither for the rent. So in that sense the Mexican Foreign Service has changed a lot and made many improvements to help their officials during their stays abroad.

Catalina joined the Service in 1991, and it is fair to say that her main encouragement was her father and he own life experience as daughter of a diplomat. Subsequently she has had contact with the diplomatic life since the beginning of her life, she has seen how the institution has changed over the years and at the same time the life conditions of the diplomats:

“¡Estaba difícil! Mis papás se endrogaron hasta el tope para poder ir todos juntos a un traslado. No existían esos apoyos antes y pues en ese sentido si ha mejorado el Servicio. Y esos apoyos también te ayudan a que tengas más cercanía con México”¹³.

Even though there is a certain yearning for life in Mexico, it was interesting to find out that financially speaking for the Mexican diplomat it is better to live abroad than in Mexico precisely due to all those additional aids they receive complimentary to their salary. Ulises spoke openly about the situation:

“(...) Nuestros sueldos no es lo mismo en México que fuera. Ha cambiado mucho el perfil de los que han entrado al Servicio y la ley sigue estando en los cincuentas, sesentas. Gente que entraba con carrera técnica comercial, que ahora están entrando con maestría y hasta doctorado, pues tienen el mismo sueldo de una secretaria en México. Entonces el nivel de vida no va a ser el mismo que tienes en México que en el exterior. (...) La equivalencia de un poder vivir decorosamente en México. No es tanto de que no quieras vivir en México. Yo estaría encantado de vivir en México 3, 4 o 5 años; pero con el sueldo que tengo no creo sobrevivir más de 6 meses. Entonces no es

¹³ It was hard! My parents indebted to the top so we could all go together to a transfer. There was no such support before and therefore in that sense the Service has improved. And those supports also help you to be closer to Mexico.

que no quiera estar en México, más bien mientras las condiciones de sueldo no se regularicen es un poco complicado que estemos en México”¹⁴.

Diplomacy is a type of voluntary migration in which going away from home is compensated with higher salaries and additional aids. Even though the possibility of having to live in a country you didn't want to is high, it is a type of migration that doesn't struggle trying to make it through every day, or has to deal with bureaucracy by having to apply for a resident permit or renovate a visa, and most importantly it comes with a guaranteed job position.

But generally speaking all of the interviewees coincided that being a diplomat implies more daily life restrictions, responsibilities, and a lot of visibility than in other types of jobs. They are government officials that represent their country all the time. Nora considers it as a, some times, difficult way of life because occasionally it is complicated to distinguish where the professional ends and where the personal starts, there is a very fine thread between both:

“Casi lo único que me queda es el fin de semana, como mío, y dentro de mi casa; porque luego sales y bueno...”¹⁵.

Ulises puts it into more elaborate words:

“Como servidor público realmente representamos al gobierno de México. A nivel personal va enlazado. No es que salga de la embajada y ya deje de ser servidor público y ya no represento a México, no. (...) Ya como servidores públicos pues tenemos que representar los valores de México, cívicos, todo, respeto, honestidad, no sé, protección, ayudar al connacional. (...)Y es

¹⁴ Our salaries are not the same in Mexico than abroad. The profile of the people joining the service has changed a lot and the law is still in the fifties, sixties. People that joined with a technical commercial career that are now joining with master's degree and even PhD, they get the same salary as a secretary in Mexico. Therefore the quality of life won't be the same in Mexico as it is abroad. The equivalence of a decorous life in Mexico. It is not so much that you do not want to live in Mexico. I would be delighted to live in Mexico 3, 4 or 5 years; but with the salary I have I do not think I could survive more than 6 months. So it's not that I do not want to be in Mexico, but as long as the salary conditions are not regularized it's a bit complicated that we're in Mexico

¹⁵ Almost all that I am left with it's the weekend, as mine, and inside my home; because then you go out and well...

muy difícil para nosotros porque somos funcionarios del lunes a domingo, 24 horas, 365 días del año; osea aquí no hay fines de semana, no es que el sábado me quite la playera de México, ya soy un austriaco y puedo hacer lo que quiera. No.”¹⁶.

But speaking in terms of representing a country there is a generalized matching sense of morality and a specific code of ethics, however, it can be a more subjective matter in the every day implementation and each one of them understands the specifics differently. Ramón considers that every diplomat does it in diverse shades:

“Entonces yo represento a México, pero no quiere decir que represento un todo, no. Osea yo en mi caso represento lo que yo puedo dar, es lo que represento. Más sin embargo no todas las cualidades que tienen los mexicanos las tenga yo. Pero finalmente yo estoy haciendo aquí un trabajo. (...) Yo digo que representas al país pero con tu trabajo, con tu dedicación”¹⁷.

It is hard work representing a country all the time and contrary to what most people think about diplomacy, in Ramón’s words, “it’s not as wow for everyone” it really depends on each individual experience. Katulić considers that:

Although diplomats belong to the class of privileged mobile professionals, diplomacy cannot be simply described as a profession reserved for elite workers that promises a fast-track career and a high standard of living. Simply put, it is not as wonderful as it seems (2008: 196).

¹⁶ As a public servant we really represent the Mexican government. On a personal level it is intertwined. It is not that I leave the embassy and cease to be a public servant and I no longer represent Mexico, no. (...) As public servants we have to represent the values of Mexico, civic, everything, respect, honesty, I do not know, protection, helping the connational. (...) And it is very difficult for us because we are officials from Monday to Sunday, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year; here there are no weekends, it is not as if Saturday I can remove the shirt from Mexico, I am already an Austrian and I can do whatever I want. No.

¹⁷ So I represent Mexico, but that doesn’t mean that I represent a whole, no. In my case I represent what I am able to give, that is what I represent. However not all qualities that Mexicans have I also have. But finally I am doing a job here. (...) I say that you represent your country through your job, with your dedication.

However, people that have no contact with the contemporary diplomatic world tend to consider it as a mostly leisure-like type of job, with a very specific imaginary of what their job description is like. Catalina explains the situation as follows:

“Yo creo que es una idea añeja de que el embajador o el enviado extraordinario y plenipotenciarios, así como existía antes el enviado del rey, pues que gozaban de cierto prestigio en las cortes y en los tribunales y eran como los emisarios del gobernante, como que se queda esa idea de que es algo especial, como de élite, como de la realeza, y que se la pasan en puros cocteles. ¡Pues no!, la verdad es que es un trabajo súper difícil y la parte más difícil es esa, la social; porque terminas tu jornada y todavía tienes que ir a cenas y cocteles. (...) Ellos no distinguen jerarquías, osea ellos no distinguen que hay un embajador y 30 funcionarios de apoyo con diferentes rangos; eso no lo ven, para ellos todos son embajadores. Nosotros sí, que estamos adentro lo distinguimos, pero la gente común no lo ve. No distingue entre una embajada y un consulado, no tienen ni idea que se hace. Solo saben que vives en el extranjero y que te la pasas muy bien, viajando, como enviado del rey en cocteles. Y otra cosa que también creo que influye a esta idea errónea es la parte de los idiomas, que como la mayoría de los que estamos en el Servicio mínimo tenemos que hablar dos idiomas, o más; entonces si tenemos como una élite. Por lo general es difícil para un mexicano común. Digamos para aterrizarlo en México “¡ay no si hablas inglés y aparte otro idioma, ya!, para ellos es este, no es algo muy arraigado en la cultura mexicana saber varios idiomas como en Europa que las fronteras son mucho más permisibles y donde vas dos horas y ya estás en otro país. En México no, cruzas dos horas y estás en Toluca o en Querétaro si bien te va. (...) Entonces esa movilidad que tienes en Europa sobre todo, pues da a que la gente hable varios idiomas”¹⁸.

¹⁸ I believe that it is an old idea that the ambassador or the envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary, as it existed before the King's envoy, since they enjoyed a certain prestige in the courts and in the tribunals and were like the emissaries of the ruler, like It remains that idea that it is something special, of elite, as of the royalty, and that they spend time in cocktails. No! The truth is that it is a super difficult job and the most difficult part is that, the social part; because you end your day and you still have to go to dinners and cocktails. They do not distinguish hierarchies, they do not distinguish that there is an ambassador and 30 support staff with different ranks; they do not see it, for them are all ambassadors. We do distinguish it inside, but the common people do not see it. Do not distinguish between an embassy and a consulate, they have no idea what is done there. They only know that you live abroad and that you have a good time, traveling as the king's envoy in cocktails. And another thing that I also think

Yet, it is fair to acknowledge that being a diplomat does entail prestige and pride to those that manage to be part of the Foreign Service, as it is also known that it is not easy to join. Nowadays there are several steps and examinations to follow, where excellent academic preparation is necessary.

Joining the Mexican Foreign service was described by all the interviewees as a challenge. Only those who manage to approve all the examinations, pass all the filters and finally the training at the Mexican diplomatic academy, *Instituto Matías Romero*, are entitled to be diplomats by career. Although certain preference for specific universities and professions is noted among the people in the Service, it is fair to say that as long as people perform well in the examinations they are entitled to join the Service.

There is also the possibility to temporarily join the Mexican Foreign Service as an article 7, which exempts the person from having to undergo the entire procedure of admission. Article's 7 are usually a controversial topic among diplomats; there is a polarized opinion towards them. Some believe it is unfair that they get the chance to join the service even though it is temporary and on top they receive a higher salaries. While some others are okay with them, as they feel they bring a fresh perspective to the workplace because in the end they all work for the same goals, they all work for Mexico.

Yet, comments regarding favoritisms and privilege once inside the Service were varied. Not in terms of promotions, as they also have to pass the examinations and proceed according their internal score system in order to upgrade their rank.

influences this misconception is the language, as most of us in the Service minimum have to speak two languages, or more; and then we do have an elite. It is usually difficult for a common Mexican. Let's land it in Mexico "oh if you speak English and on top another language, you made it!", it is not something very ingrained in Mexican culture to know several languages as in Europe; where borders are much more permeable and where you drive two hours and you are already in another country. Not in Mexico, you cross two hours and you are in Toluca or in Querétaro. (...) Then such mobility you have in Europe gives people the opportunity to speak several languages.

As for gender opportunities, it was clearly a somewhat uncomfortable topic for some during the interview. There was a clear distinction between the politically correct discourse given by male interviewees and opinions based on personal experience that were expressed by female interviewees. Although there are many women inside the Foreign Service, it was recognized that there are still men that favor working with other men. Ulises and Pablo mentioned this specifically, however, it was a situation that they heard of, not that they had seen directly, or was minimized by other circumstances such as professionalism or children. Ulises comments:

“Depende también, es cierto que hay titulares, jefes de cancillería, llamémoslo extraños. Y también depende mucho del funcionario de la capacidad que tenga uno para negociar, hacerse entender y trabajar bien profesionalmente”¹⁹.

Further more, Pablo shares that during his entire career he had to work with women and in many occasions as his superiors; himself considering his own case as an exceptional one. He also mentioned that for him such situation was never an issue and every time managed to work well; and with an initial expression of a more elevated voice and tone, he shared some thoughts:

“¡A ver! Yo tengo la impresión que ha sido una constante, que han sido de las áreas que se han abierto para la actividad femenina desde que yo ingresé. No son muchas, creo que deberían de haber más, y creo que esta tendencia se ha mantenido constante, que no ha habido ni menos ni más”²⁰.

For Salvador the only problem for women in this line of work is having children and having to find a way to balance motherhood and work. He recognizes that

¹⁹ It also depends, it is true that there are bosses, heads of Chancellery, lets call them strange. And it also depends a lot on the official's ability to negotiate, make themselves understood and work well professionally.

²⁰ Let's see! I have the impression that it has been a constant, it has been one of the areas that have opened up for the feminine activity since I entered. There are not many, I think there should be more, and I think this trend has remained constant, there have not been less nor more.

his complications in terms of his daughters are not so big because his wife is the one permanently taking care of everything home related. Even if he would have liked spending time at home helping out at least when having a newborn, when enquired about it at work he realized that it was not a benefit extended to men, only for women. Situation that can be troublesome since abroad new parents don't have the support network that would come to aid as if they were home; specially the mothers and grandmothers, whom in most cases are eager to help out and share all their knowledge about babies. As for everything else Salvador feels female diplomats do have the same opportunities and are almost the same in terms of numbers inside the Service.

It seems to be rare when a consulate or embassy is female predominant at some point, like the case of the Consulate of Mexico in Barcelona. Raúl, with his arrival to the Consulate, changed the female only situation they had been going at that moment:

“Si cuando yo llegué aquí hace 2 años, era el único hombre. A excepción del chofer del consulado, era el único; ya después yo llegué como funcionario y era el único hombre de esta oficina. Si, si, si, curioso, curioso, cierto²¹”.

In general it is possible to notice peculiar word choices and not very concrete opinions from male diplomats regarding equal and equitable participation of women. Pablo's previous comment, for example, shows a somehow contradictory situation with an attempt of a positive twist. Either female diplomats are increasing or they are the same number as always, but it can't be both. And where phrases like “feminine activity” or “the only problem of women is when they have children”, when made conscious evidence that diplomacy is still a very much male-centered field.

On the other hand female interviewees did express how much they would like to see more women joining the Service and how fundamental it would be to

²¹ When I came here two years ago, I was the only man. With the exception of the driver of the Consulate, he was the only one; and afterwards I arrived as an official and was the only man in this office. Yes, yes, yes, curious, curious, indeed.

support each other as a collective in order to gain new spaces and have more participation. Cecilia mentioned that in occasions it felt like “Tobi’s club”. Expression that is used in Mexico and other parts of Latin America for a reunion of friends where there are no females invited or allowed. She said that it was difficult in terms of attitude and language; if you are soft then you are useless, but if you are tough then you are a wretch. But if a man is soft then he is a good sport and if he is tough then he is a perfectionist. Complementarily, Nora’s opinion in this topic is worth pointing out:

“Pero recientemente vi una estadística, no más de un año, en la que una tercera parte somos mujeres, ¿no?. Pues nos hace falta mucho más por buscar nuestra equidad, ¿no?. (...) Nos hace falta mucho, mucho, mucho. Sobre todo viviendo otras experiencias fuera. Pero que no es exclusivo de México, la verdad es que es, ahora sí que es mundial el tema, ¿no?. (...) Nunca lo he sentido, osea nunca me he sentido víctima, ¿no?, la verdad. Pero si veo las diferencias, si las veo, pero vaya no me las tomo personales. Es una cuestión más general y de género. Pero sí, si las hay. Mis colegas, bueno pues sí. Yo creo que se ha trabajado mucho en México en general, se ha trabajado mucho por que nosotras las mujeres tengamos una mayor consciencia de la igualdad de luchar por nuestros derechos, de nuestro lugar, etcétera; pero yo creo que lo que falta es la otra parte, concientizar al hombre. Porque nosotras ya estamos conscientes, por ser víctimas o porque estamos un poco más empoderadas, o lo que sea. Pero es que ahora falta el acompañamiento con ellos, creo que sino sigues quedando desbalanceada. No entiendo por qué el enlace de género tiene que ser una mujer, tienen que ser ellos los que ahora tomen consciencia de nosotras, de la equidad”²².

²² But recently I saw a statistic, not more than a year, in which a third part are women, right? Well, we need to do a lot more to seek equity, right? (...) We need a lot, a lot, a lot. Especially after having other experiences outside. But it is not exclusive of Mexico, the truth is that it is a worldwide issue, right ?. (...) I have never felt it, I have never felt a victim, to be honest. But I do see the differences, I see them, but I do not take them personal. It is more of a general and gender issue. But yes, there are. My colleagues, well yes. I believe that there has been a lot of work in Mexico in general, a lot of work has been done to ensure that us women have a greater awareness of equality, to fight for our rights, our place, and so on; but I believe that what is missing is the other part, to make men aware. Because we are already aware, because we are victims or because we are a little more empowered, or whatever. But it is that the accompaniment is missing with them, I think that it is still unbalanced. I do not understand why the gender link has to be a woman, they must be the ones who are now aware of us, of equity.

So in terms of gender equality, based in some general comments made by the interviewees, the Mexican Foreign Service has yet to overcome some challenges.

Further more, concerning differentiated treatments and favoritisms it was definitively an outspoken issue that of being able to go to the consulate or embassy of preference. Salvador shares his experience in this sense:

“Por ejemplo cuando uno es trasladado o cuando uno quiere ciertas adscripciones o trabajar con ciertos titulares o llegar a tal dirección; en todo eso habrá personas, los contactos que quizá trabajan bien, o es hijo de no sé quien, o trabajó muy bien con, o es amigo de algún subsecretario; entonces todos esos quizás si tienen más, hablemos de un quizá favoritismo para al menos estar en la adscripción que quieran, el tiempo que están, o hacerse cargo de un tema; eso quizá si lo hay. (...) Yo ahorita estoy en el programa de rotación y ya me voy a ir. Pero me mandan como “bueno tu te vas pa`aca”. Yo tuve la opción de poner 5 adscripciones y no me voy a ninguna de esas, me voy a otra. Primero fue una sorpresa que no es una de las 5 que yo quise. No era lo que yo quería, quizá si yo tengo el contacto, el amigo, el conocido, lo que sea pues es más fácil ¿no?, que no lo tengo. Entonces ahí hay favoritismos ¿no?”²³.

It was also noted that such internal partialities also have an important impact if someone belongs to a certain family with notable connections and social standing. However, it was also pointed out that those groups are well identified and every time it is more difficult for them to keep stating a difference from an elitist point of view, as being a diplomat does actually require good performance on the job and a specific set of skills.

²³ For example when one is transferred or when one wants certain ascriptions or to work with certain person or to arrive at certain direction; in all of this there will be people, contacts who may work well, or are the son of certain someone, or worked very well with, or are friends with some undersecretary; then all those maybe do have more, lets say favoritism to at least be at the ascription they want, the time they are, or take over a topic they like; that does happen. (...) I am now in the rotation program and I'm going to leave. But they send me as "well you go over there". I had the option to put 5 ascriptions and I'm not going to any of those, I'm going to another. First it was a surprise that it is not one of the 5 that I chose. It was not what I wanted, maybe if I had the contact, the friend, the acquaintance, or whatever it's easier, right? I do not have it. So there are favoritism, right?

Beyond a specific set of talents required by the profession, there is much more than languages as essential skills and abilities for a job that compels life abroad. Raúl emphasizes the need for social and biological adaptability; which doesn't always play on your favor:

“Desventaja es verdad, algunos piensan que te la pasas en la ciudades solamente disfrutando de su clima, de su gente, de sus comidas, de sus espacios; pero también es complicado adaptarte a algunas ciudades, algunas son mucho más fáciles que otras no cabe duda. También tiene uno que tener, cada persona debe tener digamos que un grado de adaptación, sobre todo la gente que está en esto de embajadas y consulados. Debes tener un grado de adaptación alto y muy tolerante a muchas cosas, que no es fácil tampoco de tenerlo. No todas las personas lo tienen y (...) no se dan cuenta que tienes que empezar de cero a las ciudad que llegas. De cero de todo ¿no? Desde que llegas y no tienes ni una identificación más que tu pasaporte que te da el Gobierno de México, con el cual tienes que iniciar trámites para obtener todas las identificaciones del lugar a donde llegas. Que tienes que averiguar un poco sobre las costumbres locales ¿no?. Que tienes que averiguar un poco sobre el transporte público. Que tienes que averiguar un poco sobre donde vivir. Que tienes que averiguar un poco donde te pueden atender médicamente si tienes alguna cuestión de emergencia o si te sientes mal, que a veces también el cambio de clima, de temperatura, de altura, de comida te puede caer mal sobre todo los primeros días. Entonces uno conforme va pasando el tiempo vas aprendiendo estas cosas, que no es lo mismo que llegas a un lugar y comes en cualquier lugar, no es que esté mal la comida pero tu organismo no está preparado para comer algunas cosas. Y esas cosa pueden ocurrir. O los horarios ¿no?, que podrás llegar a un lugar y no tendrás los mismos horarios que en México o que en el otro país en el que estuviste ¿no?. Que también tienes que aprender eso muy rápido. Esa capacidad de adaptación la tienes que tener muy, muy por encima quizás del promedio que la gente lo considera”²⁴.

²⁴ Disadvantage is true, some think that you spend your time in the cities only enjoying its climate, its people, its meals, its spaces; But it is also difficult to adapt to some cities, some are much easier than others no doubt. You also have to have, each person must have let's say a degree of adaptation, especially the people who are in this of embassies and consulates. You must have a high degree of adaptation and very tolerant to many things, which is not easy

Diplomats undergo through constant learning processes, as every time they move elsewhere they have to figure out how life works in that new place of settlement, how local transport systems work, types of local food and where to grocery shop, local civic and religious traditions, among many more basic things elemental for daily life.

As much as the job itself simplifies many aspects of the migration struggle, there are still many situations from which they can't be isolated and necessarily have to take risks in terms of what they are used to in their daily lives. They are privileged but their lives are also, as much as any other migrants, significantly affected by boundaries, especially determining homemaking (Katulić, 2008:199).

Every time they move they have to create a full functioning home that provides them with certain degree of stability. It is a challenge to start from zero every time, especially for the ones that are not relocated on their own. Pablo has trailed from one country to another accompanied by his family of four:

“La desventaja es que cada vez que uno se traslada, pues rompe uno con el mundo que ya construyó, ¿no? Y a veces es difícil mantenerlo porque se

either to have. Not all people have it and they do not they realize that you have to start from scratch to every city that you arrive. From zero of everything, right? You arrive and you do not have any identification more than the passport that the Government of Mexico gives you, with which you have to initiate procedures to obtain all the identifications of the place where you arrive. You have to find out a bit about the local customs, right? You have to find out a bit about public transportation. You have to find out a bit about where to live. You have to find out a little where you can be medically attended if you have any emergency or if you feel bad, because sometimes also the change in climate, temperature, height, food can have a negative impact especially the first few days. Then as time goes by one learns these things, that is not the same thing that you arrive at a location and you eat in any place, it is not that the food is bad but your organism is not prepared to eat some things. And such things can happen. Or the time zone, right? You can arrive to a place and you will not have the same time zone as in Mexico or in the other country where you were, right? You also have to learn that very fast. That ability to adapt you have to have it very, very high above perhaps than the average of what people consider.

*rompe en pedazos, entonces reconstruir esos pedazos no es fácil y normalmente no se logra en su totalidad*²⁵.

It is entirely different for those diplomats that are accompanied by a partner, whom is usually the one more directly involved in the homemaking process. However, the complications for those partners, and children if that is the case, whom are accompanying the diplomat are bigger since they are not shielded by controlled environment that is created at the embassies or consulates. Moreover, most of the times the partner has to give up any professional aspiration because few countries have the bilateral agreement which allows them to work in the host country.

Raúl is single, however, recognizes the troubles and implications of having a partner and children in his line of work:

*“No es lo mismo quizás para uno que está en esto, que a esto de dedicas y que sabes que puede ocurrir. Pero para quien te acompaña si no está consciente puede que no te acompañe más. Entonces es complicado, ¿no? Y más que problemas pues ruptura. Osea el tratar de hacerles entender que no es sencillo, que no es lo mismo quizás. A lo mejor uno habla dos o tres idiomas y tal vez la pareja lo tendrá que hacer también, ¿no? Y si no los habla pues entonces hay un gran problema, ¿no?. Y también aún a pesar de que hables algunos idiomas, pues estos idiomas son para uno, son básicos y son una herramienta en el trabajo en tu oficina, en las oficinas con las que interactúas, con los funcionarios con los que interactúas. Pero para tu familia no, que está en tu casa y que tiene que interactuar con el día a día, con la gente que está en el supermercado, en las escuelas, en la calle, en el transporte. Entonces si esta persona tiene dos o tres idiomas que no es el idioma de ahí, pues entonces se enfrenta a una situación todavía más complicada que uno, ¿no?”*²⁶.

²⁵ The disadvantage is that every time you move you break the world you've built, right? And sometimes it's hard to keep it because it breaks into pieces, so rebuilding those pieces is not easy and usually it is not entirely achieved.

²⁶ Perhaps it is not the same for one who is in this, this is what you do and you know that can happen. But for who accompanies you if he or she is not conscious, this person may not accompany you anymore. Then it's complicated, right? And more than problems, a break up. So trying to make them understand that it is not easy, that perhaps it is not the same. Maybe one speaks two or three languages and maybe the partner will have to do it too, right? And if not

However, there were also some advantages mentioned in relation to the family sphere. For the ones that have children, according to their perspective as parents, moving from one place to another meant for their children a unique opportunity to experience the world differently by learning other languages, traveling, studying in diverse contexts, and being able to relate and interact with distinct types of people, their beliefs and their ways.

But when speaking about the extended family that remains in Mexico, it turned out to be a huge drawback of this type of work. But it was very much compensated by the current communication technologies. They have the possibility to stay in touch more frequently with their dear ones, as well as informed of what is happening in Mexico. This means that they don't lose as much sight of where they come from, of what is happening in the lives of their friends and family, and gain perspective of what is internally happening to them as they experience life away from home. In Nora's experience:

“En término de desventajas, creo que tiene más que ver con esa parte de la distancia de tu familia, de tus amigos, ¿no? Pero que afortunadamente en esta época que de verdad las comunicaciones, que puede sonar como muy trillado y sobre todo para gente muy joven, que no es que yo no lo sea; pero esto de la tecnología es reciente y si te cambia el estar cerca, el sentirte cerca; desde luego que si ha cambiado esto. Eso un poco para compensar las desventajas que encuentras en el Servicio Exterior. Pero no obstante no hay como estar en México en términos de vinculación personal con esa realidad. (...)Te desarraigas y si ya no te identificas, ya no te llegas a identificar con eso, con tu familia, con tus amigos, con la sociedad, ¿no?”²⁷.

then there is a big problem, right? And even though you speak some languages, these languages are for one, they are basic and they are a work tool in your office, in the offices with which you interact, with the officials with whom you interact. But for your family they are not, they are at home and have to interact with day to day with the people in the supermarket, in schools, on the street, in public transport. So if this person has two or three languages that are not the language there, then he or she faces a situation even more complicated than one does, right?

²⁷In terms of disadvantages, I think it has more to do with that part of the distance with your family, your friends, right? But fortunately in this era that communications really, which may sound like very trite and especially for very young people, not that I am; but this technology is recent and it does change you being close, you feeling close; of course that has changed this. That to compensate a little for the disadvantages you find in the Foreign Service. But

Closeness to the country and the ability to relate to the people of their nation becomes blurry and complicated in time, it is clearly another big shortcoming of being away for very long periods of time. Thus, it is remarkably important to close this section by pointing out what the office, whether a consulate or an embassy, means to them, by retelling a story from Catalina's father.

"Tengo una anécdota de mi papá cuando estaba en Hamburgo en el consulado. Llegó un mexicano un día con una mochila 'Cónsul, ¿esto es México?', 'bueno no es México pero se considera como si fuera México. Todas las oficinas en el exterior se supone que son una extensión de la territorialidad mexicana', '¿entonces es México?', 'se supone que si es México, ¿qué se le ofrece?'. ¡Pues puso su tienda de campaña en la entrada del consulado!. 'Si esto es México yo aquí me quedo porque no tengo donde dormir'. Y no hubo manera de sacarlo, pasó una semana y el señor vivía ahí en el consulado. Y no podía entrar la policía porque es territorialidad mexicana. Y por más de que se le trataba de ayudar, el señor no se quería ir; y vivía ahí, comía ahí, se bañaba ahí. Entonces si es como si fuera México, entonces las oficinas digamos que legalmente, jurídicamente si son parte del territorio mexicano. Gozan de inviolabilidad los archivos, el personal que trabaja ahí. No tiene jurisdicción el estado receptor sobre el espacio, que tiene que estar reconocido como tal; por eso tiene el escudo y tiene la bandera. Se registra el personal que trabaja ahí para que también goce de esa inmunidad. Y sí nosotros lo sentimos también como México. Es como nuestra familia los que trabajamos aquí, pues como si fuera mi primo y mi vecino al que recurro cuando te pasa algo, cuando te enfermas o un percance del que sea. Pues siempre recurres a los compañeros de la embajada, si es como el concepto extendido de la familia mexicana. Y si se siente uno como en México, e incluso lo vemos cuando viene la gente, el público, a hacer algún trámite, '¡ay que rico estar en México y hablar

nevertheless there is no way like being in Mexico in terms of personal connection with that reality. (...) You uproot yourself and you no longer identify, you no longer identify with that, your family, your friends, with society, right?

*español!'. (...) Y para nosotros así es. Bueno así a mi también me lo enseñaron mis papás, es como tu familia*²⁸.

As I have already discussed before, work is so much more that just one aspect of their lives that they can leave behind after office hours and unplug for the rest of their evening or weekends. It is a fundamental part of other aspects of their existence as it has direct influence on other spheres, mainly those of family and the friends. The embassy or consulate offers them a piece of their national identity, tight friendships, and a place where they can speak their native language, get a sensation of shelter from the external context and a feeling of familiarity. A Mexico outside Mexico; a home away from home.

V.III Family

The aspect of the family turned out to be one of the major topics discussed by the interviewees. Therefore, here I talk about family matters such as marriage, being single, children, language(s) spoken at home, and ways through which contact with the extended family in Mexico is carried out.

By moving abroad, diplomats and their children undergo processes of resocialisation or acculturation which occur when individuals change their social/cultural environment (Lukšič Hacin, 2010:37). However, such processes

²⁸ I have an anecdote from my dad when he was in Hamburg at the consulate. A Mexican arrived one day with a backpack, 'Consul, is this Mexico?', 'Well it is not Mexico but it is considered as if it were Mexico. All offices abroad are supposed to be an extension of Mexican territoriality', 'then it is Mexico?', 'It is assumed as if it is Mexico, what do you need?'. Then the man set a tent in the entrance of the consulate! 'If this is Mexico, I'll stay here because I have nowhere to sleep'. And there was no way to get him out, a week went by and the man lived there at the consulate. And the police could not enter because it is Mexican territoriality. And as much as he was trying to help, the man did not want to go; and lived there, ate there, showered there. So legally it is as if it were Mexico, juridically as if they are part of the Mexican territory. They enjoy inviolability of the files, the staff that works there. The receiving state has no jurisdiction over the space, which must be recognized as such; that is why the shield and the flag are displayed. The personnel working there are registered so that they also enjoy that immunity. And yes we also feel like Mexico. It is like our family that works here, as if it were my cousin and my neighbor that I appeal when something happens to you, when you get sick or have a mishap of whatever sort. You always resort to the comrades of the embassy, it is like the extended concept of the Mexican family. And you do feel like in Mexico, and we even see it when people come, the public, to do some processing, 'how sweet to be in Mexico and speak Spanish. (...) And for us it is like that. Well, so my parents taught me too, it's just like your family.

can be very challenging, especially when the new country of residence is radically different than the country of origin.

As Pablo candidly recognizes, the hardest part of the integration process is for the family and not for the diplomat:

“(...) La verdad es que uno está siempre metido en la oficina, mucho tiempo; y esa oficina es un universo minúsculo de lo que es México. Entonces uno se mantiene siempre dentro de este mini México, dentro de este círculo comentando con los compañeros todas las cuestiones de trabajo. Entonces es cuando uno sale del trabajo cuando realmente se enfrenta a la realidad externa, mientras que las familias están todo el tiempo enfrentados a esta realidad externa. Son ellos los que creo sufren más o tienen mucho más trabajo para adaptarse.”²⁹

Children may have identity crises in various degrees. Ramón talked about the case of one of his colleagues, as he saw how difficult it was for the children to identify themselves as from somewhere specific. And even more so if one of the parents is not Mexican, which implies the presence of more than one set of values, costumes and languages. Another factor he talked about was the difference it made if they were born outside Mexico and had never really lived there, which brought other complications as well:

“Su mamá es rusa. Y ellos siempre han vivido fuera; vivieron en Estados Unidos, vivieron en Rusia obviamente, y en otros lados. Pero los niños decían que no sabían qué onda, que no sabían de donde eran. “Osea ni me siento mexicano ni me siento ruso”. Y si lo entiendo. Te digo, ahí yo creo sería la mayor diferencia. El que nunca ha estado en México, aunque sea hijo de padres mexicanos o no, a el que si ha estado allá. Yo creo que la diferencia es más bien el que hayas vivido en México.”³⁰

²⁹ Truth is that one is always in the office, a lot of time; and such office is a minuscule universe of what Mexico is. Then one is always kept inside such mini Mexico, inside of a circle commenting with colleagues all work related. Therefore it is when one goes out from work when confrontation with the external reality happens, meanwhile the families are all the time facing the external reality. It is them whom I believe suffer more or have more troubles adapting.

³⁰ Their mother was Russian. They have always lived outside; lived in the United States, lived in Russia obviously, and in some other places. But the kids said that they didn't know where they

Catalina talks about her own experience as a child of a diplomat. Both of her parents were Mexican, however, she first learned how to read and write in German. Therefore, now she can understand her daughter's experience, as she has gone through it herself. Her daughter does speak Spanish, but just as Catalina did when she was a child, she identifies another language as her primary language, in this case French. Heartfeltly, Catalina describes her daughter's experience:

"Y ahora lo mismo le pasa a mi hija. Ella ha crecido fuera. Ella no se siente mexicana, no se halla ella. No sabe que es. Si es o no es. Pues difícil."³¹

Ulises also recognizes the challenge that multiple languages represent for the family and the children. As it is not the case that all of the family members speak the same number of languages, or the native language of the spouse, the native language of the parents, or the local language of the place of residence. Ulises speaks Spanish at home with his Iranian wife, of Armenian ancestry and, therefore, Armenian native speaker, and now both teach each others native language to the child; however:

"(...) El arraigo de los hijo si es difícil porque olvidan el español, la consciencia. Depende mucho también de nosotros, pero es difícil ¿no?. Imagínate mi caso. Yo tengo una niña que nació en Austria, lleva 2 años aquí viviendo. No sé cuánto dure más, a lo mejor otros 3 años, pero va a aprender a hablar alemán antes que español. Entonces la convivencia aquí con los niños de Austria no es la misma que en México o en otro país."³²

were from. "I don't feel Mexican neither Russian". And I understand. As I say, there lies the biggest difference. The one that has never been in Mexico, regardless of having Mexican parents or not, to the one that has been there. I believe the difference relies on you living in Mexico.

³¹ And now the same happens to my daughter. She grew up outside. She doesn't feel Mexican, doesn't find herself. Doesn't know what she is. If she is or is not. It is hard.

³² The attachment of children is difficult because they forget Spanish, the consciousness. It also depends a lot from us, but it is hard, right?. Imagine my case. I have a girl that was born in Austria, has two years living here. I don't know how much longer, maybe 3 more years, but she will learn German before than Spanish. Therefore the coexistence here with Austrian children is not the same as in Mexico or another country.

But after first impressions and cultural shock, people gradually become involved in their new work, social, cultural and language environments (Lukšič Hacin, 2010:37). Families create new routines and develop a new everyday life, although much easier said than done. And further on Ulises mentions:

“Si llega a afectar y si he visto que hay estadísticas de los hijos de los compañeros; o son muy brillantes, porque seamos honestos o sea los niños tienen una oportunidad de educación que no tienen en México, o si la tienen en México no está al alcance de cualquier bolsillo. Pero son los extremos, o salen ciudadanos funcionales o salen muy relajientos. (...) Mucho depende también de los padres, cierto. Muchos compañeros los dejan crecer al “hay se va”, como sobrevivan. Es cierto también hay que invertirle la educación, porque no es lo mismo que lo metas a la escuela internacional a en escuela pública sin saber el idioma local, sin tener amistades. Psicológicamente también es una afectación a los niños, a los conyugues igual. No es tan fácil estar cambiando de país tanto.”³³

But as Ulises comments not everything is negative impact for children. Pablo's experience was actually very positive in terms of family integration to different countries and everything they got out of this experience. From his point of view, regardless of the suffering every time they had to leave a place, he sees his son and daughter as young adults with a widened perception and appreciation for the world and cultures. Yet, I must point out that all of the countries he was appointed to, but one, were Spanish speaking Latin-American countries. In his own words:

“Yo he tenido una suerte enorme porque tanto mi esposa como mis hijos han tenido un grado de adaptabilidad enorme. Entonces si han sufrido

³³ It affects and I have seen statistics about the children of colleagues; or they are brilliant, because lets be honest the children have an opportunity of education that they don't have in Mexico, or if they do have it in Mexico it is now within reach of every pocket. But they are the extreme, become functional citizens or become a ruckus. (...) Much depends on the parents, true. Many colleagues let them grow up “as it goes”, however they survive. It is true that you have to invest in education, because it is not the same to put them in the international school to the public school without knowing the local language, without having any friends. Psychologically it is an affectation to the children, to the spouses the same. It is not easy to be changing country so much.

*cada vez que cambian de lugar, pero rápidamente han sabido adaptarse al nuevo entorno que les hemos construido la Secretaría y yo.*³⁴”

It is very interesting to notice the recognition that the construction of family life for diplomats abroad very much depends of the individuals but also from the institutions and the government, specifically the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Which brings us back to the concept of the bubble, as the environment in which they develop is somehow artificially set. However, such environmental bubbles also very much depend on the relationship that each of the families and the country of origin have, in this case Mexico. As it is fundamental to building a sense of identity and belonging.

As Ulises and his wife come from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds, he mentioned they try to teach their daughter the traditions and ways of living from both sides in order to connect her to both of her heritages. He says he tries to follow what he learned from his parents as well as what he experienced in Mexico. And from his wife's side it is the same but from an Armenian and Iranian context. Which implies multiple ways of doing things, and recognizes the future impact of that for his daughter:

*“Y es una mezcla que tal vez a esta edad no se note tanto para la niña, pero entre más crezca puede crear un poco de confusión o un enriquecimiento cultural muy grande ¿no?”*³⁵.”

Pablo's children, both born in Mexico and from Mexican parents, had a different experience. In his understanding, it was fundamental to keep a strong relationship with Mexico beyond the family relationship; meaning that he and his wife encouraged their children to get connected to Mexico by helping them relate to the national symbols, by knowing the history, and engaging them to care about the country's problematic. As his main career focus was culture, he always had different kinds of books at home to which his children could go to

³⁴ I have had enormous luck because my wife and children have had a great degree of adaptability. They have suffered every time that they changed place, but they quickly have known how to adapt to the new environment that the Foreign Ministry and I have built for them.

³⁵ And it is a mixture that on her age it is maybe not noticeable for her, but the more she grows it can create confusion or a great cultural enrichment, right?.

and read about their country. He recognizes books as a very important element to endure the link with the country of origin.

Other way of maintaining the connection and teaching the children about Mexico is through the cultural centers. For example Salvador takes his daughter to the Mexican Cultural Institute in Vienna for dance lessons.

From a more general approach to family life, Lukšić Hacin accurately points out, that the family as a whole acts as a representative of their country abroad (2010:39). They are the family of the diplomat all day, every day; just as we have discussed in the previous chapter, pointing out that the diplomat remains its country's representative even after office hours. Hence, it is hard for them to have a normal interaction, as the title will always stay present. But as Ulises very well notes, people in this line of work are aware of the challenges:

“(...) Si va afectando anímicamente, personalmente también, y pues es un poquito problemático el aspecto personal. Pero digo, desde que entramos en esto sabemos las consecuencias, los riesgos, la problemática y pues avanzamos³⁶”.

Now, from the point of view of the spouse that follows the diplomat, issues related with leaving his/her job and sacrificing their own careers is one of the key elements of diplomatic migration (Katulić, 2008:184). The possibilities for spouses of attaining a job in the new country entirely depend on the bilateral agreements between countries, for example Mexico-Austria or Mexico-Spain. However, in most cases, like in the two mentioned above, it is not possible for the spouses to work; therefore, their professional careers have to be set aside and occupy their time with studies, the household and children, or other social or cultural activities.

The husband's shock is cushioned by the comfortable continuity of his profession... The wife is the one who must transfer family life to new

³⁶ It affects the animus, personally too, and it is a bit problematic on the personal aspect. But I say, from the moment that we get in this we know the consequences, the risks, the problematic; and we move forward.

surroundings (...) (Cohen, 1977:59). Furthermore women during their stay abroad usually join some of the various ladies' clubs, which engage in various charity activities or organize women's gatherings for coffee or tea, so-called "coffee mornings". A key issue in these cases is that the activities of women's clubs do not meet the needs and wishes of all of these women. Some of them consider those gatherings to be artificial (...) (Katulić, 2008:184). And such dissatisfactions in some cases lead to unhappy marriages and divorces.

Ulises recognizes that constant change is the main complication for spouses from his point of view

"Unos si lo toman bien, otros no lo toman bien. Mi caso por ejemplo. Mi esposa si ha estado fuera de Irán, ha estado viviendo sola, sabe cómo está el movimiento en el exterior, para así decirlo, y pues ahí vamos. (...) Tenemos un alto índice de divorcios, eso es cierto. Entonces no todos los compañeros o compañeras logran formar una familia estable largo tiempo³⁷."

Salvador has been married for a while and has two girls. And as he talked about his family one could see questions about gender roles strongly invoked, as the spouses who cannot work are often assigned housekeeping tasks, childcare and generally the reproduction of the domestic sphere abroad (Katulić, 2008:194).

"En mi caso yo trabajo y mi esposa está en casa. En Austria no puede trabajar y tendrá que estar en casa, y está con las niñas ¿no?. Entonces lo tienes de cierto modo arreglado ¿no?. Digo si hay algo complicado por supuesto que yo voy, que si hay que ir al hospital, por el idioma yo voy al hospital, al doctor, a algo grave pues ahí estoy. Yo las llevo al kínder por

³⁷ Some take it well, some others don't take it well. My case for example. My wife has been outside Iran, has lived alone, knows how the movement abroad is, so to say, and there we are. (...) We have a high rate of divorce, that is true. Therefore not all the colleagues manage to form a long-term stable family.

las mañanas y normalmente ella las recoge, osea nos organizamos ¿no?, pero porque ella está en casa³⁸.”

This shows how a traditional household, with a working dad and a stay at home mom, works. However, not every case is the same nowadays, but that doesn't mean that it is any easier for female diplomats as working moms. Having a husband that has to stay at home can turn out quite problematic as traditional gender roles enter into conflict. Not many men are willing to leave their careers aside for the one of the wife.

Lorena's case is a different example in terms of gender roles and prevailing values. She is engaged to a man that currently lives in Mexico, but soon to move to Vienna with her. In her case it is possible to notice a shift in what people value more nowadays and how there is a negotiation in terms of professional and personal life within a young couple:

“Al final no va a trabajar, más bien estamos haciendo un plan de a qué se va a dedicar. Va a hacer el doctorado en Viena y después la idea es que se dedique a la investigación. Entonces la investigación la puede hacer en cualquier parte del mundo, pero más bien el punto es que él es muy flexible y está poniendo primero la relación a su crecimiento laboral. Pero es un caso especial. Hay muchas mujeres dentro del Servicio que tienen una vida familiar bastante buena, pero también hay muchas que se divorciaron o que no se han casado, porque pues el trabajo si es un factor que puede influir en la cuestión familiar. Y hay por ejemplo parejas dentro del Servicio Exterior, entonces el Servicio trata de ayudarlos un poco para que estén en la misma ciudad. Por ejemplo, no sé, Nueva York, uno en la misión y otro en el consulado y así³⁹.”

³⁸ In my case I work and my wife is at home. In Austria she can't work and she will have to stay home, and with the girls, right? Hence you have it in a way settled, right?. If there is something complicated of course that I am going, if you have to go to the hospital, because of the language I go, to the doctor, something serious I am there. I take them to the kindergarten in the morning, and normally she picks them up, we organize, right? but because she is at home.

³⁹ In the end he is not going to work, we are making a plan to figure out how he will occupy himself. He will make a PhD in Vienna and afterwards the idea is that he will do research. Research he can make anywhere in the world, moreover the point is that he is very flexible and he is putting the relationship before his professional growth. But it is a special case. There are many women inside the Foreign Service that have a pretty good family life, but there are also many that divorced or haven't married, because work is a factor that influences family matters.

For a single person like Nora or Raúl, family is not a main issue like for the colleagues with a spouse and/or children. Which of course means that priorities and social interactions are different. They mainly focus on friends, which will be discussed further on, and that they can also organize their lives entirely according to them. For example Nora comments on the topic of holidays:

“Siendo soltera, no teniendo familia eso me permite más movilidad. No tomo el período en el verano, más bien reparto mis días a lo largo del año. Siempre son mis vacaciones cortitas, muy puntuales, aquí y acá. Nunca si salgo de viaje, nunca pretendo conocerlo todo en poco tiempo, sino una ciudad⁴⁰.”

In terms of communication, it was very interesting to see that between the diplomat and his/her family in Mexico or elsewhere it is strongly supported by technology and access to Internet connection. Smartphones turn out to be a key tool for constant communication with parents, children, or extended family.

Raúl, as a young diplomat that is completely comfortable with the use of new communications technology, says:

“Bueno en la actualidad ya es muy sencillo, la verdad es que ya es mucho, mucho muy sencillo. Con las tecnologías ya tienes la mensajería directa desde tu teléfono celular, tienes llamadas por internet. Si ya es mucho muy sencillo ¿no?. El mismo correo electrónico es inmediato, así como uno tiene contacto con gente de otra oficina en esta misma ciudad al otro lado de la ciudad, tienes contacto con tu familia que no necesariamente los ves; ni a los de aquí, a veces no los ves hasta que hay un asunto ¿no?. Algún asunto de cita personal⁴¹.”

For example there are couples inside the Foreign Service, hence the Foreign Service tries to help them be in the same city. For example, I don't know, New York, one in the Mission and other in the Consulate.

⁴⁰ Being single, not having a family allows me more mobility. I don't take the summer period, instead I distribute my days throughout the year. Always my holidays are very short, very punctual, here and there. Never if I go travelling, never pretend to see it all in a short time, but one city.

⁴¹ Well nowadays it's very easy, truth is that it is much, much simpler. With technologies you have direct messages from your cellular phone, you have calls through internet. Yes it is very

All of the interviewees commented that they resorted to the use of instant messaging, voice and video applications on a daily basis. However, voice communication stood out. In this case an important differentiation was made, when talking to the parents, that is older generations, traditional phone calls is the main mean of communication. In the case of contact with younger generations, voice and video communications through Internet are the primary channels of communication.

Pablo refers to Skype, Whatsapp and traditional phone calls as his main ways of contacting his children; and with a touch of humor saying:

“No crea que soy experto ¡eh!, lo mínimo indispensable para comunicarme y por enseñanza de ellos. Ellos nos ponen los programas y te enseñan a usarlos, y ya⁴².”

Raúl has a different approach. He has relatively young parents; therefore, he is able to call them via internet applications. Also with his brother communication is very active and instant messaging has a predominant role.

When Nora talks to her parents, mainly her mother, she tries not to limit the time they have, which she says it normally ends up being around an hour, so she always uses traditional phone so she can simultaneously do some other activities and not sit for such a long time in a video call.

The means of communication are different according to the situation and with the person they are speaking to. However, communication with relatives in Mexico is constant, easy to achieve and it also doesn't represent an extraordinary expense like it used to be before internet communications started. The only restriction they would have in this sense is the time zone difference.

much simpler, right? Emails are immediate, just like one has contact with people from other office in the same city at the other side of the city, one has contact with family that you don't necessarily see; not even the ones here, some times you see them until there is an issue ¿no?. Some issue with personal appointment.

⁴² Don't you think I'm an expert!, the minimum necessary to communicate and by their teachings. They install the programs y show you how to use them, and that is it.

Mexico uses 4 different time zones, however, most of the country uses Central Standard Time which is 7 hours behind Central European Time.

Generally speaking due to the nature of the manners in which diplomats participate in life at home; through texts, phone calls, video calls, emails, and in some cases yearly visits, the relationship with family members is also very much determined by the way they are perceived. What they think they do and who they think they are has a lot of weight and impact on how they relate to their family in Mexico. Catalina says she does feel Mexican, but she is aware that when she goes to Mexico her family and friends don't see her as Mexican:

*"Tienen esa idea de "ay si todos son embajadores", y te la vives en el glamour porque tienes la posibilidad de viajar y de los idiomas. Se crean una imagen tuya sobrenatural, no sé, todos te ven muy raro, tus primos y tal. Y solo el que ha viajado, el que ha vivido fuera entiende realmente como te sientes, que no es tan fácil"*⁴³.

Fitting in the context at home is a challenge they have to face every time they go back. They are different persons than when they left and also the people that stayed behind have changed too. However, most of the interviewees mentioned that prolonged visits usually helped them to gradually immerse back in the context of Mexico and their families, and then it was as if they had never left.

V.IV Friends

In this section I talk about the social aspect of the diplomat's lives, where they find friends and how they keep in contact.

Friends are a topic that was not equally meaningful for everyone. It seemed that for some of the interviewees family was the main topic of their talk while for others it was friendships. For those who spoke more passionately about friends,

⁴³ They have this idea of "oh yes all of them are ambassadors", and you are all about glamour because you have the possibility to travel and of speaking other languages. They create a supernatural image of you, I don't know, everyone looks at you strangely, your cousins and so. And only the ones that have lived abroad really understand how you feel, and that it is not so easy.

it was clear that it was a fundamental area of their lives; especially for those people that are single and don't have any commitments with family of their own.

Friends are usually made at the workplace and few of them mentioned that they had friends outside their line of work. They spend so many hours at work, that their main interactions are with other diplomats, local personnel working at the embassy or consulate, and the Mexican community that they attend to and meet at cultural events or Mexican national celebrations. Expatriate communities tend to be socially closed and exclusive. The social relations of the members are largely limited to co-nationals –the community supplies the major frame of reference for the social aspirations of its members (Cohen, 1977:77).

Norma very interestingly notes that friendships are also influenced by their line of work and the position they hold at the embassy or consulate:

“En el sentido que bueno pues al final como que la gente nunca te desliga del puesto y eso. Pero siempre he tenido mi grupo de amistades, siempre han sido en el mismo entorno, en el grupo diplomático. Que he hecho unas grandes amistades, que prácticamente es otra familia. Y sobre todo tuve la suerte muy particular de que mis mejores amigos en Holanda, que era un grupo de diplomáticos latinoamericanos, llegamos al mismo tiempo a Holanda, teníamos la misma edad, era nuestra primera adscripción; entonces todos en las mismas condiciones. Y llegamos al mismo tiempo y nos fuimos al mismo tiempo⁴⁴.”

A group of people whom Norma still recognizes as her best friends even though they are no longer in the same city. They keep in regular communication and meet up whenever they can.

⁴⁴ In the sense that in the end people never disconnects you from your post and that. I have always had my group of friends, they have always been from the same environment, in the diplomatic group. I have made great friendships, that practically are another family. I had a very particular luck that my best friends in the Netherlands, a group of Latin-American diplomats, arrived at the same time to the Netherlands, had the same age, it was our first adscription; therefore we were all in the same conditions. And we arrived at the same time and left at the same time.

Expatriates tend to associate primarily with other expatriates (...) rather than with the natives (Cohen, 1977: 46). Nonetheless for those diplomats that do attend to some cultural or sports activities besides work, it turned out to be a good source of friendships and a way of meeting people outside the diplomatic circle. However, free time to do those activities is scarce for most, as those who have families tend to focus all their free time to them. But some of those who do have a special focus in other activities, like Raúl with sports, have managed to meet many people outside the office. Raúl was very happy to say that he had made friends from different countries thanks to soccer. Not only locals, but also other people from diverse countries of origin. Friendships that he still preserves from the cities he lived before Barcelona and keeps in touch.

As they move from one place to another, keeping contact with friends depends greatly from internet communications like email, Facebook, and video calls.

Emailing seemed to be a more common mean of communication for generations that experienced a youth without Facebook, video calls, and other social media interactions that exist nowadays. Ramón, with a touch of humor, acknowledges that he knows that his friends still exist thanks to emails because it is not the same interaction as if he saw them physically. Gradually to keep in touch becomes more sporadic.

Pablo emails as well, however, he mentioned that he opened a Facebook account not long ago. Nonetheless, he keeps those interactions to the minimum, for example birthday messages or small questions, as he feels it is too much exhibition of the personal life. Therefore, he still uses emails for meaningful greetings with friends.

The younger diplomats are more oriented towards Facebook, Whatsapp, and video calls through Skype or FaceTime. Raúl mentions that friends around his age are all using those applications, as emailing seems to be more of a formal work related type of communication.

But friendship talk was not only focused to the friends abroad, friends in Mexico was also a topic recognized. Long-lasting stable bonds are not always present

abroad as expatriate communities are not ordinarily highly cohesive and solidary. Hence, the increased importance of the clique or friendship circle and the family as the principal social props of the individual (Cohen,1977:77). Raúl comments on how he feels about the bond with people in Mexico:

“Extraño la cercanía con los amigos, con los amigos con los que creciste⁴⁵.”

But going back home imply different things socially depending if they go back to stay or are just for holidays. Norma had an eye opening experience in that sense. When she moved back to Mexico for a couple of years:

“Llegas a vivir y uno de mis amigos, inclusive de mis mejores amigos, me llegó a decir en algún momento, le dije “oye ¿por qué no me hablas? estoy aquí”, y me decía “ay no es que fuimos a”, “¿y por qué no me hablaste?”, “es que se me olvida que estás aquí” ¡aaaah!. Y yo así de “¿¿qué cosa? ¿cómo que se te olvida?! Osea estoy aquí, no estoy de visita”, ¿no?. Porque claro cuando vas de visita, todo el mundo en ese momento te acapara y quieren verte. Y piensas que cuando llegas y regresas que va a ser así, y pues no. A mi mejor amigo se le olvidaba que ya había llegado. Me dolió mucho, pero lo entendí, dije “pues sí”. Pero en algún momento, ya después de que me lo dijo dos o tres veces dije “aquí algo pasa” ¿no?. Es que al final, yo me fui, él se quedó, osea no tengo por que culparlo de que no se acuerde que estoy aquí. Tengo que efectivamente ser más proactiva en ese sentido, si no ni él ni nadie, y eso que era mi mejor amigo⁴⁶.”

Traveling to Mexico is much more than a temporary visit like a tourist would do, it implies reinvigorating ties with people and making sure that those relationships maintain over time as part of a network of friends and family that

⁴⁵ I miss the closeness with friends, with the ones you grew up with.

⁴⁶ You arrive to live and one of my friends, one of my best friends even, told me at some point, I said “hey, why don’t you call me? I’m here”, and he would say “we went to”, “and why didn’t you call me?”, “I forget that you are here”, aaaah!. And I was like “what? How can you forget?! I’m here, I’m not visiting”, right?. Because of course when you visit, everyone wants to hoard you up and want to see you. And you think that when you arrive and go back it will be like that, but it is not. My best friend would forget I came back. It hurt a lot but I understood. But at some point when he said it two or three times, I said “there is something going on here”, right?. In the end, I left, he stayed, I can’t blame him for not remembering that I’m here. I indeed need to be more proactive in this sense, otherwise him or anyone would remember, and he was my best friend.

one day will take them back in when they return to live in Mexico. The one that leaves usually expects a status quo when returning home, but people get on with their lives; so it is also significantly important for the one that left to take it upon themselves to remind everyone of their return. Nora considered she was then not being watchful enough and didn't maintain herself present in the lives of her circle of people in Mexico.

Therefore, socially speaking, it is challenging for a diplomat to establish friendships outside the diplomatic circle as well as maintaining them through time and space. It requires a special effort to keep in touch with people that stay behind or move on to a different country because of diverse factors such as time zones, contexts, workload, etcetera. However, it is also relatively easy and inexpensive to keep in touch, if so they desire, thanks to internet communications.

V.V Activities besides work

Although seldom activities besides work were mentioned along the interviews, in this segment I approach those few that came up in terms of leisure, culture, and sports. These activities turned to be relevant as a way of meeting people outside from work and relaxing from daily life stress.

It was interesting to notice that the diplomats that mentioned engaging in some activity not related to work that required the use of a different space besides the office or home were the ones that were actually single. Not having family related responsibilities after work allowed them to participate in activities that cater to other their physical, emotional, or intellectual desires.

Raúl likes to engage in team sports, especially soccer. As I mentioned earlier he has had a close relationship with sports since he was a young man, playing for a while in a semi-professional level. He is thankful to his parents as they were the one's whom encouraged him to do something else besides school, which from his perspective has now impacted positively his personal and professional life.

Besides the associated health benefits from practicing sports regularly, Raúl sees them as an essential activity for social interconnection; in his words:

“El deporte es integrador, es algo importante⁴⁷”

From his perspective it is important because it gives him the opportunity to meet people and eventually make friends:

“Si, de irte a jugar y vas conociendo a la gente. Y ya después no solo te vas a jugar, también te vas a comer, te vas a cenar⁴⁸.”

In his experience a common interest like sports brings people from different nationalities together, which probably it would have been difficult for them to coincide and get to know each other if it wasn't because they attend to the same gym, play in the same soccer team, or participate in the same dance class:

“Y no solamente el fútbol, también otros deportes, porque normalmente la gente que estamos así y que, yo he estado en dos ciudades fuera de México que son muy cosmopolitas, es decir que hay muchos extranjeros. Digamos que esa diáspora de diferentes países congregamos en el deporte⁴⁹.”

It is a way of expanding the environmental bubble in which they live by allowing in other people in the same condition, other expatriates, even though they come from other countries.

Nora's is a different perspective. She procures to have time after work or during the weekends to do different kinds of leisure activities:

⁴⁷ Sports are integrating, they are important.

⁴⁸ Yes, from going to play you start getting to know people. And afterwards you not only go to play, also you go to eat, you go to dinner.

⁴⁹ And not only soccer, also other sports, because normally the people that are like this and that, I have been in two cities outside Mexico that are very cosmopolitan, that is to say that there are many foreigners. Let's say that such diaspora from different countries congregates in sports.

“Trato de ir por mi cuenta a cosas que me gustan, ir al teatro, ópera, ir a los toros, ir aquí, visitar allá, comer acá, cosas así. Si las hago si las necesito, aquí sobre todo para un poco más, ¿cómo se llama?, desvincularme o pensar en otras cosas y sobre todo también para conocer, para un poco ver a la gente normal, fuera de este ámbito, ver como viven, como se relacionan, y poder yo misma relacionarme junto con ellos, ¿no?⁵⁰.”

However, for Nora it is not only about taking a break from work and being able to rest and think about herself; it is also about getting to know the society where she lives and where she ought to develop for the next unknown number of years.

“Porque parte de la carrera y de esta experiencia que te aporta es tratar de vincularte y conocer la realidad en la que estás, lo que la gente normal y corriente, igual que como tu vives en tu propio país. Los que toman el bus o los que no lo toman, los niños lloran, las mujeres van al parque, ¿no?⁵¹.”

Trying to understand otherness through the observation of the native's way of life is a mean of mediation between different worlds, as feelings of belonging intensify and identifications get negotiated. It is a way of finding their place in the world.

Interestingly Pablo was the only married diplomat that mentioned doing an activity out of personal joy. In his previous places of assignment he had taken upon himself to do cultural journalism in local newspapers. However, as he explains himself, it was not entirely separated from work but it was not part of his job either.

“Un poco como extensión del trabajo aunque no es obligatorio, lo que hice en las 3 adscripciones anteriores fue periodismo cultural. En el sentido de

⁵⁰ I try to go on my own to things that I like, go to the theater, opera, go to the bullfighting, go here, visit there, eat there, things like that. I do them if I need them. Here is mainly for a bit more, ¿how do you call it?, detachment or to think in other things and also mainly to get to know, to see a little bit normal people, outside this ambit, see how they live, how they interrelate, be able to interrelate to them, right?.

⁵¹ Because part of the career and this experience that contributes is try to link yourself and get to know the reality you are in, what normal people, just as you live in your own country. The ones that take the bus or the ones that don't, kids cry, the women go to the park, right?.

*encontrar lo que vinculaba a los dos países en la historia y escribir sobre eso en periódicos locales*⁵².”

Pablo's interests and during some time also as job responsibilities, revolve around culture. He spoke passionately about his involvement in cultural activities, as he recognizes them as not only part of his job but also an important part of his family life. And like Nora searching to understand the host country during their free time, although through a different approach:

*“Entonces todo el tiempo he tenido, he tratado de ir a cuestiones culturales, he tratado de conocer la cultura local a través de expresiones artísticas, expresiones culturales y a través de libros. Entonces en casa tenemos una sección de libros de El Salvador, una sección de libros de Brasil, una sección de libros costarricenses, y ahora la locura aquí con lo que se publica en Barcelona*⁵³.”

Interest towards what is culturally different is a generalized feature of diplomats. Some on a higher degree than others, of course. But overall they are attracted to experience the culture they are immersed in, interact with different types of people; so they gather many bits and pieces of every place they have been throughout their careers.

⁵² A bit as an extension from work although it is not compulsory, what I did at the 3 previous adscriptions was cultural journalism. In the sense of finding what linked both countries in history and write about it in local newspapers.

⁵³ Therefore all the time I have had, I have tried to attend to cultural affairs, I have tried to know the local culture through artistic expressions and through books. Therefore at home we have a book section from El Salvador, a book section from Brazil, a Costar Rican book section, and now here madness with what its published in Barcelona.

V.VI México, lindo y querido

*“México Lindo y querido
si muero lejos de ti
que digan que estoy dormido
y que me traigan aquí”⁵⁴.
Chucho Monge (n.d.)*

Mexico was a constant topic during the interviews. It came up in different ways, which are all worth mentioning as a means of illuminating their relationship towards their home country. Some of the aspects include the traditions and habits perpetrated overseas, how they feel in relation to their home country, what are the things that are mostly missed, how often they visit, as well as some issues they are concerned with relative to Mexico.

First of all it is worth mentioning that not all of the interviewees visit Mexico every year. That has to do with many factors. The first one is the distance and the second one are plane ticket prices. For diplomats stationed closer to Mexico it is easier to visit more often because airfares are much lower and the flight time is not very long. However, for those who are further away is not as easy, especially if they have to buy more than one plane ticket. Some others prefer to use their vacation time to travel around the area where they are located at that moment. For example Nora always goes to Mexico for her long holidays, but it has been different every year depending on the country she has been at:

“Mi primera adscripción en Polonia, y eso, pues iba a México cada año y medio más o menos. En Washington por la cercanía, por no sé que, y la oferta, era más fácil ir un fin de semana largo y eso. Y estando aquí en Barcelona voy dos veces al año a México, mucho por el tema familiar, a ver a mis padres”⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ “Let them say I'm sleeping and bring me back to you, my beautiful and beloved Mexico should I die far from you”. Known as one of the most representative songs of Mexico, titled “Mexico Lindo y Querido”. It was written by Chucho Monge and little is known about when it was composed; however it was made famous by the popular mariachi singer Jorge Negrete in the year of 1950.

⁵⁵ My first assignment in Poland, I was going to Mexico every year and a half or so. In Washington because of the proximity and the offer, it was easier to go for a long weekend. And being here in Barcelona I go twice a year to Mexico, mainly because of family, to see my parents.

For other people is not as easy, like for Catalina. And even though she travels often, her travels are mainly within Europe because of the proximity and also because she has a daughter that has school duties and cannot simply leave any time of the year for long trips:

“Yo voy cada dos años a México porque también tengo esos apoyos [por parte del Servicio Exterior Mexicano]. Si no los tuviera también tengo que ahorrar para el seguro médico, para la escuela de mi hija, no tendría ese plus que ahora tengo para poder ir a México”⁵⁶.

The emotions that the travel to Mexico generate are always positive. They feel excitement and joy. Ramón visits every year and stays for a month. But the excitement to get there and the feeling of home already starts on the plane:

“La verdad desde que estoy en la segunda escala, ya ves que no hay vuelos directos, desde que estoy en Ámsterdam y te subes a ese jumbo no sé que; todos hablando español, el alboroto, ¡ya!. Que dices ¡ya voy! Ya estas en tu territorio”⁵⁷.

Yet, feeling close to Mexico is important to them also in terms of staying up to date with the current living situation. Beyond reading or listening to the news from varied press sources powered by the internet, such as social media, internet radio, and online newspapers; it seemed important to have a feeling of every day life, of basic things such as housing rent rates, the price of a kilo of tortilla which is one of the most basic foods in Mexico, transportation costs, etcetera. It is a matter of not losing connection with what life is like in their home country. People that live abroad for long time often do, therefore, Raúl considers it as an important matter personally and professionally speaking:

⁵⁶ I go every two years to Mexico because I have those supports [by the Mexican Foreign Service]. If I didn't have them, I would also have to save for health insurance, for my daughter's school, I would not have the extra I have now to be able to go to Mexico.

⁵⁷ The truth is that since I am on the second stop, you see that there are no direct flights, so since I am in Amsterdam and you get on that jumbo don't know what. Everyone speaking Spanish, the fuss, this is it! You say, I'm coming! You are already you are in your territory.

“No obstante ello, a mi siempre me parece importante estar cerca de México, muy cerca y viajar. Y me gustaría también que después de ésta experiencia en Barcelona volver a México. Si, si, a mi me gusta eso porque te permite una cercanía, te permite una lectura de la actualidad de tu país. Si bien no de todo porque es complicado, si llegas tu a una ciudad si tienes esa lectura y ese tacto de lo que está ocurriendo en tu país y con tu gente. Por eso a mi me parece siempre importante salir y volver a México, salir y volver a México”⁵⁸.

Nowadays it seems easier to maintain a strong tie with Mexico thanks to the possibility of constant communication, in comparison to how it used to be before the internet opened spaces for different platforms and simultaneously made it affordable. Catalina offers a retrospective view of how it used to be:

“Y yo me acuerdo de niña, estábamos en Hamburgo y teníamos que ir al barco. De Puebla llegaba cada 3 meses al puerto de Hamburgo con la carga comercial y la tripulación; y antes se hacían los certificados fitosanitarios para checar que carga venía, etcétera, pues el consulado tenía que intervenir. Mis tías nos mandaban cosas, entonces llegaba una caja con cuentos de Archi, con algunos periódicos, y tortillas, y frijoles; y eso era para nosotros el contacto con México. Y hoy en día pues vas a cualquier tienda asiática y encuentras todo; osea a eso voy, que también ese avance que ha habido pues en los intercambios comerciales y la comunicación, que tengas más facilidades para sentirte mexicano. Lo sientes a través de la música, de la cultura, de la comida, del acceso que tienes a la información también, porque si no sabes nada del país pues no. Que tembló y te enteras 2 meses después. Hoy en día te mandan un Whatsapp, o estás en internet y estás oyendo el radio mexicano, tengo compañeros que oyen Estéreo 100 en las tardes. Si, prenden el radio mexicano y pues te enteras al segundo, osea pasando, y eso te permite también sentirte más mexicano”⁵⁹.

⁵⁸ However, it always seems important to me to be close to Mexico, very close and travel. And I would also like after this experience in Barcelona to return to Mexico. Yes, yes, I like that because it allows you closeness, allows you to read the current situation of your country. Although not everything because it is complicated, when you arrive to a city you have that reading and a feel of what is happening in your country and with your people. That is why it always seems important to me to leave and return to Mexico, to leave and to return to Mexico.

⁵⁹ And I remember as a child, when we were in Hamburg and we had to go to the ship. From Puebla it arrived every 3 months to the port of Hamburg, with the commercial cargo and the crew. Before the phytosanitary certificates had to be done to check what cargo was coming, so

Food is another nodular point that allows them to feel connected to their homeland. Authentic Mexican food is not easily found in every country. Ingredients are difficult to obtain and it is laborious to prepare. It is not as easy for everyone to acquire a taste for ingredients and forms of preparation of food that are not familiar since childhood. For Ramón food implies a relationship of a lifetime. Before joining the Foreign Service he had always lived in Mexico, so getting used to other flavors, aromas and spices, has taken him time.

However, access to Mexican food and ingredients is very much correlated to the proximity to Mexico and the Mexican diaspora. Raúl has experienced it in two different countries, which are perhaps the most linked to Mexico; one due to geographic proximity and the other because of cultural entailment, and in both cases with huge Mexican diasporas:

“En los lugares en los que he estado, mucha gente extraña la comida, ¿no? Pero en Estados Unidos no es complicado encontrarte una comida mexicana y en España en general tampoco es complicado, se encuentra buena comida mexicana. No encontrarás todo, pero encontrarás buena comida mexicana, es decir los antojos te los vas a quitar rápidamente”⁶⁰.

Whilst food is for some very much missed and one of the first things mentioned when speaking about things missed from Mexico, it is not the same circumstance for everyone. For example Pablo doesn't miss Mexican food at all, because he has a wife that cooks Mexican no matter their geographical

the consulate had to intervene. My aunts sent us things, so a box came filled with stories from Archie [comic book], with some newspapers, and tortillas, and beans; and that was for us the contact with Mexico. And today you go to any Asian store and you find everything; so that is my point, the improvements in the commercial exchanges and the communications, make it easier for you to feel Mexican. You feel it through the music, the culture, the food, the access you have to information as well, because if you do not know anything about the country it's a no go. That there was an earthquake and you find out 2 months later. Today you receive a Whatsapp, or you are on the internet and you are hearing the Mexican radio. I have colleagues that hear Stereo 100 in the evenings. If you turn on the Mexican radio then you find out right now, just as it happens, and that also allows you to feel more Mexican.

⁶⁰ In the places I've been, a lot of people miss food, right? But in the United States it is not difficult to find a Mexican food and in Spain in general is not complicated, you will find good Mexican food. You will not find everything, but you will find good Mexican food, at least you will get rid of cravings quickly.

location. Which served also as a mean through which their children could relate to their home country, as well as inviting people from their host country to experience a little bit of Mexico through its gastronomy and traditions. Pablo's family uses Mexican food as a way to integrate with the locals:

“Y lo que hacíamos o hemos hecho es invitar a nuestros amigos locales a comer desde que mis hijos eran pequeñitos, porque salieron muy pequeñitos de México; entonces invitaban a sus compañeritos de escuela, y estos compañeritos aprendían lo que es la comida mexicana, tanto en El Salvador, como en Brasil, como en Costa Rica. Es algo que nos da mucho gusto, que ellos estén muy bien y que sus amigos comieran la comida mexicana. Y que les gustara además, que aprendieran a comer picante por ejemplo, que no es muy frecuente. Y eso es algo que parece poco, pero es muy importante para difundir lo que es México, es algo de nuestra pequeña contribución al mundo”⁶¹.

Even though food is a fundamental part of Mexican traditions, there are other aspects of the Mexican culture that diplomats look to replicate while abroad. Civic as well as religious aspects are equally significant and held in large. Mexican embassies as well as consulates take special care to replicate them, accompanied by the Mexican community abroad. Nora says it is very easy to keep the cultural aspect very present in their lives because it is an integral part of their job:

“Es la ventaja de que estás con mexicanos y eso no lo pierdes. Y con la comunidad mexicana y aquí internamente también hacemos nuestra rosca, comemos nuestro pozole, hacemos nuestras comidas nosotras el 14 de febrero, algo interno pero entre nosotras. Pero como estas siempre con la comunidad mexicana, con eso de la tradición ya no sabes si lo estás

⁶¹ And what we did or have been doing is invite our local friends to eat since my children were small, because they left very little from Mexico; then they invited their school friends, and these classmates learned what Mexican food is, both in El Salvador, in Brazil, and in Costa Rica. It is something that gives us great pleasure, that they are well and that their friends eat Mexican food. And even more because they liked it, them learning to eat spicy for example, which is not very frequent. And it is something that seems minor, but it is very important to spread what Mexico is, it is our small contribution to the world.

*promoviendo o lo estás viviendo, ambas cosas. Te digo es la parte de que a veces ya no sabes si es tu profesión o es tu vida, ¿no?*⁶².

Some of them try to reproduce certain traditions and celebrate national holidays at home, so their children can also experience them and create identifications around the understanding of being Mexican. Books seem to be an important tool for that, as Catalina conveys from her experience:

*“Pero como yo tengo mis libros en casa, ahí de vez en cuando nos sentamos a revisar los libros de historia. Por ejemplo si es el 20 de noviembre y decoramos con cosas de la revolución, pues aprovecho y saco el libro y le explico”*⁶³.

However, not all of them have children or a partner, so don't feel it is necessary to replicate traditions or celebrate holidays in their personal contexts because they already anyway will do it in the office. Like Raúl, whom doesn't really have enough time to do them at home, but does contribute with preparations and participation in the office because it is part of his job:

*“La verdad es que las tradiciones, personalmente me refiero a eso, no las hago personalmente porque profesionalmente las hacemos, ¿no?. Porque aquí, las dos veces que he estado fuera, las dos han sido en consulados, pues las tradiciones mexicanas las hacemos en los consulados. Tampoco no las pierdes y uno también aporta, ¿no?. Entonces más allá de traérmelas, vienen con la institución y uno apoya a la institución para hacerlas. Personal yo no replico eso que hacía mi abuela o mi madre”*⁶⁴.

⁶² It's the advantage that you're with Mexicans and you do not lose it. And with the Mexican community and here internally we also make our *rosca* [ring-shaped bread to celebrate Epiphany], we eat our *pozole* [stew made of hominy and pork meat], we make our luncheons on February 14, something internal but between us. But as you are always with the Mexican community, you no longer know if you are promoting tradition or you are living it, both things. I tell you it's the part that sometimes you do not know if it's your profession or it's your life, right?

⁶⁴ The truth is that traditions, I mean personally, I do not do them personally because we professionally do them, right? Because here, the two times I've been away, both have been in consulates, so the Mexican traditions we replicate them in consulates. You also do not lose them and you also contribute, right? So beyond bringing them, they come with the institution and one supports the institution by doing them. Personal I do not replicate what my grandmother or my mother did.

Being Mexican abroad shows traces of a more generalized sense of belonging and it is very much manifested specially through food, civic and religious celebrations. The diverse regions on Mexico and their particularities are not very relevant, it is more about what all Mexicans share and how that brings them together. Memory, imagination and nostalgia, play an important role to evoke identifications from a standpoint of awareness and particular actions.

Their context of constant change and their daily exchange of information, objects, etcetera, between multiple locations and times, help shape their particular identifications. As part of multiple social networks their habitats of meaning become much more complex and some times even contradictory.

For some it is precisely those exchanges and interactions among people that help them feel like they belong to Mexico. Keeping in touch with what happens at home gives them a sense of rooting, family and connection to a collective. Like Ramón explains:

“Osea si soy mexicano. Pero como que me va entrando esa, ya después de 4 años. Osea si más bien, aquí mi problema está con mi familia. No es tanto que me sienta o no mexicano, si me siento mexicano, lo que si voy perdiendo son como los lazos familiares. Pero no porque no me quieran o no los quiera. Es por el contacto ¿no?. Es normal. Osea finalmente convives con una persona porque está a tu lado, osea te pierdes como que muchas cosas que ya no vives. Que el cumpleaños, que la boda, que el fallecido”⁶⁵.

Some others go beyond ways of being and develop hybrid ways of belonging in the different social fields they simultaneously live in, by consciously manifesting engagement with certain groups, institutions or organizations. They feel Mexican, but they also feel connected with other national identities in some

⁶⁵ I mean, I'm Mexican. But like I'm getting into that, already after 4 years. Well, yes, here my problem is with my family. It is not so much that I feel or not Mexican, if I feel Mexican, what I am losing are family ties. But not because they don't love me or I don't love them. It's because of the contact, right?. It is normal. In the end you interact with a person because it is by your side, you lose many things that you no longer live. The birthday, that the wedding, that the deceased.

sorts. They also develop certain attachments to the countries they live or have lived in, adopt diverse customs, acquire a taste for local flavors, enjoy the local musical styles and dances, adopt new nutritional habits, and so on.

For Catalina there is place to fit in everything, so celebrations and holidays that are not necessarily Mexican can also have a place in her home without making her any less Mexican:

“Yo he pasado por muchas etapas de sentirme mexicana, pero yo creo que mucho se debe al idioma, como te decía, que tu sigas las costumbres. Yo en la casa siempre pongo mi altar de muertos, para el 15 de septiembre decoro la casa, festejo el día del amor y la amistad, todos los festejos, todos los hago. Pero también los europeos ¿no?, la fiesta de la pascua, es común ¿no?, buscar los huevitos en el jardín, todo. Entonces mientras tu sigas esas costumbres y trates de convivir con mexicanos, buscar”⁶⁶.

However, developing ways of belonging is not only something that happens to them while abroad. It is a constant process even though they might be in Mexico. Going back to their home country after long periods of absence becomes a challenge and calls for meditation about what has changed in them and what they have learned along the way. Nora shares some of those personal reflections powerfully:

Yo salí en el 93 cuando Salinas de Gortari ¡fue declarado el Hombre del Año por el Time! ¡imagínate!, y voy a regresar en el segundo gobierno del PAN ¿no?. Y además acababa de pasar lo del fotógrafo famoso [Spencer Tunick] que retrata masivamente gente desnuda. Y es que dije “voy a regresar cuando ya también la agente se desnuda en el Zócalo”, osea, es que había un cambio en 14 años, bueno ¡mucho! ¿no?. Y entonces bueno “¿Qué sociedad me voy a encontrar?”. (...) Verme en un espejo y decir “¿yo cuánto he cambiado como persona?” Porque yo puedo decir que soy la misma pero

⁶⁶ I have gone through many stages of feeling Mexican, but I think a lot is due to the language, as I said, that you follow the customs. At home I always put my altar to the dead, for September 15th I decorate the house, I celebrate the day of love and friendship, all the celebrations, I do all of them. But the Europeans, too, the Easter holiday, it is common to find the little eggs in the garden, everything. So while you follow these customs and try to interact with Mexicans, to procure.

*evidentemente cuando regrese y me enfrente a cosas que ya no me van a gustar tanto, o sí, o que se yo, también verme yo cuanto he cambiado. La gente ¿cómo me va a percibir?*⁶⁷.

It is impossible that a person that changes geography completely can maintain the same customs and ways of doing things exactly the same, it is simply a matter of survival in a different environment that implies adaptation.

And although Mexico is geographically very far from all European countries, it is also not fair to say that it is not possible for diplomats to find connections to their homeland.

Among the many effects of globalizations, people that live away from their homelands have found ways to bring bits and pieces along. It is possible to find both in Vienna and in Barcelona places to eat Mexican food; specialty shops to buy for ingredients to cook Mexican at home; Mexican cultural centers where they can take diverse workshops, watch Mexican movies, as well as attend art expositions; also both cities have bars and clubs where Mexicans and other Latin-Americans gather to speak in their native language, dance and drink. Therefore, Raúl recognizes certain aspects of globalization have big impact in their line of work:

“Pero también esta parte de la globalización está ayudando a que haya de todo en todos lados. Entonces cada vez esto tiende a ser más pequeño, más pequeño, y de repente te das cuenta de que lo que haces en México no solamente lo replicas, sino que también la gente de otras ciudades lo hace, ¿no?. Es decir, un fin de semana, si en México un fin de semana vas un sábado al teatro, un domingo en la mañana al estadio a ver una actividad deportiva, y en la noche al cine; lo ves que también ocurre en las otras

⁶⁷ I left in '93 when Salinas de Gortari was declared Man of the Year by Time [magazine]! Imagine, and I'm going to return in the second government led by PAN [*Partido Acción Nacional*, right wing party], right?. And also it had just happened that with the famous photographer [Spencer Tunick] whom massively portrays naked people. And I said “I'll return when people are getting naked on the *Zocalo* [main square]”. There was a change of 14 years, well, a lot! right?. And then, well, “what kind of society am I going to find? ” (...) See me in a mirror and say “how much have I changed as a person?” Because I can say that I am the same but evidently when I come back and I face things that I will not like so much, or yes, or who knows, also see how much I have changed. People, how will you perceive me?

ciudades, es algo muy similar. Afortunada y desafortunadamente a la vez, la globalización tiende a eso, a que hagamos cosas similares aunque seamos personas muy diferentes y hablemos otros idiomas. Entonces tampoco no es tan diferente. Y México la verdad es que está muy insertado en esta internacionalización”⁶⁸.

But being able to do similar things no matter where you are, doesn't change the fact that they are not in Mexico. And as the popular Mexican saying goes “*como México no hay dos*” (like Mexico there aren't two), because Mexico means much more than just land and a passport. It represents family, home, growth, shelter, among many more things, as it is a personal meaning and value. For some it is more about the nation and what it implies to be part of it, while for others it is about the personal development, and for others it is mainly about the people.

For Pablo, at the blink of his retirement, thinking about Mexico evokes feelings of:

“Nostalgia no, porque se que voy a volver. Más bien sentimiento de pertenencia es lo que yo tengo. Sentimiento de pertenencia a una cultura, sentimiento de pertenencia a un grupo, un sentimiento de nacionalismo pero capaz de aceptar todas las expresiones de otras culturas ¿no?”⁶⁹.

For Raúl it is about affection and gratefulness to the institutions and to the people:

⁶⁸ But this part of globalization is also helping to have everything everywhere. So every time this tends to be smaller, smaller, and suddenly you realize that what you do in Mexico you are not only replicating it, but also people from other cities does the same, right? That is to say, a weekend, if in Mexico one weekend you go Saturday to the theater, Sunday in the morning to the stadium to see a sport activity, and at night to the cinema; you see that also happens in other cities, is very similar. Fortunately and unfortunately at the same time, globalization tends to do that, to do similar things even if we are very different people and speak other languages. Then neither it is so different. And the truth is that Mexico is very inserted in this internationalization.

⁶⁹ Not nostalgia, because I know I'm going back. Rather, feelings of belonging are what I have. Feeling of belonging to a culture, feeling of belonging to a group, a sense of nationalism but capable of accepting all expressions of other cultures, right?.

“Cariño y agradecimiento. Si porque yo en gran parte le debo a las instituciones públicas, le debo mucho mi formación y que esté aquí ¿no?. Y le tengo un gran cariño tanto a las instituciones como a las personas con las que he convivido y con las que gracias a ellas he estado aquí. Siempre les agradeceré. Osea yo soy un convencido de que lo que uno es, es gracias a las demás personas, hayan sido profesores, amigos, jefes, compañeros de trabajo; osea siempre es gracias a ellos ¿no?. Los padres sin duda, los padres y a los hermanos siempre, pero sobre todo también a la gente con la que uno ha convivido. Osea yo gracias a mis jefes, a mis compañeros de trabajo, y a mucha gente que me ha ayudado, soy lo que soy y estoy aquí, es por eso. No es solamente el esfuerzo personal que es importante y esa disciplina que te tienes que generar. Pero si es cariño y agradecimiento, y respeto a todas esas personas, eso es lo que representa para mi México”⁷⁰.

The feelings that diplomats have towards their country are fundamental to their lives not only on a personal level as ways of belonging, but also on a professional level as they represent that country and in many occasions have to embody those representations while performing their jobs.

V.VII Hallo Wien/Hola Barcelona

The host countries of the diplomats are fundamental to understanding their situation; therefore, here I discuss about their feelings towards the host country, as well as towards other countries they have been posted at, and the traditions and habits adopted outside Mexico.

Vienna as well as Barcelona are European cities that have a more less similar geographical distance from Mexico. However, even though throughout different

⁷⁰ Affection and gratefulness. Because I largely owe to public institutions, I owe greatly my formation and the fact that I am here, right? And I have great affection both to the institutions and to the people with whom I have interacted and thanks to whom I am here. I will always be thankful to them. I am a convinced that what one is, is thanks to other people, whether they have been teachers, friends, bosses, co-workers; it is always thanks to them, right? No doubt parents and siblings always, but above all also the people with whom one has lived. Thanks to my bosses, my co-workers, and many people who have helped me, I am what I am and I am here, that's why. It is not only the personal effort that is important and that discipline that you have to generate. It is affection and gratitude, and respect to all those people, that is what it represents for me Mexico.

historical times Mexico has had important ties to both countries, culturally speaking Mexico has a lot of Spain. They are definitely not the same, but Mexico is what it is today because of the Spanish conquest. Either way, because of Mexico's size and geography it is quite isolated from other countries, therefore, traveling overseas most of the times, aside for the people that live at the frontier towns, requires a flight.

Some of the diplomats shared experiences from other countries outside Europe, which are also invaluable to gather a rounder picture of their experience. Like the United States, Iran, Brazil, Costa Rica, and El Salvador. Those experiences shared by the interviewees are very different depending if they were in Europe, North America, Latin America or the Middle East. However, most of them revolve around the topics of distance, food and language as the main focus points of their reflections.

Ramón's first experience abroad was in the United States and afterwards he was moved to Austria, so he shares:

"Osea, realmente en Estados Unidos yo me sentía como en mi casa. Pero implica muchas cosas, implica el idioma, que mucha gente habla español, osea te puedes comunicar muy fácilmente. Implica que ves muchísimos mexicanos, implica la distancia. (...) Pero ya cuando me trasladé a Europa, si ves el cambio super radical. La distancia, osea tan solo en pensar en tiempo, ¿qué pasa si tengo que ir a México? Me toma un día ¿no? ¡Un día!"⁷¹.

Distance is crucial to the way they maintain relationships at home. As we have discussed before, depending the flight time and the price is how often they can go to Mexico for a visit. As well as how big the Mexican community is. Ramón promptly observes that in the United States he felt like in Mexico because of the

⁷¹ I mean, in the United States I really felt like home. But it involves many things, it involves the language, that many people speak Spanish, you can communicate very easily. It implies that you see a lot of Mexicans, it implies the distance. (...) But when I moved to Europe, you see the super radical change. The distance, just think of time, what if I have to go to Mexico? It takes me a day, right? One day!.

amount of people that have Mexican origin and how often you hear Spanish on the streets, up to the point that one could easily get by without speaking English. Raúl even speaks of a third nation within the United States, a mixture of Mexico and the United States:

“Los estamos mexicanizando porque muchos de ellos hablan español, muchos, muchos, muchos, o el spanglish. Muchos de ellos comen comida mexicana, muchos de ellos fomentan el tex-mex, es decir no solo la comida, la música también, tradiciones. Hay un híbrido, dentro de los Estados Unidos, hay un híbrido mexicano-estadounidense. Es decir, también lo que no vemos desde México por ejemplo, es que ellos están obteniendo mucho de México y nadie les dice a ellos “se están mexicanizando”, pero a nosotros si nos dicen se están americanizando ¿no?. Entonces también eso pasa mucho ¿no?, es algo que también me doy cuenta y uno les deja a sus amistades de hacer las cosas bien a la mexicana, dejando lo tex-mex que eso nunca lo van a dejar. Creo que es una tercera nación que está ahí en Estados Unidos”⁷².

Language, as another important circumstance they mention, can indeed very much facilitate or complicate their stay somewhere. Although knowing more than one language is part of their job requirements it is also just to mention that most of the times they are sent to a place where they don't speak the language so they have to try to learn at least the basics. Especially in continents where languages differ from one neighboring country to the other.

Catalina's experience in this sense is very well summarized by her daughter's and her brother's simple-hearted questions:

“Fuimos a Cocoyoc y me dice “¿mamá aquí que idioma hablan?” Porque ella va en coche aquí dos horas y estás en Bratislava, entonces “¿aquí que

⁷² We are Mexicanizing them because many of them speak Spanish, many, many, many, or Spanglish. Many of them eat Mexican food, many of them promote tex-mex, meaning not only food, music too, traditions. There is a hybrid, within the United States, there is a Mexican-American hybrid. That is to say, what we do not see from Mexico for example, is that they are getting much of Mexico and no one tells them "they are Mexicanizing", but to us they do say we are getting Americanized, right? Then that too happens a lot, does not it?, it's something that I also notice and you teach your friends to do things Mexican style, aside the tex-mex that they will never leave. I think it's a third nation that's within the United States.

idioma hablan?”. A mi hermano le pasaba igual cuando estaba chiquito, tenía 8 años, y salía del metro y decía “¿ahora en qué país estamos?””⁷³.

Another important situation derived from contexts where multiple languages are spoken is the language fluency, the mixture of different languages in the same sentence and the creation of words taken from another language.

Ramón’s experience at consulates gave him the opportunity to reflect a lot on language and how it is possible to learn, forget and remember it:

“Yo en un principio criticaba eso. Un idioma no se te puede olvidar. “Osea ¿cómo me dice eso señora? ¿cómo que quiere esto? A ver dígame ¿qué?”. Pero después lo entendí, si no lo usas se te va olvidado. Y si. Entonces apunté aquí, ¿qué es esto? “anmeldear”. Anmelden, tengo una bronca con el anmelden. Y me voy a, lo veo aquí en el contexto, me voy a registrar, me voy a “anmeldear”. ¿Es qué como dices? Como no lo tenemos vaya”⁷⁴.

Meeting people that have been living away from Mexico for a long time gives them an interesting standpoint on language. And as we can see it also happens that words from local contexts like *anmelden*, from the German language, become adapted to Spanish since there is no other word that can describe such administrative procedure.

It often happens that they cannot remember a word in Spanish but they do in some other language. Which is understandable due to the exposure to other languages and which of those are more present at that moment in their lives. However, being in an embassy and even more in a consulate, gives diplomats the opportunity to talk to people from different parts of Mexico, to remember

⁷³ We went to Cocoyoc and she says to me, "Mom, what language do they speak here?" Because she's driving here for two hours and you're in Bratislava, so "what language do they speak here?" My brother used to do the same when he was young, he was 8 years old, and he would get off the subway and say, "Now which country are we in?"

⁷⁴ I criticized that at first. A language can not be forgotten. "How can you tell me that madam? how is that she wants this? Let me see tell me, what? " But then I understood, if you do not use it you forget it. So yes. Then I wrote here, what is this? "Anmeldear". Anmelden, I have an issue with the *anmelden*. And I'm going to, I see it here in the context, I'm going to register, I'm going to "anmeldear". How could you say it? As we do not have it.

popular sayings, certain words and even hear the different accents that exist in Spanish. Which serves as a constant reminder of the richness of their mother tongue and as a way to maintain latent links to their native country.

Latin America and Spain offers them a “more closer to home” feeling. Even though those countries are very different from Mexico, in most they do speak Spanish; so that was mentioned to be a comfort for them. People like Raúl that have experienced life in Spain agree on the following:

“(…) Lo sigo conociendo y también son muy similares a nosotros en el aspecto cultural. Bueno al final venimos de acá, gran parte de cosas que nosotros hacemos, uno ve por qué las hacemos. Tradiciones, sobre todo tradiciones, festividades que sobre días muy representativos de España, como el Día de Reyes, como los santos, ¿no?, todos los santos que uno piense, el culto a los santos en general ¿no?, también vemos por qué lo hacemos. Y las construcciones de acá las tenemos copiadas, nuestras ciudades son una copia de acá ¿no? (...). Si bien no somos iguales, somos similares. Y la adaptación acá pues es lo más similar que puede haber en cualquier parte de Europa. Incluso podría decir que del mundo, somos similares a los de acá. No iguales porque si cambiamos en muchas cosas, pero somos similares”⁷⁵.

Other countries in Latin America as former Spanish colonies also share some traits with Mexico. Pablo recalls his time in Latin America as nothing but wonderful, but besides the languages, the food and the welcoming people; he noted that anywhere you go it is a matter of attitude:

“En los cuatro países que hemos estado nos hemos sentido magníficamente bien (...). Nos recibieron bien, en fin, siempre fueron buenas experiencias. Pero como le decía es parte también de la predisposición que tiene uno

⁷⁵ I'm still getting to know it and they are very similar to us in the cultural aspect. Well in the end we come from here, a lot of things we do you see why we do them. Traditions, especially traditions, festivities that on days very representative to Spain, as the Day of Kings, as the saints, right, all the saints that one thinks, the worship of the saints in general, right? We also see what we do. And the buildings from here are copied; our cities are a copy of here? (...). Although we are not equal, we are similar. And the adaptation here is as close as there can be anywhere in Europe. I could even say that of the world, we are similar to people here. Not the same because we do change in many things, but we are similar.

frente al lugar que está. Y en el trabajo. Puede estar uno en el mejor país, pero si no está uno a gusto en el trabajo es un infierno. Y puede ser un lugar complicado con lo fue San Salvador, pero puede uno sentirse en el mejor país”⁷⁶.

In terms of socialization there are also very different experiences from country to country. For example, it was mentioned during the interviews that it was not easy to socialize in Vienna; it took time and much more effort than in other countries they had been.

“Así un poquito complicado con los vecinos. Por ejemplo que hasta después de un año o año y medio pude convivir con ellos. Porque sí era difícil, aunque ellos nos veían salir cerraban la puerta y esperaban a que saliéramos nosotros para poder salir ellos. Ha costado un poco pero son cosas culturales (...)”⁷⁷.

Nevertheless, in a general sense the social aspect in the sense of equality is something that they mentioned as a very outstanding quality of Austrian society. The interviewees mentioned that the differences between people with more money are not visible as in Mexico, Ramón says that people are treated the same:

“Si y eso me gusta aquí también que todos son iguales. Tu puedes entrar a un restaurant en un short, los trabajadores de la construcción, todos entran. Osea en México no. Como te ven te tratan. Es algo que me gusta de aquí, es un punto al que yo llegaría. La igualdad ¿no?, la igualdad social”⁷⁸.

⁷⁶ In the four countries that we have been we have felt magnificently good (...). They welcomed us, well, were always good experiences. But as I said it is also part of the predisposition that one has towards the place you are at. And at work. One may be in the best country, but if one is not happy at work it is hell. And it can be a complicated place like it was in San Salvador, but one can feel in the best country.

⁷⁷ So a little complicated with the neighbors. For example up until after a year or a year and a half I was able to interact with them. Because it was difficult, even though they saw us go out, they closed the door and waited for us to leave so they were able to leave too. It has costed a bit but those are cultural things (...).

⁷⁸ Yes and I like it here also that all are the same. You can enter a restaurant in shorts, construction workers, everyone comes in. Not in Mexico. As they see you they treat you. It's something I like here, that's my point. Equality, right? Social equality.

Which is just one example of aspects that the interviewees observe and appreciate from other cultures, that some of them might even want to replicate in their personal lives. It is very common that they pick up different customs and ways of doing things, even traditions from the countries they have lived. Especially due to close interaction with locals, who take the time and interest in introducing them to the local contexts.

Interactions with local culture create bonds that are not only towards the host country, they can also serve as platforms to strengthening relationships with other expatriates. Nora has met dear friends from other countries during her postings in different countries, and they have adopted host country's celebrations as symbols of their connection and friendship:

“Y luego las costumbres. Si me he llevado costumbres de lugares que las he incorporado a mi vida ¿no?. Sobre todo en grupos de amigos. Te hablaba de este grupo de amigos tan entrañable que desde Holanda hacemos cuando nos vemos, si podemos que fue en Washington y ya después las veces que coincidimos, una tradición de Holanda que es el intercambio de regalos, que es el 5 de diciembre. Una tradición muy bonita y es un intercambio de regalos. Pero el regalo puede ser cualquier cosa, pero la envoltura, osea el regalo lo tienes que envolver en algo y acompañarlo como de una descripción de la persona a la que le vas a regalar. No dices el nombre, simplemente describes por forma de ser y entonces todo tiene que ir vinculado finalmente con la envoltura y el regalo mismo. Todo tiene que ver con eso, con la persona, y entonces tu elaboras la envoltura; osea todo es muy pensado a la persona que le vas a dar. (...) En Estados Unidos con este mismo grupo de amigos celebrar el Thanks Giving, el día de acción de gracias. Además por lo que significaba encontrarnos nuevamente en Estados Unidos. Yo creo que son las dos cosas que más, así como tradición, festividad, que para mi tienen; que aunque no estemos juntos nos pensamos y nos comunicamos en esas fechas como parte de nuestra unión”⁷⁹.

⁷⁹ And then the customs. I have taken customs from places, which I have incorporated into my life, right? Especially with groups of friends. I spoke to you of this group of friends so dear that since Holland we do when we see each other, if we can that was in Washington and afterwards the times we coincided, a tradition of Holland that is the exchange of gifts, which is on

At the same time for some of them it also means reevaluating the way they had been doing things in their daily lives up to that point. Also changing habits in order to adapt to their current living situation, which in the end become part of their routines and then they take to other countries where they are sent to. Among those we can find eating times, coffee break times, means of transportation, diet, dress codes, grocery shopping styles, etcetera.

Lorena for example had a change of heart regarding the use of the car, compared to how she was used to in Mexico City:

“No usar el carro tanto. Bueno aquí ni si quiera tengo carro. Uso el transporte público y camino muchísimo. Que en México no caminaba nada nunca. Caminaba tres pasos a la puerta, al elevador y luego bajar al garaje, luego al carro y a la oficina. Y cualquier cosa iba en carro. Y ahorita que regreso como a visitar a mis papás, por ejemplo iba a cortarme el pelo a tres cuadras y me iba en carro, ¿osea me iba en carro! Y ahora que regreso es como “¡aaaah, ¿cómo es puede ser que no podía ni venirme caminado tres cuadras para que me corten el pelo?!”. Ya que vuelvo ya me voy caminado”⁸⁰.

Food came up again as an important topic when talking about things that mostly remained with them after experiencing the flavors somewhere. The way the interviewees talked about local foods was not like an imposition to which there

December 5th. A very nice tradition that consists on an exchange of gifts. The gift can be anything, but the wrapping, the gift you have to wrap it with something and accompany that with a description of the person you are going to give it away to. You do not say the name, you simply describe the personality and then everything has to be finally linked with the wrapping and the gift itself. Everything has to do with that, with the person, and then you elaborate the wrapping; everything is thought around the person that you are going to give it to. (...) In the United States with this same group of friends celebrating Thanksgiving, the day to give grace. Also for what it meant for us to meet again in the United States. I believe that those are the two best things, as traditions, festivities, that for me have; that although we are not together we think of each other and we communicate in those dates like part of our union.

⁸⁰ Not to use the car so much. Well here I do not even have a car. I use public transportation and walk a lot. I never ever walked in Mexico. I walked three steps to the door, to the elevator and then to the garage, then to the car and the office. I went everywhere by car. And now that I go back to visit my parents, for example I was going to cut my hair three blocks away and I was going in a car, I was going by car! And now that I'm back, it's like "Oh my, how come I could not even walk three blocks to cut my hair?!" When I'm back I go walking.

was nothing that could be done about, rather as a means of discovering and understanding their new contexts. Trying native flavors offers them the possibility to integrate to their new communities and also, very important, afterwards remember them by.

Nora takes a special interest in food and always tries to incorporate flavors from all the cuisines she knows into her regular diet:

“Yo creo que lo adapto mucho a la comida, a la gastronomía, de saber hacer cosas de cada lugar o algo que me recuerda de donde lo descubrí tal condimento, ingrediente o platillo. Y eso sí, se me hace como incorporarlo a la comida o alguna costumbre gastronómica. Y de aquí [España] el jamón y el aceite; ¡no sé que voy a hacer, ya empiezo a extrañar desde ahorita!”⁸¹.

For Pablo and his family food was key to building a relationship with their new homes. Other cuisines different to the Mexican, also gained a special place in their hearts:

“Totalmente integrados. Despertar un sábado sin planes y decir “vámonos al mar”; estaba a media hora en el Salvador y regresar y tener que decidir si comíamos tacos o pupusas, que es el platillo tradicional salvadoreño, porque mis hijos ya estaban integrados también. Y muchas veces decidían comer papusas”⁸².

By living in many different countries they acquire a broader cultural panorama. Things that seemed foreign and strange become part of their every day, but obviously without it meaning that the things they liked before they don't anymore. They become collectors of flavors, sounds, smells, hobbies, sceneries, and people.

⁸¹ I think I adapt it a lot to food, to gastronomy, to know how to do things from each place or something that reminds me of where I discovered some condiment, ingredient or dish. And that yes, I do as incorporate it into the food or some gastronomic custom. And from here [Spain] the ham and the oil; I do not know what I'm going to do, I'm beginning to miss them already!

⁸² Fully integrated. Waking up on a Saturday without plans and saying "let's go to the beach"; which was half an hour in El Salvador and then return and have to decide if we ate *tacos* or *pupusas*, which is the traditional Salvadoran dish, because my children were already integrated as well. And many times they decided to eat *papusas*.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Diplomacy is a profession that requires public servants with excellent academic preparation, language skills, adaptability, and flexibility. It implies long periods of employment abroad, which can be unpredictable in terms of rotation between different countries.

They constitute a specific type of migration that can be qualified as privileged, since they don't have to go through the struggles of survival that other migrants have. Although they don't directly choose the country they go to, their movement abroad is voluntary, there is a job vacancy waiting for them, they have diplomatic immunity, diverse aids provided by the government to which they are working for, etcetera. Meaning that their conditions abroad are much more comfortable than the ones of an average migrant.

Regardless of the conditions that make their type of migration somehow easier than others, certain complexities arise because of their profession's implications of constant change of location and cultural environment. Such continuous movement involves constant bi-directional fluxes across places due to diplomats' social or work related activities.

All of their experiences as transnational migrants are different from individual to individual, no matter if they are all in the same country. As well, every country presents different challenges and opportunities to them. However, all of the diplomats share partial connections as transmigrants. Starting by maintaining ties with their home country and some other countries, at the very least with the one they are currently on assignment at.

In words of Clavin, transnationalism is first and foremost about people: the social space that they inhabit, the networks they form and the ideas they exchange (2005:422). Therefore I have made this study about exploring the connections of the diplomats, how they sustain them and how they also change.

Within that context, I was able to identify six main areas that indicate diverse cross-border social experiences, which directly shape the lives of those diplomats. The areas were: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, family, friends, activities besides work, Mexico, and the receiving country. Each of them entail different challenges and joys, meaning that not every aspect of their lives abroad is always favorable or unfavorable for them. Therefore, contrary to popular imaginary, the life of the diplomat is not only filled with the joys of the international experience, they are also faced with several profound adversities that can shake their family life, social circles, and even their own understanding of themselves.

Work, obviously, is fundamental to every diplomat as it is the one aspect of their lives that somehow frames the rest. *El Servicio Exterior Mexicano* (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs) decides where they will be living and when it is time to go somewhere else. Consequently, diplomats have to build other very important areas of their lives around those facts.

The fundamental difference between diplomats and any other person that lives outside their homeland, is that diplomats officially represent their country of origin 24 hours a day during the 7 days of the week. They are under constant pressure to deservingly represent their country; which implies the embodiment of certain values, attitudes and practices. Within this context, while outside the office they seem to be free to develop as individuals as they like; yet, symbolically always having a leg tied to their desks. Which indicates they live in a paradoxical situation.

Mexican diplomats seem to emphasize characteristics that are common or general to all Mexicans, leaving aside the particularities that every region within Mexico has. Aspect that is very well observed in the way they collectively celebrate holidays and traditions at work, they all recognize and manifest themselves as part of the same group, people from Mexico. Where space and time are themselves socialized and localized through complex and deliberate practices of performance, representation, and action.

Their job implies daily development of activities in a semi-closed environment. They mostly spend their time and interact with people from the office, which in most cases all are from the same country. Embassies and consulates become sorts of mini-universes in which the people working there find refuge from the outside contexts, speak their native languages, and perform traditions from their homelands. Depending from one country to the other those environmental bubbles are more permeable than others, so people have different degrees of interaction with locals.

Contact with locals is interlinked to the diplomat's family situation and their circle of friends. Diplomats that have families seem to have contact with locals because of, for example their children's school, classmates, extra-curricular activities, and even illnesses. Yet, for unmarried diplomats, it is more of a personal choice whether or not they socialize with people outside work. It is also common among diplomats to find a partner or spouse from the country they are working at. Which also opens up new social circles and socialization arenas for them.

When looking at the full picture, beyond daily face-to-face interactions, their social lives are complex because they move simultaneously within diverse cross-border social networks. Maintaining connections with family and friends in the homeland is a crucial sphere in the debate about transnational spaces (Katulić, 2008:192). Thanks to the development of internet communications and cheaper phone rates, they are able to interact in different social contexts regardless of whether or not they are physically in the same geographical point.

Family and friends were recognized as aspects of their lives that are fundamental for their wellbeing, especially emotionally speaking. Which at the same time are also the most troublesome areas for them.

Concretely in regard to family, the constant move to different locations does impact the spouse or partner, and the children if there are any. Among the positive aspects for the children, openness to diversity, adaptability, and different possibilities of education; were identified. However it can be very

difficult for them to go through the process of resocialization and acculturation every time they move. For the children and for the spouse or partner, there is a complete breaking of their worlds, so they have to start building again every time. Talking about partners or spouses, on the negative side, the impossibility for them to have a professional life puts serious weight into their relationships as well as on them as individuals and their personal fulfillment. Hence, divorces are not uncommon among diplomats.

Diplomats create diverse identifications that show their affiliations with different aspects of their, some times, conflicting worlds. The diverse ties to the homeland, mainly through work, friends, family, food, and traditions; allows them to maintain identifications that have to do with Mexico. However, as life goes on in their new place of settlement, new identifications around it also arise. Within a person, there can be coexistence of different identifications that go between the community of origin and the socio-cultural environment of the host country or any other of the previous countries of temporary settlement. People who embody transnationalism, Caglar points out on this issue, weave their collective identities out of multiple affiliations and positionings and link their cross-cutting belongingness with complex attachments and multiple allegiances to issues, peoples, places, and traditions beyond the boundaries of their resident nation states (Vertovec, 2001: 580). Without that signifying that Mexican diplomats are less Mexican than before they left Mexico.

In regard to the activities besides work, as another main area of their cross-border social experiences, it is significant to mention that the engagement was significantly less for diplomats with families than for unmarried diplomats. Work takes up most of their time, so whenever there is free time, those with families prefer to invest it at home or doing family activities. While single people have time and interest in participating in other activities, cultural or sports. Those activities also serve as good ways for them to immerse themselves in the local culture and meet people outside work.

Talk about Mexico was constant. It is the homeland they left behind, but also they brought with them. Therefore, it was fundamental to approach their

feelings and thoughts regarding Mexico in order to better understand their social experiences that go beyond borders.

Henceforth, feeling close and connected to their homeland is essential. And although many of them do not have the opportunity to visit Mexico every year, they have daily communication with the people there. Also, they follow the news at online newspapers and other news related websites; which keep them informed of the most relevant events and help maintain a current link to how life elapses at their home country.

They do have multi-local awareness regarding their social situation. And although, Mexico is always present for them, every day, they know that their attachments are decentered. As transmigrants, they develop pluri- and translocal understandings of home (Gielis, 2009: 282). Mexico is home for them, however the receiving country is also a kind of home; hence they feel “home away from home”.

The development of ways of belonging not only happens to them while abroad, it can also occur when they are back in their home countries. The memories of the homeland weight heavily on they way they think, feel and expect Mexico to be. But during their absence the environment changes. Hence, when they are back they have to renegotiate their ways of belonging, while at the same time considering that they too have changed.

Last but not least, the receiving country as an important area of the cross-border social experiences that shape diplomats' lives, becomes very relevant around the topics of distance, food and language. And even though diplomats pointed out mainly those topics, they all have different things to share about their lives depending if they were in Europe, North America, Latin America or the Middle East. Which makes their transnational experience very diverse and interesting. However, no matter the geographical point they are at and how different it might be from Mexico, there is always something that helps them connect both lands.

To finalize, it is worth pointing out that diplomats are privileged people from the point of view of human and cultural contact that their position offers them. In a lifetime of work experience they come, not only, to know how the tourist does, but to experience more places and ways of life than most persons. However, when studying diplomats as transmigrants it becomes clear that they are people who suffer from a constant reconfiguration of values, customs and visions of life. It is one of the professions more significantly touched by globalization; in which it is possible to clearly appreciate, both, its positive and negative effects. Diplomats indeed live in between multiple worlds, home and away from home at the same time.

VII. REFERENCES

The following section makes available the bibliographic sources like books, articles, and webpages that served as my theoretical support. Additionally for further consultation, the information about all of the interviews' dates and locations is available.

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VII.II Online resources

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VII.III Interview partners

Catalina, interviewed by Silvia Ofelia Silva Barragán, June 2014, Vienna.
Salvador, interviewed by Silvia Ofelia Silva Barragán, June 2014, Vienna.
Lorena, interviewed by Silvia Ofelia Silva Barragán, February 2015, Vienna.
Ulises, interviewed by Silvia Ofelia Silva Barragán, February 2015, Vienna.
Ramón, interviewed by Silvia Ofelia Silva Barragán, February 2015, Vienna.
Nora, interviewed by Silvia Ofelia Silva Barragán, March 2015, Barcelona.
Pablo, interviewed by Silvia Ofelia Silva Barragán, March 2015, Barcelona.
Raúl, interviewed by Silvia Ofelia Silva Barragán, March 2015, Barcelona.