

Belonging and social networks among young people from an indigenous village in Puebla

Pertenencia y redes sociales entre jóvenes de un poblado indígena en Puebla

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Oscar Ramos Mancilla*

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4258-1993>

Autonomous University of Puebla, México

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the characteristics of the digital connections made by the youth of an indigenous village, specifically their digital practices and the contents they share in social networks. These contents are related to local references, and it is argued that they are elements that allow young people to dimension their identities and sense of belonging. The research work followed an ethnographic approach to an indigenous village, and instruments related to the access and uses of digital technologies were applied. As described in the article, smartphones are the main portable devices to connect to the internet and access social networks. Precisely because of their characteristics, they allow young people to make different records of their daily activities and those related to community life. Although these records only involve reactions and interactions in social networks, their contents are latent resources in the processes of social change that are lived by indigenous peoples and that are carried out by the young population.

Keywords

Indigenous youth;
smartphone; digital
space; social change

RESUMEN

El presente artículo analiza las características de las conexiones digitales que realizan los jóvenes de un poblado indígena, en específico las prácticas digitales y los contenidos que comparten en las redes sociales. Se describe que los contenidos se relacionan con referentes locales, y se discute que estos son elementos que permiten a los jóvenes dimensionar sus identidades y sentidos de pertenencia. Para la investigación se realizó un acercamiento etnográfico a un poblado indígena y se aplicaron instrumentos relacionados con el acceso y los usos de las tecnologías digitales. Se señala que los teléfonos inteligentes (smartphone) son los principales dispositivos portátiles para conectarse a internet y acceder a las redes sociales, ya que precisamente por sus características les permiten a los jóvenes realizar distintos registros de sus actividades diarias y de las relacionadas con la vida comunitaria. Aunque estos registros solo implican reacciones e interacciones en las redes sociales, sus contenidos son recursos latentes en los procesos de cambio social que se viven en los pueblos indígenas y que son protagonizados por la población joven.

Palabras clave

Juventud indígena;
teléfonos inteligentes;
espacio digital; cambio
social

* PhD in Social Anthropology, Universitat de Barcelona. Research professor at the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities, Autonomous University of Puebla. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4258-1993> and ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Oscar_Ramos_Mancilla

Introduction

Over the last decade the increase on the use of digital technologies has been noted, especially those linked to Web 2.0 and, therefore, which depend on an Internet connection. At the beginning of the millennium, people spoke of “new” information and communications technologies (ICT), and reference was made to a series of benefits that would have a direct impact on productive, educational, communication activities, among others (Dutton, 1999).

Nowadays, it is noted that projected and imagined transformations by using ICTs have only materialized in part; that is, some social practices and processes have become dynamic, but we are in the middle of constant changes related to digitalization and at a trend of digital capitalism which is increasingly noticeable (Fuchs, 2019). Even so, Internet and digital culture are thought of as essential elements for the performance of our activities.

Concurrently, as the realities impacted by technologies were projected, access to ICTs was also recognized and, therefore, exploration of their possibilities was crossed out by social and economic inequalities (Hewitt, 2001). Over the years, contrary to the extension of access or the generation of strategies to reduce what was dubbed as digital gap, and in spite of technological developments and their progressive generalization, access to ICTs and to Internet has been included as an indicator of inequality (Crovi, 2011; Gomez, Alvarado, Martinez & Diaz, 2018). Although the images of science fiction and of marketing suggest a world where one can have access to ICTs in a general manner, at a world level, the percentage of the people using Internet barely is 52.8% approximately (Internet World Stats, 2019).

In this sense, there are two contexts flowing concurrently, which pose a question in the sense of Internet as a vital resource. There surely are sectors, groups and persons who cannot imagine a world without Internet, whether because their activities depend on connectivity or because they are making projects around digital technologies. Simultaneously, there is a wide gap on people who use Internet which has not permeated in their daily activities, such as the case of persons with random access, and which, above all, answers to material conditions.

A large fraction of the population who has unequally experienced access to digital technologies and to Internet are indigenous peoples. In the case of Mexico, from 2000 to 2010, programs and proposals were implemented to reduce the digital gap, both governmental (such as the National e-Mexico System or regional centers of the Information and Communication System of the state of Puebla) and civil society (for example, *Telecentro totolapan* in the state of Morelos, the *Wixarika* Internet Project in *San Miguel Huaistita* in the state of Jalisco, or the *Kaltaixpetaniloan* Instruction Center of the *Tosepan Titataniske* organization on the Northern Sierra of Puebla).

On the whole, these projects have achieved short objectives and, many times locally, because there are other structural factors that are to be seen to in order to create more sustainable and equitable development options. Even so, currently, during any journey through indigenous peoples, it is evident that people have access to and use digital technologies. In this sense, it is relevant to make an inquiry on the use and meaning these people give to digital technologies, on how they include them to their daily activities and on the impact on groups or communities.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the digital practices of youths in an indigenous people and, to do this, an ethnographic approach was performed on the features of accessing ICTs, as well as on local referents that are shared by means of digital social networks. It is considered that while feelings of belonging to a community have become more consistent in recent global contexts, youths perform digital practices involving their local referents, which go beyond the image of their immediate environment, and that may be considered as significant elements with which they have dimensioned their identities and social positions within changing processes.

We worked with the youth for they have had and have more access to ICTs in addition to the fact that they use those linked to Web 2.0 and, therefore, they depend on an Internet connection. The town where we performed this work is mostly of indigenous nature, the Nahuatl language is spoken by 68% of the population approximately (INEGI, 2010); in their group organization you may note their customs and traditions for community cohesion and, at the same time, there are negotiations with varied cultural consumerism, generational gaps regarding interests and activities, and eventual trips due to occupational migration.

In this sense, what we noted during the research is how malleable social relations are, they could even be contradictory. Thus, the perceptions of some adults are usually credible on the fact that young generations are no longer interested in customs, local history, or speaking the mother tongue; but the youth make expressions of community affiliation and show interest on local issues.

Concept framework: indigenous peoples and digital technologies

An aspect in this work is community affiliation. As reference is made to this conception, what we considered is self-affiliation and identification assumed by people with regards to a group or community in the middle of different relations and incorporation processes, exclusions and delimitations (Ariel de Vidas, 2003; Barth, 1976). The framework to consider that the indigenous people is founded in the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNO, 2007), which makes reference to the language they speak, to the links with their territory, to the practice of traditions, to the recovery and use of oral

traditions, to their own organizational forms, among other aspects (some of which may be expressed in the results section of this article).

It should also be mentioned that it is assumed that the ethnic identity and affiliation are, per se, the same changing processes, whether because of the internal transitions of the peoples and communities, as well as of global transformations into which the local aspect is immersed (Govers, 2006).

In this sense, it is also considered that young indigenous persons are inserted in and participate in the reorganization of a more interconnected life in view of global flows and the dynamics of digital technologies. Current generations interact in other spaces and conditions confronted by their feelings of affiliation, and these relations depend on the contexts that may be manifested in conflicts or interaction, apathy, or networks and rescue initiatives and the conveyance of learning and knowledge, among other expressions (Perez, 2019). Local references among young persons, become relevant as they are latent and significant elements of the transitions they experience.

In recent years, it has been more common to find information related with Internet connection from populations with different aspects of inequality (*Revista NuestrAmérica*, 2018). In the case of this study it is about an indigenous population connected to Internet with basic access conditions to ICTs. Approximations of the indigenous peoples and ICTs may be divided into two perspectives: on the one hand, there are studies that consider that ICTs ought to have a social use (Gomez, 2005; Monasterios, 2003) and on the other hand, the documents that record the use of information technologies and Internet performed by persons with or without social purposes (Dyson, Hendriks & Grant, 2007; Ginzburg, 2002; Ramos, 2020).

A relevant aspect of these two trends is that access to ICTs gives rise to relations of appropriation of these different communication and information tools with which persons determine their ethnic and local identities, their mother tongues, their cultural referents, among other aspects (Srinivasan, 2006).

There are juvenile sectors among the population of indigenous peoples with a better access to ICTs because of their link with formal education and, therefore, with literacy. Consequently, they carry out more interactions by means of social networks, although, it must be specified that this circumstance exceeds the conditions of origin or academic background, and it generally extends to the youth (Crovi, 2016; Reig, 2013). It may be said that change in education goes beyond the physical space at schools, which may not be exclusive of young students; that is, adults may be seen using digital technologies, for example, people in charge of a cyber-café or the teachers.

At present, the young people are negotiating their identities, their social positions, they are acquiring knowledge from their surroundings, among other activities,

with the characteristic that this is done within a context that facilitates other actions with digital devices (computers, tablets, cellular telephones, digital cameras, videogames, music players, etcetera) (Horst, Herr-Stephenson & Robinson, 2010). What can be done with digital technologies is linked to a series of recent forms and manners to communicate and relate that are possible in the digital environment (Livingston & Sefton-Green, 2016).

In this sense, the following could be examples of digital practices: taking a picture and uploading it to a digital platform, posting a text (a brief post in social networks or an essay-type entry in a blog), uploading videos to a channel (for example, YouTube), or collecting of information aided by a search engine (Ramella, Lehmuskallio, Thielmann & Abend, 2017). These practices are performed with greater intensity by sectors of young people (Crovi, 2016; Reig, 2013), and in the event of young people with whom we worked in this research, we have also noted that a greater access to smartphones extends the possibilities of the digital practice.

Method, techniques and workplace

This research was performed in accordance with a qualitative methodology, in a specific manner in accordance with an ethnographic approach, because it was considered to do a direct search of the context of the people, of social relations and persons, with more emphasis on the digital practices of young people. In this sense, from being at the site, a systematic entry on the log along with other instruments was recorded with the purpose of generating a comprehensive set of data that would, in the long run, enable liaisons between the categories and the empirical material.

The tools we used during the field work included participant observations, social networks observation, semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire. In addition, a workshop was implemented for the creation of digital contents with a reduced group of young individuals who were interviewed about their digital practices. Other persons interviewed were people in charge of cybercafés and cellular telephone points of sale, about the services they supplied and the type of users they identified.

Among the tools which enabled the relationship of digital practices with local referents in this text is the questionnaire applied to high-school students of this town. There were 114 questionnaires in total, divided per sex: 44 women and 69 men, who represented the total student population at this academic level, that is, three school grades were covered.

The questionnaire was divided in three sections with open questions: a first question for general information such as age, sex, origin, and academic level; a second

section was related with the use of communication mass media, concerns, activities of daily life and commuting to other places; the third question covered Internet access, social networks, digital practices and a specific item on the creation of digital content from pictures and videos they took with their cellular telephones.

For the last section, there were closed questions and a sketch was used with eight topics, where each student placed a flag and in some cases a description to those related to the type of content they uploaded to social networks. These topics included: landscapes, nature, traditions, academic events, parties, official activities, old pictures, and town events.

It is possible to establish a difference between participant observation and social network observation. The former was performed as they got involved or as they accompanied activities performed by persons they made contact with, mainly persons who partook in the digital contents workshop (for example, as they spent time in the afternoon, assisting a business site at the market on Saturday, or staying home for a while); it was also broadly performed during a tour around the town, aimed to have a record on the use of mobile telephony. On the other hand, observation in social networks was carried out once there were contacts in the main social network people use: Facebook and Instagram on occasion.

Field work was performed between the months of November 2018 and March 2019. It must be mentioned that, although there was no continuous stay, there is prior experience in the same town, and in other towns in the area, which allowed us to solve the absence of a long stay in exchange to having a broader and comparative perspective.

The town is Huahuaxtla, an auxiliary council of the municipality of Xochitlan de Vicente Suarez, located in the northeastern section of the Northern Sierra of Puebla. According to data of INEGI, in 2010 there were 2,471 inhabitants, 1,149 men and 1,322 women; Nahuatl is the mother tongue and Nahuatl speakers, three years or older were 1,674, 764 of which are men and 910 women (INEGI, 2010).

There are elementary education schools in the town up to the medium-higher level, there is a Community Plaza of adult education, a health center, commercial sites, points of sale of cellular telephones and cybercafés. The closest urban center is the city of Zacapoaxtla, the head of the municipality of the same name, this is one of the most important cities; there is a good mobile telephone signal coverage and Internet and it concentrates representative offices of different agencies of state and federal governments; the Institute of Higher Technology of Zacapoaxtla is also located in this municipality, where young people from different places of the northeastern region of the Northern Sierra go, therefore this is one of the options for the young people of Huahuaxtla to continue with their higher studies.

Selecting this town was because we already knew the place, and because of some of its inhabitants, after having done work for a previous research, so several points of Internet access had been identified such as cybercafés and a Community Learning Center (although this center was closed when we performed the field work for this research).

Another relevant aspect for this selection was the combination of geographic and orographic positions along with the close distance with Zacapoxtla, because there is better reception of the spectrum to feed wireless networks and a good bandwidth speed to connect to Internet (in comparison to other towns on the sierra). This is a relevant situation because it is related with the flow of people who go to places where they can connect, as well as with the constant use of cellular telephones.

Results

Daily access

The elements we took into consideration to carry out the research in the town of Huahuaxtla were, as mentioned in the previous section, observing places to connect to Internet and the people who go there, as well as persons using their smartphones. During the first visits, it was evident that access to Internet was recognized by the inhabitants, for example, when asking any person on the street about a cybercafé the answers were clear and they even spoke of the services you could find at the relevant place.

Different occurrences were also observed, where it was evident that people used their telephones; likewise, they recognized the models and using Internet-linked services were confirmed, such as social networks or instant messaging; it was even possible to identify that, in addition to using the cellphone to make calls (or to listen to voice messages), its daily use is related to digital practices.

Interviews to persons in charge of cybercafés and to people who are assisting sale sites of cellular telephones were to state that there is a generalized use of digital devices, specifically, of cellular telephones with applications linked to Internet, that is, of the smartphone type, and not only because they are on exhibition but because those are the ones people buy.

During the digital content workshop, there were moments before and after the meetings which allowed us to see the constant use of the cellular telephone by young people, for example, to take pictures, to record a video, to send a WhatsApp message, to post or react to a publication on Facebook, to watch a YouTube video, among the most habitual activities.

A relevant aspect of daily access to Internet was mentioned by cybercafé assistants, who said that in previous years, there were more users and that computers were used longer. Although rent prices per hour have not increased and the bandwidth speed is appropriate (for example, to watch videos), they saw that there currently are less users (specifically, less young people) and their time of stay at the cybercafé is shorter.

As mentioned, and which was recorded, this phenomenon is due to the fact that young people have access to a variety of digital devices, among the most relevant are portable or desk computers, whether at home or with household members, and they may therefore do their school tasks, in addition to other activities, with no need to go to cybercafés; on the other hand, they connect to their social networks by means of their cellular telephones or browse the Web.

In extensive interviews, the young people confirmed that they went to the cybercafé when they had a school task to do or to download something they were interested in, that is, they went there for a specific activity while their cellular telephone allowed them to have access to their social networks and contacts. In this sense, the smartphone is the digital device they can take anywhere and with which they can communicate or spend free time and entertainment (Madianou, 2014); thus, this device is the main means of access to Internet. This circumstance is shared at a domestic level, because in accordance with the 2018, 15th Study on the Habits of Internet Users in Mexico (Internet Association.MX, 2019), among the devices to connect to Internet, the smartphone is in the first place, followed by a portable computer.

From services linked to Internet young people of Huahuaxtla use the most, is the Facebook social network. In addition to individual profiles created by each individual, there are three profiles that stand out because they are of a collective nature, that is, they use the town name to identify each other: one has the name of the town, another one has the name of the town and the municipality, and a third one uses the name of a local organization along with the name of the town. These three profiles are relevant to users of the social network, as they may be used as newspapers or as forums; this would be similar to a point of rendezvous.

News, pictures and videos and other activities done at the town are published on the three accounts. The profile only using the name of the town has 1,143 users recorded, who like the page, whereas 1,157 persons follow its publications; the profile with the name of the town and the municipality has 1,636 users who like it, and 1,655 persons who follow its publications; lastly, the local organization has 1,289 users who like the page and 1,393 persons who follow its publications.

In this sense, group profiles are used as an example to specify that people who access Internet and the Facebook social network give relevance to local referents and, in addition, this turns into a digital space where they socialize. In this case, Facebook

concentrates users who identify themselves with the town of Huahuaxtla, mainly because they were born in this place.

Local referents

What we noted, and which was pointed out by young people who connect to the Facebook social network (as has been commented earlier, the service they use most), is that their initial contacts are people who they already know, that is, their household members, their school peers, and their neighbors in the town. As the town and their daily life are taken as a referent, the publications they make on the social network usually come from local referents. Without the intention to show a classification of topics that took place, some elements may be shown which the young people published.

Among the digital practices connected to social networks they do most, include posting pictures of the town and of surrounding landscapes, which elicit “like” reactions and comments. Other posts refer to parties and town celebrations, for example, Patron Saint festivities, Day of the Dead, civic and carnival parades, among others.

Huapangos (music and dances characteristic of the Huasteca region) stand out among the publications, there also is another variety of publications such as memes, state of mind, personal comments, information about an activity, general information and questions, which altogether reflect the concerns of users individually. Thus, an extension of social relations of the young people may be specified in the digital space, and that a relevant part of interactions include local referents.

Outstanding results were obtained from the questionnaire applied to high school students which are mentioned below. A section in the questionnaire was dedicated to creating digital contents; they were asked about the type of pictures and videos they upload to social networks (see table 1). Of the 114 questionnaires, the reason and the subject in 69 was related to “landscapes” (this includes views of the town from the top of a hill, views of the mountainside, of the Apulco River which is located on the southern side of the town, et cetera); in the second place, the topic of “nature” was recorded with 55 answers (details of plants or trees, home gardens, crops, animals, among others).

The difference between these two lies in the position of the persons, regarding what they see, while the focus of the landscape is in the distance, there is a contemplative relationship; to nature, there is closeness and interaction (for example, looking at the fingers touching or pointing at a plant leaf).

Table 1. Subjects of photos and videos posted in social media

Subject	No. of mentions
Landscapes	69
Nature	55
Traditions	42
School events	37
Parties	31
Official activities	22
Old photographs	12
Events in town	9

Source: developed by the author.

In the third place, the “traditions” were mentioned in 42 answers which make reference to different activities performed throughout the year and that are related to identifying elements linked to town groups, for example, indigenous roots, the ways to celebrate patron saint festivities of the town and boroughs (this can be connected to the 31 comments made about “festivities” in the questionnaire), regarding sowing and crops, and the way they organize to do community work, even to elect local authorities, among others.

The fourth place is for “school events”, with an emphasis to local space where the youth develop, and that is linked to the characteristics of the indigenous young persons which at present may be related with educational habits (Cortes & Hernandez, 2016); therefore, this is how a socialization space is reflected which is relevant to them (Boyd, 2014; Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016).

From the field work it was recorded that the schedules of basic and medium-higher education schools establish the routines and dynamics of people, with activity peaks every morning at the time of entry and at noon as they leave (in addition to mid-morning breaks, when household members approach the schools to leave breakfasts). It was noted that there are more persons on the street in the afternoon, and sport courts are the meeting points of the youth. At this, it is noted that the youth spend the middle of the day and from Monday to Friday at school: they are important spaces within the referents of the young people.

It should be reiterated that comments about pictures and vides refer to those that have been shared on the social networks (Facebook, specifically), whereby there is a difference between visual and audiovisual recordings that are obtained on a daily basis and that are directly shared with a contact (for example, by WhatsApp), or that they keep in their local filed (the internal memory of digital cameras or smart phones, in USB memory sticks, among others).

In this sense, the intention to decide what is shared is reinforced, that is, as images are uploaded there is control on what is to be shown, whereas others are saved for specific persons, for another time, or simply for personal record; furthermore, they decide whatever they upload to social networks from the content they want to show, of reactions and interactions they expect to cause.

At the beginning of this section it was said that people interact in social networks by using resources available in each social network service or platform, for example, a comment may be made or a reaction shown when the “like” button is selected. The discussion below is in the sense that these manners of interaction are done within the digital space from the material and physical surroundings of the youth and, in addition, in some cases, this may give rise to the negotiation of identifying elements, of relationships with the communities, the town and the region.

Notes for discussion

The relationship between information technologies and indigenous peoples depends on the material conditions that enable access to ICTs and to Internet connection. In this sense, there are specific situations in each town. Even so, by reviewing literature, it may be noted that town segments which mostly access, without being exclusive, are the generations of the youngest and school attendees.

Indeed, this segment of the population is constantly designated by adult generations of being or beginning to be detached from the traditions and customs of the towns they belong to; nonetheless, as can be seen in the previous section, young people are interested in the social and material elements they have socialized with from their local surroundings and which have become part of their identities (Ariel de Vidas, 2003); moreover, they also show concern for local and regional affairs (Salgado, 2019).

As has been seen from the literature review, people often think that the generations of youths are currently experiencing changes that have not taken place previously (Perez, 2019), and that are specifically related to the technological context (Crovi, 2016; Boyd, 2014).

An aspect that may be underlined from this approach with some young individuals within the context of an indigenous town is that there are changes in recent generations. There almost is no illiteracy because young generations are gradually more knowledgeable and it may be noted that one of the topics they share most in social networks refers to activities related to school, which is a reflection that this space is a relevant part of their lives (completion of an academic level, such as secondary education, may translate into obtaining a smartphone).

Besides, there is a higher consumption of communication mass media such as television shows and series, films in DVD format or shared via USB drives, local (if there are any), regional and national radio stations and programs. There is more population mobility, regional and even transnational (generally driven by the search for work). Just to mention some of the elements of the new situations which can be observed among indigenous youth, who are experiencing two manifestations of affinity of which they are part: faster changes situations and, at the same time, they socialize ways of expressing themselves, doing, and identifying themselves in their communities which come from local cultural referents (process of enculturation).

A distinction may be made in the sense that the youth had less elements earlier to negotiate their social status and self-affiliation (in a broad sense this can be read in Barth, 1976), therefore, changes in the reproduction of socio-cultural forms could be considered less evident.

The point to underscore in this work is that nowadays, with more heterogeneous elements which may include diverse cultural consumption, the identities related with ethnicity and belongingness to a community are dimensioned by the youth who have not been rejected or distanced, rather by setting representations and local referents in their social space (Srinivasan, 2006), which include social networks where they search for interaction with their contacts (Boyd, 2014; Horst, Her-Stephenson & Robinson, 2010).

As we followed the contents in publications, pictures and videos shared in social networks, the eight topics in the questionnaire at hand may be physically limited to the town, the school and the surrounding areas; nonetheless, at the same time, to topics covering more than the limitation of physical space, that is, they refer to what is happening in the town, academic activities, and other elements related to the context where the town is and daily activities thereof.

One of the topics with more comments is related to traditions and, as previously referred, it may include the way people organize to perform borough festivities, or ritual dances such as that of “Voladores” (Flyers) or the “Negritos” (people of color), among others; ritual practices and know-how related with crops and harvesting may also be included.

There is another example that may be referred to the topics the students pointed out, which is related to old pictures of the town, which is a manifestation of an interest to visually recover the past of a place where they live (streets, houses, landscapes, people, activities, et cetera); although there only are twelve comments on this topic, it is relevant to consider that this is a town with poor access to technologies, such as photograph cameras, that may not be easily acquired.

Aspects mentioned around pictures and videos shared in the social networks are relevant in socio-cultural processes, where they are inserted and where they participate, where the indigenous people negotiate their social status, their role in the formation of communities and in their proposals of impact in the local environment (Salgado, 2019).

Analysis of information suggests that digital practices (Ramella *et al.*, 2017) have a relevant role, although it is rather impending; it is, therefore, suggested that in spite that digital technologies are generally related to the transformation processes of societies, there are more subtleties that are to be paid attention to. In the case at hand in this article, it is noted that the pictures and videos *per se* are images that may be deemed determinant of the representations they intend to present, even so, the media they are shared in are still relevant and so are socialized topics. Therefore, digital social networks are a relevant media to the youth (Crovi, 2016); the topics on the pictures and videos are cultural and local benchmarks of the town the youth are placing within the contexts they experience, nonetheless they are changing (Govers, 2006; Srinivasan, 2006).

Lastly, it may be said that the intensive use of digital technologies by the youth, as described in some surveys (Boyd, 2014; Horts, Herr-Stephenson & Robinson, 2010; Livingston & Sefton-Green, 2016), are usually generated in broadly digitalized technical contexts. For example, as the adjustments of technical connections are opened in cellular telephones, it may be seen that there are several Wi-Fi network signals, or rather, when looking for information around a specific point, there are several options that may be deployed and texts or images may be seen.

These options are still to be developed for the Northern Sierra in Puebla, and it is inferred that there is inequality of access of ICTs identifiable in these aspects comprising contexts of differentiated access (Ramos, 2018). In this sense, what can be seen among the youth is the intermittent use of digital technologies, specifically, the smartphone and Internet connectivity, and this depends on points in time, on interactions and on their concerns, and which include local festivities of a town to manifestations against an extraction project in the region.

Conclusion

In this article, an approach has been prepared of the characteristics of digital connections made by young people in a mostly indigenous town. It has been discussed that portable devices have become important in view of that they can be easily obtained, specifically, smartphones. To connect to Internet, in addition to cybercafés, smartphones prevail because they have access to social networks by means of interfaces termed *apps* (applications), in addition to this, these devices include other elements such as cameras to take snapshots and record videos.

Some topics were also developed about pictures and videos the young people share in their social networks. It became evident that these spaces, in spite of being at different points of access, are relevant in terms of their relationship with the people involved, with events, with traits and conventions, among other aspects.

In the paragraph where the results are discussed it is specified that digital practices and local benchmarks involve the sense of belonging. Although the current young population is experiencing the processes of change linked to digital technologies in a more dynamic mode, they are, at the same time, immerse in internal processes of the indigenous peoples from which they belong to a specific ethnical group, to a town or to a community.

Therefore, digital practices are relevant as is the registration of local referents shared in social networks, as they involve subjective aspects; first off, on the control and decision of the content to be shared and, secondly, in view of the contents itself. In this sense, they are more than plain accounts of their immediate surroundings; precisely, amidst global changes (Govers, 2006), they show concern for traits and conventions, for the territory, local memories, among others. These are elements with which indigenous young people may negotiate with and give new meaning to their identities, their social status, mother tongues and their past.

At present, the indigenous young people is characterized for being a generation in transition (their own social status already is) who use digital devices to relate; the latter, by means of social network services. Although these sites and platforms are conditioned by their designs and architectures, contents uploaded and published by people make digital interactions dynamic. In this sense, and as actually discussed by several surveys (Srinivasan, 2006), it is exactly by using technological and digital resources (specifically, those of the Web 2.0) that the youth give new meaning to local and identifying elements linked to their sense of belonging to their community and ethnical groups.

The youth who connect to social networks are interested in interacting with their contacts, and they do this by using local referents, for that purpose, they use technological resources with which they make a log of their lives within the context of the town and of the community life that are later socialized, debated or supplemented in the social networks. Although digital spaces cannot imply a greater impact on the life of indigenous peoples (at least linked to specific collective projects), they are important spaces to the youth which allow them to give new meaning to local and identifying elements.

Within this dynamics, it would be interesting to continue exploring the appropriation of and impact of ICTs onto indigenous towns. On the basis of this survey, several aspects arise such as the development of skills to take snapshots and to record

videos, their impact on social perceptions and on the way the youth make narrations of themselves and of their towns.

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