Mobilities of Practice:

The Circulation of Traditional Music Making Across Mexico and the United States

By Alejandro Miranda Nieto

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Statement of Authentication

This thesis is submitted in order to fulfil the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Institute for Culture and Society at the University of Western Sydney. The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

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Alejandro Miranda Nieto

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Abstract

Music making, amongst a myriad of cultural practices, is on the move. This phenomenon has been reflected in the increasing interest of scholarly debates on the production and negotiation of meanings in and across social and geographical spaces. The enthusiasm for the analysis of the spatial dimensions of the production of, and engagement with, cultural practices has often overshadowed the consideration of their temporalities and social rhythms. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in various locations in Mexico and the United States, this thesis advances the analysis of the mobility of cultural practices to examine the circulation of ways of making and experiencing music across communities of practitioners. The notions of mobility, friction and rhythm are used to analyse the reproduction, appropriation and re-creation of musical practices. Key foci are on the production of spatio-temporal arrangements during performances and the dissemination of this practice through multilayered processes of mobility.

This mobile ethnography analyses processes of the making of culture as dynamic interplay between continuity and change. It focuses on the complexities that stem from the enactment of practices in relation to systems of meaning and representation. More specifically, it develops detailed descriptions of how assorted elements are assembled and articulated to put cultural practice in motion. This strategy sharpened my ability to perceive mobilities at various levels and contexts to analyse the circulation of people, artefacts, ideas and information. Therefore, this study gives a detailed account of the relational character of the making of culture, offering a nuanced empirical analysis and theoretical conceptualisation of how practices become simultaneously reproduced and transformed.

The specific case of *son jarocho* is addressed to explore and discuss mobilities of practice. *Son jarocho* is a musical practice originated in southeast Mexico and is believed to be a combination of African, Nahua and Spanish-Andaluz traditions. Practitioners have used *son jarocho* to elaborate discourses of authenticity and preservation of a regional musical heritage; however, it is currently sustained,

informed and reshaped by transnational/translocal linkages. Paradoxically, the transformation of various aspects of this practice has been a noticeable outcome of its recuperation and preservation. These changes are traced to concrete ways of improvising, articulating verses and playing musical phrases. I suggest that *son jarocho* is not confined to a bounded and coherent community or ethnic group, but constitutes a complex practice in which repertoires of bodily gestures, routines and improvisational forms are diffused and circulate across networks of relationships. In researching this cultural practice through mobility, this thesis examines the complex dynamics between cultural continuity and change.

Figure 1: Map of the locations involved in this study.

Figure 2: Map of the Sotavento region.

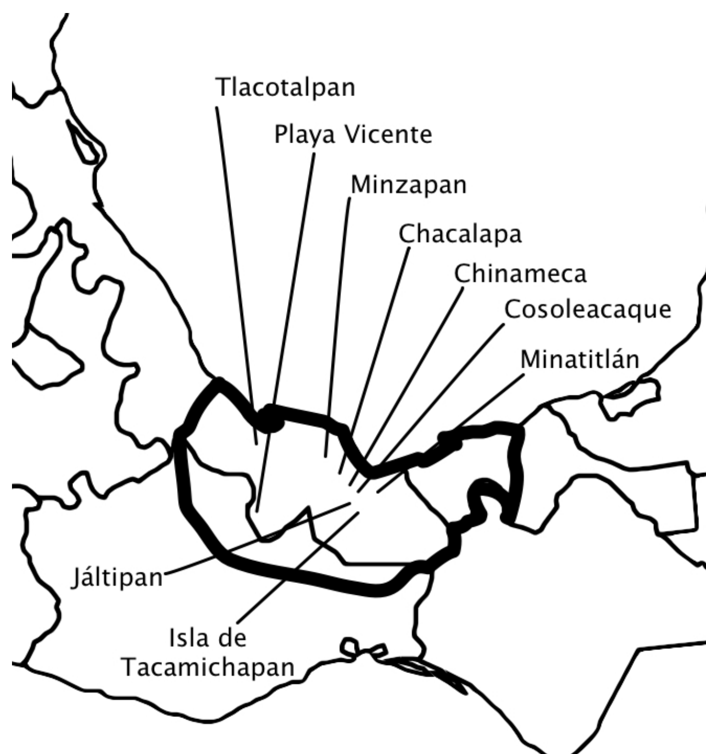

Figure 3: Locations in Sotavento involved in this study.

Introduction: Practice, continuity and change

MOBILITIES OF PRACTICE

How do practices move? People, objects and information seem to move across territories faster and further than ever before. The compression of time and space (Harvey 1992), the rapid redefinition of physical and symbolic borders (Hannerz 1997), and the increasing intermediacy of technical systems to connect people and establish spatial proximity (Canzler et al. 2008), are at the core of transformations of how culture is practised. These processes have been reflected in the increasing interest of scholarly debates on questions of movement and networks (Canzler et al. 2008), as well as on speed potentials and their impact on social structures and spatial scales (Kaufmann 2002). The 'mobilities turn' has proposed the redefinition of the very notion of society and advances a nuanced understanding of mobility and moorings to analyse contemporary social phenomena (Urry 2000). As a phenomenon and object of study, mobility is not entirely novel: after all, people, objects and information have always been on the move. Moreover, the 'new mobilities paradigm' cannot be considered as either new (Cresswell 2010) or as a paradigm in the Kuhnian sense of the term (Kuhn 2012 [1962]). Yet, the novelty and value of this approach rest on its capacity to problematise the reconfiguration of practices through migration and dwelling, and to foreground questions of cultural translation as forms of mobility that have been traditionally studied by different disciplines as separate phenomena (Cresswell 2010).

Human mobilities are partly constituted by socially established and recurrent ways of doing: commuting to work, walking around parks, travelling as a tourist and migrating to a different city are examples of their ample repertoire. Organising, executing and recalling practices of mobility are intrinsic to everyday life. An emerging body of literature on practice has also gained a certain salience in the context of contemporary cultural theories, particularly among researchers looking for alternatives to classic approaches in the social sciences (see, for instance, Schatzki et

al. 2005). Traditionally, social action has been explained in terms of instrumental interests carried out by actors (*homo economicus*) or as a series of normative values shared by collectivities (*homo sociologicus*) (Reckwitz 2002a). In contrast, theories of practice emphasise shared forms of doing and knowing to address both social action and structure as 'embedded in collective cognitive and symbolic structures, in a "shared knowledge" which enables a socially shared way of ascribing meaning to the world' (Reckwitz 2002a: 246).

Cultural practices are literally and metaphorically on the move: while practitioners, artefacts and information travel across geographical demarcations, there is also a less apparent circulation of embodied dispositions, know-how, competencies and meanings across networks of relationships. Physical displacement is intertwined with multiple forms of flow and circulation that configure and reconfigure cultural practices. Theories of mobility and practice are two bodies of literature that have focused on cultural change in relatively independent ways, suggesting the importance of analysing the circulation and diffusion of practices (Canzler et al. 2008; Cresswell 2010; Cresswell and Merriman 2011; Shove et al. 2012). However, this field of inquiry has not been explicitly developed and requires further examination. Despite the empirical relationship between practices and mobilities, and the commonalities between these two approaches, the mobilities of practices in general, and of musical practices in particular, have been sparsely addressed in the scholarly literature.

This thesis advances the study of mobilities of practice to examine the circulation of ways of making and experiencing music across geographically dispersed communities of practitioners. By focusing on the empirical case of a musical tradition, it looks at how people engage in socially established ways of doing and knowing (Schatzki et al. 2005), which for the purposes of this study are understood as the socio-cultural dimensions of bodily dispositions, artefacts, ideas, emotions, tacit knowledge, rules and routines. My aim is to advance an approach to culture based on the analysis of various layers of mobility. In examining the interplay between continuity and change, this thesis seeks to contribute to contemporary debates on flows of people, artefacts and information by empirically investigating

mobilities of practice.

The strength of empirical studies frequently relies on their capacity to provoke disagreement, as empirical data have the primary purpose of turning assumed facts into controversies (Mills 2000: 205). By upholding a processual analysis of culture, this research seeks to challenge notions of 'tradition' as essentially fixed to a geographical space or group of people. In adopting this critical stance, this thesis is based on the following set of guiding research questions: How do cultural practices circulate among networks of relationships? How are these ways of doing transmitted, diffused, appropriated and re-enacted across networks of relationships? How do practitioners invoke, share, appropriate and reconfigure practices in and through mobility? How do mobilities and immobilities relate to cultural continuity and change? What does the analysis of mobile practices tell us about the agency of identity in transnational/cross-border contexts? By building on theories of social practice and mobility, this study aims to demonstrate the relevance of the analysis of cultural practices to contemporary discussions of transnationalism, globalisation, identity and belonging. The ultimate objectives of this research are to develop the theorisation, conceptualisation and empirical knowledge base of mobilities of practice, and to explore the case study of music making.

This thesis draws on the empirical examination of *son jarocho*, a musical practice that is sustained and informed by groups of practitioners across Mexico and the United States. It specifically focuses on routines, sequences, bodily dispositions, artefacts, explicit and non-explicit rules, and ways of knowing. Far from providing an account of the 'authentic way' of performing this form of music, I develop a detailed analysis of how this practice is jointly produced by the spatial and temporal arrangement of people, artefacts, tacit understandings, competencies, rules and routines. I argue that the continuity and transformation of this practice emerges from multiple layers of mobility, such as the circulation of elements during performances, the historical trajectories of *son jarocho* as a recognisable practice, and its diffusion across networks that extend across various locations. The next section briefly describes the origins and main characteristics of *son jarocho* as a socially established activity.

STUDYING *SON JAROCHO*

Son jarocho is a musical practice that originated in southeast Mexico and is currently reproduced, appropriated and re-created in various locations in Mexico and the US. While there are various musical practices that also circulate across these two countries (see, for instance, Madrid 2011), *son jarocho* is a remarkable case worthy of detailed analysis as it is currently used by communities of practitioners to produce persuasive narratives of belonging to a localised tradition that is, nonetheless, shared and diffused across locations. The tension between discourses of authenticity and belonging, and the various forms of circulation of this practice, are a distinct feature of *son jarocho*.

This cultural practice emerged as a recognisable set of doings in the form of a popular festivity called *fandango*. At these events people get together to sing verses, play assorted instruments, and dance on a wooden platform. They constitute the most representative *son jarocho* event in which people share and learn the practice (García de León 2009). By the end of the eighteenth century *fandango* became the preferred celebration among the peasants in the region of Sotavento in southeast Mexico. The terms *Sotavento* and *Barlovento* have been used for centuries by Spanish sailors in reference to the direction of the wind: respectively, leeward and windward. In the context of southeast Mexico, 'Sotavento' refers to the plains accessed from the port of Veracruz that are protected from the sea winds. The name of this place has been elaborated from the perspective of those that arrive by ship, carrying implicit references to the colonial past and the meeting of peoples from different places. It is believed that *son jarocho* (which refers to the practice in general) and *fandango* (which refers to the specific celebration) have their background in other festive practices that came from African, Spanish-Arab-Andaluz and Nahua traditions (Cardona 2006; Kohl 2007).

Notable aspects of these celebrations are their routines and rules which establish the organisation of sequences of actions. Practitioners share a common understanding on how to proceed and there is a degree of predictability in the manner in which events unfold. For instance, during *fandangos* it is commonly assumed (but almost never

explicitly stated) that the performance should be led by the most knowledgeable practitioners, who regularly stand closer to the wooden platform where dance is performed. This spatial arrangement allows certain practitioners to define the tunes to be played, their key, and the rhythmic 'feel' (called *cadencia*)[1] that structures the interaction and turns the celebration into a coherent performance. Throughout this thesis I interpret the production of spatial and temporal arrangements as one of the various layers of mobility of this practice.

The transnational circulation of *son jarocho* constitutes another form of mobility that has been noted by a number of scholarly works. Steven Loza (1992: 192), for instance, has analysed the 'stylistic adaptation' of *son jarocho* and the 'development and maintenance of syncretic musical forms' by Chicano[2] musicians in Los Angeles. Overall, the scholarly literature on *son jarocho* has largely portrayed this musical practice as 'Mexican', leaving unaddressed what is 'Mexican' about it and how it came to constitute a consistent musical genre. Contrastingly, I suggest that *son jarocho* is no longer confined to communities of practitioners (namely Mexicans or Chicanos), but has become a complex and socially standardised set of 'doings' that circulates across networks of relationships. In this way, this study addresses *son jarocho* as a cultural practice to investigate processes of cultural change and continuity across various physical and symbolic borders.

MUSIC AS PRACTICE

Instead of framing this phenomenon as folkloric musical genre or style, I have decided to approach it as a cultural practice. This choice has multiple consequences for the conceptualisation of what music and dance are and the methodological strategies to study them. Despite being one of the most prominent approaches in the

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[1] *Cadencia* refers to rhythmic 'feel' and should not be confused with the English term 'cadence', which describes a modulation of the voice or, in music, a sequence of chords that close a musical phrase. *Cadencia* can be translated as swing or groove.

[2] 'Chicano' is a term used in the United States by some people of Mexican origin or descent to refer to their own ethnic identity.

study of music, analysing 'works of art' has been criticised for overlooking the socio-cultural contexts in which those works emerge (see, for instance, Zolberg 1990). Sociological stances, on the other hand, have emphasised the social dimensions of musical phenomena. Since Theodor Adorno (1976) established a programme for the sociological study of music, this approach has predominantly aimed to unveil the social forces that are behind the production, consumption or distribution of music. Both perspectives (analysing works of art or interpreting the social in music) have advanced the understanding of different facets of this complex phenomenon. However, both approaches have paid little attention to the processes by which music and other related cultural practices are used to compose the social 'in action'.

The study of music as social process offers an alternative entry point for understanding how music informs the social - and *vice versa*. As Tia DeNora (2004: 38) succinctly puts, '[w]e need, in short, to follow actors in and across situations as they draw music into (and draw on music as) social practice'. The importance of analysing musical practices does not reside in showing how they reflect institutions, economic conditions, people, groups, ethnicities or societies, but in understanding how music is collectively accomplished. Conceptualising music as practice makes it possible to frame this phenomenon not as a 'given thing' (namely, repertoire, musicians, forms of distribution and consumption), but as process (Wood et al. 2007). This is not to say that this perspective should gloss over the aforementioned elements; in fact, overlooking 'music's specifically musical materials' has been one of the flaws of societal accounts of music (DeNora 2004: 37). In this study I advance the analysis of the circulation of material entities, practitioners, know-how, ideas and information in relation to the circulation of a practice as a recognisable entity.

This approach constitutes an alternative to the opposition between music as 'works of art' and their constituents (melody, harmony, counterpoint, rhythm, musical instruments, repertoire) versus music as a reflection of societal structures (such as class, gender or ethnicity). This thesis examines the enactment of musical practices as transient events. At performances there are normally several musicians, an audience, a space in which the performance takes place, musical instruments and

assorted artefacts, a repertoire, and common understandings between the audience and musicians. A multitude of different elements gets together and only then does music 'happen'. 'Music cannot be reduced to the factors that might cause it and circumscribe it […]', argues Antoine Hennion (2001: 2), 'it should be seen as something transitory, not as a given but as a "new arrival", a relatively irreducible present: it happens, it passes'. In analysing the multiple ways in which various elements are assembled and articulated to set a practice in motion, I seek to move away from the dichotomy between the analysis of works or social factors and to propose a radically processual analysis of culture. This perspective resonates with John Law's (1992: 389) suggestion that 'social structure is better treated as a verb than as a noun'. Overall, this thesis addresses the processes involved in the making of culture. In researching practices in and through movement, I have developed a perspective that aims to capture dynamic aspects of cultural phenomena.

The analysis of the mobilities of *son jarocho* is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in various locations in Mexico and the US. My strategy was to pursue the spaces in which the practice of *son jarocho* is enacted. I found myself taking part in popular celebrations and workshops in which *son jarocho* is learnt, as well as in rehearsals and performances. Similarly, I spent time travelling with practitioners, busking with them at markets, or listening to *son jarocho* recordings and streamed YouTube videos in their living rooms. As I was 'hanging out' with practitioners I gradually became involved in entangled networks of practitioners and moved from place to place as opportunities emerged.

Because my engagement with the field was through the making of *son jarocho*, my participation was markedly embodied and collaborative. Making music normally takes place within groups of individuals who adjust their actions to create more-or-less 'harmonic' interactions. For this reason, my immersion in the musical culture of *son jarocho* involved the adjustment of my subjective rhythms to those of the collectivity. Here I am not only referring to the rhythms played during performances: as a researcher and practitioner I had to align my patterns and particular manner of moving, eating, sleeping or drinking. Given that music making is irremediably accomplished jointly (DeNora 2004), my participation was a process of embodied

learning and, at the same time, part of a web of collective actions. This mobile ethnography stands as a detailed account of a collaborative and intertextual understanding (Clifford 1990) of the contemporary practice of *son jarocho*.

MOBILITY AS METHOD

In the last book that Henri Lefebvre (2004) wrote, he puts forward the study of the rhythms of the social. One of its sections points out that 'to grasp a rhythm it is necessary to have been grasped by it; one must let oneself go, give oneself over, abandon oneself to its duration. Like in music and the learning of a language [...]' (2004: 27). In capturing the mobilities of practice I became captured by them; accessing communities of practitioners and moving among them rested on the act of engaging in the same rhythms as other participants. The development of my ethnographic fieldwork was to an extent circumstantial and fortuitous, and I was fortunate to encounter a series of favourable conditions that facilitated my access to communities of practitioners. I conducted fieldwork for six months in locations in the US and Mexico, focusing on the technique of 'following the practice'. I used this phrase to remind myself that first, I was there to pursue the points in which the practice of *son jarocho* was enacted, and that only then I was there to learn how to play, dance and sing. But the learning of the crafts of conducting fieldwork and making *son jarocho* became quickly entangled.

I actively participated in workshops, assorted festivities, informal gatherings, rehearsals, gigs and busking performances. I travelled to these events by bus, car, foot, bicycle, aeroplane, rural trucks and boats; often with other practitioners, sometimes by myself. Following the moves of *son jarocho* practitioners during performances, travels and various quotidian activities became an empirical access point for studying the processes through which this cultural practice is appropriated and re-enacted in different locations. Moving with the practice allowed me to understand how human travelling is reciprocally linked to other flows, such as the circulation of musical instruments and practice-specific knowledge across locations.

My first point of arrival was Los Angeles, and then I travelled to Mexico City, and to various locations in the south and outlying areas in Veracruz.[3] The objective of conducting fieldwork in geographically dispersed locations was to 'chase' *fandangos*, workshops and other *son jarocho* events as they took place. Prior to these travels, I collected dispersed pieces of information on the Internet that gave me a rough idea of the time and place of major festivities. However, this provisional calendar proved to be of little use as my trajectory took on a life on its own. After completing three months in Mexico I had a brief pause to attend a conference at the University of Alberta in Canada. Some days later I crossed a less militarised border on a bus to re-engage with my fieldwork in Seattle. I spent several weeks in that city and other locations in Washington state, then visiting various locations in Oregon and, finally, California. The length of my stay in each location varied between one to five weeks at a time. However, being based in one location always involved travelling to its surrounding areas, as communities of practitioners are densely interconnected. During the last month of my fieldwork, for instance, I based myself in Los Angeles, but continued travelling between Boyle Heights (a neighbourhood in the east of that city), the metropolitan area of Los Angeles, Santa Ana and San Diego.

My temporary immersion in these communities was facilitated by the tendency among *son jarocho* practitioners to welcome strangers who show interest in this tradition. It is very common to host and be hosted after *fandangos*, as long-distance travelling is often required to attend these events. In my case this custom was generously extended as I often stayed at the place of practitioners for longer than the duration of the celebration. As a practitioner from southeast Mexico pointed out in one of our conversations:

> Sometimes people call me to spend the night at my house. I've been called by people who come from the US who I don't know, and they say 'Marco, you are Marco right, well a friend gave me your phone number and said that if I was in

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[3] See the maps provided in pages 3 and 4. For a comprehensive list of the places and activities involved in this fieldwork, please see Appendix.

> this city, I could call you because, well, I'm looking for a place to spend the night'. And that's it, they are hosted [at his place] because they are friends of friends. One is not obliged to do it, but others have also done it for me when I'm away.[4]

Reciprocity is expected and valued among *son jarocho* practitioners because it is a basic mechanism that enables the formation of tight networks of relationships. In this way, hosting and being hosted is an integral component of the transnational, regional and local linkages among communities of practitioners. This custom worked in my favour as being hosted opened the possibility of following practitioners, not only while making music, but also in the quotidian aspects of their lives. It was during these periods of intense interaction that I easily forgot about being an ethnographer and became involved in the rhythms of the everyday life of *son jarocho* practitioners. As Goffman (1989: 129) puts it, I engaged 'in the same body rhythms, rate of movement, tapping of the feet, that sort of thing', as the surrounding people. This form of active participation put me into ambivalent situations as simultaneously an outsider and insider.

Ambivalent positionality

Several issues on my shifting positionality were raised because of the mobility implied in this type of fieldwork. Responding to the question of whether or not to be part of the social world one is to study is not straightforwardly answered in this case. As a consequence, participants categorised me in various ways depending on the context. The fact that I was born and grew up in Mexico City has certainly influenced how I conducted myself in the field and how participants categorised me. I received innumerable gestures of hospitality and amity in many locations (and also those of dismissal and disregard), possibly owing to certain identifications such as being a musician, male, Mexican or an international student in Australia.

There are significant cultural and linguistic differences across the various regions in

[4] Excerpt from the transcript of an interview conducted with an anonymous practitioner in Xalapa, Mexico, April 8, 2013.

Mexico that affected the way in which my fieldwork was conducted. In southeast Mexico, for instance, my accent and appearance were not the only markers of my outsiderness: being incapable of clearly differentiating between traditional tunes, singing verses quietly or being shy when dancing on the *tarima*, demarcated an even clearer difference. Yet, participants saw me as an outsider willing to learn and in need of guidance and I tried to act accordingly, but in the US it was different. There I was categorised as Mexican and that sometimes brought me closer to a tradition thought also to be Mexican. On one occasion, for example, I attended a small *son jarocho* performance that took place as part of the celebrations of the foundation of a suburban neighbourhood of Los Angeles, California. People were leisurely walking, having coffee and enjoying a pleasantly warm evening. On the sidewalk, in front of a café, there were three musicians playing *son jarocho*; on the other side of the street there was a pub with a rock trio also playing outdoors. It was an unfair volume competition as the *son jarocho* players were using only acoustic instruments and the other band had amplifiers. Still, the evening unfolded successfully and on my side of the street the audience seemed to enjoy the unintended mixture of tunes from southeast Mexico spiced with modern rock beats. After the gig finished I spent some time talking to one of the *son jarocho* musicians, who then categorised me in a surprising way:

> Guys like you, I mean, urban Mexicans are very much like us. When I was a kid, my idea of Mexicans came from what I saw when I visited my family in Zacatecas, people from the countryside, many are peasants who come here [to the US] to work. But then I met Mexicans from the cities and I just saw how much we are alike. You guys are just like Chicanos![5]

The multiple ways in which practitioners categorised me as a researcher and *son jarocho* apprentice had a direct influence on the ways in which I engaged with the field. This reciprocal relationship reveals, among other things, the collaborative nature of ethnography: difference and similarity are continuously demarcated and erased by both researcher and participants. My role as researcher was always overt,

[5] Excerpt from the notes taken after a conversation conducted with an anonymous practitioner in Los Angeles, United States, March 2, 2013. Author's translation.

but asserting my status as a PhD student in a distant country did not mean much to many persons that I met. After all, being an international student in Australia is only one among many potential ways of presenting myself and being represented by others in the field. I had to develop a particular sensitivity to the ways in which people categorised me and to act in accord with their ascriptions. The field changed as I moved across locations and I had to react quickly to those changes. In southeast Mexico some people called me 'professor' because of my academic background, or '*chilango*' because I was born in Mexico City, whereas in California people called me 'mate' because I was studying in Sydney. Moreover, being nicknamed became a marker of the degree of my involvement in each scene that was always welcomed with a smile of complicity.

In any case, my status as insider or outsider was never clearly defined. This research was not conducted by an ex-*son jarocho* musician going back to study his musician fellows. I was foreign to the explicit and non-explicit rules and understandings that permeate this practice. Before my doctoral studies, my contact with it was primarily through cassettes, CDs and performances at folk festivals offering a commercialised form of *son jarocho* (addressed in Chapter 3). Mexico is a country of regionalisms (Simpson 1977) and this practice is commonly identified as music from Veracruz, which is not the region in which I grew up. Although I was unfamiliar with its actual making, I have been attracted to it for a long time. This interest partly stems from my training in classical music and the fact that I have been performing popular music as a professional guitarist for several years. Because of my formal musical training, this study confronted me with the blurred lines between being an outsider who is trying to understand how people construct their own culturally contained ways of doing, and an insider who also makes music, speaks the same language and has similar cultural references.

In becoming a *son jarocho* apprentice I was confronted with many of my personal and professional prejudices. It took me some time, for instance, to understand that playing in major and minor tonalities at the same time is not inherently wrong, but a matter of choice and taste. While my previous experiences as a musician gave me a lot of confidence when playing the *son jarocho* instruments, this self-assurance was

deflated when I was asked to dance or sing verses, which are also essential parts of the performances. Becoming an apprentice involved learning to negotiate the enactment of this practice with others and led me to find my way in the field through singing, playing instruments and dancing. A crucial aspect of this negotiation was acknowledging my incompetence despite being already a competent musician. Understanding came through suspending my own opinions about music making.

This naive attitude stretched as I moved across different locations. In this journeying I encountered located ways of enacting the practice that involved both reproduction and transformation of the traditional ways of enacting it. *Son jarocho* is currently sustained as a recognisable practice because of the complex dynamics between continuity and change produced among groups of practitioners. Despite being shared across a transnational social space (Glick-Schiller et al. 2006), this practice constitutes a culturally contained world produced by communities of practitioners interlinked by enthusiasm for a common way of making music. The fact that the *son jarocho* networks of practitioners extend across geographically dispersed locations does not contradict the fact that they constitute a small world. Just as a single road in a cosmopolitan city can contain a broad spectrum of local worlds (Hall 2012), a relatively consistent practice can be shared across transnational social spaces. The chapters of this thesis seek to capture the tight bonds that currently produce the mobilities of this dispersed practice.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

From the study of the various forms of mobility of cultural practice, three interrelated themes extend throughout this thesis: the interplay between continuity and change, the circulation of practices (as entities) and practising (as enactments), and the production of spatio-temporal arrangements during performances. The progression of the chapters elaborates the various facets of these themes and their relationships. The first objective is to construct a theorisation of mobilities of practice that contributes to the field of cultural research. Chapter 1 introduces key theoretical debates that inform this research, namely theories of practice and mobilities. It also provides a

brief overview of the incipient academic literature on *son jarocho,* the critique of methodological nationalism, and the conceptual debates on transnational social spaces. In providing a general view of the foundations of this thesis, I connect these theoretical approaches with the methodological choices on which this mobile ethnography is based. Chapter 2 examines the mobilities that take place during the enactment of the practice. *Fandango*, the celebration during which *son jarocho* is performed, is analysed as a constant circulation that produces spatio-temporal arrangements. These arrangements show how the act of enacting a practice produces forms of 'mutual susceptibility' (Barnes 2005: 34) among practitioners. It is then detailed how the spatial positioning and synchronisation of actions put practices in motion.

Chapter 3, in turn, addresses the mobilities of *son jarocho* as a recognisable practice. It briefly outlines the historical movements of this practice based on recent studies that document the interrelation of shared ways of making music across the main ports of the Caribbean (García de León 2002; Ávila et al. 2011). It is argued that a long process of circulation of cultural practices defined many of the constitutive characteristics of what is currently understood as *son jarocho* (García de León 2009). The chapter goes on to analyse a series of significant transformations that led this practice to its apparent disappearance and then to its recuperation by groups of enthusiasts. One of the most relevant initiatives involved in the 'rescuing' of *son jarocho* was the diffusion of this practice through workshops in which people learn to play instruments, dance and sing verses. In examining the relevance of these workshops for diffusing the practice, the chapter discusses the ways in which the practice changes as it moves. While practices do not literally move as such, practitioners and musical instruments travel in various ways. Hence, Chapter 4 explores the physical displacement of people and artefacts and its significance for the circulation of this practice across geographically dispersed communities of practitioners. In examining these mobilities, this chapter discusses how these forms of journeying intervene in the circulation of practice-specific knowledge.

It has been suggested that studies of mobility have emphasised its spatial dimension while glossing over its temporalities and social rhythms (Kaufmann 2002: 22).

Chapter 5 advances the notion of rhythm as a metaphor to assist the analysis of multiple layers of mobility. Originally derived from ‘rhuthmos’, which in turn comes from ‘rhein’, the notion of rhythm refers to processes of becoming, flow and possibly to the ‘periodic motion of waves’ (Hasty 1997: 10). The discussion of this chapter draws on the notion of rhythmanalysis proposed by Henri Lefebvre (2004) and studies that elaborate on it (Edensor 2010; Schatzki 2010b; Cresswell and Merriman 2011; Fen 2012). Rhythm is used as a heuristic to connect bodily dispositions during performances to the mobilities of *son jarocho* as a recognisable entity.

During my fieldwork I was constantly confronted with the stark contrast between narratives of authenticity and belonging to an essentialised tradition and the various forms of circulation, flow, displacement and mobility in which one becomes involved as a *son jarocho* practitioner. Chapter 6 provides a critical reflection on this tension to examine how the contexts of enactment of this practice are socially constructed spaces of friction and convergence. If identities are about ‘the process of becoming rather than being’ (Hall 1996: 4), then there is much to be learnt by analysing how mobile cultural practices provide resources for the creation and negotiation of meanings. This chapter examines how the friction between essentialised discourses and the circulation of elements provides the grip that enables mobilities of practice. Taken together, Chapters 5 and 6 seek to position the empirical knowledge base, theorisation and conceptualisation of the mobility of practice in relation to a wider field of knowledge production.

The chapters of this thesis investigate different facets of the mobilities of practice to put forward a nuanced understanding of the interplay between cultural continuity and change. Throughout music is used as a case to discuss the dynamics of culture. Still, this study has been strongly influenced by the idea that ‘music […] is good to think with’ (DeNora 2003: 173). The collective, dynamic and transient qualities of music make it an empirical window onto larger cultural processes. The following chapter, then, will address the key concepts used in this study and the ways in which they informed the methodological choices on which this mobile ethnography is based.

Chapter 1: Constructing a mobile object of study

INTRODUCTION

In focusing on mobilities of practice, this thesis investigates how a specific musical practice is enacted in different locations, and how these enactments are embedded in a wider circulation across communities of practitioners. As an empirically grounded study it looks to contribute to the field of cultural research, particularly in relation to scholarly debates on flows of people, meanings, ideas and artefacts. The arguments developed in this thesis build on assorted literatures that discuss culture from various disciplinary angles. While I acknowledge the sources when pertinent, several themes characteristic of the field of cultural research resonate in the background throughout the analysis. This chapter discusses the most relevant themes on which this thesis is founded. More specifically, it focuses on a number of theoretically informed choices that I have made during the writing of this mobile ethnography. My aim is to provide an overview of the most salient concepts and scholarly works on which such choices are based in order to situate this thesis in this rather eclectic field of cultural research. They are grouped into the four themes presented below.

First, I have taken practice as the basic unit of analysis for the investigation. This choice invokes practice theory, which denotes a group of theoretical orientations that emphasise the ways in which people engage in, and negotiate the enactment of, socially established activities (Schatzki et al. 2005). It also involves looking at how different practice-specific elements become interrelated and disassociated in ways that enable or restrict the enactment of the practice (Shove et al. 2012). Accordingly, the first section of this chapter engages with theories of practice and a number of key concepts on which the analysis developed in subsequent chapters is based. Second, this thesis approaches practice as a mobile phenomenon, which implies the need for examination of how assorted elements come to be enacted in multiple spaces and times. Tracing mobilities of practice across networks of relationships also demands the identification and examination of how practices become a ‘situated social

achievement' (Shove and Pantzar 2005). While practices are localised phenomena, I suggest that their reproduction and continuity are established through the mobility of elements across networks that extend to multiple locations. For this reason, this ethnography does not address situated practices as fixed in a particular location, but seeks to understand how practices become multi-local phenomena. These points are elaborated in the second section of this chapter, in which I briefly discuss relevant examples from the literature on mobilities and its distinct approach to cultural transformation.

Third, the background of the case that I examine builds upon a small but emerging literature on *son jarocho*. These texts have been fundamental to situating this contemporary analysis of traditional music making in a scholarly context. While the literature on this practice has widely portrayed it as a 'Mexican musical genre', I argue that one should investigate how these meanings are invoked and produced in practice. Fourth, the suggested study of culture as practised entails the examination of processes by which meanings are constructed. Based on this processual understanding, I do not interpret cultural phenomena as a thing, but as doing. As Law (1992: 380) describes it, social processes are 'better seen as verb–a somewhat uncertain process of overcoming resistance–rather than as the *fait accompli* of a noun'. Consequently, the last section of this chapter discusses the ways in which these theories and concepts have informed the methodological design of this investigation. With the general aim of linking my theoretical choices with their corresponding methodological strategies, I start with a discussion of theories of practice.

PRACTICE THEORY

The notion of practice has gained salience in the context of contemporary cultural theories, particularly among researchers looking for alternatives to the classic paradigms in the social sciences. Instead of explaining social action in terms of the polarisation of individual-nonindividual (Schatzki et al. 2005: 14) or agency and structure (Shove et al. 2012: 2), these theoretical approaches tend to locate the social

in a field of practices; that is, in the series of connections that link complex forms of 'socially established cooperative human activities' (MacIntyre 2007: 187). By bringing together assorted theoretical orientations under a general ideal type of practice theory, Andreas Reckwitz (2002a: 249) suggests that these theories analyse social activities as consisting of:

> [...] several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.

This definition sheds light on the pragmatic articulation of different elements through routinised forms of action. Repetition and embodiment are significant themes that have been addressed by a wide spectrum of theorists who deal with practices to various degrees. The origins of this theoretical orientation can be traced to Heidegger and the later Wittgenstein, although they have a more explicit background in authors from different social and cultural traditions, such as Harold Garfinkel (1984 [1967]), Michel Foucault (1990) or Pierre Bourdieu (2013). In broad terms, 'practice' commonly refers to a collective form of action, which is a central point in most social theories, especially in the field of cultural research. To introduce some major topics of practice theory, in the following paragraphs I focus on the relationship between routines and the body, and then discuss practices as constituted by interconnected elements.

Embodiment and repetition

A key point supporting the argument of this thesis is the theorisation of recurrent ways of doing and their relationship to bodily action. An influential example of such an interpretive framework is the outline of the theory of structuration developed by Anthony Giddens (1984). He (1984: xxiii) addresses embodied ways of knowing through practical consciousness, which '[…] consists of all the things actors know tacitly about how to "go on" in the contexts of social life without being able to give them direct discursive expression'. Tacit knowledge, the non-explicit competency by which sets of actions conform to rules and routines, allows groups of people to

interact based on shared understandings. While actions in everyday life are highly contingent and improvisatory, practices tend to guide the ways in which people proceed in specific situations. The repetition of actions based on embodied understandings is a process whereby groups of people come jointly to enact practices (DeNora 2004: 38).

Repetition and embodiment have also been theorised through the seminal notion of *habitus*. The term was introduced to the social sciences by Marcel Mauss (1973; 1979) and further developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1990; 1998; 2013). Mauss' perspective on *habitus* specifically refers to cultural routines of individuals and groups of people. Drawing on this approach, Bourdieu further theorised the concept as a 'mediating category' (Wacquant 2004: 391): *habitus*, in this case, mediated between subjective and objective transformations that he encountered in the collapse of French colonial rule in Algeria (Bourdieu and Sayad 1964). The Bourdieusian elaboration of *habitus* is the product of a critical engagement with practical questions of empirical research. In the succeeding development of the concept, Bourdieu (1990: 53) described it as:

> [...] a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.

From this perspective, *habitus* refers to enduring dispositions that emerge from social interaction. Dispositions are here understood as a way of being in relation to other things, as long-lasting ways of proceeding whereby social actors make sense of the world. *Habitus*, therefore, consists of dispositions which, in turn, allude to permanence, continuity and reproduction. This approach echoes Wittgenstein's understanding of dispositions as 'something always there from which behaviour follows. It is analogous to the structure of a machine and its behaviour' (2001: 91). The structured, durable character of *habitus* sheds light on the embodiment of social life, on the inscription of collective history, and on the history of the subject (Bourdieu 1990). These meanings of endurance, stability and continuity have

prevented me from developing an argument on *habitus* and mobile practices, even when some aspects of this term seemed to capture relevant features of music making.

Such conceptualisation of deep, enduring dispositions makes it hard empirically to approach stable ways of conducting oneself in environments that are in flux. Here it must be noted that, in Bourdieu's works, the concepts that derive from his theorisation tend to be described in relation to a field, and their analytical purchase emanates from its empirical use. As Bourdieu once commented: '[t]here is no doubt a theory in my work, or, better, a set of *thinking tools* visible through the results they yield, but it is not built as such' (Wacquant 1989: 50). *Habitus*, like many other Bourdieusian concepts, has been formulated as an analytical device. Since Bourdieu does not develop a consistent theory of practice, I decided not to take the concept as a 'stand-alone' category, but to look at it as a thinking tool. I also found that the concept also contained a dynamic view of cultural transformation, particularly when described as a kind of 'practical sense', which in *The Logic of Practice* is described as:

> […] what is to be done in a given situation - what is called in sport a "feel" for the game, that is, the art of anticipating the future of the game which is inscribed in the present state of play. (Bourdieu 1990: 90)

Although Bourdieu treats *habitus* and 'practical sense' as associated, I draw on the latter throughout this thesis to refer to a capacity to perceive sensations, judge and proceed to action. The analytical purchase of 'practical sense' relies on its reference to the practitioner's capacity to anticipate a series of events, which is closely related to improvisatory forms and the temporal and spatial unfolding of musical performances. Without denying the analytical possibilities offered by *habitus*, in this thesis I do not use that concept, but refer to 'practical sense' as a device for analysing the ways in which practitioners 'temporalise themselves' (Bourdieu 2000: 213) through their practice. This notion allows me to advance the empirical analysis of what I call spatial and temporal arrangements, which I elaborate in subsequent chapters as the ways in which practitioners orient themselves and synchronise their actions during performances.

Dynamics of practice

Recent theorisations of practice coincide in the assumption that practices are constituted by interconnected elements. In this respect, the philosopher of social science Theodore R. Schatzki (1996: 89) refers to practices as composed of 'doings and sayings'. Similarly, in the definition provided at the beginning of this section Andreas Reckwitz (2002a: 249) mentions 'bodily activities, forms of mental activities, "things" and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge'. With the aim of bringing clarity to the constituent elements of practice, Elizabeth Shove, Mika Pantzar and Matt Watson (2012: 21-41) have grouped different elements to produce an analytical framework that categorises them within three sets: materials, meanings and competences. This strategy has the advantage of providing broad categories that bring clarity to the discussion of what integrates practice. Most importantly, they make room for the analysis of how the linkages between such elements are forged:

> [...] if specific configurations are to remain effective, connections between defining elements have to be renewed time and again. This suggests that stability and routinization are not end points of a linear process of normalization. Rather, they should be understood as ongoing accomplishments in which similar elements are repeatedly linked together in similar ways. (2012: 24)

In their theorisation of the dynamics of practice, Shove et al. provide conceptual tools to analyse how practices are reproduced and changed through the configuring and reconfiguring of the linkages between their elements. This theoretical perspective offers an analytical 'toolkit' for addressing the circulation and trajectories of practice-specific elements, as well as the historical unfolding of the bundles of elements that constitute practices as a relatively consistent way of doing.

Schatzki theorises the articulation of assorted elements in time and space as practice-arrangement bundles. One advantage of this ontological framework is that it 'treats the site of social existence as a mesh of practices and arrangements' (2003: 191). The concept of arrangement has a special importance for this thesis, as it brings focus to

the processes through which the articulation of elements is configured. These configurations encompass people, materials (such as artefacts), organisms and other elements (Schatzki 2003). Drawing on Schatzki's understanding of the social as bundles of practices and arrangements, I illustrate how the enactment of practices produces specific spatial and temporal arrangements. These spatial and temporal orders, I argue, are productive contexts (Thrift 1996: 43) from which various forms of mobility emerge.

A second strength of Schatzki's (1996: 89–90) theorisation of practice is the analytical distinction between practice as a performance enacted in a specific time and space, and as 'temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings'. This distinction has been further developed by Shove and Pantzar (2007) and Shove et al. (2012) through the differentiation of practice-as-performance and practice-as-entity. The enactment of performances (or the act of practising) is given by the articulation of the elements in specific time and space. This concept becomes analytically relevant when contrasted with practice as entity, which alludes to the collection of multiple, recurrent enactments in times and spaces. The accumulation of enactments, the argument follows, turns practices into coherent and recognisable activities (Schatzki 1996; Shove et al. 2012). Here it is important to note that the differentiation between practice as performance and as entity is an analytical distinction that is intended to reduce complexity. However, these two categories refer to facets of the same phenomenon and have a reciprocal and co-constitutive relationship. In the case of musical practices, this analytical contrast can be translated into the relationship between practising music (the unfolding of a given performance) and musical practice (the set of complex and relatively coherent activities that constitute a recognisable practice). This analytical distinction becomes particularly useful in order to differentiate the circulation of elements that takes place during performances and the circulation of a practice within networks of relationships. This point leads us to the literature on mobilities, which is the subject of the following section.

MOBILITIES ACROSS SOCIAL SPACE

Contemporary scholarly work on culture and society has brought focus to different forms of movement, portrayed in ways such as 'liquid life' (Bauman 2005), 'flows' (Appadurai 1996) or 'network society' (Castells 1996). Within this wide field, the so-called 'mobilities turn' has become increasingly noticeable among scholarly analyses that critically engage with cultural processes by bringing upfront questions on movement and the varying capacity to move (Canzler et al. 2008), as well as on speed potentials and their impact on social structures and spatial scales (Kaufmann 2002). One of the fundamental ideas to inform the construction of the argument of this thesis is the definition of the social on which the mobilities perspective is based. In his seminal work *Sociology Beyond Societies*, John Urry (2000) questions the utility of the traditional notion of society, which tends to be equated with the nation-state as the main unit of analysis. In turn, Urry proposes to address multilayered processes of mobility and moorings to understand contemporary social phenomena. By critically engaging with (im)mobilities, this theoretical perspective provides tools to go beyond the study of social life as bounded by discrete 'societies', and highlights a dynamic understanding of the social.

In focusing on mobilities as a located and materialised event (Sheller and Urry 2006), scholars from various disciplines have become increasingly concerned with the development of theoretical and methodological strategies to analyse the social as mobile. In recognising the difficulty of developing an encompassing theorisation, some alternative frameworks have been proposed. Canzler et al. (2008), for instance, define mobility as a 'change of condition' in focusing on how movement takes place, the variegated capacity to move (motility), and the networks through which movement occurs. In a similar fashion, Cresswell (2010) proposes to analyse three dimensions of mobility: the fact of physical displacement, the ways in which movement is enacted (practices of mobility), and the representation of such movement. Although the mobilities literature encompasses a diverse range of approaches, all have a common interest in the dynamic nature of social and cultural phenomena. I analyse processes of music making by engaging with this literature.

Looking at the social as mobile is not entirely novel as an approach (Cresswell 2010). However, the originality of this perspective rests on problematising the fact of movement at different levels, contexts and scales, such as commuting (Edensor 2011), migration (Ahmed et al. 2003) or walking (Ingold and Vergunst 2008; Lorimer 2011). One of the strengths of this perspective comes from the possibility of dealing with various processes that have been traditionally studied by different disciplines as separate phenomena (Cresswell 2010). The mobilities literature has been particularly advantageous for addressing what I call 'layers' of mobility, namely the circulation of elements during performances, the travelling of music makers, the transmission of know-how or the circulation of artefacts among communities of practitioners.

In exploring the potential of theories of practice and mobility for studying contemporary cultural phenomena, I emphasise the dynamic character of the social. There is evidence that people, objects and ideas are moving faster and further than ever before. However, it must be recognised that not everything and everyone is on the move. Some scholarly analyses have tended to celebrate flows, mobilities and fluidity across transnational spaces, while leaving friction, filtering, borders and various mechanisms that restrict movement relatively unnoticed. Several scholars of mobility have more cautiously suggested that the proliferation of flows and borders is part of the same complex phenomenon (Cresswell 2010). In enquiring into the complexities of mobility and fixity, the mobilities literature moves away from categorisations of social phenomena as bounded by a single geographical entity.

Research and writing on transnationalism and migration also provide important resources for thinking through the ways in which cultural practices move. In particular, studies of globalisation, transnationalism and the cultural practices of migrants have encouraged the critical engagement with the notion of space. One of the first attempts to form an idea of transnational spaces came from the so-called Manchester School of Anthropology, with James Clyde Mitchell (1966: 57) defining the transnational social field as a:

> […] series of inter-connecting relationships all of which in some way influence one another […] Each field is a segment of the social system which may be isolated in terms of the interdependency of the relationships and the activities of the people involved in it. Overlapping fields together, therefore, comprise the total social system […]

The notion of transnational social space has been further developed by scholars interested in migration and transnationalism as an alternative point of departure for the analysis of dynamic social processes (Levitt 1998; Glick-Schiller et al. 2006; Glick-Schiller 2010; Glick-Schiller and Meinhof 2011). For instance, Levitt and Glick-Schiller's influential article *Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society* defines transnational social spaces as '[…] a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed' (2004: 1009). In a similar fashion, Ludger Pries (2008: 2) understands social spaces 'as relatively dense and durable configurations of transnational social practices, symbols and artefacts'. Despite the prominence of nation-states for most aspects of social life, it is no longer possible to presume that social phenomena are contained in countries as if they were bounded and coherent units (Pries 2001: 6). The apparent congruence between configurations of cultural practices and the geographical/political demarcation of countries has often been presumed in the social sciences. In general terms, the literature on migration and transnationalism resists the conflation of social spaces and nation-states, offering an alternative to the study of the dynamics of cultural phenomena.

The theoretical discussion of transnational social fields has been significant for the development of this thesis, particularly in relation to the analysis of how practice-specific elements circulate between the US and Mexico. The utility of thinking through the notion of transnational social fields relies on the analysis of networks of social relationships in which specific forms of music making are experienced and shared. More specifically, my critique of methodological nationalism and conceptualisation of transnational social fields is translated into the examination of the ways in which a particular musical practice is shared among communities of practitioners in geographically dispersed locations.

Analysing cultural practices through the theoretical lenses so far introduced has important methodological consequences, including the distinction between what is there to be interpreted, and the categories that researchers use to interpret it. According to this reasoning, the category of 'ethnicity', for example, loses its value as an explanatory model, as it fails to acknowledge the ways in which people engage with practices across physical and symbolic borders. As Rogers Brubaker (2004: 9) notes, ethnicity 'is a key part of what we want to explain, not what we want to explain things *with*; it belongs to our empirical data, not to our analytical toolkit'. In a similar methodological vein, Immanuel Wallerstein (2000: 119) notes that:

> What is fundamentally wrong with the concept of society is that it reifies and therefore crystallizes social phenomena whose real significance lies not in their solidity but precisely in their fluidity and malleability. The concept "society" implies we have before us to analyse something that is a tangible reality, albeit, to be sure, a "developing" one. In fact what we have before us is primarily a rhetorical construct […]

This analytical strategy distinguishes between society as phenomenon and the analytical categories to understand it as social phenomenon. In relation to culture, Margaret Archer (1996) criticises the 'myth of cultural integration' and questions the anthropological and sociological accounts that presume that cultural systems are homogeneously shared by its members by the mere fact of being part of a given social group or inhabiting a geographical demarcation. Similarly, Ayse S. Caglar (1997: 170) argues that: 'despite its anti-essentialist intentions the notion of "culture" deployed in anthropological discourses retains earlier tendencies of "race" to "freeze" difference. It thus acts as an essentialising tool […]'. Despite the differences in the research agenda of these authors, there is a common concern regarding the conflation of social phenomena and the accounts produced of them (Wacquant 1997: 222).

It is through practices that practitioners form collectivities with different degrees of similarity and difference. Hence, it is necessary to research how ethnicities and other kinds of categorisation are invoked and produced in practice, rather than using those categories to analyse social phenomena. By highlighting processes instead of

essential categories, the literature on mobilities and transnationalism offers a perspective that considers the analysis of the social as produced in networks of relationships (Glick-Schiller and Meinhof 2011).

Music as mobile practice

As it has been shown in the previous sections of this chapter, the literature on practice suggests the importance of studying the circulation, 'careers' and trajectories of practices (Shove et al. 2012: 19). Concurrently, the literature on mobility has largely focused on how practices of mobility are enacted, represented and 'animate and co-produce spaces, places and landscapes' (Cresswell and Merriman 2011: 7). If the study of practices of mobility has emerged as a recognised field of research, why not examine the mobility of practices as well? Despite the increasing scholarly interest in practices of mobility, and the commonalities between these two theoretical orientations, the mobility of practices has been sparsely addressed in the cultural research literature. Among the few exceptions are Shove et al. (2012) on 'circuits of reproduction' and Hui (2012; 2013) on mobile practices, networks and materials. Shove et al. explore the ways in which elements, practices and the links generated among them reproduce and sustain practices through interrelated performances. Drawing on theories of social practice, Hui examines how specific elements and people move with practices by analysing the cases of patchwork quilting and bird watching. These works are insightful contributions to this emerging area in cultural research on the circulation of practice.

Although it is generally agreed in the literature of various disciplines that practices are on the move at different scales (see, for instance, Thrift et al. 2014), the mobilities of practice are yet to be developed explicitly within the field of cultural research. One of the proposed outcomes of this thesis is a contribution to filling this scholarly gap by developing its theorisation, conceptualisation and empirical knowledge base. This research specifically advances the notion of the mobility of musical practices as a way of analysing the circulation of ways of making and experiencing music across social spaces. As an empirically grounded study, this thesis looks to challenge notions of 'traditional' music as static and essentially fixed

to geographical space or groups of people, and to contribute to the contemporary debates on flows of people, objects, ideas and information. By building on theories of cultural practices and mobilities, I aim to develop a theorisation, conceptualisation and empirical knowledge base regarding the mobilities of practice based on the empirical case of music making.

In a more general vein, I seek to understand music as practice in order to confront a 'slippery' phenomenon that does not explicitly appear as object or text with a straightforward meaning. The idea of music frequently makes reference to organised sounds, notes, chords, instruments, scores, concert halls, recordings, musicians, composers or audiences. And yet, this notion leaves unanswered how these different elements are articulated to produce a whole collective phenomenon. Music, as sound, is evanescent: it happens and then passes out of existence (Hennion 2011: 289); it fades out as soon as its conditions are transcended. From this point of view, music is not exclusively constituted by sounds, artefacts or musicians, but primarily by processes whereby assorted elements are set in motion. Emphasising the processual opens wide possibilities for placing the relational character of music at the centre of the analysis. Therefore, I investigate practices through the analysis of how different elements come into 'musical' play.

By drawing on various perspectives of the social sciences and humanities, I highlight processes of music making with the objective of contributing to wider discussions on the dialectics of meaning making. On this basis, social processes of music making are understood as 'a field of embodied, materially interwoven practices centrally organized around shared practical understandings' (Schatzki et al. 2005: 12). To analyse music as mobile practice, I examine the case of *son jarocho*. My aim is to interpret this case as a socially established activity that circulates across communities of practitioners. In the following section I briefly discuss the literature on *son jarocho* to provide a background for the subsequent analysis.

SCHOLARSHIP ON *SON JAROCHO*

As indicated in the Introduction, this thesis empirically engages with a musical practice that currently circulates between Mexico and the US. Cultural dimensions of the migratory system between these two countries have been extensively studied (see, for instance, Kandel & Massey 2002; Massey et al. 2003; Fomby 2005). However, there is much to be learnt from the analysis of processes of meaning making across countries, especially in mobile contexts. The particular focus of this thesis is on *son jarocho*, a recognisable and relatively consistent way of dancing, making music and singing verses that constitutes an outstanding example of a mobile practice because of the multiple trajectories that converge in its enactment and diffusion.

Although scholarly research on *son jarocho* is still in its incipient stage, there is a considerable number of articles, books and assorted texts dealing with this music in a more-or-less direct way. These sources are scattered and there is a lack of systematisation of the multitude of materials on the subject. Some of them can be found in public documentation centres, but a large proportion of texts and multimedia resources belong to the private collections of *son jarocho* enthusiasts. Yet, there have been initial efforts to develop catalogues of the assorted materials on the subject.[6] Academic works that deal with this music have primarily come from the fields of ethnomusicology, history and anthropology. The doctoral dissertation of Daniel E. Sheehy (1979: xii-xiii) is a relevant example of early ethnomusicological research on *son jarocho*. Throughout this work, Sheehy describes its stylistic characteristics and repertoire, and in the last chapter he links this music to changes in ‘socio-economic context’ and:

> [...] the eclipse of the traditional repertory, and standardization of content among the many consequences of rapid urbanization, the commercialization of

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[6] In that respect, the 'Centro de Documentación del Son Jarocho' (Centre for the Documentation of *Son Jarocho*) and Rafael Figueroa Hernández have separately engaged in the development of a provisional catalogue of bibliographic and multi-media materials related to *son jarocho*. See Centro de Documentación (2014) and CómoSuena (2014).

> the son, the professionalization of the traditional musician, the spread of the electronic media, and the growth of the tourist industry.

This brief chapter constitutes an important testimony to the rapid social changes that have propelled the mobilities of this practice. There is a number of works that also deal with the stylistic and historical features of *son jarocho* (see, for instance, Baqueiro Foster 1942; Loza 1982; Aguirre Tinoco 1983; Baudot and Méndez 1987; Delgado Calderón 1995; 1996; 1997; 2004). However, the most influential texts from a broad social sciences perspective are to be found in the works of Antonio García de León (1996; 2002; 2009; 2011), whose historical scholarship on *son jarocho* has become a reference point for the study of this music. Furthermore, these works reflect an enthusiasm that has its background in García de León's activities as a *son jarocho* practitioner. During the 1970s, he vigorously campaigned for the valorisation and preservation of this music along with a group of enthusiasts who undertook various actions to keep this way of making music 'alive'. The revival of this practice, as well as its historical unfolding, is further explored in Chapter 3, which partly draws on García de León's scholarship. Also relevant to this thesis are the texts written by Ricardo Pérez Montfort (1999; 2007; Ávila et al. 2011) on southeast Mexico and its cultural life.

In recent decades, scholarly work on *son jarocho* has seen a modest yet consistent development. Rafael Figueroa Hernández (2007) has published an accessible introduction to the basic elements of this music that has been fairly popular among *son jarocho* musicians. Andrés Barahona Lodoño (1996; 2013) has also published a number of texts on the history of the style and repertoire of this music. Ishtar Cardona (2006; 2011) has analysed the role of 'cultural actors' and their relationships with the market and the nation-state. In the US, *son jarocho* has attracted the attention of some scholars, probably owing to the fact that it has become culturally visible, particularly in California. A pertinent example comes from the discussion that Steven Loza (1992: 192) develops regarding the politics of identity in Los Angeles. In this article, Loza examines the 'stylistic adaptation' of *son jarocho* and the 'development and maintenance of syncretic musical forms' by Chicano musicians.

Overall, the literature on *son jarocho* produced in either Spanish or English has tended to address this way of making music as a ‘Mexican musical genre’. My contention is that this presumption leaves unquestioned what is ‘Mexican’ about it, how it became a ‘genre’, how the presumed ‘Mexicanness’ is invoked by its practitioners and, more generally, how these meanings intersect with the wider dialectics of social and cultural continuity and change. Consequently, in this thesis I examine how these meanings are constructed in practice, and argue that *son jarocho* is currently shared, appropriated and re-enacted within networks of relationships that extend to and across many locations in Mexico and the US.

Son jarocho has been practised in the region of Sotavento in southeast Mexico for about two centuries (García de León 2002). However, this practice is currently informed and re-created by ways of doing that go well beyond that single region. This ethnography is an account of how meanings are created and negotiated in those processes of mobility. In that regard, it is novel in terms of approach, since there are currently no studies that specifically undertake the analysis of the mobility of cultural practices as such. It is also original in cultural analytical terms in examining *son jarocho* in detail for the first time within the field of cultural research. Instead of looking at the ‘cultural effects’ of migration in the US or Mexico, this study examines various forms of circulation, diffusion and transmission in relation to the mobility of practice across geographically dispersed locations.

The diffusion of a tradition

This music is distinct from other folkloric forms of music of Mexico in a number of ways. The instruments played are generically called *jaranas*, a term that encompasses a family of plucked instruments with five double strings derived from the baroque guitar (see Arboleyda Castro 2004; Pareyon 2007: 532). During performances, groups of *jaranas* are accompanied by other instruments such as the harp, violin, *marimbol* (a wood box with a series of metal strips that are plucked to play bass-lines), tambourine and *quijada* (the jawbone of a donkey or horse used as percussion). The singing technique is usually high-pitched and has distinct melodic ‘turns’. The repertoire is mostly integrated with traditional songs that belong to the

public domain. Therefore, performances rely on the improvisation and reinterpretation of several themes that constitute a canon, rather than the creation of new compositions. These pieces have a particular lyrical structure and a repetitive harmonic sequence. Although melodies and chords are relatively fixed, musicians have plenty of opportunities to develop different melodic phrases and to improvise verses. The rhythmic section is possibly the most stable element, along with certain conventions relating to the tempo and the rhythmic 'feel' required of each song. Music, dance and poetry form an organic unity to the extent that conventions on how to play songs are also dependent on dancing sequences and the order of verses. The typical context for playing this music is, as noted, the *fandango*, a popular festivity that interlaces music, dance and poetry.

It is hard to think about Sotavento without making reference to this music. Contemporary literature from development studies (Léonard and Velázquez 2000) and anthropology (Aguirre Beltrán 1992; Rodríguez and Tallet 2009) mention the relevance of music making in the everyday life of the people of Sotavento. There is also a range of texts from as early as the eighteenth and nineteenth century that depicts the relevance of music making in the everyday lives of the inhabitants of Sotavento, the *jarochos*. One example is an article written in 1868 by the novelist Thomas Mayne Reid, who worked as a correspondent in Mexico for a New York-based newspaper during the Mexican-American War (Noverr 2004: 76). In *Jarocho Life*, Mayne Reid (1868) portrays the quotidian life of the peasants of Sotavento, recalling their 'splendid costumes', the swords with which men were regularly armed and their impressive horses. He also describes how a typical *jarocho* takes 'his *jarana* (a sort of banjo-guitar) and play[s] pretty tunes upon it, with words perhaps improvised: for the Jarocho is a sort of modern troubadour and poet' (1868: 683). Close to the end of the article, he gives an account of *fandango*, the festivity in which 'he [the *jarocho*] finds distraction at night in the dance: for he is a noted disciple of Terpsichore' (in reference to the Greek muse of lyric poetry and dance; 1868: 686).

Various authors have suggested that this musical practice has played a major role in the affirmation of local identities in Sotavento (Camastra 2006; Cardona 2006, 2011; Kohl 2007). These forms of belonging have been constructed in relation to narratives

of a tradition that it is claimed needs to be valued and preserved. Paradoxically, the meanings associated with the preservation and permanence of a cultural tradition have been crucial to their mobilities, as the diffusion of the practice has been considered essential in order to keep it 'alive'. Currently, *son jarocho* is reproduced, appropriated and re-enacted in locations as dissimilar as Mexico City, Xalapa, Veracruz, Ciudad Juarez, San Diego, Los Angeles, New York and Chicago. Two examples of this appropriation are the *Fandango Fronterizo*, which is a gathering of *son jarocho* musicians at the Tijuana and San Diego border that has been celebrated annually since 2008. A second example is the *Encuentro de Jaraneros de California* in Los Angeles and the *Encuentro de Jaraneros de Tlacotalpan*, festivals celebrated respectively in the United States and Mexico. Despite these emergent networks of relationships that extend across multiple locations, the literature on *son jarocho* has described it principally as a musical genre embedded in a local context either in Mexico (Montfort 1992; Kohl 2007; Montfort 2010; Vega Deloya 2011) or the United States (Loza 1992; Viesca 2004). *Son jarocho* today, though, is not exclusively associated with local, bounded and coherent communities from southeast Mexico, but by numerous groups of people in different localities.

Practitioners in Mexico and the US have used *son jarocho* to elaborate discourses of authenticity and preservation of a musical heritage. The peculiarity of this musical practice (and, in that sense, it differs from other musical forms practised in and across Mexico and the US) resides in the manner that some practitioners explicitly describe as a grassroots movement of practitioners known as '*Movimiento Jaranero'* (Movement of *Jarana* players). Although the so-called 'movement' does not have explicit political connotations or agenda, its aim is to foster this musical practice in the context of social transformation that presumably threatens its existence (such as economic structural adjustments, mass migration, or globalisation). Still, this practice is currently sustained, informed and reshaped by transnational/translocal linkages. Studying a mobile practice in such a context constitutes a challenge in terms of methodological choices–this is the subject of the next section.

ENGAGING WITH PRACTICE AND MOBILITY

So far, I have argued that there is much to be learnt from analysing musical phenomena from a practice theory perspective. I have also suggested that such an analytical framework requires addressing how practices circulate across different locations. In this regard, there is an increasing interest in the relationships between transnationalism and cultural production. More specifically, the study of music production and consumption as a transnational phenomenon has experienced growth in recent years (see, for instance, Baily 2006; Grossman and O'Brien 2006; Azcona 2008; Diaz-Sanchez 2010; Toynbee and Dueck 2011). Such investigations constitute very important contributions to the understanding of the 'social' aspects of music. However, they tend to overlook the intricacies of the musical 'matter'. In connection with this point, DeNora (2004: 37) argues that:

> […] a weakness of sociology has been its failure to deal with music's specifically musical materials, and here textual interpretation and analysis can help to draw sociological studies on to more firmly musical terrain.

Considering the relevance of linking musical materials (such as instruments, chords, tunings, rhythms or musical jargon) to social processes, it is proposed to tackle the analysis of such linkages by looking at practices at 'different levels of zoom' (Fitzgerald 2006). In pragmatic terms, that 'zooming' entails the consideration of the fine details through which musical performances are produced, as well as the more general circumstances of these enactments.

A way of conceiving the relationship between 'musical matters' and cultural processes is through the notion of 'affordance' (Gibson 1986). Affordance refers to a resource or capacity that offers opportunities for acting in specific ways: a guitar affords 'playability', just as food commonly affords 'edibility' (Colman 2003: 16). The production of musical performances and their circumstances is enabled or 'scripted' by the affordances of the multitude of elements that constitute a practice. For DeNora, music affords 'modes of being and doing' (2003: 170) because of the relationships established between practitioners and assorted elements in action. This

thesis explores how assorted practice-specific elements, such as musical instruments or strings, afford musical performances. Yet, the examination of elements and their musical context is not an end in itself: this strategy is used as an entry point for the interpretation of how musical practices afford 'mobility'. It is in this respect that the techniques that I have used for collecting evidence of such phenomena required engagement with mobile methods.

The study of mobility demands certain methodological flexibility. Bücher et al. (2010) make evident the complexity of mobilities as phenomena and point to the necessity of reflexively developing methodological designs that suit such complex questions. Mobile methods aim to explore multiple mobile practices, and their materialities and relation to place and space by '"observing" people's movement' (Bücher et al. 2010: 8) and moving along with the participants. Paola Jirón, for example, suggests that the use of 'flexible and dynamic methods as opposed to strict adherence to predefined tools' is the best alternative for understanding experiences of mobility (Jirón 2010: 37). In this regard, mobile methods constitute a source of methodological innovation. They open fertile possibilities for diversifying the empirical engagement with mobile and immobile phenomena. However, as Merriman (2013: 168) warns, sometimes the enthusiasm for new methods may give the impression that the old, conventional methods have 'failed', or that they are no longer useful. The innovative character of this mobile ethnography lies on reconsidering and reworking existing methods that suit the challenges of capturing and being captured by multiple forms of circulation and flow. The methodological choices that informed the design of this study are examined in the next section.

Methodological choices

This research project has been designed as ethnographic because of the focus of this methodological approach on the creation and negotiation of meanings as processes that structure social life. Another advantage of this method is that conventional ethnographic practice usually involves the movement of a researcher to a remote location. This form of displacement – the act of removing oneself from one place and becoming a practitioner of ethnography in another – has significant consequences. In

designing the 'architecture' of my ethnographic work, I looked to create conditions that would accentuate such a form of displacement. In this research project, that form of mobility had to be 'radicalised'.

Traditional ethnographic perspectives would not suit the analysis of mobile practices across networks of relationships that stretch out across different physical and symbolic borders. Classical ethnography prescribes the study of a single 'society' and 'their entire culture and social life' for a prolonged period (Evans-Pitchard 1951, cited in Hannerz 2003: 202). As has been previously discussed in this chapter, classical social thought has tended to depict societies as bounded and autonomous systems by conflating the ideas of culture and society. Nevertheless, current flows of goods, people, practices, ideas and ways of doing things across different networks make it increasingly difficult to think about autonomous societies that can be explored without taking into account their interdependence (Urry 2000; Hannerz 2003). I have also argued earlier that the way in which the term 'society' is conceptualised entails a particular understanding of the social. Furthermore, this understanding is heavily loaded with ontological, epistemological and methodological positions, regardless of the awareness or ignorance that one as a researcher has on the matter. In other words, pre-existing stances on the social frame what counts as socio-cultural phenomena, what can be known as socio-cultural phenomena, and how empirical research is to be conducted. As Archer (1995: 17) notes:

> […] the social ontology endorsed does play a powerful regulatory role vis-a-vis the explanatory methodology for the basic reason that it contextualizes social reality in certain terms, thus identifying what is there to be explained and also ruling out explanations […]

Because of the heavy burden of these positions, conducting ethnography in several locations has important implications for one's presumptions regarding what culture is, and how those ways of being fluctuate in space-time. My choice, then, was not to study an 'entire culture and social life', but to follow a single practice by becoming a *son jarocho* apprentice. To address the phenomenon within a wider perspective, I assumed that a practice is what practitioners consider and recognise as such (Shove

et al. 2012: 121) - that is to say, what is recognised by its practitioners as a coherent set of ‘doings’. By endorsing an understanding of the social as multilayered processes of mobility and immobility, this investigation demanded a radicalisation of the researcher’s journeying through communities of practitioners. I, therefore, focused on various locations interconnected by networks of relationships. While conventional ethnographic research tends to examine a specific location, I have designed this research with the aim of analysing ‘the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space’ (Marcus 1998: 96). The ethnography of the mobilities of a practice would necessarily engage with a number of geographical locations, which brought the question of how ‘thick and thin’ I should treat each location. As Marcus (2011: 10) suggests, ‘thick and thin is as much a theoretical question as a matter of fieldwork pragmatics’.

The research field is not just ‘out there’ waiting to be studied, but is an intellectual construction temporally and spatially framed by the researcher (Scheffer 2007). Inspired by the literature on multi-site ethnography, I decided to experience the process of becoming a practitioner instead of following specific people, things, metaphors, stories, biographies or conflicts (Marcus 1998: 89-95). Of course, cultural practices involve all the latter. Yet, my participation has been framed as a pursuit of the points where the practice of *son jarocho* is enacted. Because I looked to ‘deeply hang-out’ with *son jarocho* practitioners in various locations in Mexico and the US, my site of enquiry was then delineated by assorted events, namely festivities, concerts, casual performances and workshops in which people learn the basics of the practice.

This strategy has given me access to the shared and recurrent ways of acting and knowing that make it possible jointly to ‘do things’. It was through immersion into a cultural practice that I have realised that my research is not so much about what culture is, but about how it is *done* and what it *does*. One of the most important outcomes of this strategy has been the emphasis on the minute details through which the practice is enacted: gestures, connections between a series of bodily movements, explicit and non-explicit understandings, and many other elements that are only captured with one’s embodied immersion in the practice. Understanding through

corporeal experience has been put into effect by using what DeNora (2014: xx) calls 'high-resolution methods of investigation'. While this study can be considered 'thin' in terms of a long-term involvement in a specific location, its 'thickness' has been achieved through the careful examination of a single practice and its multiple forms of mobility and circulation, namely the recurrent ways of doing that take place during performances, the transmission of know-how, and the geographical displacement of artefacts and people. Overall, this way of conducting fieldwork as a form of apprenticeship is a novel contribution to emergent mobile methods.

The conceptual framework and methodological strategy that I have followed may have certain resonances with ethnomethodological and phenomenological approaches (see, for instance, Sudnow 2001; Hester and Francis 2004). However, I have not (consciously) embraced either of these perspectives for two main reasons. First, my research is based on the assumption that narratives, discourses and everyday conversations are practices in themselves, and are entangled with a myriad of other practices. I am primarily interested in how these communicative processes unfold - for instance, through the coding and decoding involved in the learning of chord progressions or dance steps. However, in the context of this research thesis I do not privilege discourse over other facets of the making of culture. Contrary to theories that explain cultural phenomena in terms of the symbolic meaning located in people's minds, I subscribe to theories of practice that emphasise collective ways of doing. While my approach resembles that of ethnomethodology, there is a tendency in that perspective to presume that social interaction 'is overwhelmingly conducted through language. It is in and through language that most of the actions [that] we perform are done' (Hester and Francis 2004: 7-8) - hence the importance of conversation (see, for instance, Sacks 1992; Silverman 1998). Conversely, the experiences that I had in the field (and more generally, those as a musician) suggest that conversation is one facet of the rich interactional patterns that comprise practices. Second, the emphasis that I put on embodiment and bodily gestures may suggest a phenomenological approach. But whenever I tried to 'think' my topic phenomenologically, the *son jarocho* practitioner appeared rather solitary (Ossman 2013: 126) and stripped of the companionship that characterises this way of making music. My thesis, then, looks to demonstrate that cultural practices are primarily

collective, shared phenomena.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have reviewed key aspects of theories of practice that have informed this thesis. Such theoretical orientation provides analytical tools for a nuanced understanding of embodied, recurrent ways of doing. This approach also situates practice as a central aspect of social life. The concept of 'practical sense' has been particularly useful for 'thinking the social' in terms of practices. This Bourdieusian concept refers to the practitioner's capacity to perceive and understand sequences of instances. I have argued that the analysis of this tacit understanding is an entry point for the mechanisms of the enactment of practices. Equally useful have been the theoretical concepts and analytical strategies advanced by Schatzki (1996), Shove et al. (2012) and DeNora (2004). The distinction between practice-as-performance and practice-as-entity is particularly relevant as it makes possible analysis of the reciprocal relationship between the enactment of practices and their trajectories as recognisable entities.

I have also provided an outline of the ideas on mobility and transnationalism on which this thesis builds. Contemporary scholarly debates are becoming increasingly concerned with flows, networks and movements. Within this field of enquiry, the literature on mobility and transnational social spaces is significant for examining various ways of making and experiencing music across networks of relationships. Despite the emerging interest in practices and mobilities, the specific study of mobilities of practice has been virtually absent in previous scholarly work. Consequently, this thesis aims to contribute to correcting this neglect by theorising and conceptualising this area of cultural research through the analysis of the practice of *son jarocho*. The scholarly analyses that specifically deal with this musical tradition also have significant omissions. There is, however, a growing number of researchers interested in it. During my fieldwork I met half a dozen researchers who were also investigating aspects of this music – although none of them is explicitly dealing with the mobilities of this practice. *Son jarocho* might become better

documented as it grows in popularity.

Overall, theories of practice and mobility offer analytical tools that are ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically loaded. Consequently, the methodological choices that underpin this thesis draw on these and other theoretical approaches. In pragmatic terms, my ethnographic fieldwork followed a practice in multiple locations in Mexico and the US. By becoming an apprentice who moved across groups of practitioners, I gradually attained the embodied dispositions of this practice. This type of participation had a strong effect on me as a researcher because it turned ordinary events (such as rehearsing, casual playing or talking about music) into extraordinary research situations. Closely related to this experience is Michael Grenfell's (2010) suggestion that Bourdieusian concepts '*make the world strange* and bring the mundane into analytical discourse' (2010: 26, emphasis in original). I would extend this assertion to the theoretical perspectives presented in this chapter.

To conclude, I would mention that there is more to this thesis than engagement with the literature on theories of practice and mobilities. In his discussion of ethnographic validity, Roger Sanjek (1990) recalls the maxim that the jazz trumpeter Miles Davis used to relate to his band members: 'You need to know your horn, know the chords, know all the tunes. Then you forget about all that, and just play' (1990: 411). Sanjek makes this point to highlight the fact that knowing the literature, understanding the concepts and being acquainted with the fieldwork methods are fundamental to the practice of ethnography or of any other form of empirical research. However, Sanjek continues, 'they do not produce ethnography. Like jazz, ethnography requires the person who improvises the performance, who not only knows how to do it but does it' (1990: 411). I have produced this thesis through my personal improvisation, both as an apprentice of the craft of cultural research and *son jarocho*. The following chapters reflect such improvisation as they provide an account of the mobilities of a practice. The next specifically analyses *fandango*, a popular celebration in which the synchronised articulation of elements works to facilitate *son jarocho* making 'on the move'.

Chapter 2: Practising *son jarocho*

> They did not have hindrance to walk two or three leagues with the sole purpose of going to a *fandango*. The excuses to 'fandanguear' [taking part in the event] were always multiple, and as they normally celebrated it on Saturdays and finished with the first rays of the sun, extenuated because of the effort and passion they put into it, and also because of the abundant alcoholic drinks, the church complained that this was the reason, tired as they were, of not fulfilling their Sunday obligation. (López 1992: 70, my translation)

SPATIO-TEMPORAL ARRANGEMENTS AROUND THE *TARIMA*

In the previous two chapters I have referred to *son jarocho* as a form of music making, although it would be more accurate to frame it as a spatio-temporal set of actions; namely, dancing, singing verses and playing specific musical instruments. When practitioners refer to *son jarocho* as music, they are in fact alluding to an organic understanding of music making that goes beyond the mere production of organised sounds. Dance, verse and instrument playing are articulated at the traditional celebration of the region of Sotavento called *fandango*.[7] The term *fandango* has been widely used in the Americas and the Iberian Peninsula since colonial times to designate various types of dance and music. In this thesis it refers to the popular celebration in which *son jarocho* is practised. This term has been traced to the 18th century in archives of the Spanish Inquisition that portray a *mulato* (a man of mixed ancestry) who sang verses, depicting him as 'very *fandanguero*' (Pérez Montfort 2003: 39, my translation; see also Delgado Calderón 2004). The adjective *fandanguero* was used in the context of an accusation of invoking demons

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[7] In certain regions of Sotavento the words 'huapango' and 'fandango' are used interchangeably. *Huapango* apparently comes from the Nahuatl 'cuauhpanco', which literally means 'on top of wood', although it also designates a musical genre mostly played in the Huasteca region. In the interest of clarity, I will only make use of the word *fandango* (see Pareyon 2007).

through music and dance. The demonization of *fandango* has not completely disappeared, as its meanings may sometimes oscillate between those of the sacred and the profane (García de León 2009). I suggest that the ritualistic attitude towards this way of making music takes the form of a 'collective belief in the game' (Bourdieu 1995: 230).

This chapter concentrates on the circulation of elements that takes place as performances unfold. In the following sections I address *fandango* as a celebration in which the manipulation of artefacts produces various forms of embodied and collective engagement. My aim is to illustrate how these forms of enacting a cultural practice produce specific spatial and temporal arrangements, and I focus on the ways in which they become productive contexts (Thrift 1996: 41-43) that stem from a continuous circulation during performances. To give an account of these processes it is necessary to examine how musicians, dancers, instruments, verses, dance steps and other instances are in motion during performances. But first I will discuss the cultural significance of the *tarima*, an artefact that materialises and articulates collective action at *fandangos*.

The heartbeat of *fandango*

The seamless integration of dance, instrument playing and verses that takes place at *fandango* acquires its full collective meaning by being enacted in relation to a stomp-box called the *tarima*. The *tarima* is a platform made of several wooden planks that together form a large box on which practitioners dance. It rests on its sides, which have holes that enhance the resonance produced when dancers stomp on it with hard-soled shoes (see figure 4). Despite resembling a rustic stage, the *tarima* is not a surface used by entertainers to become visible and thereby differentiated from the audience; it is, more than anything else, a percussive instrument that rhythmically structures the performance. Acoustically, it is built with specific material characteristics in mind: its top must be firm and resistant as it will be hit simultaneously with the hard-soled shoes of at least six dancers. At the same time, it must be flexible enough to cushion the strikes and to resonate like a deep stomp-box. *Tarimas* made of oak tend to be hard and sturdy, mahogany offers a good balance

between resonance and solidity (although it can be expensive), and pine is also a good material, but is only available in certain places. The physical qualities of the *tarima* have significance for the way in which *fandango* unfolds and for the embodied/mental schemata of dancers and musicians.

Figure 4: *Tarima* and dancers. Author's photograph.

The relevance of the *tarima* can hardly be exaggerated, as it constitutes the heartbeat of *fandango*. It is by far the biggest instrument in the performance and its commanding resonance marks the beat. *Llevar el golpe* (to carry the beat) is the duty of dancers, which refers to the ability to sustain a steady pulse and to articulate distinct rhythms for each theme. Practitioners appreciate it when dancers highlight the differences of every piece of the repertoire and bring rhythmic variety by dancing

each *son*[8] with a distinct *cadencia.*[9] For this reason, skilled dancers pay attention to the volume and timbre of the *tarima* on which they are dancing in order to regulate their steps as the performance unfolds. Dancers do not only display their skills through the elegance of their movements, but primarily on their competency as rhythm makers, as percussionists. For instance, when the performance is building momentum there are peaks in which dancers *aprietan* (tighten it up) by stomping more effusively, inducing the musicians gathered around them to play with even more intensity. It is very emotive when everyone around the *tarima* moves at the same pulse and is completely focused on the same rhythmic ‘feel’. Practitioners commonly describe this effect as playing *amarrado* (tight, knotted), which is a way of saying that participants and instruments hang together and resonate around the same *tarima*. Here Marco,[10] a practitioner who has been making *son jarocho* in Sotavento for decades, explains the significance of *tarima* in the context of *fandango*:

> This celebration [*fandango*] is something close to a ritual; it is a space. Look, it is an incredible thing when you go to a *ranchería* [a small rural settlement] and people take the *tarima*, either from the place in which the celebration happens, or from a different place. Some carry the *tarima* and say ‘hey, Don Fulanito,[11] where are we placing the *tarima*?’. And Don Fulanito says ‘eh… let’s place it there’. And that place, that little area, becomes a sacred place, because wherever you place that thing… I’m going to say it in an ‘ugly’ way, because if you look at the *tarima* without this understanding, it is just a mouldy piece of wood, isn’t it? But wherever we place that piece of wood, right there, that very place becomes a magical thing, because around that simple piece of wood everything happens. Romantic relationships come! From there comes the possibility for me to sing the verse I learnt! The possibility that I meet other

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[8] *Son* (plural *sones*) in this context refers to a tune that is part of the traditional *son jarocho* repertoire. More broadly, the term refers to various forms of dance and music developed in various regions in Latin America since colonial times (see Pareyon 2007: 978-979).

[9] See footnote 1, Introduction.

[10] To maintain the anonymity of the practitioners, all real names throughout the thesis have been replaced with aliases.

[11] 'Fulanito' or 'fulano' is a placeholder name commonly used in Mexico, and it might be similar to the use of 'bloke' or 'mate' in Australia.

> people! That I meet with that dear friend I haven't seen in a long time! The possibility of meeting that great *jaranero* and playing beside him! That thing, all the respect, all the mysticism that happens around that piece of wood, happens only because everyone keeps a ritualistic attitude. Do you see?[12]

Regardless of austerity or opulence, it would be unthinkable to have a *fandango* without a *tarima*; its presence is a basic condition for the celebration to take place. The collective achievement of a 'ritualistic attitude', of a 'practical belief' (Bourdieu 1990: 68) in the activities that take place, is enacted around this artefact. Its significance in the context of *fandango* reveals how materials enable and constrain the unfolding of events and, more generally, how their materiality is constituent of the social (Schatzki 2010a: 123). An example of the relevance of the *tarima* comes from a *fandango* that I attended in San Diego, California. We were not celebrating anything in particular and simply decided to meet up for the mere interest of playing and dancing together. Helena, a friendly *jaranera*[13] who has been very active at the *son jarocho* scene of California, picked me up in East Los Angeles and we headed south. A few hours later we arrived in Balboa Park in San Diego and started walking around, looking for the *fandango*. The Facebook invitation indicated that we were meeting 'by the fountain', but we soon realised that it was going to be a bit complicated to find the *fandango* as there were several fountains in the park.

We spent some time watching people walking their dogs, and kids eating ice cream, until we saw a girl with a *jarana* hanging from her right shoulder. She was also looking for the *fandango* and had already spent half an hour looking for familiar faces. We saw a small group of people gathered by one of the fountains and by sunset we formed a group of around twenty people switching between English and Spanish, tuning instruments and eating snacks. One hour later, we all had our instruments in tune, avoided switching languages (because of linguistic fatigue) and had already eaten enough snacks. I was holding my instrument with impatience,

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[12] Excerpt from the transcript of an interview conducted with an anonymous practitioner in Xalapa, Mexico, April 8, 2013. Author's translation.

[13] The *jarana* is an instrument with five double strings derived from the baroque guitar (see Pareyon 2007: 532). *Jaranero(a)* refers to a person who plays the *jarana*.

wondering when we were going to get started. Surprisingly, nobody dared to start playing and there was no need to ask why: the person bringing the *tarima* had not arrived yet; thus, playing without it would be like attempting to start a soccer game without a ball. Two young men finally arrived carrying the *tarima*, apologising for being late and recounting the mechanical problems that they had with their truck.

The spatial arrangements around the *tarima* are meaningful because this artefact is the epicentre action. It is commonly understood that the hosts of the *fandango*, locals and the most knowledgeable musicians stand closer to the *tarima* because they can be clearly heard by dancers, who in turn develop the groove with their stomping. Traditionally, it is the *requintero*[14] (a person who plays the *requinto*,[15] also called *guitarra de son*) who stands close to the edge of the *tarima* and leads the *fandango* by deciding what *sones* from the traditional repertoire are going to be played, as well as their sequence, tempo, key, mode and *cadencia*. Being physically positioned close to the *tarima* is crucial to influencing dancers' stomping and, most importantly, to deciding when to begin and finish a *son*. The spatial order maintained around the *tarima* is not explicit because it is presumed by practitioners and, in the case of newcomers like me, it suffices to imitate what the most experienced do. The mechanisms of these tacit understandings can be better appreciated by analysing the way in which *fandango* unfolds.

A FESTIVITY UNFOLDING

I attended a *fandango* in Chacalapa, a rural town in southern Veracruz. The celebrations at this particular location are famous among *jaraneros* to the extent that conversations about them acquire a mythical character. Prior to that event, I spent a few weeks hanging out with *jaraneros* of this region, particularly around Cosoleacaque, Chinameca and Chacalapa. These towns have been historically

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[14] Practitioners occasionally recall the phrase *'requintero manda'* (*requintero* commands) to make explicit that *fandango* should be guided by a person who plays that instrument.
[15] *Requinto* or *guitarra de son* is a four-string, melodic instrument played with a large plectrum.

connected by trade, roads and people who go back and forth to shop, visit relatives or catch buses to larger cities. I mostly travelled around by bus, taxi and privately owned vans that function as public transport. In these trips I visited groups of young *jaraneros* who organise *son jarocho* workshops and occasionally gather in the afternoons to play casually when the sun lowers and the heat recedes. My expectation regarding the *fandango* in Chacalapa was growing as the young *jaraneros* reiterated how these events were the 'real thing', just like 'those made many years ago, when the old *jaraneros* were younger'.

One afternoon I was travelling by taxi from Chinameca to Chacalapa with José, a young *jaranero* with whom I was going to the *fandango*.[16] José had kindly offered to host me that night and we were making a quick stop at his house before heading to the celebration. Inside the house there was a large room divided into three sections; the kitchen was at my right hand side, where José's mother and her neighbour were having a lively conversation while washing dishes. After greetings and introductions I went to the opposite side of the room to drop my backpack. The left end of the room was a bit darker but I could notice a hammock bouncing slowly. A young man said 'hi' and then started playing chords with a small *jarana*. I introduced myself and sat down on a couch nearby.

> 'Nice *jarana*', I said.
> 'My father made it, I've been struggling to get it in tune the whole afternoon', he replied and then tried a few chords as if testing the tuning, slowly strumming the strings absentmindedly without any regular rhythm.

He continuously stared at a fixed point on the ceiling and never turned his head to the *jarana* or to me; I then realised that he was blind. He twisted one of the wooden tuning keys because it did not sound quite right yet. He tested it again, but this time he strummed chords in a steady manner, as if playing a *son*. 'That sounds like "El

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[16] The following descriptions are based on fieldnotes of a *fandango* in Chacalapa, Mexico, March 30, 2013.

Pájaro Cú"‘,[17] I thought. How did I recognise that *son*? Habits grow quickly in the field and I was attaining the capacity to recognise musical pieces, not by their melody, but by their rhythm, phrasing and chord progression. The smell of beans and fried pork filled the entire room.

> ‘My mum says dinner is ready’, José said, and when I turned to the kitchen I saw his mother walking towards the door.
> ‘Have a good time, guys’, she said in a rush. Then she turned to me: ‘Please make yourself at home’.

José and I sat and ate silently, it was already dark and we were listening to the crickets and the chords of ‘El Pájaro Cú’ that José’s brother was distractedly playing. Silence can be uncomfortable when one is a visitor in an unknown environment, but at that moment starting a conversation felt unnecessary, as there were plenty of surrounding sounds already. Perhaps we were getting prepared for being imbued with the solemn attitude of *fandango*.

> ‘I’ll do the dishes’, I said as we were finishing eating.
> ‘No, buddy, you are having a shower. Are you going to the *fandango* looking like a tourist?’

I laughed and then realised that he was right: sandals, shorts, t-shirt, backpack and camera would certainly not help me to blend in; but then I also noticed that José spoke those words with a subtle, commanding tone, as if letting me know that I should take the occasion a little more seriously. By the time we were leaving his house, José was wearing shiny, sturdy shoes and a nice white shirt. I did my best with tennis shoes and a wrinkled shirt from my backpack. The occasion required setting up certain conditions, such as dressing a little better than usual. This gesture is not a rule, but the establishment of certain circumstances connecting us with the ritualistic character of *fandango*.

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[17] 'El Pájaro Cú' is a tune of the traditional *son jarocho* repertoire. Its verses usually portray rural landscapes and tell stories about birds acting as love messengers.

After a brief walk on Chacalapa's main road we turned onto a dirt road. From a distance I could see parked cars on both sides and dozens of chairs carefully arranged in rows, facing two big light reflectors that pointed towards a large *tarima* right in the centre of the road. On one side there was a Catholic shrine decorated with colourful fabric and flowers. Some people were already there, most of them standing, talking, laughing, shaking hands, and effusively greeting old friends. By the number of chairs I could tell that they were anticipating many more people as the night progressed. 'Now you'll see what['s] a good one, the best *fandangos* are in Chacalapa', said José with a wide smile. Most of the attendees seemed to know each other and held animated conversations. Some men were gathered around the *tarima*, right on the opposite side of where the chairs were arranged. As they started to tune their *jaranas*, José turned to me and said 'don't stand there just watching, let's tune'. It is expected that people who come from other regions to join the *fandango* adjust their playing to the local style; tuning one's instrument is a good example of this practice. I took my *jarana* and asked for the note used as reference to tune. When tuning a *jarana*, one normally starts with the upper string and continues to tune the rest, taking that string as a reference point. I knew that the note taken as reference should be G, but could not be more wrong that night: I later understood that tuning *son jarocho* instruments using equal temperament[18] with a reference of A as 440 Hertz is rare. In the 20th century, the frequency of 440 Hertz became the tuning standard for the musical note A above the middle C; that is the reference that contemporary musicians use to tune most instruments. However, the tuning practices of *son jarocho* usually differ from that 'canon' because there is a continuity of archaic tunings based on those of renaissance and baroque music (García de León 2002). As will be analysed in Chapter 3, tuning practices are not simply a stylistic choice, but an expression of belonging to a tradition.

After tuning I noticed that the strings were more tense than usual; that night the note used as reference was almost one tone higher than a tempered G. Using higher tones to tune these instruments increases the tension of the strings, projecting a slightly

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[18] The twelve-tone equal temperament is a system of tuning that divides the octave into 12 equal parts (see Barbour 2004).

brighter and louder sound. However, the more tense the strings, the harder it is to play them. People in Chacalapa are proud of their musicians, dancers and challenging *fandangos*. That night the local and experienced musicians who set the tuning did not make it easy for others, and it was expected that everyone submit to those dispositions by approaching the *tarima* with one's instrument and asking for the tone of reference. Tuning around the *tarima*, like many other routines, is an unspoken activity that rests on implicit understandings. To become a practitioner not only implies following such conventions, but to presume them as inherent elements of the practice.

Fandangos have routines and rules that allow practitioners to anticipate a series of interconnected events. Yet, these events stand in stark contrast to the predictive evolution of staged musical performances, as there is no previous rehearsal. In other words, there is a series of conventions that allows practitioners to perform jointly, but nobody knows the exact way in which the events will unfold. One of the most immediate problems encountered at *fandangos* is the issue of starting together. How can practitioners engage in collective action if there is no previous rehearsal in which a starting point is agreed? The drummer of a rock band can count until four by hitting their drumsticks to make sure that everyone starts at the same time. Members of a string quartet are attentive to the subtle sign (a slight nodding and breathing gesture) that precedes the beginning of a piece. Yet, these are instances of well-rehearsed groups in which clear starting points are marked. In the case of *fandangos*, the beginning of a *son* is given by a call for participation that in the practitioner's jargon is named *declaración* (to declare or state). A melody played by a single instrument (*guitarra de son*) announces the piece to be played and establishes the tempo, key and rhythmic 'feel'.

That night in Chacalapa, José, a dozen other musicians and I were standing around the *tarima*, chatting, making jokes, laughing, checking the tuning of our instruments and waiting for something to happen. Away from the *tarima* people talked loudly, standing scattered in small groups along the dirt road. Kids were running around playing a game of chasing each other, a baby was crying in the arms of a mother, dogs were barking in the distance and there was an incessant buzz of crickets. In the

middle of all that noise emerged a single melody, executed as loudly as possible (as much as an acoustic, nylon-stringed instrument allows) and, in a matter of seconds, we were strumming with our *jaranas* a *son* called ‘El Siquisirí’. Everyone knew when to start. Those who seemed distracted were effortlessly responding to a melodic call in the same way that one joins a conversation after hearing the calling of a friend. The man who played the *declaración* was leading the *fandango* by standing in front of the *tarima*; another person was playing deep bass melodies with a *leona*, and the rest of us provided a harmonic base by strumming chords in our *jaranas*. I could barely see the *tarima* from that point as I was standing behind the musicians following the same rhythmic pulse and reproducing sequences of chords (G7, C, F) almost intuitively. We spent some time (a minute or two, perhaps) repeating the same chord progression, getting used to the *cadencia*, testing if one’s playing is too loud or too soft, assimilating the ambience created by more than a dozen acoustic instruments being played simultaneously in the middle of a dirt road. The repetition of the same chord progression and strumming patterns had already established a sonic surface on which other events were about to happen. I turned to see what José was doing; he appeared to be busily trying to recognise those who had just arrived and was not even looking at his instrument. His manipulation of the *jarana* was so effortless it was almost as if the instrument had disappeared from his hands. Still, his strumming was loud and followed the same tempo as the rest. Someone by the *tarima* sang (almost yelled) the first verse that, in the form of rhyme, asks for permission to begin:[19]

Divino cielo te ruego	Divine heaven I ask you
permiso para cantar,	permission to sing
permiso para cantar	permission to sing
divino cielo te ruego	divine heaven I ask you

[19] The left column has the original verse in Spanish; the right one contains my translation into English.

Another person sang exactly the same words but with a slightly different melody. It was a form of call and response, almost like a conversation in which the first singer asserts and the second one replies. After the response, the first singer continued with the second part of the verse:

me contesta luego, luego	and it answers at once
empieza por saludar,	start by greeting,
empieza por saludar,	start by greeting,
agua, tierra, viento y fuego.	water, earth, wind and fire.

'El Siquisirí' is a *son* that has a fixed verse structure in which the first person sings four octosyllabic lines and the respondent reproduces exactly the same words with a melodic variation. After completing four octosyllables there is a shorter call-response that builds up and finishes with three concluding octosyllables from the first singer:

1st singer:

ay que sí, que no, que no	oh yes, oh no
cuánto gusto me da verte	I'm so glad to see you

2nd singer:

ay que sí, que no, que no	oh yes, oh no

1st:

déjame darte un abrazo	let me give you a hug

2nd:

cuánto gusto me da verte	I'm so glad to see you

1st:

le doy gracias a mi suerte	I thank my luck

2nd:

ay que sí, que sí, que no	oh yes, oh no

1st:

por que con el tiempo acaso	because perhaps on time
por que con el tiempo acaso	because perhaps on time
más y más pueda quererte.	I could love you more and more.

This sequence constitutes a full verse, which is usually followed by an interlude in which dancers show their rhythmic skills by stomping on the *tarima*. After that interlude, another person starts a new verse, repeating the same pattern but rotating the participation among singers.

Later that night, as the *fandango* unfolded, José encouraged me to sing a verse with short utterances such as '*vas!*' (go on) or '*échale!*' (take this turn). I did want to sing a verse and, in fact, I had learnt a few of them at workshops. But I just could not do it. The mere idea of taking a singing turn made me nervous to the point of forgetting the rhymes, and I did not want to start a verse and leave it unfinished. Taking part in collective practices involves forms of exposure that trigger personal insecurities that, in this case, were aroused by my incapacity to know what was going to happen next. As a beginner, I was confident to strum my *jarana* in the back of the group because I could follow the chord progression and the strumming pattern. But I was unsure about the right moment to intervene with a verse, as I could not anticipate who was going to sing next. Participation at *fandangos* is inherently temporal—practitioners are not looking at, or listening to, specific points in time, but have a comprehensive understanding of what has just happened and pre-empt what is about to happen.

Organising verses into patterns of call-response makes participation intuitive, but it took me several *fandangos* to attain a tacit understanding of how the sequence of singers is articulated. As there are no queues or any other explicit principle that structures sequential participation, the rotation of singers relies on their capacity to read each other's gestures, such as slightly leaning forward, breathing deeply before starting a verse, or moving a little before responding to a verse. Interpreting and responding to quick, spoken utterances and bodily gestures is a skill that requires an acute sense of timing. Nobody knows how the sequence of verses is going to unfold; yet, seasoned practitioners know when to intervene, when to stop, and how to motivate other practitioners to participate. Now that I can reflect on this field experience with the passage of time, I realise how those interventions are timed assessments of complex interactions. José encouraged me to sing when he estimated that it was the right moment through evaluation of who sang before and who could potentially respond to my verse. José (and, more generally speaking, any person engaged in performative practices) understands 'how these elements "come-into-sight" and "pass-out-of-sight" of variously contoured and textured surfaces' (Haldrup 2010: 63). This capacity to seize the situation (to assess what had just happened and guess what is about to happen) and act accordingly is what Bourdieu (1998: 25) calls 'practical sense' or the art of anticipating.

The 'practical sense' attained by *son jarocho* practitioners allows them to anticipate what comes next and, consequently, to circulate smoothly across a series of entangled actions. The more skilled a practitioner, the less effort invested in this circulation. The continuous alternation of singers is similar to the way in which people transit at a busy railway station (as noted earlier). The reading of bodily gestures and the subsequent actions take a fraction of second, such as deciding who is passing first or if one should quickly move aside to clear the way. In *fandangos*, as in railway stations, it can be irritating when someone blocks the way; thus, only two people at one time are expected to engage in the same verse, and then they let others sing as well. If two persons accidentally start a verse at the same time there is an implicit courtesy, which is based on the common understanding that one should allow other practitioners to participate too. Occasional cases of rivalry between two practitioners are likely to take the form of displaying skill at dancing, singing or

playing an instrument, instead of intentionally blocking the participation of others. Continuing with the station metaphor, the implicit courtesy is like waiting to board the train on a crowded platform: everyone will eventually step in and out, but one should be aware of the presence of other people and read their movements to avoid clashing. But, in contrast to our station metaphor, *fandangos* rarely have a peak-hour and there is no need to rush. There is space for everyone to sing if they want to, pluck their stringed instruments, step on the *tarima*, or simply rest on a chair watching others doing it.

Figure 5: *Fandango* unfolding. Author's photograph.

After some verses have finished, it is time for the dancers to takeover. That was the case in Chacalapa, where a few verses had already been sung, but there were still no dancers on the *tarima*. Singers used the first verses to ask for permission to start, greet the people present on that occasion, apologise for one's self-attributed hoarseness, and invite women to dance. The latter finally made their way to the

tarima and stepped onto it with timely precision, right at the end of a verse, and so marking the rhythms of a pattern known as '*café con pan*'.[20] The dancers' percussive intervention is known as *zapateo*,[21] which refers to the rhythmic stomping on the *tarima* that takes place while no verses are sung. Another verse was started and the dancers ceased stomping on the *tarima*, conducting muted steps instead, and allowing singers to be heard. The objective of this alternation is to establish a constant interplay between verses and percussive dance. Those playing instruments around the *tarima* also imitate this performative oscillation by playing quieter when a verse is sung, and louder when dancers are performing *zapateo*. Every time a verse is finished, a new group of dancers can step onto the *tarima* and replace the previous ones, resulting in a constant circulation of dancers, singers, players, chords, melodies and rhythmic patterns. This continuous circulation must stop at a certain point, but the fact of it being a non-rehearsed performance brings up the issue of how practitioners may finish together. Starting and finishing the performance together is crucial for the establishment of the temporal and spatial orders at *fandango*, and also for the alignment of actions that turns the practice into a collective activity (Barnes 2005).

Sones, the pieces of the traditional *son jarocho* repertoire, normally last for long enough (compared to what is commonly assumed to be standard song length) to allow sufficient time for dancers and singers to display their skills. But, how to know when to stop playing or dancing? The *guitarrero* who leads the *fandango* assesses if the participants have satisfied their eagerness to dance before starting a set of *versos de salida* (closing verses) that are either sung by him[22] or by some others around the *tarima*. These verses are the first notification that the *son* is coming to an end,

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[20] 'Café con pan' is the basic rhythmic pattern for dancing 'El Siquisirí' and other *sones*. It is called this because the syllabic accentuation of the phrase 'ca-fé-con-pan' is that of the steps.

[21] *Zapateado* comes from *zapato* (shoe), which denotes the use of the hard sole of one's shoe to stomp on the dancing surface. This term and other variants (*zapateo, zapateao*) are widely used across the Americas and the Iberian Peninsula, although they may refer to differing dance styles.

[22] Gendered language is justified in this case because, despite the enthusiastic participation of women as singers, percussionists, *jarana* players and dancers, the vast majority of *guitarreros* are men. This gender order is probably related to the patriarchal ways of organising social life that are so common in Sotavento. The gendered use of instruments is gradually changing, as women are increasingly taking up all sorts of musical instruments. Still, at present the *guitarra de son* is predominantly played by men.

followed by rhythmic indications, such as the accentuation of the first beat and a gradual decrease of speed. *Fandango*, to repeat, is not a concert but a gathering full of noise and distractions; therefore, the most effective ways to indicate the end of a *son* are nodding, moderately raising one's instrument and yelling *'una!'*

When a *son* finishes one leaves the *tarima* and goes to chat with others, or to get something to eat or drink. After a while, the *guitarrero* goes back to the edge of the *tarima*, plays a melody calling for a new *son* and the performance starts again. Every new *son* results in a different combination of participants and instruments because some people choose to dance instead of playing, or take a different instrument, or simply take a rest. Local and experienced musicians in front of the *tarima* are in control, but the commanding position also rotates at some point. As I was re-tuning my *jarana* that night in Chacalapa, Roberto, a *jaranero* from Cosoleacaque, told me how he was waiting for those men in the front to leave the *tarima*: 'relax, this is just fun, my friend. We'll take over soon! This is just show time'.[23] As Roberto affirms, the successive leading of the *fandango* is also a timed activity. The temporal character of this circulation is an example of the rhythms through which the order at *fandango* is sustained.

Every *fandango* inevitably starts with 'El Siquisirí'. There is no apparent explanation as to why this is so, although some practitioners were keen to recall assorted reasons when I asked them about it: this *son* is good as a warm up, the flexibility of its theme enables the construction of verses for different occasions, it is one of the easiest *sones* and encourages participation, or the word 'siquisirí' is derived from its refrain '*que sí, que sí*' (yes, yes). Starting *fandangos* with this *son* has been replicated from generation to generation. This canon is not questioned; it constitutes a tradition that has been reproduced as the practice moves. 'El Siquisirí' belongs to a category of *sones* called '*de a montón*' (danced in groups), which are danced exclusively by groups of women. Some other *sones* are '*de cuadrilla*' (danced by four women and one man) or '*de pareja*' (danced in couples). The latter are the most challenging ones

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[23] These jotted field notes are particularly difficult to translate into English because they contain slang. In Spanish they say: 'tú tranquilo, esto es puro cotorreo, primo. ¡Pero ahorita les damos vuelta! Estamos en la hora del show'.

and are reserved for the 'peak' of the night as dancers are expected to gauge their skills in a duel between a woman and a man. As the night unfolds, the exciting tunes are replaced by more placid ones called '*sones de madrugada*' (dawn themes), which are sung in a tranquil way. That arrangement allows people to stretch the event some more hours, until dawn if possible. As Marco describes below, *fandangos* that last until the dawn become memorable events:

> Seeing the sunrise, the day clearing, is not a mere routine. Traditionally, when a *fandango* was made, people came from other communities and the host received the people from communities 10 or 15 kilometres away, or from towns nearby, and they arrived by any means possible: by horse, by bus, now that there are bus services everywhere, or by foot. And for security reasons those who are at the *fandango* are not encouraged to leave at 3am. It is advisable to wait until the sun rises to ensure a safe return home. That is why it became customary, although many participants were unaware of this rationale. I found out about it by asking the old men why people wait until the dawn. One replied: 'when I used to come with my *compadre*,[24] with my friends, we didn't venture to come back in the dark'. But people don't think 'let's wait until the dawn to come back to our town'; no, that is something that stayed in their unconsciousness. That is why receiving the dawn while playing... Hey! That is something that makes everyone very glad![25]

Hearing stories of *fandangos* that lasted until the dawn is common; being at a *fandango* in which this actually happens is less frequent. There is no guarantee of being able to sustain a *fandango* until the dawn; that depends on a myriad of factors: weather, number of participants, general enthusiasm, if the attendees know each other, the dynamic that is established between dancers and musicians, and so on. If the ambience affords it, people continue playing and dancing for hours. That was the case that night in Chacalapa, but unfortunately the *fandango* finished before dawn and José and I dragged our feet back to his house when it was still dark. I woke up in

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[24] *Compadre* is translated as godfather, although it is also used to refer to a friend.
[25] Excerpt from the transcript of an interview conducted with an anonymous practitioner in Xalapa, Mexico, April 8, 2013. Author's translation.

the hammock of José's living room the morning after, and my right hand was aching because strumming the strings for so many hours had left it swollen. But I was in a good condition compared to José who, apart from playing *jarana*, spent part of the night hitting a *quijada* (a donkey jawbone used as percussion), ending up with a heavily swollen right hand. On top of that, he could barely talk because of a sore throat, the consequence of yelling for hours.

Taking part in a good *fandango* gives rewards that are specific to the practice of *son jarocho* and are only attainable through participation. Aching feet are nothing compared to the joy of being immersed in this cultural practice. Considering Alasdair MacIntyre's theorisation of practice (2007), Mark Banks (2012: 70) describes the relationship between these rewards and the involvement of practitioners:

> Such 'goods internal to a practice' […] can only be fully realised through a subordination to, and immersion in, the character of the practice, that is, when practitioners establish a knowledge and appreciation of a given practice's interior qualities, and an intimacy with its specific demands, rhythms and standards.

Comments about sore legs, wrists and throats, and slightly 'wounded' hands and feet, are common remarks as one leaves the *fandango*. These wounds are an obvious consequence of playing and dancing for extended periods of time. Part of the process of becoming a better practitioner is to invest physical effort only at particular moments, staying loose the rest of the time. An accurate sense of timing is crucial to a skill that is attained through repetition and continuous exposure. José, for example, is a good performer who, despite his skills, has not yet attained that physical relaxation; hence, his post-*fandango* aches. Contrastingly, my immersion in the practice of *son jarocho* was so recent that I had not attained the skills to participate fully; hence, I only had a slightly swollen hand. These wounds often decrease as one improves as a performer and gets used to the practice. But their symbolic value is maintained as they constitute markers of the experience of gradually becoming a *jaranero*. The progressive engagement with this practice takes the form of a 'collective belief' (Bourdieu 1995: 230) that characterises these celebrations. To illustrate this process the next section focuses on the ways in which *fandangos* are

organised.

ORGANISING *FANDANGOS*

Once in Chinameca I was spending the afternoon with a group of young *jaraneros* at the porch of Jenny's house. She and her family were organising a *fandango* for her birthday and two men were making jokes about the long time that she takes to dress up and get ready before going to a *fandango.* 'By the time she is ready there will be nobody around because the *fandango* will be over', someone said. Jenny remained silent as we laughed, bouncing on a hammock. 'How much time does it take for you to get ready?' I asked her. 'No, buddy, you don't know. When one organises a *fandango*, the hassle starts when one is making the dough for the *tamales.*[26] Dressing up is nothing compared to getting all the other stuff done'. Cooking *tamales*, making large pots of coffee and punch, sourcing chairs, *tarima* and lighting are just the beginning of the intricate preparation of the event. The coordination of family and friends is necessary to set up the conditions for the event to take place. Inviting experienced *jaraneros* is also important, especially if one wants to ensure that the music of the event is good. The various ways of inviting people differ from place to place. On that occasion José was designated by Jenny's family to go to a remote community to invite an old, experienced *guitarrero* who is admired by many people in the towns of that region. I asked José if I could go with him.

A few days later we were on a bus that took us across roads surrounded by cane-sugar fields before dropping us at the hilly area where Don Francisco lives. We had brought pork crackers and Don Francisco received us with refreshing *pozol* (a drink made of maize, water, sugar and ice) to alleviate our thirst. We chatted for a while under the shade of the mango trees of his patio, then played a couple of *sones* (we had brought our instruments, which at that moment seemed the most natural thing to do) and had a light meal before announcing the real purpose of our visit: inviting him

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[26] *Tamal* is a maize-based dish, steamed and stuffed with various kinds of chillies, spices, meats, cheeses or vegetables.

to lead a *fandango* in Chinameca. He agreed and we left before it started to get dark. As we were walking back towards the bus stop, José explained to me that the process of visiting and spending time with the 'old man' was necessary to make him feel needed and appreciated. This form of request is not considered to be a one-on-one agreement, as is the case when one invites a friend to a party. The protocol turns the invitation into a commitment to the collectivity and, sometimes, to a specific religious celebration, as some *fandangos* are part of Catholic commemorations. Marco explains the formalities that involve organising religious events:

> When someone tells you 'my friend, let's celebrate the virgin, let's make a *velorio* for the *Virgen de los remedios*, I need you to be at the *fandango*', that is almost like an order. You don't receive that only as an invitation. Which, in a way, it is an invitation, isn't it? But it's a real commitment because the other person needs me. Because he needs to make a good impression with the virgin. How is he going to make a *velación* for the virgin without help? The *velación* is something religious, there are chants, it is adorned. One waits one, two, three or five years to have the image of the virgin at one's house, because it is borrowed. Then, to host the virgin at one's house, one needs to set up the house, you save up all year round for that very day to adorn the virgin with flowers, with marvellous things, to make a beautiful shrine, to invite singers who sing the religious chants for the virgin. *Rezanderas* [prayers], as they call them, but they are singers too. They are paid and these are expenses for a poor family. Therefore, when someone tells you 'my friend, I'll see you at my ranch for the virgin's celebration', that is something that cannot be refused, you cannot lie and say 'I'll be there' and then not show up. That is a serious offence. This is because, when one makes a *fandango*, one needs the help of the community: when I ask you to come to my house, I am actually saying that I need you. It is not like saying 'look, we are having a party, if you are free we'll be there from this hour…', no, it is not like that, it is a serious thing, it is a formal commitment.[27]

[27] Excerpt from the transcript of an interview conducted with an anonymous practitioner in Xalapa, Mexico, April 8, 2013. Author's translation.

Not every invitation requires the protocols that Marco describes here. Young people are particularly keen on Facebook invitations, be it in Mexico or the US. A paradigmatic case of the use of virtual social networks to make public an event of this type is the trans-border organisation of the *Fandango Fronterizo*, which is celebrated every year at the frontier between San Diego and Tijuana. The event gathers practitioners from Sotavento, central and north Mexico, California and many other regions of the US. Workshops in which *son jarocho* is taught are also places for advertising these events. In a small city of California, for instance, the weekly *son jarocho* workshop was followed by the organisation of an upcoming *fandango* that included a structured division of tasks, like transporting the *tarima* to the place of the event or cleaning afterwards. Guests usually contribute by bringing food, coffee or hard liquor. There is no entrance fee, but collaboration is crucial to the creation of the event. As Marco explains:

> This has to do with poverty, but also with empathy, knowing that if someone invites a lot of people, that person is doing a big effort, isn't it? Spending the money that this person doesn't have. One day Don Andres [a well-known musician from Sotavento] calls me and says: 'hey, my friend, I'm celebrating the "Quince años"[28] of my grand-daughter and I'd like to invite you'. I said yes and then asked what could I take [to the celebration]. He said 'well, I was thinking of having two *padrinos*,[29] my grand-daughter needs *padrinos* and well, I thought… would you like to be *padrino* of half a cow?'. Half a cow! Do you see? That is not an entry fee, it was a party for 300 people and they needed to cook for everyone. One has to collaborate because he is considering me as someone from his family. He trusts me in such a way that he asks me to contribute with that, and I feel obliged and at the same time honoured! This happens in this way because this is a culture of poor people. When one is poor, one needs the help of others.[30]

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[28] 'Quince años' refers to a type of celebration for a fifteen years old girl.
[29] 'Padrino' refers to a patron of the event and also to a godfather.
[30] Excerpt from the transcript of an interview conducted with an anonymous practitioner in Xalapa, Mexico, April 8, 2013. Author's translation.

Because they are not considered to be entertainers, practitioners do not receive money in exchange for their participation. Entertainment is the consequence of collective engagement. Yet, *fandangos* would not take place without the expenditure of time, effort and resources. Here I am referring to those practitioners who spend the little money that they have on the bus to get to a *fandango*; or the one who battles the traffic, let's say from Santa Barbara to Santa Ana in California, to attend a gathering that lasts for six or seven hours, then spends the night on a friend's couch and returns to Santa Barbara with red eyes and a sore back; or the one who goes from Chula Vista, on the American side of the border, to Tijuana to attend a weekly *son jarocho* workshop; or the hundreds who (despite generalised dissatisfaction and complaints) attend the *Encuentro de Jaraneros de Tlacotalpan*[31] every year and literally camp wherever possible. One must believe in 'the game' to engage recurrently in these activities. As Bourdieu (1995: 230) puts it:

> The collective belief in the game (*illusio*) and in the sacred value of its stakes is simultaneously the precondition and the product of the very functioning of the game; it is fundamental to the power of consecration, permitting consecrated artists to constitute certain products, by the miracle of their signature (or brand name), as *sacred* objects.

A question that is raised, then, concerns how the 'collective belief in the game' is related to the 'internal mobilities' of these celebrations. Or, as Marco asserts at the beginning of this chapter, how the 'mysticism that happens around that piece of wood', that 'ritualistic attitude', is related to the continuous circulation around the *tarima*. The 'enchanted' relationship between practitioner and practice (Bourdieu 1998: 77) is not a question of who are *son jarocho* practitioners, but how and when they become so, in and through mobility. We now turn to the circulation that takes place during performances to analyse how space and time are arranged 'in action'.

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[31] This annual event celebrates the *Candelaria* virgin in Tlacotalpan, Veracruz. *Jaraneros* from different regions have reunited for decades at that festival to perform on stage and at impromptu *fandangos*. There is a generalised dissatisfaction among *jaraneros* because the organisers of the festival have it is claimed structured it as a touristic event and marginalised the performance of *son jarocho* (see Pérez Montfort 1992).

CIRCULATION AROUND THE *TARIMA*

A meaningful event in the eyes of its practitioners, *fandango* can also look chaotic to the untrained eye. It may appear as a gathering where people come and go; singers do not sing a full song but only fragments of it, dancers do not perform a whole piece but jump on a wooden platform for a moment just to be replaced by other dancers, and monotonous harmonies, melodies and rhythms are played for hours. *Fandango* may appear to be a long, fragmented activity; yet, it is, in fact, a meticulously structured event sustained through continuous movement. The constant circulation that takes place around the *tarima* constitutes the dynamic principle of *fandango*. Musicians, instruments, dancers, verse singers, melodies, chord progressions, rhythmic patterns, grooves and a multitude of other elements revolve around this central artefact. By being in constant motion, these elements hang together and resonate around a fixed object, articulating actions into coherent and intelligible arrangements. In this context, the term 'arrangement' connotes the action of reshaping or accommodating various elements to fit the needs of a particular situation, just as musical arrangements are adjustments of given compositions to altered conditions.

The structuration of actions into sequences is given by a series of dispositions, routines and rules that allow practitioners to anticipate interconnected events. Practitioners know, for instance, when it is appropriate to step on the *tarima* to dance, to sing a verse, or to dance in couples or groups. Yet, the way in which these routines are actually linked with one another is extemporised, as there is no previous rehearsal among performers. Nobody knows the actual order in which events will unfold at a given *fandango*. There are no groups, combos or ensembles performing because practitioners simply participate by approaching the *tarima* and engaging in the performance. Because of its non-rehearsed form, practitioners rely on a finely tuned perception of timed instances that integrate the temporal arrangements of *fandango*. I now focus on a *fandango* in Sotavento[32] to illustrate how practitioners perceive and act upon the unfolding of timed instances. But, instead of giving an

[32] This description is based on fieldnotes of a *fandango* in Chinameca, Mexico, April 13, 2013.

account of how practitioners comply with the rules and routines of *son jarocho*, I will describe a 'mistake' – examining how things going wrong during performances have the potential to reveal the presumed rules and routines upon which the interaction at performances is constructed.

At a *fandango* I was among a group of musicians playing 'El Butaquito', a *son* frequently danced by groups of women. We had just begun, a couple of verses had been sung and some dancers had already stepped on the tarima, stomping a rhythmic pattern that provided a steady beat. Around the tarima were the musicians plucking their instruments, and among them was a woman playing a *leona* (a big four-string instrument with deep, bass-like sound) who suddenly sang a verse that is typically used to indicate that the tune is coming to an end. The verse was a popular one and said something like:

Con esta ahí *nomás digo*	With this I just say
qué bella es Rosa, *qué bella es Rosa*	how pretty is Rosa, how pretty is Rosa
ya cantamos 'El Butaco*'*	we've sung 'El Butaco'
y venga otra cosa, *venga otra cosa.*	let's continue with something else, something else.[33]

Compared to what is commonly assumed to be a standard song length, these tunes typically last long enough (from 30 minutes to one hour) to give plenty of time for dancers and singers to display their skills. We had just started warming up, but this verse indicated that we were about to finish the *son* and then continue with something else. It was an unexpected event and the musicians started looking at each other with some confusion. That night I was playing a *jarana* and, after hearing this

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[33] Author's translation.

verse, I reduced the intensity and pace of my strumming to listen for whether the *son* was actually about to end. Everyone's strumming slowed down. It felt like the song was fading out for about two or three seconds, then one *jaranero* standing by the *tarima* turned to the players and nodded with his head to indicate the beat as he kept on loudly strumming. Then someone started a new verse and everyone returned to the previous rhythmic 'feel'. Marking the beat, playing louder and starting a new verse are common strategies used to align the collective motion. Introducing a verse at the wrong moment was similar to stumbling upon an unexpected obstacle, only subsequently to recover the pace. It was just one of the many minor incidents that were continuously resolved through improvised actions as the performance unfolded.

How does one know when to sing what? At *fandango* verses are used for various purposes, such as marking the beginning of the event, greeting the organisers or indicating the closure of a *son*. Verses are timed instances with specific functions and meanings, as was exemplified above. By 'stumbling' collectively, I understood that *son jarocho* musicians and dancers become aware of the innumerable subtleties that take place at performances by immersing themselves in the practice. It appears as if they are distracted while playing or dancing, looking at something else or thinking about the food that is being passed around. However, it is clear that they have their ears and eyes on the moments in which instances come into being during the performance. Practitioners develop a sharp sensitivity to elements that are imperceptible to laypersons. The temporal and spatial arrangements that take place around the *tarima* are intelligible and meaningful because there is a shared 'practical sense' among practitioners, a common capacity of anticipating 'the future of the game which is inscribed in the present state of play' (Bourdieu 1998: 25). The tacit knowledge acquired through repetition and failure takes the form of a particular awareness of the temporal and spatial arrangements that are produced during the performance, which is essential for the development of improvisational forms.

Returning to the constant circulation around the *tarima*, it is also relevant to note that this movement occurs at a particular location. The interaction between practitioners and artefacts is structured by ways of being positioned in relation to one another, and so producing specific spatial arrangements. The spatial order around the *tarima* is

sustained through implicit understandings. Most of the time it is not necessary to verbalise indications of how to negotiate space because these forms of interaction are communicated through gestures and it suffices to imitate what the most experienced do. On one occasion, for instance, there was a lively *fandango* in a small community in Sotavento. It was an exceptionally crowded event, with about 40 people playing various instruments around the *tarima* and many others waiting to dance. I was strumming my *jarana* at the back of the crowd among many others who had arrived late and, although the dancers were not visible behind the crowd, the resonance of their stomping was still perceptible. I suddenly noticed that the people on my right moved away as if making room or trying to avoid something; my intuitive reaction was to move as well, and turn to see what was happening. There was an old man holding his *jarana*, walking towards the *tarima* and the rapid movement of bodies cleared the way for the man to cross. When he got in front of the dancers, the cleared area was filled again by young practitioners strumming their instruments. I had just unintentionally repeated the same movement without the mediation of words. There was not enough time to think about it: the imitation of bodily gestures in this context was sudden and not quite conscious. The situation resembles the action of following a crowd in a railway station because everyone seems to be heading towards the exit. On that occasion, clearing the way for that man was a way of enacting the fact that, in that particular context, an old *jaranero* is considered to be more important than a young one.

An interpretation that can be drawn from that simple instance is that the idea of respect in the communities of Sotavento involves treating the elderly with deference. Therefore, clearing the way in a public space such as a *fandango* is considered to be a respectful attitude consistent with the traditional values exercised at these events. This apparently insignificant action is one of the many ways in which a notion of tradition is collectively evoked in practice. It constitutes an instance of a particular way of negotiating space, as the imitation of bodily gestures in relation to meaningful artefacts guarantees the reproduction of the spatial arrangement of *fandango*. Therefore, space is neither a container in which events occur, nor a surface on which participants move: space is the locus of what Mike Crang (2003: 194) describes as ‘an eventful and unique happening’. Thinking of space as a practiced place (de

Certeau 1984) opens the possibility of analysing *fandango* as a process. In this sense the circulation of assorted elements around a central artefact is a collective accomplishment in which the enactment of this practice 'produces' space and time.

CONCLUSION

In focusing on the articulation of dance, verse and instrument playing, this chapter has discussed the enactment of *son jarocho* as an unfolding arrangement in space and time. *Fandango*, the most relevant *son jarocho* celebration, has been analysed to discuss the constant motion of various elements that hang together and resonate around a fixed artefact called *tarima*. Distinct ways of 'carrying the beat' while dancing, the establishment of pulse and rhythmic 'feel', and the articulation of verses, chords, melodies, practitioners and musical instruments, have been addressed as forms of mobility that emerge during the enactment of this practice. The unfolding of performances illustrates how the articulation of artefacts, know-how and meaningful actions constructs practice in and through mobility. The spatial and temporal order of these performances is sustained through gestures, presumptions and tacit understandings that allow practitioners to anticipate a series of interconnected events. While these performances are characterised by formulaic improvisation (which is addressed in detail in Chapter 5), their routines are established through a 'practical sense' that allows practitioners to synchronise complex sets of actions. The spatio-temporal arrangement around the *tarima* has been used to illustrate the ways in which practitioners adjust their actions collectively.

Various ways of being in relation to one another are produced through the constant movement of bodies and artefacts, as well as the execution of timed actions. The continuous establishment and adjustment of different degrees of temporal and spatial proximity are the ways in which actions and actors are 'on time' and 'in place'. Being on time/off time and in place/out of place produces a gamut of possibilities that has been interpreted as degrees of spatio-temporal proximity. The constant circulation of elements, adjustment of spatial positioning, and synchronisation of

instances, put these performances 'on the move'. Addressing the proximity among elements during performances is crucial to understand how actions and elements are articulated into coherent and intelligible arrangements. While this order is established through recurrent patterns of action, the analysis of their mobilities offers an empirical illustration of the dynamic ways in which practice, practitioners and artefacts are reciprocally linked. This analysis raises the question of how this practice changes as it moves. To examine the mobilities of *son jarocho* as a recognisable entity, it is necessary to look at how practitioners attain, share and re-create these culturally contained ways of doing. The following chapter focuses on the mobilities of *son jarocho* as a recognisable practice.

Chapter 3: The mobilities of a practice

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the mobilities of *son jarocho* as a recognisable practice. In its first part I briefly address the historical unfolding of *son jarocho*, which has been traced to the maritime mobility across the Atlantic during colonial times (García de León 2002). A series of transformations during the subsequent centuries paved the way for the development of this distinct cultural practice from Sotavento, which was to be reshaped and represented as folkloric music by the official propaganda of the Mexican state and the media during the first decades of the 20th century. This section gives a very brief account of the historical transformation of this practice. My aim is not to document the genesis of this cultural practice (several texts have done it to a certain extent; see García de León 2002, 2009; Figueroa 2007; Barahona 2013), but to suggest that the contemporary mobilities of *son jarocho* must be contextualised in relation to long historical processes. As Tim Cresswell (2010: 29) argues, 'thinking of mobilities in terms of constellations of movements, meanings and practices helps us avoid historical amnesia when thinking about and with mobility'. Looking back at the history of this practice is particularly relevant in this case, as contemporary flows of music making may sometimes produce the impression of being new and to bear little relation to the past. In the second part of this chapter I concentrate on the recuperation of traditional *son jarocho*, which took place during the last decades of the 20th century. I argue that these processes constitute the main forces of the contemporary mobilisation of this practice across different locations. While the efforts to recuperate and preserve this cultural practice have mobilised it as a bounded and coherent tradition, its diffusion across networks of relationships that extend across Mexico and the US are producing its inexorable transformation.

Contrary to my naive assumption when starting this research project, cultural practices are not mobile simply because there is a transition from the regional to the

transnational level. Contemporary *son jarocho* exemplifies how a cultural practice originating in a specific region of southeast Mexico is currently sustained, informed and reshaped by transnational linkages. Nevertheless, the fact that there are groups of people practising *son jarocho* in locations that are not geographically contiguous does not tell us exactly how this practice became mobile and is currently mobilised. The transnational character of *son jarocho* is certainly an important part of the story; however, 'thinking about and with mobility' opens the possibility of addressing various scales or layers of circulation and transmission of a recognisable 'set of doings and sayings' (Shatzki 2002: 87). The following section will examine the past travels of this practice as one of these layers.

THE HISTORICAL JOURNEYING OF *SON JAROCHO*

Once a practitioner told me the serendipitous way in which she found out about *son jarocho*. What is intriguing about this story is that, while alluding to the historical journeying of a piece of the traditional *son jarocho* repertoire, it provides an example of how the long-term circulation of cultural practices intersects with the personal trajectories of practitioners. Elisabeth LeGuin is an American musicologist and successful baroque cellist specialising in the history of European music (see, for instance, LeGuin 2005; 2013). In one of her research projects she focused on the musical *milieu* of 18th century Spain and spent time in Madrid conducting archival work. At a particular point in her work day she faced an apparent dead-end, felt the need of a break and went outside to a plaza to get some fresh air. As she was walking, she heard a young man busking, playing a version of 'Los Ympossibles', a piece for baroque guitar that she knew quite well as a musicologist who specialised in early European music. That man seemed to play an unusual guitar; she then approached him to find out that he was neither playing 'Los Ympossibles' nor a baroque guitar, but 'La lloroncita' with a *jarana.* He said that he was from southeast Mexico and had recently arrived in Madrid, and then explained that the music he was playing was called *son jarocho*. The musicologist had unexpectedly encountered the continuity concerning a piece that is part of a repertoire that has been circulating for centuries. Furthermore, this historical circulation also converged with her personal

mobilities as a researcher and those of the young musician. Once back in the US, she discovered that there were workshops in which people learn to play and dance *son jarocho*, and that she could join them at a cultural centre located relatively close to her place of residence in California. Elisabeth currently plays *jarana* and *leona*, and is an avid practitioner who participates in *fandangos* and workshops in the US and southeast Mexico.

Son jarocho's repertoire has evolved as interplay between changing circumstances and historical continuities. An insufficiently documented topic, the striking similarities between this repertoire and some baroque songs is exemplified by 'Los Ympossibles', also known among *jaraneros* as 'La Lloroncita'.[34] The piece can be found in the *Saldivar Codex IV*, a baroque guitar book published in the 18th century as a compilation of popular tunes played on both sides of the Atlantic, and attributed to the Spanish composer Santiago de Murcia (Lorimer 1987 [ca.1732]). This book is testimony to the circulation of a rich and varied repertoire of music and popular dance that was performed in regions of Europe and the Americas (García de León 2002). The movement and continuity of this repertoire is part of a more general process regarding the journeying of cultural practices across geographical and social spaces. In the following discussion I address key historical markers of these mobilities by looking at the circulation of bundles of practices during colonial times, the consolidation of the practice of *fandango* in Sotavento, and its subsequent folklorisation.

The popular celebration of *fandango* emerged from long-term historical processes in contexts of socio-cultural flow and movement. During colonial times, the port of Veracruz, located on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, linked central Mexico to the Caribbean and the Iberian Peninsula. The 16th century was marked by maritime transportation through the *Carrera de Indias,* which was a complex infrastructure that linked the Spanish cities of Cadiz and Seville to Veracruz. The *Ruta de los Galeones* was another major maritime route that connected Spain to Cartagena de

[34] The blend of 'Los Ympossibles' and 'La Lloroncita' can be appreciated in at least two recordings: Isabelle Villey, *La Guitarra en el México Barroco,* CONACULTA, 1996 and also Ensemble Continuo, *Mexico Ensemble Continuo: Labyrinth in the Guitar*, URTEXT, 2004.

Indias, then branching out to Peru and to other regions of South America (García de León 2011). The Caribbean constituted the junction of these routes, a nodal region with a constantly changing population and a dynamic economy fuelled by intense legal and illegal commerce. García de León (2011) indicates the historical relevance of this region by arguing that the 'Great Caribbean' was, in fact, a cultural region that extended well beyond the Antilles, comprising the Gulf of Mexico (Florida, Louisiana, Veracruz, Campeche and Yucatan), the Atlantic coast of Central America, Colombia, Venezuela and the Guyanas. People, commodities, artefacts, goods, ideas, and (often conflicting) ways of doing and being were displaced through the wide maritime networks that connected these regions. Musical repertories are some of the remnants of the circulation of cultural practices from which *fandango* emerged.

The musical repertoire shared across the Atlantic has been traced back to the 16th and 17th century (Aguirre Tinoco 1983; García de León 2002). *Sones de la tierra* (inland tunes) was the term used to differentiate the songs originating in the Americas from those with European lineage. Still, they were the product of constant circulation that gradually gave place to distinct regional repertoires. By the beginning of the 18th century there was a generally shared repertoire across the Caribbean that emerged from the gradual transformations of the practices that had been travelling across the Atlantic (Ávila et al. 2011). This repertoire has been called '*cancionero ternario caribeño*' (ternary songbook of the Caribbean) (García de León 2002), which is characterised by a predilection for ternary measures, alternation on the accentuation of particular beats (such as *hemiola*),[35] and certain forms of polyphony derived from baroque music, which at that time formed a long-established tradition in Mexico (García de León 1994). By the end of the 18th century, the music, dance and verse singing performed at the celebrations among the peasants of Sotavento acquired the form of *fandango* (García de León 2002, 2009; Ávila et al. 2011).

[35] *Hemiola*, also known as *sesquialtera,* refers to a musical metre that alternates between duple and triple time within groups of eight notes. This way of organising rhythms has been mentioned in Spanish musical treatises since the 16th century; for example, Juan Bermudo's *Declaración de Instrumentos*, published for the first time in 1555 (see Bermudo 2009).

The 19th century was marked by the collapse of Spain as a colonial power and the consequent emergence of nation states in the Americas. The reconfiguration of the maritime and terrestrial transportation of people, objects, ideas and practices across and within the newly formed countries established new conditions of exchange and connectivity (García de León 2011). During this period, bundles of ways of doing became articulated in what is known as *fandango* - namely dance, tunings, repertoire, ways of singing, musical instruments, rhythms and spatial organisation during performances. The celebration of *fandango* acquired a distinct character as a product of the relative isolation of the region. These forms of dancing, singing verses and playing instruments were, then, consolidated as a regional practice. The significance of these historical processes for this thesis rests on the circulation of assorted elements that established constellations of interrelated cultural practices across distant territories. *Fandango* became one of the favourite forms of celebrating among the peasants of Sotavento (García de León 2009), partly because of the trajectories and specific ways in which these elements became entangled. There were, however, a series of reconfigurations that took place during the 20th century that changed the ways in which this practice was recognised by its practitioners.

From Sotavento to the cities

During the first half of the 20th century *fandango* became less common due to various factors, such as increasing urbanisation, changes in the economic structure and methods of agricultural production (Leonard and Velazquez 2000). These transformations are linked to the intense internal migration from rural areas to emerging cities in Mexico, and later to transnational migration from Mexico to the US (Pérez 2003). Significant changes to the fortunes of *fandango* also appeared when these ways of dancing and making music were used by the official propaganda of the Mexican state to forge a national imaginary based on regional, folkloric manifestations of culture. In its intention to produce an ideal of 'Mexicanity', the bureaucracy of the Mexican government took fragmented elements of the regional practices to produce stereotyped representations of the 'typically Mexican' (Perez Montfort 1999). The music and dance performed at *fandangos* were used in film, radio and TV productions, but not before an intense process of stylisation took place. Regional music and dance in the cinema, for instance, was often represented through

orchestral arrangements, resulting in a lack of coherence between the images displayed (in this case consisting of rural musicians playing guitar-like instruments) and the musical background (an orchestral arrangement) (Barahona 2013). By 'trimming off' what this bureaucracy considered excessively rustic and rural, these musical and dance practices became folklorised performances that reinvented them as shows on stage (Pérez Montfort 2007).

The development of nationalist, folklorised representations in the media created new 'niches' for the performance of *son jarocho*: musicians from rural Sotavento who migrated to Mexico City and the port of Veracruz could make a living out of performing *son jarocho* music. These musicians were mostly male, knew how to play *son jarocho* because that was part of the everyday life in Sotavento and, later, became reliant on their capacity to perform music to earn a living in urban contexts. They occasionally performed on the radio and television, but their main source of income came from performing at restaurants, bars, nightclubs and cabarets (Figueroa 2007; Cardona 2011). Serenading customers at their own table became an important part of their daily routine. The transition from practitioners engaging in the popular celebration of *fandango* to entertainers forced to play for an audience to earn a living is a crucial shift that produced a particular kind of folklorised *son jarocho.*

The mobilisation of this practice from rural Sotavento to the cities also carried the re-arrangement of the artefacts involved. A *tarima* was no longer necessary as musical performance was not directed towards dancers, but to an audience. Musical instruments also had undergone modifications that illustrate how their materiality enables particular ways of enacting the practice while discouraging others. The changes in the design of the harp used to play *son jarocho* in these new contexts illustrate this point. In 1936, a film was being shot and a brief *son jarocho* performance was part of the plot.[36] The footage required musicians to stand, which became a problem for the harpist featured in the film because the size of the instrument only allowed harpists to play in a sitting position. The harpist in the film substituted the *son jarocho* harp for a larger one typically played in western Mexico,

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[36] De Fuentes, F. (Director) (1936) *Allá en el Rancho Grande*, México: United Artists.

marking the beginning of what later came to be known as traditional *son jarocho* harp. Andrés Alfonso, a notable musician in the emerging musical scene in Mexico City, describes how he modified the design of the instrument to adapt it to the new context:

> I remember that when we started playing at 'Fonda Santa Anita' [a restaurant in Mexico City] with Nicolas Sosa, and the problem was precisely that I had to play sitting down. We had to go and play from one table to another, and in that sort of restaurant, full of people, it was very uncomfortable and it looked bad if we carried a chair. I had the idea of designing an 'arpa jarocha' [a harp for specifically playing *son jarocho*] that could be played standing up, based on an 'arpa michoacana' [a different harp from the state of Michoacán, in western Mexico]. I examined that harp and realised that it had a triangular form, so harpists tended to slip forward while playing it. That is why I designed one with a wider base, so the instrument allowed one to lean on it and play more comfortably (Barahona 1996: 155; my translation).

Crowded venues, the requirement of playing around tables and the adaptations of the *son jarocho* repertoire to these new conditions framed the uses and material design of old traditional instruments. New rhythms of *son jarocho* making were also established as the practice substituted the circulation around the *tarima* for the circulation around restaurant tables.[37] At *fandangos*, a single, repetitive *son* was played for a long time to satisfy the eagerness of the attendees to dance. In this new context, there were no dancers but customers who were paying per song, keen to hear virtuosic performances and funny verses about political parties, football teams or *double-entendre* rhymes with sexual connotations.

Since the 1930s there has been an upsurge of musical groups specialising in the performance of *son jarocho*. As this activity became a 'way of life', *son jarocho* musicians started dressing in distinctive costumes and adopted group names to attract

[37] Practitioners of traditional *son jarocho* sometimes use the pejorative term *marisquero* to refer to a folklorised way of playing. The word comes from *marisco* (seafood), in reference to the seafood restaurants in which folklorised musicians played.

clients. Flexible in repertoire and improvisation, capable of physically moving inside restaurants and across the city, these groups proved to be remarkably adaptable to the new circumstances of performance, navigating complex urban settings and generating a living based on the performance of this newly contextualised music. A few *son jarocho* practitioners became relatively famous and frequently travelled to other countries, particularly the US (Figueroa 2007). This travelling eventually opened new opportunities for performers, as some *son jarocho* groups moved to Tijuana and Los Angeles from the second half of the 20th century (Cardona 2006). This migration constitutes a modest, but still significant, antecedent to *son jarocho* along the international border between California and Baja California.

Fandango continued to be part of everyday life in scattered communities of Sotavento, although it was overshadowed by the folklorised version of *son jarocho*, which became the most representative performance of Veracruz (Barahona 2013). Its representation in the media had a dramatic effect on the way in which the cultural practices of the region of Sotavento were perceived. By the mid-20th century the inhabitants of Sotavento had received contradictory messages: on the one hand, the experience of the *fandango* was a historical practice that had been replicated for generations; on the other, the media represented a stylised version of this musical practice that portrayed virtuosos performing on stage. Antonio García de León (1996: 30) vividly highlights this process:

> This phenomenon brought a generalised underestimation of local musicians because people thought that they didn't know how to play properly. At the same time, the introduction of other musical genres (*danzón*, *mambo*, *chachachá, tropical, etc.*) through the groups of marimba, tropical groups and others, gained space in the realms of popular music, displacing *son jarocho*, which was the traditional dance, to a secondary level until it was almost forgotten. The majority of the groups of *soneros* [*son jarocho* musicians] stopped partaking not only at popular *fandangos,* but also at key celebrations for the community, such as burials, religious celebrations, *etc*.

At different moments in the 20th century, the Ministry of Education and some groups of specialists aware of the gradual disappearance of traditional forms of music and

dance, raised the need for documenting the cultural expressions of the various regions of Mexico (Figueroa 2007). But these efforts were meagre, and it was not until the 1970s that various groups of young enthusiasts from Sotavento undertook a series of actions that aimed to 'keep traditional *son jarocho* alive', thereby starting the so-called rescue of *fandango* and, in particular, its music and dance. They understood the tradition as being rooted in a rural region of southeast Mexico, as opposed to the stylised interpretation created by official propaganda, the media and the groups of musicians playing at restaurants. In the following section I discuss the journeying of these enthusiasts with the practice.

RECUPERATING THE TRADITION

The groups of young enthusiasts who sought to rescue *son jarocho* from extinction had the distinction of being able to transit between rural Sotavento and urban centres with ease. Most of them were born in Sotavento, had intermittently moved to large cities to study or work, and had strong links with groups of people in Mexico City, Veracruz, Xalapa and Minatitlán, and later on in San Francisco and Los Angeles, California. This capacity to move among different circles allowed them to direct economic resources provided by governmental institutions (such as the Institute of Culture of Veracruz [*Instituto Veracruzano de Cultura*] or the Support Programme for Municipal and Community Cultures [*Programa de Apoyo a las Culturas Municipales y Comunitarias*]) for projects aimed at promoting the popular culture of Sotavento (Cardona 2006).

Despite being limited, these resources triggered the development of workshops in which people from remote communities of Sotavento learned to play and construct instruments (Cardona 2011). These efforts were reinforced when regional municipalities appointed some of these enthusiasts to positions relating to cultural affairs. This circumstance facilitated their access to some spaces for already-existing workshops, tools for the construction of instruments and a limited amount of funding to pay instructors. It is important to note, however, that despite the governmental assistance these workshops continued as unofficial learning spaces with no capacity

to award qualifications, and were focused only on the promotion of regional culture. Furthermore, these spaces were crucial for contesting a generalised imaginary of rural culture as 'lowbrow' (Pérez Montfort 2007) and forging one that portrayed *son jarocho* as an endangered culture that needed to be valorised and preserved.

Over the years, these enthusiasts became not only promoters but also practitioners who learnt to play, sing, dance and construct instruments from old practitioners scattered all over Sotavento. Their journeying across the region positioned them as mediators between the old practitioners who started to 'dust off' their instruments and skills, younger generations increasingly eager to participate, and governmental institutions that provided sporadic support. They taught at workshops, sold instruments and organised *fandangos* in communities where this celebration was no longer common. Senior musicians and dancers from neighbouring towns were invited to participate because they were ostensibly closer to the 'authentic' way of making *son jarocho*. Yet, these events were increasingly attended by young people because the workshops reinforced the participation of young *jaraneros*.

This process of recuperation of *son jarocho* was based on the presumption that the old *jaraneros* from Sotavento were the 'true' bearers of the tradition. This idea presumes that the elder has accumulated invaluable experience by cultivating their practice in close contact with the rural environment of Sotavento. Although appearing to signify a nostalgic longing for a rural way of life, the idea that the old *jaraneros* bear the tradition is not an entirely romantic stance, as it is closely related to the actual ways in which the practice has long been learnt and shared. *Fandangos* have constituted the preferred form of entertainment among adults. Younger people, including the children of these *jaraneros*, had only a secondary role and, if they did not have a direct relationship with organisers or visitors, it was usually hard for them to obtain permission from their parents to attend because these night-long celebrations carried some risks, such as heavy drinking and brawls. The adults who directly organised *fandangos* or travelled to participate in them were the centre of the attention, led the events, invited people from other towns, and made an effort to sustain good music and dance until dawn (if possible). This generational divide was eroded from the 1970s as the process of recuperation introduced new forms of transmission and circulation of this practice.

The bundles of activities that took place around the *tarima* did not have written records because their reproduction relied entirely on the memory of its practitioners. Therefore, being able to hear other musicians and to play with them represented the only opportunities for learning this practice. Replicating what others did at these celebrations was the most plausible way to learn; still, mirroring the elder was not a straightforward process, as Marco indicates:

> When one was just a beginner, any elder, no matter his limitations, represented a source of knowledge and experience. Then, one tried to approach an old *jaranero* that was around at a *fandango* and tried to imitate him to learn how to play. And the *jaranero* realised that you were looking at him and turned his back on you or moved in a way to hide his left hand so you couldn't see his fingering patterns.[38]

Possibly misrecognised as 'stinginess', this attitude conceals a complex way of understanding the transmissibility of embodied knowledge and the significance of the cultivation of a practice for its practitioners. Shielding one's playing was a legitimate protocol because the cultivation of a personal style was highly valued. This type of investment was crucial to the process of becoming a practitioner. Typically, the most experienced participants did not make an effort to slow-down and explain the various aspects of *son jarocho* making to beginners. *Fandango* was a peculiar learning space in which practitioners learnt by testing out what they heard and saw; and yet, getting close to other *jaraneros* to mimic their actions was not a smooth process, as Marco explains:

> Once I was playing in a *fandango* and my *jarana* was out of tune. An old *jaranero* nearby gave me a quick elbow and looked at me with a gesture of 'what are you doing?' I learnt that way, that was how we learnt at that time.[39]

Marco also mentioned how frustrating it was not being able to tune one's instrument and join the musicians, as approaching the *tarima* without being properly tuned

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[38] Excerpt from the transcript of an interview conducted with an anonymous practitioner in Xalapa, Mexico, April 8, 2013. Author's translation.
[39] Ibid.

would incur disapproval. Melodic lines, improvised verses, strumming patterns and dance steps comprised the building blocks of an embodied expertise that, in the particular context of *fandango*, represented a form of currency. Age and expertise were two facets of the same process, as this form of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986) was acquired over time. It was amassed as direct experience obtained through exposure and participation at *fandangos*. For this reason, these embodied assets were jealously protected and discreetly shared only under conditions of trust and sympathy.

Old *jaraneros* were involved neither in teaching nor in disseminating their personal ways of playing, dancing or improvising verses. Therefore, to become an 'apprentice', the young practitioner in question needed to visit an old *jaranero*, become his friend and demonstrate interest, empathy and admiration – all gestures that in this context were (and are still) seen as expressions of respect and humility. These gestures were also a type of currency directly exchangeable for practical *son jarocho* knowledge. The accumulation of expertise was considered a personal investment despite being incorporated through the reproduction of what other practitioners did. Here I should emphasise that I am describing a cultural practice of poor, mostly illiterate people for whom formal education and material wealth was (and still is) not easily available. Therefore, the memorisation of a repertoire of verses and the capacity to improvise upon them at weddings, religious celebrations, birthdays or Christmas represented a personal, intangible wealth. The old *jaraneros* did not conceive systematising and transmitting their practical knowledge because the practice was simply understood as the accumulated experience that one bears. But the ways of assigning value to this expertise changed with the recuperation of this tradition.

As was described in the previous section of this chapter, *fandangos* became less common in Sotavento during the mid-20th century, producing a severe devaluation of the old *jaraneros*' cultural capital. The polyphony of the melodic patterns of a *guitarra de son*, the various ways of tuning a *jarana*, or the smooth dance steps performed on the *tarima* did not hold the same value in that changing cultural landscape. New forms of entertainment replaced *fandangos* and dusty *jaranas* were hung on the walls through lack of use. This situation changed dramatically with the

efforts to valorise and recuperate the regional culture of Sotavento and the subsequent emergence of workshops during the last decades of the 20th century. Workshops became the principal device for the gradual reconstruction of this practice as an endangered and valuable tradition. Most interestingly, this process reconfigured the forms of exchange of this type of cultural capital between different generations.

The entanglement of the transmission and circulation of tacit knowledge constitutes a crucial layer of mobilities of practice. There is a marked contrast between the learning protocols of the old *jaraneros* and the learning practices of the workshops. The latter established new conditions for knowledge transmission and appropriation by reconfiguring the roles between experts and beginners. In these learning spaces a facilitator leads the session and helps others to practise the basic elements of *son jarocho* performance. Sequences of actions such as strumming patterns or a series of dance steps are dismantled, slowed down and repeated. In this new context it is not necessary to negotiate and make explicit the terms in which knowledge is going to be shared and learnt: it is presumed that interested practitioners have the right to learn as long as they are disposed to do so. Since workshops were primarily focused on the development of skills among young people from Sotavento, the participation of younger generations bypassed the forms of control of the elders on the practice. The old *jaraneros* were no longer in a position to decide whether to share their knowledge and expertise because the facilitators of these workshops were not the old *jaraneros* from remote communities, but the enthusiasts mentioned above. Many workshops were free or involved a minimal fee, yet participants were entitled to learn by the mere act of attending. Therefore, the fundamental changes in the transmission and appropriation of *son jarocho* did not reside in the content taught at workshops (as it is asserted in endless, orthodox discussions on what is ‘authentically’ traditional and how it should be taught), but in the non-explicit routines that were transmitted or bypassed under these new circumstances.

Age and embodied knowledge are still valuable forms of currency, but the methods of exchange have shifted. Being old and knowledgeable are no longer seen as inherently connected as younger generations quickly attain new skills through workshops that establish new forms of transmission, reproduction and re-creation of

the practice. I became aware of these nuanced generational differences as I was walking with a small group of young *jaraneros* after attending a workshop in a small town in Sotavento. We were passing by a crowded church and a fair that occupied the entire plaza. We stumbled across an old man who was greeted effusively by my companions. One of them asked him why he did not attend the workshop that afternoon since Gonzalo, a renowned *jaranero*, had come to town:

> 'No, I didn't want to', the old dancer replied.
> 'Oh, come on, but you are older [than him] and know much more than him!'
> 'No, if I went, he would make me dance at that thing you all do [taking part in the workshop]'.[40]

For the old dancer, workshops are not ideal spaces in which to cultivate *son jarocho*. Although he and the young *jaraneros* share a common practice, the ways in which specific skills are developed have changed. In their effort to rescue a tradition that was perceived as endangered, workshops have established new forms of transmission of know-how and reconfigured the relationships between generations of practitioners. At this point it is necessary to examine how tacit knowledge and other practice-specific elements are transmitted at *son jarocho* workshops. In doing so, the following section addresses the significance of the circulation and dissemination of rules and routines for the construction of cultural practices as ongoing traditions.

SON JAROCHO WORKSHOPS

The repetition of sets of procedures is a fundamental element of the process of learning cultural practices. Music making provides a good example of how the regular practise of series of actions allows practitioners to attain greater understanding and proficiency. Practising music, for instance, usually entails dividing, fragmenting and slowing down chains of action that integrate larger and coherent sequences. For this reason, the mastery of fragments is not enough to make

[40] This description is based on fieldnotes taken in Cosoleacaque, Mexico, March 28, 2013.

music, as the ability to link chains of action in seamless yet varied and inventive ways defines the character of a given performance. Mastering a practice is often assumed to be the capacity to enact a series of actions with grace and 'naturalness'. Repetition is not only fundamental to learning musical practices, but is also a precondition of practitioners playing together. Establishing recurrent rhythms, chord progressions and many other elements makes it possible to anticipate events as the performance unfolds, as well as to improvise within the limits of stylistic conventions. The interplay between repetition and improvisation is, then, a central aspect of the way in which practitioners attain fluency.

There are currently two basic and combinable ways of becoming a *son jarocho* practitioner. Some musicians and dancers from the region of Sotavento told me that they have learnt in a 'natural way', 'just by doing it at *fandangos*'. Indeed, there is a significant difference between 'growing up around the *tarima*' and attending workshops in which one is explicitly taught to perform in particular ways. For instance, Jenny, a young dancer from Sotavento, told me that she never felt exposed or nervous when dancing on the *tarima* because she always had an ostensibly natural disposition towards doing it. When I asked Jenny's mother about her daughter's inclination, she told me that she was eager to 'hang around the *tarima* and to dance with the adults soon after she learnt to walk'.[41] The development of proficiency through extended exposure to a practice has a deep effect on bodies to the extent of making a series of actions appear gracious and natural. On the contrary, a lack of exposure may result in the fragmented, clumsy or uneasy unfolding of actions. Many *son jarocho* practitioners grew up making up verses, strumming *jaranas*, and singing and dancing as a recreational activity embedded in everyday life. In remote villages on the plains of Sotavento, for example, people call to each other at a distance by shouting across *caseríos* (hamlets). This way of calling to each other is quite similar to the way in which *son jarocho* is sung, as singers' voices are typically projected loudly, as if shouting in tune. Contemporary urban life does not offer many opportunities to call another person in such a loud manner. Learning this practice by growing up around the *tarima* or in *caseríos* is not common any more, as most

[41] Excerpt from the fieldnotes taken while conducting fieldwork in Chinameca, Mexico, April 13, 2013. Author's translation.

practitioners today live in urban areas and attend workshops to develop proficiency at playing instruments, singing and dancing. Workshops are non-institutionalised, friendly and unofficial learning spaces in which people get together to practise with a certain regularity. No qualification is awarded, although they are far from being mere 'jam sessions' in which to experiment with folk music. Workshops are meant to be spaces for learning a specific repertoire by manipulating musical instruments in particular ways. I will elaborate on this analytical description by considering a concrete example.[42]

At a workshop Gonzalo, a renowned *jaranero* and workshop facilitator, explained the *cadencia* of a *son*. He first strummed his *jarana* so that we could hear how it should sound. The participants then focused on an exercise in which we played the rhythmic pattern of that strumming with our *jaranas*, while muting the strings so that we could only hear the percussive rhythm without the chords. After that exercise we all added the chords, but the rhythms were not played in the correct tempo, sounding like a mass of indistinguishable chords. Gonzalo then recalled the galloping of a horse to illustrate how the rhythm of that particular *son* should feel: 'you guys have to mount the horse! It's not tum… tum, tum, tum; tum… tum, tum, tum. It is tom, tum, tum… tum; tom, tum, tum… tum'.[43] He was saying this while mimicking a person riding a horse. His intention was to illustrate the subtle unevenness of the pulse as exemplified by an imaginary rider on a horse galloping at a cadenced pace. The rhythm should not be played straight (establishing the same duration between the chords), but with that specific *cadencia*. The strumming of chords was to be accomplished on time, but in a slightly irregular way so that the notes do not last exactly the same amount of time. Thus, the rhythmic 'feel' is produced by a non-uniform strumming, although the unevenness has to be carefully controlled since its exaggeration can lead to alterations that disrupt the tempo and make it impossible to play together as a group. Later, at that workshop, Gonzalo became a little tired of the group's incapacity to replicate the exact *cadencia* that he tried to teach us. He then

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[42] The following descriptions are based on fieldnotes and audio recordings of a workshop in Cosoleacaque, Mexico, March 26, 2013.
[43] Excerpt from the transcript of the audio recording of the aforementioned workshop. Author's translation.

said, ‘well, you hardly ever hear the galloping of a horse. Your lives are different, and that is why the *cadencia* of today’s *son jarocho* is different’.[44]

Gonzalo’s assertion captures much of the spirit of *son jarocho* workshops by alluding to the transformation of this practice in relation to their proliferation. These changes, he suggests, emerge from the disconnection of practitioners from the rhythms of rural Sotavento. But his assertion also refers to the more general issue of the contrast between learning at workshops (which is a relatively recent pedagogical environment) and learning in ‘the natural way’. By analysing how sets of actions are practised at *son jarocho* workshops, the following section addresses how these learning practices entail a contrast between the fragmentation and simplification of sets of actions into manageable exercises, and the integration of these parts into meaningful sequences that resemble ‘the natural way’. These processes are part of two related issues: the rhythmic coordination of practitioners’ actions within a group through non-verbal gestures, and the reclamation of a traditional identity.

Entering the workshop

Soon after arriving in Mexico City, I stumbled upon an advertisement on the Internet announcing that a renowned *jaranero* was giving a workshop at a cultural centre in a small town of Sotavento called Cosoleacaque. I assumed that this was a perfect way to start my fieldwork in the region, because a famous figure was likely to attract practitioners from neighbouring towns. A week later I arrived in that location after an overnight bus trip from Mexico City. The practical arrangements for the journey were carefully prepared as an attempt to compensate for the uncertainty of conducting fieldwork in a region that was relatively unknown to me, my lack of contacts and acquaintances, and a recently discovered ignorance of many practical aspects of *son jarocho* making. This last point is important because, just a few days before departing, I started to realise that my deep expertise in playing guitar would not suffice when dealing with *son jarocho* instruments. For instance, I spent hours on the Internet looking for information on how to tune a *chaquiste* (a small type of

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[44] Ibid.

jarana) and could not find the slightest hint. Serendipity would prove to take a prominent role while conducting the fieldwork, but at that moment it seemed sensible to spend hours looking for documentation on how to use that instrument before travelling to the south. There are scant written materials dealing with the performative aspects of *son jarocho's* music and dance, which contrasts with the large volume of user-generated content on the Internet. The latter tends to portray limited aspects of the practice and rarely involves a form of musical, dance or textual transcription. The scarcity of transcriptions is not incidental; it is associated with the way in which workshops are structured.

I arrived at this town before noon, and by the afternoon I had prepared my camera, digital audio recorder and musical instruments, and headed towards the cultural centre indicated on the advertisement found on the Internet.[45] Finding the street was not hard, but I simply could not see where the cultural centre was. Many houses were not numbered; there was a school at the corner, and there was nobody on the street from whom to ask for directions. In any case, I was quite sure of being on the right street. Then, as I was walking up and down the street, I heard the strumming of a *jarana*. That was all I needed! Finding the place was then just a matter of letting myself be guided by the sound. I walked down a ramp and found that the cultural centre could not be seen from any side of the street as it was located downhill and hidden by dense foliage. People who frequent this place apparently know the area well, so there is no need for a signboard. There were plenty of trees and plants and, as one walks down the ramp, it is possible to distinguish a large patio covered by high corrugated metal roofing, many chairs and, at the very end, large rooms used as a kitchen and as bedrooms. When I arrived there were only a few people on the patio tuning their *jaranas*. I asked them about the workshop, and they said that I was in the right place and we started talking. They asked where I was from, if I played *son jarocho* in Mexico City, and if I knew musicians around Veracruz. They seemed slightly disappointed when they discovered that my enthusiasm for this music was disproportionate to my knowledge of it. Still, they were welcoming and introduced me as 'a friend from Mexico [City]' when someone joined the conversation. More

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[45] The following descriptions and quotes are based on fieldnotes and audio recordings of the aforementioned workshop. Author's translation.

young *jaraneros* were arriving; I later found out that they had travelled from Chinameca, Jáltipan, Chacalapa, Minatitlan and other neighbouring towns.

Two men who looked older than the rest walked down the ramp holding, respectively, a *jarana* and a *leona*. Fernando and Roberto, I was to find out later, were the organisers and regular facilitators of these workshops, although on that occasion the renowned *jaranero* would be in charge of the teaching. They had not quite got to the patio when Fernando loudly said 'Come on guys, tune your *jaranas* because Gonzalo is about to arrive!' Then he saw me with a certain surprise; I was an unfamiliar face. He approached me, said 'hi', and then asked me how I had heard about the workshop, and where I was staying. When I mentioned that I had seen the advertisement on the cultural centre's Facebook page and was staying at the local hotel, he seemed a little disappointed and said that I should have sent a Facebook message, and asked if anybody could offer me a couch:

> 'You wouldn't have paid [for a] hotel. Well, next time. So, what do you have in there?' he asked, pointing at my instruments.
> 'I've brought this *requinto* and this *chaquiste*', I said.
> 'I didn't bring anything', said the guy standing beside me.
> 'How come! Going to war with no rifle?', Fernando exclaimed. 'I may look rude, but I should ask why did you come, then?' That last question was interrupted by the noise of dozens of chairs being arranged because Gonzalo, the well-known *jaranero*, had just arrived.

There were about thirty attendees sitting around the *tarima*, which was right at the centre of the patio. Most were under twenty years old. Gonzalo stepped up onto the *tarima*, apologised for being late, and asked for a G note to tune his *jarana*. Tall, stocky and mature, Gonzalo's countenance was severe and intimidating. The fact that nobody talked was surprising, particularly in a context where jokes and laughter are intrinsic to everyday life.

Figure 6: Workshop in a Sotavento town. Author's photograph.

'This *jarana* has travelled a lot in the last few days, that's why it is hard to tune. Well, I wanted to check some points with you guys. I heard some things last time we were playing together in here, and I'd like to check them out', Gonzalo said. As he continued tuning, the rest also discreetly checked their tunings. Apparently we were all out of tune, but among all those instruments the correct point of reference was difficult to establish. Everyone tuned by ear (intuitively, without the aid of tuners) and we were unlikely to be tuned with a reference of A as 440 Hertz.

> 'Let's start with "El Pájaro Cú". Who knows how to play that *son*?', Gonzalo asked. No one replied. After a brief silence, Fernando and Roberto prompted the attendees to participate. 'Hey guys, someone who plays "El Pájaro Cú"…'

Gonzalo slowly strummed a few chords, emphasising certain beats. He explained the basic rhythmic figure that distinguishes 'El Pájaro Cú', and then we all started to play together the same strumming pattern at the tempo that he had set. He kept on describing the details of the chord progression and its rhythmic characteristics; we continued dutifully playing, always after he spoke. He then turned to the corner where I was sitting and said 'let's see, play what we were just playing'. I replicated the progression with my *chaquiste*. The chords sounded right, but, as I later

understood, my fingering patterns were unusual. 'Oh, I wanted to make sure you are playing the right chords. I see you are using a different tuning, then', he said. As previously mentioned, I did not know how to tune a *chaquiste*, so I just set a tuning that suited the strings and size of the instrument in a way that allowed me to play chord progressions in C major with relative ease. But Gonzalo showed interest because tuning *jaranas* in different ways is rooted in archaic practices, such as the tuning of baroque and renaissance guitars (García de León 2002).[46] In this context, old tunings are a sign of authenticity because the recuperation of these tuning practices is part of the affirmation of a tradition in contrast to a folklorised form of *son jarocho* (as will be discussed later in this section). The workshop continued with the description of specific *sones* and their details on how they should be played. Gonzalo then asked:

> 'How do you feel when playing, for example, a "Morena" or a "Cascabel"?'
> There was a brief silence. 'Anyone? Are they the same, similar or different?'
> 'They are different', a voice said from the back of the patio.
> 'Why?'
> 'Because of the downbeat and the backbeat', said Roberto.
> 'All right, who can hum the theme of "El Cascabel"? All *sones* have a theme when they start', said Gonzalo.
> Complete silence.
> 'Come on, guys, why did you come if you are not gonna talk?', said Fernando.
> Silence.
> 'Don't be mean, because I know you know it', said Gonzalo.
> Seconds passed and I felt the silence to be unbearable. I was holding my *guitarra de son* (which in this case I knew well how to tune and play because its tuning resembles that of the guitar) and suddenly plucked what I thought was the theme of 'El Cascabel'.

[46] There are some extant works from the 16th century that describe tuning schemes for vihuela, lute and renaissance four-course guitar that were shared across the Atlantic. Some examples are the texts written by Luis Narváez (1980 [1538]), Juan Bermudo (2009 [1555]), and Alonso Mudarra (1984 [1546]). They are testimonies to the tuning practices that have been used and developed by *son jarocho* practitioners over the centuries.

> 'No, no, no. You are playing a melody. That is the commercial melody, as we say', asserted Gonzalo. Then a musician sitting on the other side of the patio played the theme and everyone joined in a generalised strumming.

There is indeed a difference between 'melody' and 'theme'. Every *son* is distinguished, not by a specific melody (as in popular songs), but by an introductory theme that sets the *cadencia*[47] or rhythmic 'feel' that characterises each *son*. Gonzalo said that I was playing 'the commercial melody' to make a relevant distinction between what is considered to be the folklorised form of *son jarocho* and its traditional form. Regarding the latter, he explained, one does not sing a particular melody to identify the *son*, but recalls themes and *cadencias* to identify and define each of them. Gonzalo then used the example of 'La Morena' and 'El Cascabel' to describe the subtle differences of two rhythmic patterns of *son jarocho*:

> These differences have been ignored by commercial *son jarocho*, but are an important part of the tradition. They are something that people should preserve. There is a lady whose name is 'La Negra Graciana'; Discos Corazon recorded her, and the other day I heard her music, I think it was on the radio. She was playing 'El Cascabel', and was playing it 'straight', as traditional musicians call it. So Graciana was playing 'El Cascabel' and in the middle of the *son* she started singing 'La Morena'. I mean, she was singing '*Bonito tu cascabel, bonito tu cascabel…*' and suddenly '*Una morena me dijo…*' That wouldn't happen to someone who knows *sones* [the traditional repertoire], because they are very different. Long time ago, when I started playing, I didn't know that either. There was a moment in which Don Arcadio[48] said to me 'who told you that "El Cascabel" is played straight?' And I stared at him in the same way you are doing now, I didn't understand what he was talking about. I learned it by looking at his hand because he played the chord changes before me, because 'El Cascabel' has that difference, it doesn't follow the chord changes on time, it is backbeat.

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[47] See footnote 1, Introduction.

[48] Don Arcadio Hidalgo is a well-known *son jarocho* musician who became visible only after the re-emergence of this musical practice during the last decades of the twentieth century.

Gonzalo's assertion illustrates two important and entangled points: on one hand, he indicates the relevance of observing, listening and repeating in order to learn aspects of the practice that are not clearly noticeable. By carefully looking at, and listening to, the strumming of an old *jaranero* and reproducing it, Gonzalo learnt the rhythmic distinction between *derecho* (downbeat) and *atravesado* (backbeat). On the other hand, the ability to demarcate and enact the difference between these two rhythms is also part of a parallel learning process, that of enacting traditional as opposed to folklorised *son jarocho*. Before discussing the opposition that Gonzalo established, it is necessary briefly to address the importance of observing and listening, and their relationship to the way in which *son jarocho* is transmitted.

Learning 'by ear' and silent practices

The practice of *son jarocho* is learnt 'by ear' – that is, by listening to, observing and replicating what others do. Written records that explicitly detail how to play, dance or compose lyrics are practically non-existent, with only a handful of texts that appeared in recent years providing general guidelines on how to play *son jarocho* instruments or to perform dance steps (see García and Gutiérrez 2002; Gutiérrez and Pascoe 2003). Similarly, there are a few compilations of verses in the form of books and PDF files that circulate among practitioners, but these texts have little use at *fandangos* since, at these events, verses are sung from memory or improvised. The increasing volume of user-generated resources on the Internet, particularly in the format of video, still image and (to a lesser extent) audio, are widely used by practitioners. However, these media do not entail any form of transcription. Workshops are structured in a way that emphasises repetition and memorisation, partly because of the scarcity of written/transcribed materials. Since the emergence of workshops and their dissemination across several locations in Mexico and the US, there has been a gradual incorporation of the transcription of verses, strumming patterns, chord progressions and dance steps through the use of whiteboards, handouts, verse compilations and strumming 'cheat-sheets'. Still, there is little preoccupation among practitioners with finding ways to transcribe what is already performed. The ways in which workshops are structured tend to position collective engagement and performative flow over an individual development of skills. Therefore, getting together in groups to practise fragments of *sones* is the

workshop's organising principle.

The scarcity of written records is even more surprising when we acknowledge that the routines, rules and rituals performed at *fandangos* have been continuously practised in more-or-less the same form for about three centuries (García de León 2009). How is it possible to sustain a consistent cultural practice for such a long time despite the absence of written records? The notion of 'oral tradition' might be invoked to categorise *son jarocho's* transmissibility, especially in light of this practice's emergence in a context in which most practitioners were illiterate, as literacy in Sotavento was until recently the privilege of only a few. However, thinking of *son jarocho* as orally transmitted is not accurate because its routines, rules and rituals are not only situated in what people say; in fact, many gestures and other actions that are transmitted from generation to generation, and from practitioner to practitioner, are not verbally communicated but appropriated through immersion in the practice.

The previous chapter, which dealt with the unfolding of *fandango,* contains examples that illustrate how manifold actions and meanings of this practice are not only situated in orality, but primarily in bodies and objects. Taken for granted actions, such as clearing the way for old *jaraneros* when playing around the *tarima,* reading each other's gestures to anticipate who is going to sing or dance next, or not starting a *fandango* without a *tarima*, are just a few examples of the myriad of non-explicit understandings that constitute *son jarocho*. Most of the sequences that are set in motion at *fandangos* are situated in the actions of bodies in relation to artefacts as 'not only bodies but also artefacts are sites of understanding, in the form of materialized understanding' (Reckwitz 2002b: 212). Therefore, the transmissibility and continuity of the routines, rules and rituals of *son jarocho* are accomplished through the reproduction of non-explicit practices, a process that Ann Swidler (2005) refers to as 'silent practices'. Swidler uses this term to point out the 'unspoken realities upon which more directly symbolic or linguistically mediated activities are based' (2005: 94). This notion can be used as a thinking tool to reflect on the ways in which certain overlooked actions (the *silent* dimension of recurrent actions) organise larger sets of cultural practices (DeNora 2007).

Dividing, fragmenting and slowing down *sones* at workshops are explicit workshop activities that differ from the implicit, non-verbalised 'glueing' of these sets of actions. The ability to perform sets of actions as part of a logical and intelligible flow is cultivated through silent practices. One of the most relevant aspects of workshops is the cultivation of the capacity to play together at the same time. Playing a common rhythmic pattern within a group, sustaining a common pulse and *cadencia*, is one of the main objectives at workshops. Participants usually mute the strings with the left hand and repeat the strumming rhythm with the right. After repeating this pattern a few times, the chord progression is incorporated into playing the *son* in question and then practitioners prompt verses while strumming.

The process is similar at workshops in which dance is taught: the stomping pattern is simplified and practised in small exercises. These fragments are then articulated into a larger sequence of steps that combines the *zapateo* (stomping) with the *mudanceo* (soft dancing). In all cases, workshops inculcate a particular rhythmic sense (a rhythmic form of 'practical sense', see Bourdieu 1998: 25) that is based on following a regular pulse and *cadencia*. These exercises can be practised individually, but the fact of rehearsing them within a group provokes participants to engage in a common rhythm and to attain the capacity to align their actions within a collectivity (Duffy et al. 2011). As Barry Barnes (2005: 32) suggests, practitioners are 'interdependent social agents, linked by a profound mutual susceptibility, who constantly modify their habituated individual responses as they interact with others, in order to sustain a shared practice'.

The capacity of being interdependent in rhythm is perhaps the most important skill attained through the participation at workshops and *fandangos*. Playing together is a form of *temporal proximity* in which each participant in the workshop simultaneously follows a rhythmic pulse and the irregularities of the *cadencia*. Being contiguous in the unfolding of events is similar to the physical proximity that is sustained while moving within a group: practitioners hold various degrees of closeness that are constantly adjusted as the group moves. The more proximate individual actions are in relation to time, the 'tighter' the ensemble sounds. Being temporally and spatially contiguous is the foundation of the temporal and spatial arrangements of *fandango*. As Henri Lefebvre (2004: 60) suggests, '[p]erhaps music

presupposes a unity of time and space, an alliance. In and through rhythm?' The rhythmicity of arrangements is a relevant aspect of the mobilities of cultural practices, as will be discussed in Chapter 5. For now it suffices to say that, similar to the way in which geographical displacement transforms cultural practices by establishing different degrees of spatial proximity (Cresswell 2006), rhythmic circulation also transforms cultural practices by establishing different degrees of temporal proximity. The spatio-temporal arrangements produced during performances have been transformed by the attempts to rescue and preserve this tradition, a paradox that is addressed in the following section.

PRESERVING A CHANGING PRACTICE

The differentiation between traditional and folklorised *son jarocho* acquired its full social meaning in the process of disseminating a practice that was at apparent risk of extinction. The use of this difference is significant for understanding how this practice changes as it moves. The systems of meaning that structure the recuperation of this practice are at the core of these transformations. Disseminating *son jarocho* through workshops has been the main strategy that current practitioners use to reclaim a traditional identity. In these workshops a specific repertoire is learnt, shared and adjusted according to explicit and implicit rules. These rules are not merely capricious or stylistic choices, but actions that draw a distinction between these two ways of making *son jarocho*. In the case of the workshop facilitated by Gonzalo, the emphasis he put on playing 'El Cascabel' with a backbeat rhythm and 'La Morena' with downbeat shows the pragmatic use of such a difference.

The term 'traditional' is used by practitioners as a means of inscribing an identity in contrast to a foklorised *son jarocho*. It can be illustrated with a straightforward example: 'La Bamba' became an iconic song after Richie Valens recorded it in 1958 as a rock and roll adaptation of a *son* with that name. The song has become so popular that many can recall the first verse of the lyrics, which says '*para bailar la*

bamba, para bailar la bamba se necesita una poca de gracia'.[49] There is no other way of starting that song; changing the lyrics could only produce a different song or a musical remake. It also starts with a C major chord (when played in the key of C major), has an upbeat rhythm, and many other characteristics that make it widely recognisable as a rock and roll song. Many different versions of this song have been recorded, always starting with the same lyrics, a C major chord (or first degree, depending on the key), and perhaps a slightly different tempo. The musical instruments used may vary, but in every case it remains as a single, coherent and recognisable song.

Contrastingly, the traditional *son* 'La Bamba' does not necessarily start with the aforementioned lyrics, but with any verse that the practitioner chooses to sing, as long as it refers to the themes of 'La Bamba', such as sailing, the sea, flirting, romantic relationships, *etc*. In fact, *son jarocho* practitioners sometimes refuse to use the lyrics of the rock and roll version in order to demarcate further between the folklorised version and the traditional one—traditional practitioners may want to start by improvising a verse or singing something like '*una vez yo te dije, una vez yo te dije que eres bonita…*'[50] This *son* does not start in C major, but in G or G7 (fifth degree, again depending on the key) and can be played with different instruments tuned in assorted ways. These are just some examples of the many actions performed at workshops and *fandangos* to separate one way of making music from another.

This difference is not produced by an idea or opinion about two musical genres residing in people's heads, but is enacted through choices, gestures and routines that *son jarocho* practitioners share and learn at workshops. It could be argued that practitioners have performed this musical piece in the same way for centuries and that those playing 'La Bamba' as a song have altered what was originally conceived as a *son*. However, particular ways of dancing, making music or improvising verses are currently considered by *son jarocho* practitioners to be traditional - not just because they are rooted in the past, but because their meaning is constructed as the continuation of an ongoing past. These actions are constitutive of a system of shared

[49] "To dance 'La Bamba', to dance 'La Bamba' one needs a bit of grace" (author's translation).
[50] "Once I said to you, once I said to you that you are pretty..." (author's translation).

meanings that make Gonzalo's workshop comment significant when he succinctly said: 'No, no, no. You are playing a melody. That is the commercial melody, as we [traditional practitioners] say'. The remark was shared among the attendees because we all knew that a symbolic boundary was at stake. The differentiation between 'traditional' and 'commercial' or folklorised *son jarocho* is important to understanding the system of meanings that structures the reclamation and recuperation of a traditional identity as it moves and becomes mobile across geographical and social spaces.

Critical stances towards workshops

After several decades of transformation, many of the former enthusiasts have looked back to think from a more critical perspective about the outcomes of their initial strategies of recuperation. An example of these reflexive stances comes from a workshop in Sotavento in which the facilitator, who has long actively participated in this recuperation, tried to persuade us of the deficiencies of these ways of learning:

> There is a difference between waiting to be called by an old man to join the group of musicians at *fandango*, and just joining in as you arrive. It's better when they know you and call you [to join them]. But if you just get there and start playing… no, that is different. That is what has been lost at workshops: respect. Because the facilitators don't provide enough information, they just go there to *machetear la figura* [to 'carve out' melodies with a machete], to teach techniques, and there is not enough information [about how to behave at *fandangos*].[51]

Portraying workshops as spaces in which performance techniques are 'carved out' provides a meaningful metaphor for thinking with the practice. At a typical workshop, facilitators demonstrate basic patterns such as chord progressions, verse structures or dance steps, and then the whole group engages in their repetition. As has been shown in the previous sections of this chapter, the common denominator of

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[51] Excerpt from the transcript of the audio recording of a workshop in Isla de Tacamichapan, Mexico, April 3, 2013.

the elements taught at workshops is rhythm, which is expressed in the form of singing or composing verses, playing instruments or dancing. These elements form patterns that allow groups of practitioners to engage in synchronised ways of doing. Thus, the main achievement of workshops has been to 'carve out' the hard surface of embodied dispositions to produce new ones; that is, to train practitioners to produce synchronised ways of being in relation to other practitioners and artefacts. The problem arises when the 'carving out' of these dispositions is de-contextualised. The development of technical skills for performances has apparently 'rescued' an endangered tradition at the expense of leaving behind those elements of the practice that, despite being inherent to it, are no longer identified as skills by the new practitioners. Marco is also one of the enthusiasts who advanced the valorisation and recuperation of *son jarocho* during the last decades of the 20th century. His personal trajectory has led him to rethink the recent transformations of the practice from a much more critical stance:

> I felt a bit uncomfortable with that thing, you know, people coming here to Veracruz, staying one week, we sell instruments to them, we can earn some money from what they pay for the workshops or for the instruments, and we can eat from what they have paid. And then we let them go and, with one month of experience, they arrive at other places. We teach them to play *jarana*, but that does not guarantee that they understand what we want them to understand. Here [in Sotavento] we know those things [how to carry oneself at *fandangos*] because we are close to one another, because were are here in Veracruz and have that [understanding] at hand. But we charge them for the workshop, sell instruments that we make and, on top of that, we tell them 'now you go to your town and keep on playing', because more players mean more paid workshops and instruments to sell, right? Are we misconceiving these aspects of surviving with our own culture?[52]

Constructing instruments, teaching at workshops and performing professionally have become a way of life for some practitioners. Although many of their daily activities

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[52] Excerpt from the transcript of an interview conducted with an anonymous practitioner in Xalapa, Mexico, April 8, 2013. Author's translation.

involve work 'for the community' (which is unpaid work), there is an ambiguous overlap between the disinterested promotion of a cultural practice and the possibility of making a living out of it. This issue is a peculiar consequence of the process of recuperation of traditional *son jarocho*. Despite the emergence of a modest grass-roots market of instruments, workshops, professional recordings and performances, interpreting the initiatives of the enthusiasts of the 1970s (and the generations that followed them) in terms of economic instrumentality would be misleading. Being a full-time *son jarocho* performer is not a profitable activity, and it has more to do with an ascetic life of self-sacrifice than the comfortable status of glamorous folk musicians.

A small number of *son jarocho* groups has been able to position themselves in the so-called 'world music' market; that is, in the commercialisation and distribution of recorded music that is not classified as part of classical and pop musical genres of Western Europe and North America (see, for instance, Frith 1989; Connell and Gibson 2003). However, the vast majority of practitioners who are completely dedicated to these activities has to combine the construction and selling of instruments, teaching at workshops, recording and touring with their groups, and applying for grants, among other activities, to meet their basic economic needs. The cultural capital accumulated through the practice of *son jarocho* is not easily exchanged for economic capital. For Marco, however, the gradual commodification of this cultural practice is connected to not being able to make new practitioners 'understand what we want them to understand' as the practice moves. He has noticed that the ability to perform *son jarocho* is only one among many facets of this tradition. To him, workshops have proven incapable of transmitting the implicit routines upon which traditional *fandangos* were based.

These routines established ways of relating to one another that were largely taken for granted as they were gradually transmitted through participation at *fandangos*. Practitioners reproduced what they saw and heard at *fandangos* while cultivating a personal craft. These actions were carried out in an environment that presumed implicit understandings. Contrastingly, the 'carving out' of skills for musical performance has not ensured the continuity of this cultural practice, especially now that it is moving across different contexts. The implicit routines enacted at *fandangos*

do not constitute skills in themselves, but habitual dispositions that frame dynamic arrangements of actions, ideas, artefacts and groups of people. For example, before the introduction of nylon strings and modern instrument making-techniques, *jarana* strings were made of catgut, a fibre made of the dried intestines of horses. The characteristics of this material enabled *jaraneros* to tune their instruments in many different ways. These variations depended on the region, the size of the instrument and the quality of the strings that were used. It can also be said that, as with many other musical matters, tuning was an expression of a personal taste. As we have seen, traditional tuning practices differ from the use of equal temperament with a reference of A as 440 Hertz; therefore, practitioners typically approached the *tarima* to tune their instruments taking into consideration the height that the locals have chosen. This simple gesture was part of the implicit set of relationships between guests and hosts at *fandangos*. Contemporary *fandangos* have different relationships among *jaraneros* as they tend to tune their instruments with the reference of A as 440 Hertz as a matter of convention. The standardisation of tuning practices emerged when new workshops needed to establish a uniform tuning so that individuals could learn within large groups. The simple act of tuning either at workshops or around the *tarima* is just an example of wider processes of circulation of implicit understandings that are in constant flux. More generally speaking, the demarcation of a boundary between folklorised and traditional *son jarocho*, and the dissemination of the latter through workshops, are processes that have entwined cultural continuity and transformation.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has aimed to advance an understanding of the diffusion, transmission and reproduction of cultural practices that considers different layers or scales of mobility. The circulation of cultural practices across the Atlantic during colonial times; the consolidation of a regional practice from Sotavento that followed the reconfiguration of those networks of relationships; the construction of a folklorised practice from that tradition and its successive reinvention (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2000) and attempted recuperation, were all addressed here to illustrate entangled

processes of mobility. These overlapping layers formed an 'ecological niche' in which *son jarocho* was constructed as a reified identity, a topic to be further examined in the following chapters. This is not to suggest that the historical development of this cultural practice and its importance for the collective identity of the people of Sotavento were simply invented. As argued above, the bundles of routinised activities such as dancing, singing verses, and playing and constructing instruments existed long before its ostensible recuperation. The cultural practice of *fandango* has been, indeed, cultivated, preserved and transmitted from generation to generation.

Various types of mobility, such as the constant circulation around the *tarima* and the maritime movement across the Atlantic, are testimonies to a more-or-less consistent celebration among the peasants of Sotavento. Furthermore, this practice is intimately felt to be part of the identity of its practitioners. However, there is an ongoing construction of a tradition through the use of a difference that already existed between the bundles of routinised activities that take place at *fandango* (as a long established celebration among peasants of Sotavento) and the folklorised *son jarocho* produced by official propaganda and the media. I suggest that specific ways of enacting the practice constitute a tradition not only because they are represented as the continuation of an ongoing past, but principally because their meaning is opposed to that of the folklorised *son jarocho* promoted by the Mexican state and the media. By using the old materials, the contemporary traditional *son jarocho* has turned workshops into devices for the transmission, circulation and dissemination of practice-specific elements. Furthermore, the entanglement of various devices, meanings and mobilities is not, as noted, a mere abstraction, but a series of empirically traceable actions continuously enacted through gestures, choices and dispositions that construct this tradition as a contemporary cultural practice on the move.

The practice of traditional *son jarocho* is currently moving fast and far. Its contemporary mobilities are providing resources for the creation and negotiation of meanings on the move. The interplay between routine and improvisation, the rhythmic circulation around the *tarima*, the production of spatio-temporal arrangements, and the dissemination of this practice through workshops, are

examples of multilayered processes of mobility that extend across networks of relationships. Regardless of their place of residence, most contemporary *son jarocho* practitioners have some awareness of taking part in a living tradition and engaging with an ongoing past. This conscious perception contrasts with the apparently unpremeditated, spontaneous perspective of those who learnt 'just by doing it at *fandangos*' through extended exposure to the practice. Workshops have become the predominant space to attain the capacity to judge and be positioned in space and time that is required at performances, as well as the main device through which a tradition has been transmitted, mobilised and shared.

This practice is changing as it moves. The efforts to preserve it have been also accompanied by gradual - yet discernible - changes in the repertoires of bodily gestures, routines and rules as they are re-created. Contrasting with the rural way of life that is described in the verses that are learnt by heart at workshops and sung at *fandangos*, a large proportion of practitioners learn and perform *son jarocho* in entirely different environments, as the issue of recalling a rhythm in reference to the galloping of a horse revealed. 'How to sing the verses of [the *son* called] "La Guacamaya" (The Macaw), if we have hardly ever seen one?', a *jaranero* once told me as we were leaving a *fandango* in the American north west. Many of the old verses that have been passed from generation to generation are gradually acquiring new meanings; some new verses are extemporised, taking into account the different contexts in which performances take place. The adaptation of musical phrases and other stylistic elements, use of commercial recordings to establish standards of excellence, or the increasing standardisation of the repertoire, are some of the markers of these transformations. These apparently mundane acts are examples of a more general and complex issue: the mobility of cultural practices carries their transformation and their preservation entails their change. This paradox encapsulates the contemporary predicament of contemporary *son jarocho*. To a considerable extent, this tension is produced by the geographical displacement of people, artefacts and the circulation and transmission of know-how across networks of relationships. These are the issues to be addressed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Journeying with the practice

> […] everyday co-ordination assumes spatial as well as temporal parameters. This reflects the reality that, despite information and telecommunications 'saturation' (English-Lueck, 2002), most of us spend much of each day orchestrating continual movement in relation to others. (Jarvis 2005: 139)

> When life is successful, it is made of well-ordered times; vertically, it is made of superimposed and richly orchestrated instants; horizontally, it is linked to itself by the perfect cadence of successive instants that are unified in their role. (Bachelard 2000: 144)

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores how different elements of *son jarocho* circulate across geographically dispersed communities of practitioners. Although practices do not travel in the literal sense of the word, their mobilities are possible, in part, because of the physical displacement of practitioners and artefacts. Analysing the trajectories of practitioners and objects such as musical instruments provides an empirical window into the processes through which practices become appropriated and re-enacted in different locations. In the first section of this chapter I focus on how *jaraneros* travel with the practice. The relevance of human travelling has been widely discussed in the mobilities literature (see, for instance, Bissell 2014), yet the actual ways in which travelling intervenes in the circulation of practice-specific knowledge has received less attention (Hui 2013). I then analyse how artefacts circulate by specifically looking at mechanisms through which musical instruments get into the hands of its practitioners in geographically dispersed locations. After addressing the transportation of artefacts, in the last section I examine the implications of 'packing' and 'unpacking' intangible elements. It is argued that competencies do not travel in the same way as artefacts, yet both are practice-based elements that are prepared

before they are moved, as well as received and used in specific ways as they circulate. Artefacts, it is proposed, can be literally unpacked but know-how must be decoded (Shove et al. 2012: 44-57). People, artefacts and know-how circulate in distinct ways. Their mobilities are not mere ‘episodes’ in the dynamics of practice, but constitute overlapping processes of the production of culture. We now turn to human travelling to illustrate how practitioners move with the practice.

ORCHESTRATING MOVEMENT

The act of travelling regularly implies an intricate organisation. Everyday commuting, as quotidian as it sounds, is an example of the articulation of know-how, information and material infrastructures (Cresswell and Merriman 2011). Commuters, for instance, usually have a tacit understanding of assorted pieces of information that allows them to take trains, buses, drive cars or ride bicycles (see, for instance, Jain 2006). This understanding, however, relies on material infrastructures such as streets, petrol stations, ticket vendor machines or pedestrian lines that make journeying possible (Urry 2007). From everyday commuting to global forms of circulation, there is a complex articulation between mobility, tacit understandings and material infrastructures. Practices of mobility are orchestrations in which various forms of knowledge, meanings, material infrastructures and artefacts are articulated to produce physical displacement. In this way, ‘[o]rchestrating continual movement in relation to others’ (Jarvis 2005: 139) is intrinsic to the experience of everyday life.

As might be anticipated, the word ‘orchestration’ is used evocatively in this section to refer simultaneously to practices of mobility and to the performative character of music. It is not unusual to find this term used in scholarly texts to describe the organisation of elements to accomplish movement (see, for example, Gault 1995: 153; Urry 2000: 59; Larsen et al. 2006: 19). But what exactly does orchestrating movement mean? The craft of symphonic orchestration consists of scoring a work for the various elements that comprise a given orchestra. Despite the historical variations in the use and combination of orchestral instruments, the common denominator of the art of orchestration has been the consideration and skilful

arrangement of the various forces that are in motion within an orchestra (Mathews 2006). This interplay of forces in motion echoes the practice of mobility: just as with the instrumental craft of orchestrating, the practice of mobility is based on the consideration of given forces and infrastructures and the skilful arrangement of means and competencies. In the following passages I focus on how practitioners move with the practice (Hui 2013) - that is, the ways in which *jaraneros* bring together different material and symbolic resources to take part in workshops, *fandangos* and performances. To illustrate this point I analyse the case of Pedro,[53] a practitioner who teaches and performs in several locations in Mexico and the US connected by communities of *son jarocho* practitioners.

'Using whatever I had at hand'

After two months of travelling, Pedro finished another teaching tour. The workshops took place in Seattle, Los Angeles, San Diego, Santa Ana, Mexico City, Guanajuato, Queretaro and Guadalajara, and he finally arrived in Xalapa[54] to perform in a festival along with other *son jarocho* musicians. The first time I met Pedro was at a week-long workshop in rural Sotavento in which he was teaching *jarana*. During the following months, I ran into him at a couple of *fandangos* (first in Sotavento, then in California), at workshops that he gave in various cities in Mexico and the US, and also at some gatherings with other musicians. On those occasions we briefly conversed about the revival of traditional *son jarocho*, the vicissitudes of making a living as a musician, and music making in general. Those conversations were fragmented because of the agreeable messiness that prevails at festivities and, occasionally, at workshops. Yet, one day he found time in his busy schedule to have a more focused conversation about his activities as a *son jarocho* practitioner. The day of the interview[55] I picked him up at the house in which he was hosted and we then went to have lunch. As we were sitting at a small table of a conventional *taquería* (a restaurant in which tacos are served), a large TV screen at the end of the

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[53] The names of certain people and places are omitted to guarantee the anonymity of my interviewee.
[54] See the map provided in page 3.
[55] Excerpt from the transcript of an interview conducted with an anonymous *son jarocho* practitioner in California, United States, July 30, 2013. Author's translation.

room featured a soccer match that we ignored because our conversation went straight to the topic of music making. The meeting was in some way a continuation of the truncated conversations that we'd had before, with the only difference that this time a digital recorder – the technological mediator of our conversation (Hennion 2004) – was placed on the table, sitting between bowls of *salsa*, slices of lime and our greasy plastic plates. We were in southern California.

Pedro was hosted at the house of a group of *jaraneros* who regularly receive visitors from other cities while they attend workshops or *fandangos* in that city. As I entered the house earlier that day I saw tools and pieces of polished wood scattered around the living room. These wooden pieces were about to be glued together to form a new *jarana*. Pedro usually finishes his instruments as he travels in the US. The craftwork starts in his workshop in Sotavento, where he cuts the main body of the instruments, carves them out,[56] and makes the fretboard and tuning pegs. He then packs these pieces when they are almost finished and assembles them as he travels. This combination of activities is not casual: his main sources of income come from selling these instruments, teaching at workshops and performing with other musicians.

From the outset, the development of Pedro's craft of instrument making has been inseparable from that of teaching and performing. In the 1980s he joined a group of enthusiasts who organised *fandangos* and workshops in Sotavento. During these years he dropped out of university because he 'didn't like the [teaching] system' and decided to dedicate his time to learning to make *son jarocho* instruments and to the workshops that he was already facilitating:

> I was teaching *zapateado* (dancing) at [a cultural centre], but my students wanted to learn to play *jarana* and after we talked to the coordinators [of the cultural centre], we had some hours of *jarana* every week too. […] I was earning very little money and one day somebody brought a *jarana* that was

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[56] The body of the *jarana* and other *son jarocho* instruments is carved from one solid piece of wood. This is a technique for making stringed instruments that is embedded in a history of mobile technologies as it was used, for example, in the middle ages to make fiddles (Campbell and Campbell 2010: 302), renaissance lutes (Spring 2001: 5) and the Chinese p'i-p'a (Fletcher and Rossing 1998: 266).

> broken and asked me if I could repair it. That was an opportunity, a way to have an extra income. And then I just kept on going, I learnt by spoiling instruments. I tried many different ways. I was [recently] giving a workshop on building instruments very close to the Lake Michigan, and they [the students] didn't have enough tools. That wasn't a problem because I learnt on my own, using different tools and we made the instruments anyway […] When I started, I didn't have a drill press and used a normal drill to carve out the body of the instruments. I hung that drill with a piece of wire so I could have the right distance to carve out the wood without perforating the instrument beyond that mark. But sometimes the wire broke and I perforated the body of the *jarana*. I learnt in that way, trying, looking for ways to do it using whatever I had at hand.[57]

Improvising with the resources at hand has been a recurrent pattern in Pedro's process of learning the craft of instrument making, teaching and performing. This capacity to adapt to different circumstances became a collaborative skill as these forms of improvisation took place in a community of practitioners. Teaching at workshops had a significant role in this process. The workshops at the cultural centre continued for five years until the institution lacked the resources to pay his salary. The classes were then transferred to his own house and the attendees paid a small fee. There were about twelve regular families at these workshops: at first, most of the participants were children and adolescents, although there was a rotation over the years as their parents also joined in and their children moved to larger cities to continue with their studies. This small community of *jaraneros* reunited when the young practitioners travelled back home to attend a monthly *fandango.* During our conversation Pedro expressed how these activities were occasions that enhanced family conviviality and helped 'to keep the culture alive, otherwise, nobody would do it'. At the beginning, these workshops were characterised by the absence of a method to structure the sessions: they simply met to dance and play a few *sones*. But over the years these experiences were formative as Pedro gradually adopted more

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[57] Unless stated otherwise, all the subsequent quotes in this chapter are excerpts from the transcript of an interview conducted with an anonymous practitioner in California, July 30, 2013. Author's translation.

effective routines. Long and complex sequences of action were divided into small exercises such as simplified dance steps or strumming patterns. During these years, he and other practitioners teaching at workshops in Sotavento attained a series of competencies for 'packing' and 'unpacking' tacit knowledge. The 'abstraction' of practice-specific knowledge and its appropriation are crucial processes for the circulation of practice-specific knowledge (Shove et al. 2012: 48-53), a topic explored later in this chapter. For Pedro, however, the attainment of these skills was foundational for his future journeying with the practice.

During these years, travelling to *fandangos* in the region of Sotavento was also an important part of Pedro's learning and reproducing *son jarocho*. This journeying was also improvised to a certain extent since the necessary arrangements to make the trip possible were put together as the movement was conducted. During the interview, he recalled the unrehearsed ways in which he and other practitioners used to put information and material resources together to attend *fandangos*:

> When we were starting [making *son jarocho*], there were not many *fandangos* in the cities, very few. Once someone told me 'there is a *fandango* in Mecayapan'. 'Where is Mecayapan?' [Pedro asked], 'In the sierra, you go up entering from Cosoleacaque…' There was neither Internet, nor mobile phones at that time, so you only knew about *fandangos* when friends told you on the street 'hey, there's gonna be a *fandango* there…' I was with the others from the group and we borrowed a car from a relative, and there we go! We went in a *vochito* [Volkswagen beetle], I remember it well, a red *vochito* […] We later asked somebody on the road 'is this the way to Mecayapan?'; yes, it was some kilometres ahead. We then arrived at the town, but we had never been in that place before. We had met some musicians from that town in the past and but we hardly found people on the street. It was at around nine in the evening when we finally got to the house of an old *jaranero* we knew. 'Hey, how are you guys doing?', 'We came to the *fandango*', but there didn't seem to be any. 'No', the man said, 'the *fandango* was last night'. And we were so far away, it took us hours to get there! We couldn't just go back like that [immediately], so we had to stay for a bit chatting with the man. Only a bit because the next

> morning he was going to his farmland and we shouldn't keep him awake, you know.

Such a description of a failed trip to attend a *fandango* recalls the necessary articulation of resources, competencies and information. As with any other form of travelling, taking part in *fandangos* requires putting together assorted elements, which in this case were gathered through face-to-face interactions as the trip was made. Far from being just a way to get to an event, regular travelling to *fandangos* shaped the dynamics of the *son jarocho* practice in at least two ways. First, it formed a sense of conviviality among practitioners, enhanced by the fact that people from various locations and age groups shared the practice. Second, the regional travelling with the practice provided resources that gradually enabled the development of interpretations, representations and identities related to *son jarocho* making (as we will see later in this chapter). These ways of linking with one another became the basis of particular forms of association among traditional *jaraneros*. This point is further illustrated in the following discussion by addressing the upsurge of musical groups in the context of the recuperation of this tradition.

The emergence of *son jarocho* groups

In the development of his account, Pedro recurrently situated this journeying in reference to his experiences as a member of a professional *son jarocho* group. His group formed during the years in which he and other enthusiasts from Sotavento taught at workshops and attended *fandangos*. They gradually developed proficiency at music making and became part of networks of musicians and cultural promoters that operated in various cities of Mexico (Cardona 2006; Figueroa 2007). These two points coincided with their involvement in the emergent niche market of so-called 'world music' during the last decades of the 20th century (Stokes 2002). This circumstance allowed them to release two relatively popular studio recordings and to perform in several local and international festivals. This success was, in fact, embedded in a wider process through which several *son jarocho* groups emerged from the recuperation of this practice.

The upsurge of groups amid the recuperation of this tradition appears paradoxical in the first instance. As described in Chapter 3, the differentiation between folklorised and traditional *son jarocho* has been pivotal to the mobilisation of this practice through workshops. Hence, the appearance of groups of musicians performing traditional *son jarocho* on stage echoed the folklorised *son jarocho* promoted by the media and the propaganda arm of the Mexican state. This paradox, however, has to be contextualised within processes of recuperation of a practice that was perceived as endangered, otherwise it would be facile to reduce these actions and their meanings to contradictions. A turning point in the emergence of groups took place in the 1980s with the organisation of festivals of traditional *son jarocho*. *Encuentros de Jaraneros* (Festivals of *Jaraneros*) was the name given to these events, which consisted of a series of performances by groups of musicians on stage. The *Encuentros* had the peculiarity of putting 'authentic' old *jaraneros* in the spotlight from rural communities, often accompanied by younger practitioners. The spatial and temporal arrangement at these events produced and framed the ways in which the performances unfolded. In contrast to the development of *fandangos*, these festivals did not usually feature dancers or improvisation of verses, but groups of musicians playing rehearsed arrangements of *sones*. These pieces were significantly shorter than the long *sones* played at *fandangos*. More interestingly, however, the circulation around the *tarima* was replaced by the rotation of groups performing on stage for a passive audience. The establishment of a clear distinction between audience and performers ironically resembled the previous folklorisation of the practice.

Son jarocho enthusiasts advanced these festivals as a way to promote the traditional culture of Sotavento. A major achievement was the involvement of a public radio station in Mexico City[58] in the broadcasting and recording of the performances at the festivals, which were subsequently produced by an independent music label and distributed in the form of cassette-tapes and, later, as CDs.[59] The transmission and distribution of these materials constituted an unprecedented incorporation of traditional *son jarocho* in the media. However, the most important point for the

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[58] Its name is 'Radio Educación'. This radio station still broadcasts some *son jarocho* events, such as the annual '*Fiesta de la Candelaria*' in Tlacotalpan, Veracruz, every February 2.
[59] Various performers, *Encuentro de Jaraneros,* [CD] México: Discos Pentagrama, Volume 1-5.

current analysis is that these festivals motivated the creation of groups as they were the basic form for presenting performers on stage. At this point, the question is how exactly a number of musicians who occasionally met at *fandangos* became part of groups of traditional music. Here, in addressing the phenomenon, an old *jaranero* (Nieves 2009) describes how his group was created under these new circumstances:

> I went back to Aguapinole [a small town in Sotavento] and there was where [the group] 'Los Panaderos' ('The Bakers') was born. […] Here you couldn't hear that [traditional *son jarocho*], all that was lost. San Juan [Evangelista] was a noticeable town for its *fandangos*, and there are some *jaraneros* around, at that time there were *fandangazos* [outstanding *fandangos*], very good *fandangos.* There were some ladies that organised them every week. When I came back I started hanging out with those people and then we made a little group. We started growing as a group and that was the moment in which we made 'Los Panaderos', because Noé [a very active member of the generation of enthusiasts] invited me to Minatitlán. I had never been at a *Encuentro de Jaraneros* (Festival of *Jaraneros*), and I think that was the time when they started organising them. He came and invited me. Back then I had an oven, I baked bread in Aguapinole, and he came because his parents-in-law are from there, we've known each other for a long time, and then he said 'I want you to go to play in *Mina* [Minatitlán], you go with your group, I only want you to get white shoes, white pants, *guayabera* [a traditional type of shirt], white hat'. Then I said to my fellow musicians: 'do you want to venture there and make the effort of buying those things?' and we did it, and we went [to the festival]. He [Noé] said 'name your group', and I said 'what name are we going to give it?' 'Don't worry! You go and by the time you arrive there, you'll have a name. I'm going to tell you what name your group is going to have'. And he came up with the name of 'Los Panaderos'. Some time ago they announced us as 'Los Panaderos de Aguapinole', but because the thing went on and on, soon after that [the group] was divided again, but I continued, I never stopped having a group. Then I moved here [to another town called San Juan Evangelista] and

> now [we are called] 'Los Panaderos de San Juan Evangelista'. I live here, I've been here for fifteen years, perhaps more. I moved here and stayed here.[60]

In this account, the old *jaranero* first situates the creation of his group in relation to a tradition that 'was lost', and then goes on to refer to their participation in a festival and the way in which the group acquired a name. The mere fact of getting together to play was not sufficient to form a group – that had already happened at *fandangos*. Rather, *son jarocho* groups became recognisable entities in the process of performing at festivals and being identified by a group's name. Their efforts at organising festivals and the creation of groups revolved around the recuperation of the traditional ways of making music by performing on stage. This seemingly contradictory situation was completely acceptable among *jaraneros* for two main reasons. First, making *son jarocho* is a meaningful activity to the majority of practitioners; this practice means more than a mere pastime. Still, they do not make music for a living. The distinction between amateur and professional cannot be sharply made in this context because among *jaraneros* there are no clear standards for determining what it means 'professionally' to make *son jarocho*. The more-or-less consistent understanding of what is 'proper', which Alasdair MacIntyre (2007: 190) calls standards of excellence, is established in the case of *son jarocho* by the continuous reinforcement of basic conditions of participation. These rules and routines are made manifest during performances and workshops, as has been analysed in previous chapters. Therefore, playing in a group was associated with being part of a tradition, rather than developing an activity to make profit.

The second and closely related reason is that practitioners regularly differentiate between those interested in cultivating the tradition and those who have a marked interest in profiting from the practice. This difference is established through the term '*charolero*', which in its literal form refers to a person who uses a tray (*charola*). The term pejoratively alludes to the image of folklorised musicians using a tray to collect money while serenading customers at a restaurant. Yet the word is frequently applied in a figurative way, that is, in reference to a group of musicians who dismiss

[60] Interview in the accompanying CD booklet in Nieves (2009). Author's translation.

the community of practitioners from which they emerged after brief commercial success. On the whole, the organisation of festivals and the upsurge of groups were assumed to be relevant to the recuperation of the tradition.

In which category do groups such as Pedro's fall? Understood in this way, traditional *son jarocho* musicians performing on stage would not be categorised as '*charoleros*' as long as they also participate in the tradition by taking part in *fandangos*. Pedro and the other members of the group developed their craft by participating in festivals and *fandangos*, teaching at workshops and building instruments. They were legitimate members of a community of practitioners and played an important role in it. But they also were one of the small number of groups that developed a noticeable sophistication in their musical arrangements and, simultaneously, became part of networks of relationships that opened opportunities for recording and performing in various locations. In our conversation at the *taquería*, Pedro commented on this success by referring to the first time that he travelled with the group to California: 'the tour started in Tijuana, we played at six or seven places in total, then we went to LA, Santa Ana, and from there we went all the way up to Berkeley'. As the next section illustrates, this tour marked the beginning of what would later become a constant journeying between Mexico and the US, albeit not as originally planned.

Touring the US as a workshop facilitator

By the beginning of the 2000s, Pedro and his group had already spent two decades immersed in networks of practitioners that extended across Mexico and, increasingly, the US. They also became recognised and promoted as traditional musicians in the 'world music' scene. But the outcomes of this involvement quickly faded as the group was dissolved after a number of years of performing at international festivals. Pedro formed another group soon afterwards, but:

> […] there were few gigs for musicians in Mexico at that time. I got by because I was making instruments and, from that time on, I have had a lot of work [as an instrument maker]. But that only covers basic things, the everyday

> expenses, if you want to save a bit, fix something in your house, that's not enough.

A few years later, the coincidence of two events triggered his journeying as a workshop facilitator in the US. His daughter was about to turn fifteen years old, which in Mexico is typically celebrated with a costly party. Pedro could not afford such a celebration, but the situation changed when he received an unexpected invitation to teach at workshops in the US. A group of *jaraneros* that had been running workshops for some years invited Pedro to give a series of workshops in various cities of the San Francisco Bay Area. This teaching tour represented a good opportunity to earn money because of the exchange rate between US dollars to Mexican pesos and the lack of sources of income at home. A seemingly typical case of Mexican migration to the US, his journey was primarily motivated by economics: his objective was to earn enough to cover the expenses of his daughter's 15th birthday party. The original plan scheduled three weeks of teaching, but practitioners in other locations organised additional workshops as soon as they heard that Pedro was teaching in California. As I confirmed while travelling among communities of *jaraneros* in the US, the capacity rapidly to organise workshops has been to a large extent enabled by the use of virtual social networks and the pervasiveness of the Internet that was well established by the first decade of the 21st century. Three weeks became three months as more workshops and some gigs with local musicians were added to his diary. 'I didn't have to get a loan for the party', he mentioned. These activities implied a lot of travelling across geographically dispersed cities in unfamiliar territory. Prior to this experience, Pedro's practices of mobility were subject to the itineraries, arrangements and scheduling of his group. But this time the cross-border mobilities as workshop facilitator compelled him to learn to move by himself:

> At the beginning it was hard. I was used to going around with a group, for twenty years I moved everywhere with a group. And suddenly I was alone because the group finished […] I got a mobile phone with a number from the US. Then I needed to drive, I had no choice. For instance, now that I come to California, I give a few workshops in Santa Ana and Los Angeles, and if I'm in

> the Bay [Area], I sometimes travel four hours, because there are places that are so far that it takes hours [to get there], because there is no [public] transport.

Pedro currently combines teaching, performing and building instruments by considering time, resources and geographical trajectories. He enlisted his habitual routes with no sign of hesitation: 'Four days here, three days there. From San Diego to Oakland: San Diego, Los Angeles, Santa Ana, Santa Barbara. And then the Bay Area: Sacramento, San Francisco, Oakland, Berkley, San Jose, Watson Bay and Santa Cruz'. In Texas he travels to San Antonio, Austin, El Paso and McAllen. In the Northwest he usually visits Seattle, Portland and Eugene, and on the east coast New York and Washington, D.C. Teaching at different workshops involves the articulation of means and information in the following conventional sequence: first, he gives a workshop for three days in a city, then travels to another location to borrow a car from friends. He then drives to a remote city in which a new workshop takes place. 'It ends up taking four hours to get there, then I teach a workshop for three hours and come back. Yes, I've done that once or twice in the same week'.

When Pedro is invited to teach, the organisers normally pay his flight or bus ticket and the attendees pay a small fee, although it is difficult for the organisers to calculate how many people are attending and, consequently, to determine the amount that he would earn. 'They tell me "we pay you the ticket, although we don't know how many are coming". I tell them that there is no problem, I go anyway'. Pedro teaches in Spanish, although the interaction among the attendees tends to oscillate constantly between English and Spanish because most practitioners in the US are fluent in both languages. When a person is unable to understand Spanish, a practitioner nearby quietly provides rough explanations in English. Still, these verbal translations are just one type of mediation among many other forms of interaction, as the exercises are performed simultaneously by all the attendees and are based on the repetition of strumming patterns, melodic lines or dance steps.[61] All these circumstances associated with teaching in many different locations contrast with Pedro's previous experiences of being in a group. Travelling with the practice has

[61] Even in the case of singing verses in Spanish, practitioners who do not speak that language tend to memorise the lyrics by focusing on the sound of the words while ignoring their meaning.

challenged his habitual ways of teaching and performing:

> […] I never boast about being a good musician, I wasn't recognised either. I never gave interviews because I didn't like it, I said no, the others [members of the group] did it. I didn't speak at the microphone [at concerts] because I could sing, but talking on the microphone, no, I just couldn't. And all the others did it, anyway. And then being alone and coming here [to teach to the US]. I had friends, but it wasn't like having the protection of coming with a group. But I had to carry on! It was about organising gigs and then, you have to say something, don't you, or there is an interview, well, I had to carry on. I had no choice but to do a bit of everything. I say that in the end it was all right [to dissolve the professional group] because now people know me because of myself, because of the things I've done, but it was a very difficult process. But now I have overcome all those issues. Now I know how to move everywhere. At first, friends helped me to organise how to get here or there, but now I go around everywhere by myself. I had to learn to move around without knowing the [English] language!

This journeying has been a learning process in itself. Attaining a certain command of the English language, for instance, is not directly related to his craft, but has been significant in his experience of travelling. The day of the interview we left the *taquería* and walked towards a Starbucks café. 'Latte and two packets of honey, please', he asked in English at the counter, and as we were sitting he commented to me in Spanish: 'now I know how to ask for my coffee, but it took me some time to know how to ask for the one I like'. We then recalled some funny stories about the frustrations and difficulties of learning English as a second language, which led us to talk about my doctoral studies. Among other things I quickly mentioned a conference that I had recently attended in Canada; Pedro was suddenly excited:

> Is it hard to get a Canadian visa? I've been invited to [teach at] a workshop in Montreal, the Canadian guy who was at the workshop the other day invited me, he is organising a workshop there, do you remember him? I was thinking about doing Montreal, Toronto, New York…

For Pedro, journeying with the practice represents a way of making a living, a job. And yet he does not see himself as a migrant, nor he is classified as one by the bureaucracies of the US and Mexico. Moving with a practice assumes multiple forms and meanings. The day of the interview he added with a hint of pride: 'I have already been in all the *son jarocho* communities in the US', which was a way of expressing the joy that derives from being potentially able to move. This statement is reminiscent of Ghassan Hage's (2005: 470-471) notion of 'existential mobility':

> We move physically so we can feel that we are existentially on the move again or at least moving better. I believe that the movement we call migration cannot be understood without taking into account this relationship between existential and physical movement. What's more, such a relationship allows us to construct a whole social physics of socio-existential mobility, explaining different kinds of mobility rather than homogenizing them with one term that equates the travel of the totally-at-home-having-fun tourist and the travel of the fragile, dislocated and hesitant refugee.

There are, indeed, multiple ways of relating existential and physical mobility. While Pedro's practices of mobility are embedded in the recuperation of traditional *son jarocho* (namely the emergence of groups, festivals and workshops), they also represent the possibility of physical movement that makes travelling with the practice a meaningful activity. The mobilities of Pedro carry meanings of discovery, education and cultivation of a practice that is worth preserving and diffusing. Simultaneously, they originate in a context of social disadvantage, chronic unemployment in Mexico and the consequential difficulties of making a living. Pedro's experience is unusual in terms of the extent of his travels, the expertise that he has developed as a workshop facilitator and performer, and the depth of his involvement within transnational networks of *jaraneros*. However, the various forms of mobility that converge in his journeying certainly resonate with the experiences of other practitioners as every *jaranero* takes part in various forms of mobility. So far I have analysed the travels of a practitioner across communities of *jaraneros* and described this form of mobility as a continuous interweaving of teaching, performing and making instruments. The next section of this chapter will focus on the transportation of musical instruments to discuss the role of artefacts in the mobility

of practices.

MOVING MATERIALS

It has not been long since social theorists have systematically addressed the role of material entities in the enactment of practices. Theories of practice have traditionally dealt with topics such as habituated action, tacit knowledge and understandings, embodied dispositions, and rules and routines. Yet the issue of how material entities intervene in these points has received less attention. Schatzki (2010a: 123) advances an ontology that considers materiality as constituent of the social. With that proposition in mind, I address music making as an entry point to reflect on how materiality is interwoven with the mobility of practices. Because they are at the forefront of music making, musical instruments are unavoidable elements of these practices. Furthermore, they enable and constrain musical performances – their affordances (Gibson 1986; Clarke 2003; Acord and DeNora 2008) highlight the relationship between the practitioner's agency and material contexts.

Musical instruments are intrinsic to musical practices because their roles and properties are revealed through their use. A guitar, for instance, is usually categorised and portrayed as a musical instrument, yet its musical properties are not inherent to the instrument, but come into being as it is manipulated by a practitioner in such a way that it resonates. The instrument might be used for different purposes apart from the production of organised sounds, such as decorating a living room. Still, its attributes as instrument are realised in the process of music making. In his analysis of the practical engagement with objects, Heidegger (2010 [1953]: 69) argues that artefacts do not contain practical meaning in themselves because they cannot work as tools without an understanding of how they are to be implemented in practice:

> Hammering does not just have a knowledge of the useful character of the hammer; rather, it has appropriated this utensil in the most adequate way possible. In such useful dealings, taking care subordinates itself to the in-order-

> to constitutive for the particular utensil in our dealings; the less we just stare at the thing called hammer, the more we take hold of it and use it, the more original our relation to it becomes and the more undisguisedly it is encountered as what it is, as a useful thing. The act of hammering itself discovers the specific “handiness” [“Handlichkeit”] of the hammer.

Here Heidegger points to the realisation of the properties of artefacts in action – it is through music making that the ‘handiness’ of musical instruments becomes evident. Furthermore, the qualities of these artefacts are also given by various forms of mobility. The transportation and circulation of material entities has been examined by a considerable body of scholarly literature. There is, for instance, a significant research focused on global commodity chains (Brewer 2011). However, the question of how the circulation of material entities enables and withholds practices remains unclear. Artefacts are not mere resources manipulated by practitioners; they have a significant role in the globalisation of practices. As Thrift et al. suggest, ‘[t]hese so-called little things are the real material of globalization, the things that count, the things that guide or impose outcomes’ (2014: 1). The flow of assorted materials across geographical space is a crucial aspect of processes of globalisation, yet the specific mechanisms through which this flow enables the reproduction, re-creation and appropriation of practices require further examination (Hui 2012; Shove et al. 2012). How do such processes relate to the flows of artefacts? How does the mobility of musical instruments affect their practical meaning? Although this complex topic extends beyond the limits of this section, I have introduced these questions to frame the following analysis, which deals with the circulation of *son jarocho* instruments.

Instruments on the move

How do *son jarocho* instruments get into the hands of its practitioners in the first instance? These instruments are not commonly found at stores, but are directly ordered from craftspeople specialising in their construction. The spaces in which the instruments are manufactured are mostly located in Sotavento and other cities in Mexico, with a handful of craftspeople living in California and in towns close to the border between Mexico and the US. *Son jarocho* practitioners in Mexico obtain these instruments with relative ease because of their geographical proximity to these

craftspeople. But the consumption of these instruments is becoming more entangled with their transportation as the practice is diffused in the US. Accordingly, *jaranas* and other instruments currently travel from Mexico to the US in rather unusual ways.

When ordered by practitioners in the US, craftsmen in Mexico are rarely asked to send these instruments by post. The most common, effective and cheap way to organise the transportation of an instrument is to ask somebody who is travelling from Mexico to the US to take it. This individual could be either the craftsperson (as demonstrated in the previous section of this chapter) or a friend who is travelling to the US. The networks of practitioners are so closely imbricated it is easier and cheaper to rely on friends and acquaintances to bring the instrument that has been previously ordered. The connectivity within geographically dispersed communities of practitioners is largely mediated by infrastructures of transportation, telecommunication and the pervasive use of Internet-based social networking media. Yet, despite the interconnectivity that allows the circulation of instruments from hand to hand, the journey of these instruments has to be carefully orchestrated.

A group of practitioners from California told me the story of how they brought a batch of *jaranas* to their workshop. Some years ago they ordered several instruments from a craftsman based in a remote location in Sotavento. Their intention was to have enough instruments at their disposal during workshops to ensure that beginners had access to an instrument from their first session onwards. The construction of *jaranas* takes time and ordering them delays the incorporation of new practitioners into the workshops. Therefore, having instruments at hand seemed advantageous. The funding of these instruments was limited and, consequently, this group of practitioners could only afford their construction, but not the shipping costs from Sotavento to California. The problem was solved, then, by taking the instruments through a chain that connected communities of practitioners in different locations. At different moments, various practitioners took as many instruments as they could from Sotavento to Mexico City, and then to Guadalajara and Tijuana. Once all the instruments were near the border with the US, several *jaraneros* from San Diego took turns to travel to Tijuana and come back with some *jaranas*. The process was slow, but proved to be inexpensive and reliable. The batch of instruments was finally

gathered together in San Diego, where one of those who narrated the story picked them up and drove them to their final destination.

This example of mobility shows how the travelling of instruments is crucial for the formation and reinforcement of networks of relationships at local, regional and transnational levels. Not everyone, of course, is equally mobile – nationality, residency or visa status, and economic resources shape the trajectories of practitioners. Still, the joined efforts of geographically dispersed communities of practitioners have been effective ways of transporting musical instruments. This type of mobility also enables the continuity of the practice, as these artefacts are essential components for performing *son jarocho*. More generally, these instruments mediate between the identity of practice (the demarcation of *son jarocho* as a tradition) and the collective identities of practitioners. This is why the latter use the word *jaraneros* (people who play *jarana*) when referring to themselves: they play these instruments because they are inherent to, and representative of, the practice.

Travelling strings

There are other artefacts that do not play the same role in the identity of the practice, and yet are relevant to its reproduction and diffusion. Customised strings for *son jarocho* instruments are a relatively recent addition among communities of practitioners, although they have rapidly become part of the flow of commodities among groups of practitioners in Mexico and the US. The production and distribution of strings specially designed for *son jarocho* instruments have a role in enabling the reproduction and re-creation of this practice. Practitioners in Sotavento have typically improvised with all sorts of materials with which to string their instruments. For centuries, strings were made of catgut, a fibre obtained from animal intestines. This was a common practice for stringing instruments in Europe and, later, in the Americas (Busby 1827). As nylon became widely available in the 20th century, fishing line of various diameters and, subsequently, nylon strings replaced catgut. Nylon strings for guitar became widely used, although they are calibrated for the particular qualities of the acoustic guitar and, consequently, have inconsistent tuning and short lifespan when used in *son jarocho* instruments.

Since the 1990s, a small group of people in California started manufacturing hand-made, customised strings for so-called regional instruments. They supplied strings to a small number of musicians in the US who required strings with tensions and gauges that were not found in the regular music stores. These string makers are also musicians who have been involved in the music scene in Los Angeles for several years, a situation that put them in contact with *son jarocho* musicians. Based on their previous experiences with other instruments, they developed strings adapted to *son jarocho* instruments as the number of *jaraneros* in the US started to increase. Despite the fact that the scale of their production has only grown modestly, they have been able to reach consumers in distant locations as most *son jarocho* practitioners in both countries currently consume these strings. They are plucked from Seattle to Sotavento. How are these strings taken to these locations? As is the case with instruments, the closely imbricated networks of practitioners make it easier and cheaper to transport strings between these two countries. One of the string makers in Los Angeles, who also frequently performs as a member of a popular *son jarocho* group from Sotavento, travels to Mexico at least twice a year with two big suitcases full of packets of strings. He tours Sotavento and other cities of Mexico selling strings while playing with his group and visiting friends. The strings are commonly sold hand-to-hand to other practitioners who, at the same time, resell them for a small profit.

In this way, it is clear that this grass-roots market has an important role in the circulation of this practice by fuelling the movement of practitioners, instruments, strings and many other objects (such as books and recordings). These processes demonstrate how material entities are part of wider networks, and how the actions of practitioners are partly enabled and withheld by what artefacts afford. These instruments materialise a *son jarocho* identity that frames specific ways of practising – one cannot, for instance, play traditional *son jarocho* with a non-traditional instrument such as the nylon string guitar. The persuasive narratives that render these artefacts as “authentic” have effectively contributed to the diffusion of this practice, which is reflected in the gradual increase in the number of people making *son jarocho* instruments in various locations in the US and on the Mexico-US border. From the analysis up to this point, the journeying of practitioners and artefacts has

been presented as involving forms of circulation across communities of practitioners. This analysis has also conveyed the impression that knowledge (in the sense of practice-specific competencies) is also on the move, although this point has not been explicitly elaborated. Accordingly, the matter is addressed in the next section.

ABSTRACTION AND REVERSAL

In previous chapters I have suggested that workshops have been central to the circulation of *son jarocho* across various locations. These pedagogical spaces constitute the main device for the diffusion of the practice, but at this point of the argument a distinction must be made between the ways in which competencies, as opposed to people and artefacts, move. Competencies circulate among communities of practitioners in a way that differs from that of people or artefacts. As Shove et al. (2012: 52) indicate, '[k]now-how is not typically moved by lorry or ship. Instead, relevant processes include those of abstraction, reversal, lateral migration and cross-practice creep'. To put it succinctly, abstraction refers to the process of preparing and removing knowledge from its local context, while reversal denotes the process through which knowledge is incorporated into a different context. In their insightful analysis of the dynamics of practices, Shove et al. introduce the notions of abstraction and reversal to examine the processes through which know-how circulates. This perspective presumes the existence of at least two different realms in which know-how moves: localised and diffused. Travelling with a practice implicitly conveys the idea of the circulation of know-how. In this section I analyse the ways in which practice-specific competencies are packed and unpacked at workshops.

Pedro developed a craft for making instruments, teaching at workshops and performing *son jarocho* by improvising and 'looking for ways to do it using whatever I had at hand'. In the process of being immersed in a community of practitioners, Pedro attained a tacit understanding of particular aspects of the practice and the capacity to act upon them. Like many other practitioners, he is able to determine if an instrument is out of tune, and tune it according to a series of shared conventions. Constructing instruments, performing steady rhythms, or connecting

large sequences of dance steps are competencies that rely on a sharp sensitivity to elements that are imperceptible to laypersons. This sensitivity should not be conflated with the notion of taste (understood as a personal liking): the capacity to perceive the nuances of practice-specific elements is not simply a choice, but a cultivated skill (Hennion 2007). Belonging to a community of practitioners is much more than membership of a group of people who share a particular liking. One is member of a community of practitioners, in part, because there is a shared capacity to perceive specific elements of the practice and to adjust one's actions in a context that presumes that sensitivity. How is the practitioner's nuanced perception and capacity to act upon it transmitted? In his enquiry on craftsmanship, Richard Sennett (2008: 74) points out the complicated character of transferring know-how:

> The difficulty remains, in scientific laboratories as much as in artists' studios. Although in a lab the neophyte can be readily inducted in procedures, it's harder for a scientist to pass on the capacity to look suspiciously for new problems in the course of solving old ones or to explain the intuition formed from experience that a problem is likely to wind up a dead-end.

To address the difficulties involved in the circulation of know-how, in the following paragraphs I examine two episodes that are frequently observed at *son jarocho* workshops: the ritual of instrument tuning and the practising of dance steps. I will use the examples from a workshop that Pedro gave in California,[62] although the character of these routines is common to most contemporary workshops.

Tuning with one's ear

The chairs formed a wide circle in the main room of a cultural centre. A few latecomers were greeted as they entered the room; some others were chatting or trying a few chords to see if their instruments were in tune. Everyone had taken a chair, except Pedro, who was constantly walking around the room with his *jarana* hanging from a strap.

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[62] The following examples are excerpts from the transcript of audio and video recording of a workshop in California, July 29, 2013. Author's translation.

> ‘OK, let’s tune. Who wants to sing a G note? It is important that you memorise how the note G sounds. Let’s sing G all together’.
> We all sang in unison as Pedro played G with the upper string of his *jarana.*
> ‘In your house, while you are in the kitchen, while you are doing the sort of housework that we, men usually do, things like sweeping, cooking and all that... [laughter] you can sing and remember the note G while doing all that…’
> ‘What note was that?’, asked a man while twisting one of the tuning pegs of his *jarana*.
> ‘It was G, repeat that note all the time, until you memorise it’, said Pedro while plucking the upper string of his instrument several times. ‘Try to memorise all these tuning notes. Hello!’
> A few more practitioners had arrived at the workshop.
> ‘Who knows how to tune by ear?’, asked Pedro. A handful affirmed with a gesture.
> ‘Well, this is one of the many tunings that exist in *son jarocho*, but this is not the only one, it has become very common, or commercialised very much because it is the one that is known everywhere. There is a friend who has written down about fifteen different antique tunings, although there are more. Many are no longer used. […] Well, to tune in this way you then memorise G and set the upper string using that note’.
> Pedro plucked the upper string of his *jarana* several times while the group adjusted their own instruments in reference to that note. ‘Then you press the second fret to get A’, he said while playing simultaneously the upper string and the second lowest set of strings. ‘Once you have A in tune, you press the third fret and get C. And then you press the fourth fret and get E. And finally you tune the lower G with the upper G. Pretty easy, isn’t it?’, he said while playing a C major chord.

Many continued testing the relationships between the strings, as they did not seem to be quite convinced about their own tuning. Pedro stood in front of those who appeared to be more doubtful and showed them where to place their fingers to obtain the sounds that were intended to be compared. He patiently repeated the tuning formula, string by string and word by word. Indeed, the almost literal repetition of the procedure reveals two aspects of processes of abstraction and reversal: prolonged

engagement with teaching has led Pedro to use these explanations without much attention or conscious thought. This is why he almost literally repeated the procedure. Furthermore, Pedro's explanation entails the codification of a procedure that is tacitly known by many *son jarocho* practitioners. Therefore, Pedro has arranged a procedure (tuning a *jarana* in a particular style) to make it available to the attendees of the workshop. Simplifying, preparing and sequentially organising sets of procedures is, therefore, an essential step in the transmission of know-how (Shove et al. 2012: 56-57).

Equally relevant is the reversal or 'unpacking' of a given abstraction. Practitioners at workshops interpret sets of interconnected procedures and apply them to their own instruments with different degrees of success. At this workshop, reversing the tuning method relied on two basic skills: the capacity to determine whether two notes sound similar enough to be in tune, and the ability to set up specific pitch relationships between the tension of the strings (one twists the tuning pegs to adjust the tension and, consequently, modify the pitch of the string). Tuning is a skill that is developed through repetition, although the process is certainly facilitated through face-to-face interaction, as workshops demonstrate. Beginners may learn Pedro's (or any other) tuning formula by repeating it until it becomes a habit. But they typically discover alternative ways of achieving the same result as they repeat a formula. This process of discovery is a way to discover tuning formulas that are better suited to the particularities of one's instrument. Succinctly put, practitioners frequently learn formulas that establish a limited range of outcomes, which also create spaces for finding unforeseen ways of doing – they are spaces of improvisation. The order established by practice-based routines is, as de Certeau notes, 'a body of constraints stimulating new discoveries, a set of rules with which improvisation plays' (1988: xxii). To illustrate further the subtle processes of abstraction and reversal, the following paragraphs exemplify how sequences of dance steps are divided into easier patterns and how practitioners with different levels of expertise replicate them.

Packing and unpacking dance steps

After tuning we practised three *sones*, focusing on their chord progression and verse

structure. The singing and playing of *jaranas* did not last long because, in fact, the workshop was intended to be focused on dancing: many practitioners, particularly men, are keen and confident when playing and singing, but are shy when it comes to stomping on the *tarima*. Everyone put the instruments aside and helped to move the chairs to the corners to continue with the dancing part of the workshop.

> 'Did you bring your dancing shoes?', asked Pedro.
> 'Yeah', many replied.
> 'All right, who doesn't dance at all?' Some replied with an affirmative gesture.
> 'Let's start with '*paso de seis*' [six step], we begin with just a double step, for those who are starting. One, two, three...'
> We stomped with the right foot.
> 'Two, three… I want to hear the steps together. One, two, three...'
> We continued repeating basic steps that were probably redundant to the more experienced ones.
> 'Hey, why are you looking at the floor? I'm sure you feel what you do with your feet, look up! Who can't do it?', said Pedro in reference to the step we were just practising. 'Raise your hand, no shame [laughs]. Mario, let's do it slowly [and he then approached a practitioner]. Do you remember when you learnt to walk? [laughs] Well, this time you change foot after you step twice. You are going to do this…'
> Pedro simplified the exercise even more as they slowly stomped together. The rest looked at their feet while silently standing in a long circle.
> 'It's like running, but with the same foot. OK, now all together, again: one, two, three... now faster...' He started playing his *jarana* to indicate a faster pulse.
> 'OK, now everyone says this rhythm: *taca, ta, taca; taca, ta, taca; taca, ta, ta*. One, two, three…'
> We pronounced the rhythm onomatopoeically, then clapped it and finally produced those rhythms by stomping.
> 'Don't go faster… Guys, I can dance that step and show you the foot that you have to use, but that takes a long time and that would be only one way of doing it, only one combination of steps. But if I only show you the rhythm, there are

> many possible combinations and here the most important thing is how it sounds. OK, again, everyone: *tara, taca, ta, taca* […] Well, what we are doing are not steps but sounds, and you see that it's easier for those who don't know how to dance because those who know how to dance focus on one step only. They don't do anything else because they do that one step well. OK, let's do it again'.

It was ironic to see practitioners with more experience having difficulties with reproducing complex rhythms. In the case of the beginners (I was one of them), repeating those rhythms was surprisingly easier because we did not have much experience at dancing *son jarocho*. This is a point that Pedro also made during the interview:

> When I arrived at the first workshop I gave [in California], those who invited me told me that I was teaching beginners and advanced dancers. And I arrived with no idea of what to do with the advanced ones because, what am I going to teach them if they are advanced? When I got there and started to show them steps that are more complex, they were completely lost. They were not advanced, they were only beginners and sort of intermediates. When I gave them basic steps they couldn't do them because they were ballet dancers, which is completely different, they don't know how to improvise and all that. During these years I have had to learn to teach in a way that everybody learns something. […] I made a teaching technique very simple, very open, looking for ways in which they learn, not being strict in only one way of teaching, because I learnt to teach at different levels. In the same workshop I teach beginners and intermediates and… well and that's it. There are no advanced, there are very few. Then, when the workshop starts, the intermediate get bored because I put simple exercises, but then in the middle of the workshop I start putting exercises that they don't know, or asking them to improvise on what they know, because they don't know how to improvise. 'OK, I tell them, sing that in a different way'. And they can't do it. Or [ask them for] an improvised strumming [in the *jarana*]. They got used to doing things in one way and they don't try new things. I say 'no, look for a new way of strumming or a new dance step'. It's OK if you do it in one way, that's a base, but it's more fun if

> you combine it with new rhythms, if you play with the rhythm, but many don't want to. I learnt to bring them out from the things they know well.

Here we have an example of how processes of abstraction and reversal take place at *son jarocho* workshops. The attendees tried to replicate the rhythms marked by specific stomping patterns, as the aim was to practise short formulas and then to integrate them into longer sequences of steps. As the exercises became more complex, Pedro only indicated the rhythm and intentionally ceased pointing out the foot that was supposed to be used. The objective of this omission was to allow practitioners to find for themselves which combination of steps was easier for them. Finding one's way through the stomping rhythms (and through the practice in general) precisely shows how reversing abstracted know-how and turning it into bodily movement is puzzling in various ways. Shove et al. (2012) propose to think about the transference of competencies, not as simple processes of sending and receiving information, but as a process of arranging and sequentially organising procedures that become tacit through their continuous repetition. This way of framing the transference of knowledge highlights the transformation that competencies undergo as they move:

> The basic idea that knowledge has to be 'abstracted' from a local situation before it can travel, and that it needs to be 'reversed' when it arrives in some new destination, complicates popular interpretations of knowledge transfer as a simple process of sending and receiving. This representation is, however, consistent with an account of practices as integrative performances in which elements are conjoined. The suggestion that abstracted knowledge circulates between such moments or sites of enactment is also relevant in thinking about how competencies circulate. (Shove et al. 2012: 48)

The competencies required to dance *son jarocho* circulate across communities of practitioners through processes of abstraction and reversal. Pedro's teaching exercises are forms of codified know-how that are reversed at workshops in various ways. The multiple ways of reversing know-how have a background, a history of previous experiences that influence the particular ways in which practitioners interpret abstracted know-how. In other words, processes of reversal are partly

dependent on (but not determined by) previous experiences. Learning to dance is a competency that takes time to develop because one needs to be exposed to circumstances in which to practise: the more one enacts the practice, the easier it should get. However, previous experiences may also hinder the development of certain skills such as improvisation. At that workshop, beginners like me had limited experience at rhythmic stomping and, for that reason, were focused on repeating the patterns and paid less attention to which foot was used for that matter. I sometimes started with the left foot and finished with the right, but that combination of steps was not consistent. In contrast, experienced practitioners reversed Pedro's indications through reference to the steps that they already knew. Those sequences are regularly effective for producing certain stomping rhythms, but in this case they failed to produce the desired pattern because the steps that they knew (the embodied dispositions) were reflexes that limited their capacity to attain new patterns of movement. In sum, the extended exposure to a practice shapes the processes of transmission of know-how. Attaining practice-specific skills is not a linear procedure that extends from incapable to capable, but a much more complex process in which the acquisition of embodied dispositions frames the ulterior learning experiences.

Moreover, processes of reversal do not occur in isolation, but are entangled with the routines of other practices (Shove et al. 2012). When learning a new practice, one usually recalls and adapts the skills attained from previous experiences in new contexts in order to perform and integrate new sequences of actions. This was actually the case when I started playing *jarana*. Being trained as a guitarist, for me it was easier to tune my *jarana* by imagining that I was tuning the first four strings of a guitar. As a form of 'lateral migration' (Shove et al. 2012: 52), this simple trick proved to be very useful, although it would only work for those who are acquainted with the tuning structure of the guitar. The cultivation of competencies is a form of accumulation and, as Bourdieu maintains, an investment of effort and time (1986: 47-51). Yet, a relevant aspect of the various ways in which processes of abstraction, reversal and lateral migration shape the circulation of practices is that the cultivation of competencies is much more heterogeneous than a gradual, cumulative acquisition of cultural capital.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have argued that the circulation of artefacts, competencies and practitioners is significant for the development and continuity of practices. A growing body of literature has shown that the flows of materials are crucial components of globalisation (Thrift et al. 2014). A less obvious point, however, concerns how the flows of materials affect the unfolding of practices. By looking at how musical instruments and strings reach geographically dispersed groups of practitioners, this chapter outlined the affordances of these artefacts in relation to their mobilities and the ways in which their circulation enables and withholds practices. The properties of musical instruments also operate in conjunction with the competencies of the practitioners who manipulate them. The diffusion of practice-specific knowledge is dependent on processes of codification, decodification and recodification of know-how. Enthusiasts from Sotavento have carried out the abstraction of tacit understandings for a number of decades, a process that has emerged from the reinvention of traditional *son jarocho*. At the same time, this process has relied on the capacity of groups of practitioners to reverse or unpack this know-how. A point to note here is that the co-, de- and re-codification of practice-specific knowledge is a process that occurs primarily at workshops, entailing face-to-face interaction and with almost no written registers. Nevertheless, there is a growing corpus of information in the form of digital videos and images on the Internet, generated and circulated by practitioners. New configurations between the know-how, artefacts and meanings of this practice may emerge from these new arrangements.

This chapter has demonstrated that travelling with the practice produces conditions for other forms of mobility, such as the circulation of instruments and know-how across locations. *Son jarocho* practitioners are connected through imbricated networks of relationships that extend to multiple locations in the US and Mexico. Immobile infrastructures, assorted forms of telecommunication and face-to-face interaction enable this connectivity. Moreover, practitioner travel is a precondition of taking part in events such as *fandangos*, workshops and festivals. By looking at practices from a processual perspective, this and previous chapters have provided

detailed accounts of how practice (as a recognisable entity) and practising (as performance) circulate. The mobility of practice does not refer to discrete events, but to processes across time and space. To develop a more nuanced characterisation of these spatio-temporal processes, I propose to examine them by taking rhythm into the equation. As Lefebvre points out, ‘everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm’ (Lefebvre 2004: 15). This topic will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Rhythm, metre and improvisation

> [...] every rhythm implies the relation of a time with a space, a localised time, or if one wishes, a temporalised place. Rhythm is always linked to such and such a place, to its place, whether it be to the heart, the fluttering of the eyelids, the movements of the street, or the tempo of a waltz. This does not prevent it from being a time, that is an aspect of a movement and a becoming. (Lefebvre, 1996: 230)

> Why do rhythms and tunes, which after all are only voice, resemble characters, whereas savours do not, nor yet colours and odours? Is it because they are movements, as actions also are? (Aristotle, 1984: 3090)

INTRODUCTION

The circulation of practice-specific elements, which was the focus of previous chapters, involves various forms of periodicity. The motion around a fixed dance platform turns the performance into a coherent and intelligible sequence of events. At *fandangos*, dancers step up and down from the *tarima* to perform dance steps. These movements are based on recurrent formulas that are adjusted to the varying circumstances of the performance. Similarly, chord progressions are constantly repeated by groups of musicians. Practitioners also sing based on a standardised lyrical structure that is repeated as they take turns to prompt verses. For this reason, as was detailed in Chapter 2, the enactment of practices is a constant flow of interrelated elements as they come into and out of sight. As noted in Chapter 3, practitioners repeat sets of procedures at workshops in order to attain a tacit understanding of dance steps, strumming patterns, verse structures and many other elements of this practice. Likewise, Chapter 4 illustrates the periodic circulation of know-how, artefacts and meanings across geographically dispersed communities of practitioners. Finally, the travelling of practitioners to take part in the various activities related to *son jarocho* making is also a recurrent phenomenon. All these

forms of circulation constitute multiple layers of mobility that extend across various networks of relationships. The mobility of practices is, therefore, characterised by its periodicity; that is, by its rhythms.

The regular enactment of practices establishes tight bounds between their elements. The establishment of these links is an accumulation that, over time, forms regular patterns of action (Shove et al. 2012). Because practices are essentially recurrent ways of doing, the careful examination of such recurrence may be an entry point to their processual properties. Identifying and analysing patterns of social phenomena is, of course, one of the underlying principles of the social sciences. But the analysis of the mobility of practices demands careful attention to the variegated forms of circulation of practice-specific elements. The examination of this type of recurrence requires what DeNora (2014: xx) calls 'high-resolution methods of investigation'. In the context of the current argument, such an examination would involve focusing on the nuances of specific instances and the ways in which they become articulated in broader processes. The repetition of patterns is a fundamental aspect of practices, as Swidler (2005: 95) observes: '[t]he crucial thing about social practices–and the feature that differentiates them from most habits–is that they are the infrastructure of repeated *interactional* patterns' (emphasis in original). Patterns put interconnected elements in motion; they produce the rhythms through which practices come to life.

This chapter brings focus to patterns of circulation through the notion of rhythm. The aim is to advance this concept as a metaphor to assist the analysis of social processes. To use rhythm as a thinking tool is not to suggest the incorporation of the term in its strict musical sense. Yet, the analytic purchase that may derive from this heuristic relies on its various connotations, which are indelibly associated with the musical. Overall, the notion of rhythm is used here to explore the recurrent mobilities of practice. There are three main sections in this chapter: the first introduces and frames the term, and the second analyses the rhythmic configuration and reconfiguration that takes place during *fandangos*. The third section addresses the improvisatory forms of *fandango* and their relation to the rhythmic unfolding of performances. The aim of using this heuristic is twofold: to contribute to the overarching argument of this thesis by exploring its empirical components from a different point of view; and to

interpret the mobilities of practice from a rhythmic perspective while trying to keep in mind its musical character.

RHYTHM AS HEURISTIC

Rhythm is associated with repeated patterns of movements or sounds; at least that is what the experience of dance and music would suggest to many. But what is meant by repetition and pattern, and why do they characterise rhythm? The linguist Émile Benveniste (1971) argues that, etymologically speaking, rhythm comes from the Greek '*rhuthmos*', which is related to '*rhein*', 'to flow'. Although those terms indicate continuity, Benveniste goes on to trace the various connotations of the term to indicate that *rhuthmos* has been historically used to connote proportion, shape and frame. Accordingly, *rhuthmos*:

> […] designates the form in the instant that it is assumed by what is moving, mobile and fluid, the form of that which does not have organic consistency; it fits the pattern of a fluid element […] It is the form as improvised, momentary, changeable. […] We can now understand how *rhuthmos*, meaning literally 'the particular manner of flowing,' could have been the most proper term for describing 'dispositions' or 'configurations' without fixity or natural necessity and arising from an arrangement which is always subject to change. (1971: 285-286)

This definition resonates with many of the points analysed in the previous chapters. The reference to form and movement resembles the circulation of elements that takes place at *fandangos*. This point has been analysed in this thesis as the production of time-space that occurs as events unfold. Similarly, the development of dispositions and configurations 'without fixity or natural necessity' are established through the various ways in which *son jarocho* has been mobilised as a practice that needs to be preserved and valued. The development of a 'form as improvised, momentary, changeable' also echoes the ways in which practitioners travel with the practice, artefacts are transported, and know-how is transmitted. Throughout, I have also

emphasised that the rules and routines of the practice are elements that produce a recognisable and more-or-less coherent practice, even though they change and are in constant flow. Benveniste's conceptualisation of rhythm is significant for the current argument in at least two ways. First, it refers to a 'particular manner of flowing', which offers an entry point to the notion of mobility. And second, it alludes to processes of configuration and reconfiguration, to fluid dispositions, and to non-fixed structures.

Thinking about rhythm as ongoing configuration evokes transient and interrelated elements as they come into and out of sight (Haldrup 2010: 63). As a riddle with an ambiguous solution, rhythm recalls forms, frames, configurations and dispositions that enable flow, mobility, change and improvisation. Rhythm is, therefore, closely related to evanescence, which might also invoke Marx and Engels' (1988: 212) famous proposition that 'all that is solid melts into air'. This statement can be read in this context as the sublimation of arrangements and dispositions. But is not the reverse process also possible? On following the sublimation metaphor, it is possible to stretch the image and to think of desublimation (Marcuse 2006), which is the condensation of a gas to a solid. Frames would then become mobile and, similarly, mobilities would produce frames. Using rhythm as a heuristic opens the possibility of thinking about improvised configurations, arrangements in constant change, and structures that flow. It leads us to reflect on the 'complicity' between fixity and mobility.

Drawing on Benveniste's definition of *rhuthmos*, I propose to address rhythm in relation to the tension between continuity and change. Here it is important to indicate that I do not intend to shift the overarching argument of this thesis toward a philosophical speculation on 'the flux of things' (Whitehead 1978: 208-215) or on Heraclitus' 'unity of opposites' (Shields 2003: 11-16). I am aware that conceptualising rhythm in reference to structures that flow points towards deep ontological discussions. But my intentions here are much more intellectually modest: this chapter explores the heuristic value of rhythm to highlight the dual character of the term and its capacity to illuminate the processual nature of practice. The study of cultural permanence has an inherent relation to the construction and negotiation of

cultural identities. I suggest that approaching continuity and change from a rhythmic perspective may sensitise us to the cadences of being and belonging. To explore further the tension between these two connotations of rhythm, it is necessary briefly to look at the ways in which repetition and process have been used to analyse the social.

Repetition and process

What is 'rhythmic' about the social and how has the notion of rhythm been used to examine cultural phenomena? Eviatar Zerubavel (1976: 90) argues that a 'crucial sociological issue is determining to what extent social periodicity rests upon a social, rather than a purely natural, rhythmic order'. Rhythm, in this case, is used to refer to a series of events recurring at certain intervals. There is also a growing interest in cultural geography in the systematic use of rhythm to conceive of space and place. The work undertaken by Tim Edensor and others (2010: 1) is a relevant example that focuses on '[…] the patterning of a range of multiscalar temporalities – calendrical, diurnal and lunar, lifecycle, somatic and mechanical – whose rhythms provide an important constituent of the experience and organisation of social time'. Here again, rhythm refers to frames of temporal organisation. Following a similar conceptual path, there is a growing interest in the analysis of the rhythms of urban settings, with 'attention and an attitude toward the ways in which rhythm and repetition not only dominate, regulate or reproduce urban space but, moreover, can themselves be productive of difference and distinction' (Smith and Hetherington 2013: 13). And finally, there are several examples from the mobilities literature that have addressed the rhythmicity of cases such as the experience of commuting (Edensor 2011), airports (Adey 2006), and of the social (Urry 2000: 105-130; 2003: 18-22). Overall, there is a tendency to use the term 'rhythm' to address the dynamic properties of social and cultural phenomena. But, curiously, there is also an inclination to conceive rhythm in terms of repetitions, patterns, schedules and other forms of temporal organisation. I suggest that it is necessary to turn to various forms of circulation to examine further the interplay between structure and flow.

Rhythm as repetition has been suggested by Lefebvre (2004: 6) when arguing that there is '[n]o rhythm without repetition in time and in space, without *reprises*, without returns, in short without measure [*mesure*]'. The cyclical, Lefebvre notes, is primarily grasped by the body, since '[r]hythm appears as regulated time, governed by rational laws, but in contact with what is least rational in human being: the lived, the carnal, the body' (2004: 9). Our embodied experience also would tell us that rhythmic patterns do not equate with stagnation: it is easy to recall the experience of moving one's foot to the beat of a tune. Further, rhythmicity is intrinsic to other forms (or layers) of mobility, perhaps in a similar way in which constant beats stimulate bodies to move. Describing rhythm in terms of dynamism and movement is closely related to John Dewey's model of aesthetics. In his later works, Dewey (2008: 158-159) defined rhythm as:

> [...] ordered variation of changes. When there is a uniformly even flow, with no variations of intensity or speed, there is no rhythm. There is stagnation even though it be the stagnation of unvarying motion. Equally there is no rhythm when variations are not placed. There is a wealth of suggestion in the phrase "*takes place.*" (emphasis in original)

Accordingly, Dewey does not characterise rhythm only by its repetition but, most importantly, by the relationships that define each element and produce their specific identities. Individual elements become linked to the whole as they are produced within the process. Under this perspective, rhythm is characterised by variation of intensity, speed and motion, while repetition is seen as stagnation and uniformity (Kruse 2007; Dewey 2008). In general terms, the property of rhythm to establish recurrent patterns appears to be the common denominator among assorted socio-cultural analyses. However, there are significant differences when it comes to establishing a distinction between the framework or form of those patterns, and the flow of instances that integrate them. In other words, rhythm evokes a tension between the cyclical and the linear (Lefebvre 2004); border and flow; fixed and mobile. A way to explore this tension – and to welcome, paradoxically, its ambiguity – is to return to the musical sense of the term.

In music theory, a distinction is often made between metre and rhythm. Metre refers to the temporal hierarchy of subdivisions, beats and bars that is sustained during performances; whereas rhythm refers to the 'actual' instances that are put into effect. Christopher Hasty (1997) takes this distinction further to analyse the relationship between forms of temporal organisation on the one hand, and the various ways in which series of events are enacted in reference to that framework on the other. Although Hasty's contribution is aimed at the development of the philosophy of music, his work provides conceptual tools that can be used to examine:

> […] questions of determinacy and indeterminacy, law and freedom; homogeneity and heterogeneity, unity and multiplicity; and structure and process, order as fixed arrangement of parts and relations and order as the emergence of dynamic, novel "wholes". (1997: 20)

Elaborating on Hasty's seminal work, I suggest that metre can be thought of as a temporal framework that organises a series of instances. Groups of people are able to share assumptions about the ways in which events unfold because they have a common metre. At a musical performance, for instance, listeners and musicians infer the metre that defines various scales of temporal organisation. Each level of temporal organisation can be clustered into a higher level of organisation. For example, beats can be grouped in measures, phrases, sections and so forth. Therefore, metre operates simultaneously at different levels. In a similar fashion, rhythm is produced at various levels, hence its use as a metaphor to explore cultural phenomena. Thinking about rhythm in these terms implies that every rhythm is, in fact, the assembly of multiple dynamics, which is to say that it is polyrhythmic. Rhythm, then, is not constituted by a single trajectory, but by a process in which several trajectories meet.

Although closely related, metre and rhythm differ in a number of ways. Metre is not articulated as such; it is not turned into sound because it works as a reference. While metre is presumed by groups of people (performers and listeners alike), rhythm is articulated as the performance unfolds, as instances come into being. This distinction has significant analytical consequences because it steps out from the opposition between metre and rhythm that is often encountered in musical theory (Hasty 1997: 5). Drawing on Hasty's work, I suggest that rhythm and metre are reciprocally linked

in ways that simultaneously provide structure and flow, continuity and change. Metre determines rhythm, and rhythm defines metre. In sum, rhythm constitutes an 'ordered variation of changes' (Kruse 2007: 19), 'scripted' by metrical forms of temporal organisation. This reciprocal relationship leads us to ask how these concepts can be extrapolated to examine the mobilities of practice. In the following section I analyse how practitioners alternate between waiting and proceeding to produce a rhythmic circulation during performances.

(RE)CONFIGURING RHYTHMS

To conceive rhythm as 'a particular manner of flowing' encourages us to attend to the specific ways through which this process is articulated. Practices are the articulation of elements, 'joints' that enable movement through the fitting together of different parts. To analyse these articulations I look not only at the moments in which practitioners proceed to action, but also attend to the establishment of rhythms through waiting. Practitioners collectively demarcate intervals and distinguishable sequences of events through waiting or pausing. Snow and Brissett (1986: 3) note that 'pauses are necessary to the recognition of action, and, as such, the rhythm of our social and personal existence'. Pausing or waiting is related to action in multiple ways. Monica Minnegal (2009: 90), for example, argues that waiting can be a strategic form of action; that is, waiting is 'an explicit expression of agency'. Waiting can also be the consequence of the failure of material infrastructures and assorted artefacts (see, for instance, Jain 2006: 89) or environmental changes (Baer 2009; Robins 2009). Not acknowledging the relevance of infrastructures, artefacts and other materials would attribute too much agency to human pausing. However, I will leave those other aspects aside here as my main interest in this section is the alternation between waiting and proceeding as forms of human agency.

Delaying the course of action is not simply a way of letting time slip away; waiting in this context is produced through the act of pausing to evaluate the most appropriate moment for intervening. An example of this strategic way of acting can be illustrated by the constant rotation of singers that takes place at *fandango*.

Practitioners typically wait for specific moments to prompt verses, taking into consideration what has already been sung and, more generally, what is happening at that particular event. In this way, the verses are loosely connected in sequences and articulate a form of interaction that is built upon formulaic lyrical structures. By contrast, waiting for 'too long' or not proceeding at all disrupt the sequence of verses, as the flow is sustained in 'real-time'. Singing 'off time' or not responding to a verse are felt to be omissions, just as the absence of a timely response in most everyday conversations is taken as a failure to take part in a given interaction.

In one occasion, for instance, I was taking part in a *fandango* in a small town in Washington state. A *jaranero* standing on my right hand side prompted a verse and then turned to me as if handing the response to me with that gesture. I did not reply despite having perceived the gesture, probably owing to the fact that I was distracted and my reflexes were slow. Meanwhile, he was waiting for me to repeat the same verse with a slight melodic variation, which is the habitual way of responding. There was a temporal gap and my silence became an empty space. The dancing and strumming of *jaranas* continued undisturbed, but the absence of a response from me produced a certain awkwardness. The singer on my right then leaned forward and said in sotto voce: '*no me dejes solo, güey!*' ('don't leave me alone, stupid!').[63] He then sang the remaining half of the verse, to which I responded this time, on time. The example illustrates how the rhythms of *fandango* are sustained or disrupted through specific forms of interaction established among practitioners, a form of dialogue with pauses and iterations. Understanding when and how to (re)act is a fundamental aspect of performing. Sensing the appropriate times for acting is not an art of divination, but a skill that relies on the tacit understanding of the interplay between waiting and proceeding.

This interplay is also noticeable when a *fandango* is about to start. There was a *fandango* in Santa Ana, for instance, and a series of preparatory events framed the

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[63] Author's translation.

commencement of the event before the actual performance began.[64] Practitioners greeted each other as they arrived, made small groups to chatter and, after a while, started tuning their instruments. The *tarima* was already placed at the centre of the large backyard in which the event was taking place, and a woman stepped on it and stomped a little as if testing it. Some others tested their *jaranas* by playing C major chords and adjusting the tuning pegs. Some were talking about the home-brewed beers that somebody was selling at the event, while others were commenting about a recently purchased instrument. The *guitarrero*,[65] the person who introduces each *son* by playing a melodic instrument, was tuning by the *tarima*. *Jaraneros* checking the tuning of their instruments spread all over the backyard, but the noise produced by their tuning gradually became concentrated as they approached the *tarima.* While the chatter and the tuning continued, a melodic line introduced 'El Siquisirí', the *son* with which every *fandango* begins. This melody marked the end of the waiting time and the beginning of the actual performance. It is perhaps an obvious remark to say that practitioners waited a while before engaging in playing and dancing. However, it may be less obvious to note that the benchmarks of the performance were established through waiting and proceeding. Therefore, *fandangos* are dynamically configured through such interplay.

While the production of rhythm is the consequence of meaningful actions performed by individual practitioners, the process of configuring a given performance through waiting and proceeding is a form of collective agency. One of the most noticeable forms of this collective achievement occurs when, at *fandangos*, practitioners stand close to the *tarima* and wait before stepping onto it and starting to dance. Delaying this action depends on the type of *son* that is performed, as there are three different types: those danced by groups of women (*de a montón,* literally 'by many'), by one woman and one man (*de pareja,* 'in couples'), and by four women and one man (*de cuadrilla*, referring to a specific kind of group - these forms have already been addressed in Chapter 2). These categories regulate who can dance at specific moments and how many should do it at one time. Waiting close to the *tarima* is,

[64] This description is based on the audio recording of a *fandango* in Santa Ana, United States, August 2, 2013.
[65] See footnote 15, Chapter 2.

then, a prelude to the act of dancing. Practitioners must delay stepping onto the *tarima* in order to anticipate the specific moment for doing so, which is marked by the end of a verse. Although stepping on the *tarima* when somebody is singing a verse is not considered to be correct procedure, practitioners use that moment for approaching it and wait. Consequently, the act of waiting near the *tarima* is already a meaningful act: it announces that the waiter is about to step onto it. Not everyone may be able to notice this action, especially those who are already on the *tarima* and focused on their own dancing. This is why it is customary that the waiter touches the shoulder of the person who is going to be replaced to indicate the change of dancer while stepping onto the *tarima*. These strategic ways of waiting and proceeding refer to a metre, to a framework that structures the unfolding of *fandango*. It is to the relationships between rhythm and metre that we now turn.

The rhythm and metre of *fandango*

These gestures have been continuously repeated to the point of becoming constitutive rules of performance. Groups of practitioners align their actions in reference to a common form of temporal organisation. This arrangement is established by specific actions, such as waiting by the edge of the *tarima*, waiting to dance, singing verses and replying to them. These and many other actions are also benchmarks that indicate the beginning and conclusion of an event. These are just a few examples of the myriad of actions through 'which the determinacy of the past is molded to the demands of the emerging novelty of the present' (Hasty 1997: 82). As an underlying system of temporal organisation, metre is presupposed by groups of practitioners who synchronise their actions. This form of alignment – the eurhythmics of these celebrations – is sustained in a context in which practitioners presume the same rules.

This is not to say that all practitioners necessarily follow a common metre. The production of forms of spatio-temporal organisation is, in fact, the consequence of multiple degrees of alignment. As was observed in Chapter 2, performers are more-or-less on time/off time and in place/out of place. This gamut of possibilities can be better appreciated through the contrast produced when practitioners who presume

certain rules perform along with others who ignore them. An example comes from a *fandango* I attended in Sotavento that assembled people from many different locations. At the beginning of the event there was a certain discomfort among many practitioners when some dancers stepped onto the *tarima* at unexpected moments. I noticed this event with great interest because these dancers were following the conventions of approaching the *tarima* and touching the shoulder of the person to be replaced before engaging in dancing. By this means, they were performing the same gestures as the rest, but lacked synchronicity as they did not wait for the appropriate moment before stepping onto the *tarima*. This situation provoked some confusion and a woman, who was one of the hosts of that *fandango*, called attention and spoke up:

> Just as *son jarocho*…, just as we are rescuing this tradition, in the same way we are trying to rescue its rules. So, *son jarocho* has its rules: the '*son de a montón*' is danced only by ladies, just by women; and the '*son de pareja*', well, I see that some of you don't know that bit: the change is when the verse has finished. I mean, while someone is singing, there is a couple dancing. Once the verse has finished, there can be a change of man or a change of woman. Those are the rules for dancing.[66]

Through this comment, the woman made explicit the need to follow a common temporal organisation. One cannot access the *tarima* at any time, as there are specific moments marked by the beginning and end of verses. That is a principle of the practice, a constitutive rule (Swidler 2005: 91) that demarcates a distinction between what counts as *fandango* and what does not. As Shove and Panzar (2007: 165) note, 'practices acquire a separate identity through repetition'. The repetition of this rule has, therefore, become part of what must be done during a *fandango*. Further, this repetition is a rhythmic accomplishment, produced in reference to an order presupposed by groups of practitioners. The spatio-temporal arrangement produced during *fandangos* is confirmed in each re-enactment; thus, the accumulation of enactments over multiple times and spaces establishes the practice of traditional *son*

[66] Excerpt from the transcript of the audio recording of a *fandango* in Tlacotalpan, Mexico, May 13, 2013. Author's translation.

jarocho as a recognisable entity (Shove and Pantzar 2007: 154). In other words, *son jarocho* is recognised by practitioners as a meaningful practice because of the accumulation of performative patterns throughout history. Although what counts as traditional *son jarocho* is contested and cannot be clarified with a sharp definition, practitioners do share a 'practical sense', a common ground from which to proceed. Bourdieu (1990: 61) has described this sense as:

> […] the practical mastery of the logic or of the immanent necessity of a game – a mastery acquired by experience of the game, and one which works outside conscious control and discourse (in the way that, for instance, techniques of the body do).

The instances produced through such temporalised forms of alignment are rhythmic events that refer to a common metre. To explore further the rhythmicity of these configurations, it is worth looking at the events that disrupt them. As Michael Burawoy (2009: 14) observes, 'interventions create perturbations that are not noise to be expurgated but music to be appreciated, transmitting the hidden secrets of the participant's world'. Arrhythmia, the irregular and 'deviant' pattern that cuts through the unfolding of events, provides precious opportunities for the analysis of the tension between continuity and change.

Arrhythmia

During my fieldwork I heard many anecdotes involving humorous moments at *fandangos*, workshops and other performances. Yet others recounted events that became significant for some practitioners. The latter tended to describe extraordinary events or situations that fall outside the taken-for-granted norm and so carry specific meanings. Far from evaluating the 'truthfulness' of these stories, their relevance resides in their pedagogical purpose; practitioners brought them up during casual conversations, partly because the stories refer to what is not typical and thereby worth mentioning. There was a particular story that I heard a few times which stands out because of the excitement with which it was narrated. I am incorporating it into the analysis because it was an event that disrupted 'the particular manner of flowing' of a *fandango*–that is, an arrhythmia.

About a decade ago there was a *fandango* in a remote community in rural Sotavento, and a group of tourists from the US happened to be at that celebration (there is disagreement among the storytellers about who invited them and how many tourists were there). These tourists had never practised *son jarocho* before; apparently, this was the first time that they had attended such an event. Here it is important to note that *fandango* may give the impression of a celebration with no apparent order, as people sometimes dance in couples, or groups, and there are moments in which there are no dancers on the *tarima*. The songs might also be perceived as excessively long and repetitive. The internal logic of *fandango* is not obvious and it takes time to grasp the things that matter, and to understand how and when they matter. Additionally, the storytellers pointed out that the tourists were quietly looking at the performance, but were taking part in the copious drinking of the alcoholic beverages that were circulated. At some point during the night the *fandango* was at its best, with the music and dance loudly and vibrantly resonating. One of the tourists suddenly stepped onto the *tarima* and started dancing, making gestures that caricatured a sort of flamenco dance, while saying *olé, olé*. Somebody at the front of the *tarima* yelled '*Una!*' in the middle of an unfinished verse and the performance stopped abruptly after a few moments of confusion. The halting of the music was similar to pushing an emergency break while the performance was in motion. The tourist remained in the middle of the *tarima* unsure of what was happening; those standing around, the story follows, stared at him disapprovingly, and one of the storytellers commented in interview:

> Well, imagine what it is like standing there with everyone looking at you. He [the tourist] was convinced that he could do the same as all the others, didn't he? He couldn't understand because he ignored that thing. But one [a traditional practitioner] sees it as disrespectful, don't you think? Because if we let that happen, then any drunken or any clueless person will feel the right of stepping onto the *tarima* and use the tradition in which he [*sic*] hasn't invested any effort to understand, to respect its ways, the ways that are important.[67]

[67] Excerpt from the transcript of an interview conducted with an anonymous practitioner in Xalapa, Mexico, April 8, 2013. Author's translation.

This story describes a type of interaction that clearly falls outside what is expected at these events. During *fandangos*, countless instances fall into different degrees of what is considered to be 'authentic', 'acceptable' and 'not-acceptable'. In this case, the tourist's intervention was blatantly disrespectful. The story, of course, was not told to demonise drunken visitors, but to highlight the necessity of sustaining the *fandango*. That disturbance constituted a form of arrhythmia, a disruption that was felt to be offensive, because participating in a tradition by taking time to cultivate its metre and rhythm is felt as intimate, as part of oneself. Because cultural practices provide resources for the formation of ways of being and belonging, their traditions are felt to require defence. Enjoying the performance is central to the practice, but what is at stake is one's identity, and not simply one's diversion. For *son jarocho* practitioners, the need to keep their practice 'alive' by sustaining, rescuing and valuing it, is mobilised through narratives of a single, bounded and coherent tradition.

There are certain consistencies in the *son jarocho* practice that have been sustained for a long period of time, despite the multiple trajectories and contexts in which it is enacted. For instance, every *fandango* starts with 'El Siquisirí', regardless of whether it takes place in Pajapan, Portland, Minatitlán, Mexico City, Santa Barbara, Seattle, Chinameca or Chicago. This principle is one among many other consistent elements that enable practitioners to develop a sense of belonging based on a recognisable practice. An expression of this identity is invoked when they call themselves *jaraneros*, as the main instrument to perform *son jarocho* is the *jarana*. Yet, the characteristics that define the identity of this traditional practice are ambiguous. Workshops have had a central role in the diffusion of the practice to many locations and the formation of strong bonds among communities of practitioners. The fact that *son jarocho* is practised in many different contexts has given rise to questions of what constitutes 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' practice; that is, what is rhythmic and arrhythmic. There is a need for a common metre to produce the rhythms of the practice.

California is probably one of the regions in which groups of people have most actively taken this practice to be a meaningful way of making music. This situation

owes much to the historical links between this state and the Mexican northwest, the consolidated migratory system and the economic integration between Mexico and the US (see Delgado and Favela 2004; Castles et al. 2008). As was noted in Chapter 3, there has been a gradual development of *son jarocho* in California since the second half of the twentieth century, but only over the past three decades has a larger number of people assiduously practised it. In this process, some of them developed proficiency at making this form of music and started teaching at workshops. Yet, significant changes came when these practitioners formed groups of traditional *son jarocho* players to perform on stage. The professionalisation of *son jarocho* groups beyond Sotavento has raised the question of who has the 'right' to disseminate a tradition that is thought to have its 'roots' in Sotavento.

From the beginning of the 2000s, many groups have commercialised their music through studio recordings, performances at festivals and interventions in the media. The relative success of some of these groups has caused contention among practitioners. Who is qualified to teach *son jarocho*? How proficient must a practitioner be before engaging in professional activities? On one occasion I had a conversation on these topics with a *jaranero* who grew up in Los Angeles, had lived in southeast Mexico for a number of years, and was currently promoting *son jarocho* in various parts of the American west coast. He was uncomfortable with the fact that there were some practitioners performing *son jarocho* as professional 'world music' groups without having, in his opinion, a sound understanding of the tradition:

> It would be better if they studied a bit more, they should learn more about this tradition before going out there and playing [on stage]. They have just learnt a few things and now are out there saying that what they play is '*son jarocho*'. We had a discussion the other day and they said 'well, what we play is *son chicano*'.[68] That makes no sense. We are trying to keep a tradition, but they just don't get it.[69]

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[68] 'Chicano' is a term used in the United States by some people of Mexican origin or descent to refer to their own ethnic identity.

Some practitioners are angry with the members of those groups because, for them, it is not enough to be able to play pieces of the traditional repertoire in order to be a traditional practitioner. ‘This is not about them and their identity crisis’, the *jaranero* from LA mentioned later in our conversation. Who has the right to benefit from that tradition? Who is a ‘bearer’ of it? These discussions are closely related to the multiple identities negotiated across communities of practitioners. Practices do not only underpin collective integration, they are also felt as part of one’s identity. As Ien Ang (2001: 151) notes, ‘identities are generally expressed (and mobilized politically) precisely because they *feel* natural and essential’. Cultural practices provide resources for the development of these feelings, which are at the core of the creation and negotiation of identities. The contestation of existing power configurations through the recuperation of a tradition, and the circulation of these practices across communities of practitioners, are both forms of mobilisation. Furthermore, the meanings of these identities are caught up in the tension between continuity and change. There is, however, a significant difference between the reproduction of traditional ways of doing and the improvisation that takes place as performances unfold.

IMPROVISATION AND STRUCTURE

As the previous section illustrates, *fandangos* are environments in which events occur with frequency and consistency. Yet, their fallibility and imperfection opens a myriad of possibilities. As a non-rehearsed performance, the ways in which the different elements come together can produce successful or frustrating events. One usually arrives expecting to participate in a positive, engaging event, although no one knows how exactly the performance will unfold, and how good the result will be. There are many factors that affect the unfolding of a good or bad event: the quality of the music and dance, the intensity of the interaction that is established among

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[69] Excerpt from the notes taken during a conversation conducted with an anonymous practitioner in Seattle, United States, June 16, 2013.

musicians and dancers, the weather, the moment in which the *tamales*[70] (a typical dish served at *fandangos*) are eaten, or the general enthusiasm of the participants. While *fandangos* have a shared metre, the rhythm of their unfolding is not predetermined, but is constantly adapted on impulse. Despite the planning that involves the organising of these events, the seamless integration of elements is produced on the spur of the moment. Improvisation is a significant aspect of these performances.

By improvisation I am here referring to a form of formulaic extemporisation, which in this context is understood as the constant adaptation of pre-existent procedures, methods or units of meaning to altered conditions. This approach should be distinguished from conceptualisations of improvisation as 'free' creation – that is, the ability to take action without the control of structures or dispositions. This perspective is closely related to forms of 'free improvisation' that have been developed in various musical genres (Bailey 1993: 83-85). Adorno (2002: 445) adopts a similar approach to improvisation in his critique of popular culture:

> Even though jazz musicians still improvise in practice, their improvisations have become so "normalized" as to enable a whole terminology to be developed to express the standard devices of individualization [...]. This pseudo-individualization is prescribed by the standardization of the framework. The latter is so rigid that the freedom it allows for any sort of improvisation is severely limited. Improvisations [...] are confined within the walls of the harmonic and metric scheme.

Here Adorno captures how formulaic improvisation is restricted by standardised structures, such as harmony and metre. From this perspective, 'actual improvisation' equates with free invention, which is closely connected to such aesthetic views of improvisation as 'risk taking' or an 'unguided journey' (Peters 2009: 36). Despite the apparent opposition to the formulaic views of improvisation, these perspectives highlight the structures that limit performance and the risks taken in the unguided

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[70] See footnote 26, Chapter 2.

journey of improvisation. Instead of focusing on the free character of improvisation – which tends to be portrayed as a positive value – in this section I advance a view on formulaic improvisation as a guided journey in which travellers may find inventive solutions to puzzling situations while the trip is underway. People engage in routines that are constrained by a series of rules and, at the same time, enable forms of 'everyday creativity' and improvisation (de Certeau 1984). Practitioners are usually able to estimate the most probable outcome of certain events, based on habit and the well established routines of this practice. The 'walls' of metre are the basis of the 'practical sense' or the art of anticipating. Pre-empting 'obvious', interconnected events is based on regular sequences of action. The following section analyses the constant adjustment of those actions to changing situations. This adaptation is in itself an improvised production of rhythm.

On the spur of the moment

The dancers' performance is called *zapateado*,[71] which consists of rhythmically stomping on the *tarima* during the brief interlude in which no verses are sung. When someone around the *tarima* sings a verse, dancers cease their stomping and conduct muted steps; in *son jarocho* jargon this interval is called *mudanceo*. The word '*mudanceo*' is derived from '*mudar*' (to change). Practitioners also refer to this interval as *escobillado*, which makes use of the metaphor of sweeping floors to describe the dancers' steps. In this case, dragging one's steps (instead of stomping) is described as sweeping the *tarima*. The objective of alternating between stomping and conducting muted steps is to establish a constant oscillation between verses and percussive dance. Dancers usually connect a series of standardised dance steps to produce a coherent flow; the improvisation of steps occurs, then, during the brief moments of stomping when dancers become percussionists. The fluctuation between verses and percussive dance provides a frame, a structure that enables the deviation from the mere reproduction of rules and established dispositions. The capacity to perform a formulaic series of dance steps is a precondition of the performance taking place. *Fandango* (like the enactment of any other practice) is a domain in which the

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[71] See footnote 21, Chapter 2.

constitutive rules are reproduced, not only because they are known, but also because practitioners 'presume' them (Swidler 2005: 91-92). The reproduction of rules and routines at *fandango* provides opportunities for disobedience (Peters 2009: 12) through the introduction of new, invented steps that 'flex' the tempo or manipulate the intensity of the performance. Improvisation takes the shape of inventive disobedience.

The established interaction between verses and percussive dance is also mimicked by those plucking strings around the *tarima* who modulate the intensity of their playing: a little softer when a verse is sung, and vigorous when dancers are performing the *zapateado*. This oscillation also provides a frame for the improvisation of melodies played by the *guitarrero*, who usually has a leading role in the performance. Melodic phrases (called *figuras* [figures] in *son jarocho* terminology) and their variations are the building blocks of a musical vocabulary upon which the tunes of the traditional repertoire become recognisable and are differentiated from one another. The aim of the *guitarrero* is, then, to turn the melodic phrases at hand (melodies that have become part of an embodied 'stock' of musical knowledge) into an intelligible sequence that can be recognised by other practitioners. But the craft of the *guitarrero* relies on the capacity to improvise upon those formulas in order to 'imprint' inventiveness into convention.

Despite the relevance of dancing and playing instruments, the singing of verses is the preferred and most cultivated improvisational form at *fandango*. *Sones*, the pieces of the traditional *son jarocho* repertoire, have a fixed lyrical structure called *décima*,[72] which refers to a ten-line stanza that has been used for centuries in the Americas and on the Iberian Peninsula. *Décima* is the essential lyrical structure that is used by those gathered around the *tarima* as they prompt verses. Although the singing verses rely on this predetermined structure, their enactment follows the tempo of the performance. Thus, singing requires an acute sense of timing despite being a routine action. In other words, memorising verses is only half the task: prompting them at

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[72] Formally known as *Décima de Espinel*, this verse form was named after the Spanish writer and musician Vicente Espinel (1550-1624) (see Preminger et al. 1996: 382).

the most opportune moment is where the expertise is exercised. Additionally, the invention of verses in ‘real-time’ intensifies the engagement of practitioners, particularly when they refer to the place, people or any other element that characterises that specific event.

A relevant example comes from Santa Ana, California, where a group of practitioners that has fervently taken up the practice of *son jarocho* organised a *fandango*. The event brought together people from near and distant locations alike. There were visitors from Los Angeles, San Diego and other locations in southern California, a few from the Bay Area, and some others from north and southeast Mexico. That night, in the heat of the performance, a practitioner who travelled from Tijuana earlier that day extemporised the first four lines of a verse in which he mentioned the difficulties of crossing the international border at peak hours despite having the required documentation. The other six lines were then complemented by a traditional verse:

Seis horas estuve esperando	Six hours I waited
para cruzar la frontera	to cross the border
ahora aquí estoy jaraneando	now I’m here playing *jarana*
con la raza santanera	with the people from Santa Ana
ay que sí que no que no	oh yes, oh no
cuanto gusto me da verte	I’m so glad to see you
déjame darte un abrazo	let me give you a hug
le doy gracias a mi suerte	I thank my good fortune
porque con el tiempo acaso	because perhaps in time

más y más pueda quererte.	I could love you more and more.[73]

When the verse was sung, we formed a group of about twenty musicians around the *tarima*. There were also six dancers on it, and small scattered groups of people having conversations. The loud voice, then, sang 'now I'm here playing *jarana* with the people from Santa Ana'[74] and the crowd instantly cheered, whistled and played their instruments louder. The verse is a very brief account of the singer's journey to cross an international border and arrive at that particular *fandango.* It held a special resonance for the musicians around him because it instantiated the personal experiences of many practitioners who dwell on either side of the border and travel regularly between the US and Mexico. This verse is the product of the practitioner's tacit understanding of the lyrical structure of *décima* and his capacity to improvise upon it. It is an expression of 'practical sense', adaptation and imagination. But, of course, the verse is also an implicit reference to the politics of securitisation of the border between the US and Mexico, and the inequalities and asymmetrical relationships among people, institutions, and governments. Finally, the extemporised verse succinctly evoked movement (travelling from Tijuana to Santa Ana), friction (waiting for six hours to cross the international border) and mooring (locating his playing in Santa Ana amid constant movement), which are fundamental aspects of mobility (Cresswell 2010).

Not all improvisations work as well as the former example. Verse improvisers run the risk of failing to find a suitable rhyme or to fit their words into the rigid structure of ten octosyllabic lines. On one occasion I heard of such an unsuccessful attempt at a *fandango* that was held in Sotavento. Instead of singing one of the many well-known verses of the *son jarocho* repertoire, a practitioner ventured into creating a verse with reference to the colour of the skirt worn by a pretty dancer who happened to be on the *tarima* at that moment. The man's verse did not fit the lyrical structure of *décima,* as the first two lines were too long, causing the singer to miss the beat. It

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[73] Author's translation.
[74] Author's translation.

was a risky attempt that ended up being somehow incomplete. A finished verse is usually followed by the dancers' stomping, but they did not react in the usual way because there was a clear gap as the verse was not properly articulated. The musicians kept on strumming their instruments; the dancers were quietly following the beat. The singer started the verse again, repeating the first words of the previous attempt, but on this occasion modifying the last words to fit the number of required syllables, keeping the beat and the lyric structure. Still, the last words of each line did not rhyme! From the outside it looks quite easy to improvise a verse, but once one starts singing it, the words become hard to fit in, the beats run fast and the words may simply not rhyme. Someone among the musicians cried out '*epa*!', there were some whistles, and one could still feel the gap of an unfinished verse. Musicians looked at each other chuckling or smiling, trying to find out who was going to sing next. Someone in the back of the crowd started a new verse, but this time the choice was a much safer, conventional verse that the majority would surely recognise.

In the improvisatory performances that I have described, the rhythmic circulation of elements that conform to *fandango* is given by the reproduction of routine actions, as well as by their improvisation. As a transient event, improvisation is a change of condition in the unfolding of performances, so illustrating how cultural practices are more than the reproduction of rules and habitual dispositions (Spinosa 2005: 209). Attaining tacit knowledge of the explicit and non-explicit elements of a practice is a precondition of improvisation. Furthermore, the 'particular manner of flowing' of *fandango* relies on both the rules and routines of the practice and their inventive disobedience. This is why the meanings of improvisation at *fandango* are established by the reproduction of what practitioners regard as traditional through the adaptation of rules and routines to particular situations and contexts.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have argued that it is important to be attentive to rhythm when looking at the continuity and change of cultural practices. While this analysis embraces the rhythms produced in dance and music, it also attempts to push forward

a more comprehensive view that encompasses the rhythmicity of practices to understand cultural transformation. Furthermore, it introduces the notions of rhythm and metre as constructs to aid the exploration of cultural processes. The examination of the reciprocal relationship between rhythm and metre, I argue, can be used as an analytical strategy to outline the rhythms of the multilayered processes of mobility. The case of *fandango* illustrates how the analysis of these rhythms can broaden processual understandings of cultural practices.

One way of examining the significance of rhythms is to attend to the pauses that establish the benchmarks of performances. Although waiting is often perceived as wasted time, this chapter has shown some of the ways in which strategic waiting demarcates coherent patterns during performances and, consequently, establishes rhythms. The interplay between waiting and proceeding is, in itself, a form of agency and an 'art of anticipating' a foreseeable future (Bourdieu 1998: 25). Practitioners engage in this form of motion through dancing, playing instruments and signing. To perform, they must consider what has just happened and anticipate the upcoming events as the performance unfolds. The instances marked by waiting and proceeding do not constitute autonomous moments, but become integrated into a coherent flow. Therefore, the rhythmic enactment of practices (or practising) takes place as a 'gluing' of instances, an articulation of a series of actions in reference to a common metre.

These rhythms operate in multiple ways. Their enactment rests on a collective metre; that is, the shared understandings that make possible synchronised interaction. Different degrees of synchronisation are established during performances, producing varying degrees of 'doing it right'. In this and previous chapters I have addressed the unfolding of performances as the production of spatio-temporal arrangements that have been analysed as collective achievements in which groups of practitioners share rules and routines that are intrinsic to the practice. This is not to say, however, that the production of these arrangements is at all times harmonious: *son jarocho*, like most cultural practices, is a space of contestation, conflict and disagreement. To examine this tension, some examples of arrhythmia have been discussed. The analysis of disruptive rhythms with no reference point in common – that is, a

completely different metre – unveils aspects that are otherwise taken for granted. As Lefebvre (2004: 19) puts it, the rhythmanalyst: '[...] will listen to the world, and above all to what is disdainfully called noises, which are said without meaning, and to *murmurs* [rumeurs], full of meaning [...]'. A methodological note can be added here: discrepancies, I believe, are not to be dismissed as anomalies but closely examined as they have the potential to reveal the rules and routines that are presumed by practitioners and are otherwise imperceptible to the ethnographer.

The significance of the tension that contains Benveniste's (1971: 286) conceptualisation of *rhuthmos* can be appreciated better by referring to rhythm as the 'form as improvised, momentary, changeable'. Practices are more than eurhythmic and arrhythmic arrangements, and more than the reproduction and disruption of rules and habitual dispositions. Accommodating various elements to fit routines to altered conditions is a form of improvisation. Similarly, the tacit understanding of the rhythms of performance is a form of temporal and spatial awareness. In the context of *fandango*, practitioners imprint a personal touch to well-known formulas through the invention of verses, dance steps and melodies. These inventions rely on a tacit understanding of the rhythms of performance – that is, on an acute temporal and spatial awareness. These inventions enhance the performance, as the flow of habitual elements is discontinued by 'inventive disobedience'.

The analysis of the rhythmicity of practice has led us to reflect on issues of mobility and fixity from a different perspective. The rhythm and metre of the *son jarocho* practice are mobilised through narratives of identity that inform what the tradition is generally believed to be. However, the demarcation of what constitutes 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' is contested. Practitioners based in different locations currently question what traditional *son jarocho* is and how it intersects with their own identities. These issues are not obvious, as what counts as traditional, and who is entitled to benefit from it, are questions that emerge from the mobilities of this practice. In a more general sense, cultural practices do bring people together into a more-or-less shared and synchronous 'TimeSpace'. They also connect groups of practitioners across different locations. But they also produce frictions because the meanings assigned to the practice are entangled with the collective identities of

practitioners.

In summary, rhythm and metre operate at various levels. Beats, bars and measures are scales of temporal organisation that are embedded in established forms of interaction. A whole performance, for example, also unfolds rhythmically in reference to metre. At a higher scale, the rhythm and metre of practices-as-entity also operate in a multilayered manner. As argued throughout this and the preceding chapters, the meanings that structure the recuperation of the tradition of *son jarocho* are at the core of its diffusion across geographically dispersed communities of practitioners. The mobilities of *son jarocho* have borne its transformation, and its preservation has entailed its inexorable change. This paradox resonates with the dual character of rhythm, as it encapsulates the tension between continuity and change. How is it possible to address the entanglement between the circulation of a practice across communities of practitioners and the essentialised narratives that construct it as a fixed tradition? The trajectories of this practice stem from their reproduction and adaptation in different contexts, establishing and transforming the impermanent limits of its identity. These complex frictions are explored further in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: In the grip of friction

> I find it good to think with that kind of paradoxical mobile rootedness, because in practice people are living all sorts of tactical combinations of roots and routes, experiences too easily mapped onto oppositions of stasis and displacement, essence and difference, native and cosmopolitan (Clifford 2003: 66).

INTRODUCTION

The argument that extends throughout the chapters of this thesis establishes that cultural practices are sustained, informed and reshaped by multiple forms of mobility. It is suggested that these processes are formed by the overlapping circulation of practice-as-entities and practices-as-performances. A notable aspect of these mobilities relates to the discourses of recuperation and valorisation of a tradition in risk of disappearance. During my ethnographic fieldwork I constantly encountered these narratives seeking to anchor practices to specific groups of people, territories and ideals, which stand in contrast with what I came to conceptualise as the mobilities of practice. How critically to engage with the discrepancy between essentialisms and mobilities? In this chapter I address this tension by focusing on four points.

First, I suggest that studies of cultural practices can run the risk of conflating the category of analysis (cultural practice, in this research study) with the categories elaborated by practitioners (tradition and authenticity). The processual approach that is advanced here focuses on the ways in which practices become reproduced, appropriated and re-enacted in different contexts, as well as recognised by practitioners as coherent and bounded entities. Discourses on recuperation and valorisation are closely related to these changes and continuities. These narratives have not only made possible the reproduction of a presumably authentic way of making *son jarocho* but, most importantly, have allowed practitioners to mobilise

and enact it as a recognisable practice. Paradoxically, a noticeable outcome of this process has been the transformation of various constitutive elements of *son jarocho*. As localised phenomena (Shove and Panzar 2005), the ways of performing and transmitting this practice have been adapted to the various circumstances of such enactments. To what extent, then, do *jaraneros* practise the same practice? A closely related point is the role of constitutive elements (such as rules, routines and artefacts) in the reproduction of these enactments, which is analysed in the second section of this chapter. The variations produced by practising *son jarocho* in different contexts raise the questions of how mobile practices attain consistency and how practice-specific elements intervene in the stabilisation of *son jarocho*.

Practitioners define the identity of mobile practices through discourses of authenticity. Essentialised narratives, especially those related to diasporic groups, have been critically scrutinised in much cultural research (see, for instance, Baumann 1997). This body of literature clearly shows how social groups are prone to reify cultural practices as representative of communities or geographical demarcations. Yet, various scholars have sought to go beyond such criticism by engaging with reified categorisations as social phenomena in their own right. Jonathan Friedman (2002: 30), for example, asks: '[...] if people are doing this thing called bounding and closure and essentialism, should this not be recognized as a real social phenomenon rather than shunned as a terrible mistake?' To address the ways in which practices acquire a reified identity, the third section of this chapter focuses on how practitioners use essentialised narratives of authenticity and tradition while exercising a flexible adherence to its rules and routines. Finally, the opposition between these discourses and the multilayered circulation of practice is interpreted as friction. This last section examines how the resistance produced between fixity and circulation enables movement by providing the 'grip' that sets practices in motion. The following section, then, will examine the variations in practice as it is enacted in different contexts.

VARIEGATED PRACTICE

In bringing focus to mobility I have sought to demonstrate that cultural practices are fundamentally processual phenomena. Mobility, circulation, transference and diffusion are concepts that I have used throughout the previous chapters to describe the ways in which practices are simultaneously reproduced and transformed through the assembling of elements. Two questions that arise from such emphasis are: How is it possible to adopt a processual perspective when analysing specific instances? And what processual approach is necessary with regard to a practice that is recognised by its practitioners as a bounded and coherent entity? As an analytical strategy, I have chosen to distinguish between practice-as-performance (an enactment in a specific time and space) and practice-as-entity (the collection of enactments in several times and spaces) (Schatzki 1996; Shove et al. 2012). This approach provides a point of departure to determine how a practice can be turned into an object of detailed analysis and how to proceed to analyse it empirically (as has been already suggested in Chapter 1).

Approaching practice from a processual perspective has the methodological advantage of avoiding essentialist categories. Therefore, 'culture' would not be examined as a series of attributes that individuals or groups possess, but as a continuous collective construction. Looking at practices as processes turns notions such as culture, ethnicity, or gender into objects of empirical analysis, rather than taking them as analytical categories to conduct research (Wicker 1997: 40). This approach contrasts with reified ways of framing social phenomena. For instance, the use of 'ethnicity' as an analytical tool is a relevant example of the conflation of a category that is used in practice (as invoked by social actors) and a category of analysis (used to explain that phenomenon). Framing social interaction as integrated by clearly identifiable groups takes such categories as given. Contrastingly, a processual perspective on 'ethnic' differences or similarities would examine how, when and under what circumstances groups become 'ethnic'. Social and cultural research has provided evidence that realities are multiple and in continuous construction (DeNora 2014: 125). Theories of practice, in particular, have contributed to the understanding of how essentialised and reified categories are

evoked, enacted and produced as social phenomena. Still, the analytical advantages and promises of practice theory run the risk of essentialising its own object of study; that is, by taking the coherence and consistency of practices for granted.

Reifying social and cultural phenomena owes much to a thinking habit. 'Practice' can easily become a substitute for 'culture' or 'ethnicity' to frame phenomena, leading us to overlook the processes through which such categories become collective phenomena. In fact, the discussion in previous chapters may have left the impression that the practice of *son jarocho* has been treated as a consistent 'unit' that is readily available for empirical analysis. There is indeed regularity in practices that turns them into structures of action – faithful practitioners need to recognise practices as logically consistent entities. Yet, practices are located phenomena that vary depending on the context in which they are enacted. Neither entirely homogeneous nor fully coherent, cultural practices are often portrayed by practitioners as consistent, enclosing them in a 'myth of cultural integration' (Archer 1996) and presuming that they are shared by the members of a group for the mere fact of belonging to such collectivity.

This criticism is pertinent regarding reflection on the way that I have discussed practice so far. In preceding chapters I have recurrently suggested that practitioners tend to share a common understanding of ways of doing, and that the unfolding of performances relies on this integration. But at this point of the argument it is necessary to analyse the extent to which practices are shared by practitioners. In the following paragraphs I take a case written by Sumei Wang and Elizabeth Shove (2014) that examines the transformations associated with the diffusion of a sport in various countries. I use this example to elaborate on the discussion of the theorisation and consistency of practice in light of the mobilities discussed in previous chapters.

Are they practising the same practice?

In 'How Rounders Goes around the World', Wang and Shove (2014: 202-206) describe the trajectories followed by the game of rounders, a sport originating in England that during the nineteenth century was widely popularised in the US,

changed significantly during its dissemination and became a distinct sport later known as baseball. Wang and Shove describe how baseball became diffused and appropriated in different countries as part of the wider transformations mobilised by the expansionism of colonial powers: first by the English in North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, then during the American intervention in Japan in the nineteenth century, and later during the Japanese colonisation of Taiwan in 1895. This sport carried specific meanings produced by its previous travels, and acquired new meanings in the places of arrival. In Japan, for instance, baseball tended to represent an American way of life, identified as 'Western' and associated to privilege. But later, when the game was taken by the Japanese to Taiwan, new meanings were embedded in it, such as 'the new "bushido" or "samurai", core values of the Japanese warrior' (Wang and Shove 2014: 203). One of the most noticeable characteristics of the journeying of baseball across different countries has been the maintenance of sufficiently consistent elements (namely fields, balls, bats, or gloves), despite its varied appropriation. In 1945 this game acquired yet new meanings when the Republic of China assumed control of Taiwan. Baseball was discouraged by the new regime because of its association with the former Japanese occupation. As Wang and Shove (2014: 204) state:

> In the first decades of the KMT's rule, watching baseball was one of the few occasions when native Taiwanese could be themselves, dressing in shorts and slippers, chewing betel nuts, and eating from Japanese-style lunch boxes, reproducing a way of life they took to be comfortable and normal, but that was denigrated as vulgar by the new middle-class elite from mainland China […] baseball is also not only a site of symbolic expression: it is also actively implicated in making national and ethnic identities.

Here Wang and Shove touch on the formation of identities through the dissemination of a sport which is closely related to various points that are of key relevance to the current discussion. First, the practice of playing and consuming baseball became a form of belonging that intersected with the circulation of practices linked to the historical trajectories of colonialism. Still, the authors do not reduce the diffusion of baseball to a colonial imposition on vulnerable countries: they show how this practice served as a common denominator among practitioners and how it was used

as a form of identification, 'generating an emergent "national" identity' (2014: 204). Cultural practices provide resources for the construction, reproduction and negotiation of identities (which are to be discussed later in this chapter). Furthermore, the ways in which these forms of belonging are framed is important for the continuous construction of practice as a consistent and recognisable entity.

Second, the materiality of the practice is central to its standardisation and reproduction: the type and dimensions of the baseball fields, bats, balls and gloves have been crucial for sustaining its internal consistency as practice and for diffusing it as a coherent activity. This point resonates with the standardisation of artefacts in general, which in music making play a very important role. The diffusion of baseball is not a one-way process, but an appropriation and re-creation that involve innovation and adaptation of materials to new circumstances. Wang and Shove clearly illustrate this point by referring to the gloves made out of folded paper and the rubber balls used by community teams in Taiwan.

Finally, one of the most intriguing arguments of the essay comes when the authors conclude that the variations in the sport may actually entail the existence of different sports: 'when teams compete in international leagues, they are not, in fact, playing exactly the same game' (2014: 206). Although there is a substantial literature on standardisation and sport (see, for instance, Hesmondhalgh 2012), this suggestion leads us to wonder how practices acquire their identity; that is to say, under what circumstances is it possible to say that specific enactments belong to a given practice. Ultimately, the construction of practice as object of analysis entails the study of how it becomes recognised as an entity. If practices are embedded in mobility, flows and circulation, how can we claim that people enact the same practice in different contexts? Are they enacting the same or different practices? These points articulate a series of interrelated issues: the circulation of practices linked to their historical trajectories and transformations, their consistency as entities, their use to produce forms of belonging, the relationship between the identities of both practitioners and practices, and the adaptation of constitutive elements as practices are appropriated and re-created in different contexts. I start the next section by exploring this last point, and then incorporate the other ones in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS

How do people in geographically dispersed locations consider and recognise the rules and routines of a single practice? How do they assemble different elements to reproduce a relatively coherent set of actions? Cultural practices need recurrence in order to become socially recognised activities. This consistency, however, rarely involves a neat congruence from one enactment to another. *Son jarocho* performances are similar enough to be identified as a way of making music, even when the characteristics of individual *fandangos,* workshops and live-group performances fluctuate. In general terms, the identity of a practice is given by a series of elements that determine what that practice is as opposed to what it is not. The process through which specific arrangements of elements are articulated constitutes the link between a single performance and a recognisable practice-as-entity. As has been illustrated in previous chapters, these arrangements also distinguish one practice from another – in *son jarocho*, for instance, there is a significant differentiation between 'traditional' and 'folklorised' ways of making music. Rules, routines and the manipulation of specific artefacts are structured by explicit and non-explicit formulations or, as Bourdieu (1990: 60) puts it, by 'a set of objective regularities imposed on all those who join a game'.

Practice-specific elements constitute the most significant trademarks of mobile practices. Just as with the 'immutable mobiles' proposed by Latour (1987) and Law and Mol (2001), the articulation of these elements in different contexts often delineates in various ways the contours that make them socially recognised activities. These contours, however, become vague when their reproduction in different contexts depends on the adaptation of their constitutive elements. Rules and routines might not be replicated in exactly the same way because they need to fit the varying circumstances of performance. Although playing with relatively consistent and logical rules is central to the unfolding of performances, every event entails the adjustment of those regularities to altered conditions.

This section addresses the ways in which practitioners adhere to rules and routines while also adapting them to meet the specific circumstances in which the event is

taking place. The unfolding of *fandango* has been addressed in preceding chapters as a 'guided journey' conducted by structures of action. Borrowing from D'Andrade (1984) and Swidler (2005), I have referred in the previous chapter to these structures as 'constitutive rules' that lead practitioners to perform actions in particular ways. This notion refers to 'a culturally created entity – *an entity created by the social agreement that something counts as that entity*'. (D'Andrade 1984: 91, emphasis in the original). Although these principles are inherent components of practice, they can be expressed and followed in various ways. The enactment of practices is possible because groups of people act in accordance with a series of explicit and implicit principles.

Agreeing that something counts as something else is also a way of supporting a particular set of ideas and, to an extent, a form of belonging to a group of people who share those views. Constitutive rules and routines are, therefore, entangled, forming regular events embedded in frames of collective action. *Fandangos* illustrate this type of adherence as practitioners act in a way that conforms to the regularities of performances. We have seen in previous chapters how these regularities enable and constrain the unfolding of events. An example of these constitutive rules of *fandango* comes from the shared metre and the production of rhythms during performances, which have been reproduced in different locations as part of the mobilities of *son jarocho*. However, their recurrent enactment in different contexts has led to significant variations. In the following paragraphs, this ambivalence is exemplified by an unconventional form of *fandango*. But before analysing such an event, it is necessary to introduce the background of the group of *jaraneros* who organised it, because their personal trajectories are related to the contextualised appropriation of this practice.

A *fandanguito* in Portland

About six years ago, a small community of *son jarocho* enthusiasts emerged in Portland. They started a weekly workshop initially run by a small group of people who were already involved in this practice and moved from California to that city. The original workshop facilitators have recently returned to California, but now there

are several *jaraneros* with a reasonably good understanding of how to make *fandangos* and to run workshops. This small community of practitioners has also been assisted by frequent visits of *jaraneros* from Sotavento and other cities in the US. The personal trajectories of the practitioners who attend these workshops vary greatly. Some of them are Americans whose families migrated from different regions of Mexico decades ago. Others are undocumented migrants from Mexico who find it increasingly hard to move across the border, or are skilled migrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries who arrived in the US at different times. And some others are music enthusiasts who do not speak Spanish or have a Mexican background and simply enjoy making this type of music.

The motivations that bring this heterogeneous group to make this type of music jointly are diverse and difficult to categorise. One practitioner, for example, told me how she discovered this practice at a party in which one of her friends had brought a *jarana*: when her friend picked up the instrument and started playing, she remarked, ‘it was something like love at first sound’.[75] While this anecdote describes the attachment of a practitioner to a practice, these types of narrative do not explicate why they become practitioners. Ostensibly, *son jarocho* making in the US could be approached as a nostalgic longing for a rural way of life lost in the past of southeast Mexico. However, this *jaranera* and her fellow practitioners in Portland do not come from Sotavento, and many have never been there. This is also the case in most communities of practitioners in the US. Framing *son jarocho* in diasporic or ethnic terms would fail to capture the meanings of this practice because this is not a form of long-distance regionalism.

There are, however, some vague patterns that I have identified as characteristic of the experience in Portland and in other locations in the US. Practitioners have found in this practice a space in which to socialise, make friendships, and engage their families in an activity that can be practised regardless of age. It is also an affordable form of entertainment because, apart from buying an instrument (which constitutes

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[75] Excerpt from notes taken after a conversation with an anonymous practitioner in the United States, July 18, 2013.

the most expensive item), the workshops are often free or attendees make a voluntary contribution after the session. This practice has been appropriated in such a way that regional and national differences are negotiated through music making. In their effort to learn and reproduce an ideal of traditional *son jarocho,* they have developed a flexible adherence to a tradition that has been adapted in different contexts.

While conducting fieldwork in Portland I attended the Saturday workshops at a cultural centre in a suburb of that city. Once the workshop finished, *jaraneros* regularly spent a few hours chatting and having lunch at a nearby café. In one of those occasions the owner of that place, a man who migrated several years ago from southeast Mexico with his family, asked some of the musicians if they were interested in playing a few *sones* to celebrate the first anniversary of 'this little piece of Veracruz in Portland'. Three of the most experienced musicians decided to prepare a few tunes and make a small recital. Some weeks later, once the Saturday workshop had finished, most *jaraneros* headed towards the café as customary.[76] In the meantime, a dancer and I went to pick up a smaller *tarima* because the one we were using at the cultural centre would not fit into the small venue.

As she was driving, this *jaranera* explained that these smaller *tarimas* have made it easier to play in a variety of spaces. Although they can only have one or two dancers at a time, these '*tarimas cajueleras*' (*tarimas* that fit in the boot of a car) are practical because they can be easily transported and used for casual playing. She also stressed that these are used more often than the larger ones because they do not organise 'real *fandangos*' as often as they would like, and have opted to have shorter *fandangos* instead. The latter regularly start with a performance, often featuring visitors from other cities in the US or Sotavento, and then there is a little performance around one or two small *tarimas* in which everyone participates. These events are called *fandanguitos* (little *fandangos*) and reproduce many of the characteristics of the traditional celebration with a number of modifications, which will be addressed later in this section. 'Real *fandangos*', she said, 'are nice, but take too much time and run

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[76] The description of this event is based on fieldnotes regarding a *fandanguito* in the United States, June 15, 2013.

until very late'. She also mentioned that it is hard for those with small children to attend the whole event and stay up until late hours at night. I was surprised by that comment because staying up at night with children does not seem to be a difficulty for the families in Sotavento – possibly owing to different ways of structuring time.

The café was so full by the time we arrived that we could hardly make our way through the tables to place the small *tarima* in a corner at the end of the room. The walls were colourfully decorated with paintings, paraphernalia and a large red flag of 'Los Tiburones Rojos de Veracruz', a soccer team from southeast Mexico. There was also a coffee roaster that had to be stopped because the three performers could not hear themselves tuning. The heat, the incessant conversations and the aroma of roasted coffee beans made one feel squeezed into a close, agreeable atmosphere. After a while the chatter faded out because a harp, *jarana* and *guitarra de son* started playing 'El Siquisirí'.

> 'Bravo!', the audience clapped as they were finishing the tune.
> '*Bueno, pues gracias por venir, nosotros no tenemos nombre…*' [Well, thanks for coming, we have no group name…], one of the *jaraneros* said in Spanish, and then he switched into English. 'We don't have a name because we just got together two days ago to practise for this event and we are very thankful to Armando for inviting us to play here. And we are sending good vibes for him and for his place, we wish they continue doing great!'
> 'Bravo!', people yelled and clapped even more loudly.
> 'So, many of you know this type of music', Gerardo continued, 'but for those who don't know, this is called *son jarocho*. We played… the first *son* we played is called 'Siquisirí', and this *son* is part of a huge celebration called *fandango*, and the *fandango* is like a party, so the *fandango* usually opens with the 'Siquisirí'. That's why we chose to start with this one. The next one is 'Balajú', and I heard that people sing this one when there is a flood, and it talks about sailors and water, so that's why they sing it when there is a flood in the lower areas of Veracruz'. After a brief re-tuning, the musicians started playing a new *son*.

Here Gerardo, the musician who talked on behalf of the group, framed the event through these brief comments. I would like to focus on two points that are relevant for discussing the adaptation of the constitutive elements of this practice to specific situations. First, the choice of starting with 'El Siquisirí' is a convention followed at *fandangos* that was also replicated in this case. Despite the differences between a typical *fandango* and this adapted celebration, the gesture established a relationship between the two as a re-enactment in a different context. Gerardo also made a similar gesture when he described a tune they were playing ('El Balajú') in relation to the floods in the region of Sotavento. The rationale behind invoking Sotavento, its landscape and the celebration of *fandango*, is two fold: it re-creates *son jarocho* as a tradition from a specific region, rooted in a customary way of doing that has been passed from generation to generation, and it also establishes a connection between that tradition and the enactment of the practice as it takes place in Portland.

Second, remarking on the absence of a name was not gratuitous because *jaraneros* in this city have been concerned about the proliferation of *son jarocho* groups. By stressing the fact that they do not have a name, Gerardo indirectly suggested that this was an amateur recital in which three friends had put together a number of *sones* for a small celebration. This assertion subtly emphasised that they did not get together to promote a musical group, but to cultivate the tradition. Playing *son jarocho* on stage has become a prominent form of performance for many groups based in the US and Mexico. As a result, the popularity of stage performances has apparently displaced *fandango* as the privileged space in which *son jarocho* is developed and displayed. Preoccupied with the displacement of *fandangos*, the *jaraneros* in Portland have tried to organise regular celebrations, but they have not been successful for various reasons. They have found it hard to bring a large group of performers to the same event because their schedules differ, many of them find it difficult to stay up playing until late hours at night because of family commitments, and they lack a suitable space for these events, as the noise at night can disturb the neighbours. As was pointed out earlier in this section, these justifications surprised me because of the stark contrast with the customs in Sotavento. In the latter place, schedules were much more flexible, staying up all night was not an impediment but a precondition of the event to take place, and the noise did not seem to disturb others as the space for

*fandango*s was often improvised: a patio, a backyard, a clearing on the middle of the street. By contrast, *jaraneros* in the US have seen the need to organise *fandangos* indoors or at parks to prevent noise problems.

Figure 7: Performance at a café. Author's photograph.

In Portland, *fandangos* are regarded as the ideal way to cultivate *son jarocho*. However, the simpler and flexible form of *fandanguito* is a convenient way of dealing with the problems mentioned above: these events are significantly shorter,

can be organised earlier in the day, and tend to be less loud than typical *fandangos* because there are fewer performers. These adapted events have become much more suited to practitioners who are looking to exercise the skills that they learnt at workshops without the degree of performativity of a *fandango*. The versatile structure of these events probably makes them less intimidating for beginners. These points are related to the adaptation and innovation that has emerged from the transnational mobilities of this practice. The following paragraphs continue with the description of the event in the café in Portland to illustrate how *son jarocho* is produced as a meaningful tradition through the demarcation of ideal forms of 'correct' performance.

Flexible adherence to a tradition

After playing seven *sones*, the group finished their performance while the audience cheered them. The small *tarima* was then taken from a corner and placed right where the musicians were performing minutes before. The distinctive humming of *jaranas* being tuned increased as people among the audience picked their instruments and slowly approached the little *tarima*.

> 'What do we play?', someone asked without addressing anybody in particular.
> 'I don't know…', another one said.

Gerardo then played the *declaración* (introduction) of a *son* called 'El Buscapies' and everybody joined in a few beats later. The rhythms were steady, the introductory verses were sung and the chord progressions were flowing. Because the *tarima* was very small and only allowed one dancer at a time, there were only women taking turns to dance, always following the convention of gently tipping the shoulder of the dancer who is going to be replaced. The turns to take verses and the oscillation between dance and verse were smooth. Everyone knew each other, which made it easier to anticipate the sequence of verses and steps to come. The ending was well coordinated too: marking the strong beats, slightly slowing down the tempo, yelling '*Una!*'. Then we played some other *sones*: 'La Morena', 'El Cascabel' and, lastly, 'La Bamba'.

The participation of some among the audience changed the dynamic of the event – the initial separation between performers and listeners was reshaped by their intervention. There were also people sitting at the tables, sipping their coffee and clapping at the end of each *son*. The distinction between audience and performers was reconfigured through the partial involvement of part of the audience. Although resembling *fandango* in some ways, these events have a distinct circulation around a *tarima* that substantially differs from passive forms of entertainment that characterise stage performances. *Fandanguitos* simultaneously have wider participation and a greater distinction between audience and performers. To what extent are these type of performances 'authentic' or 'acceptable'? Their liminality might leave the impression that these performances unintentionally fall between the folklorised and the traditional.

Figure 8: Indoors *fandango* in Portland. Author's photograph.

Figure 9: Outdoors *fandango* in San Diego. Author's photograph.

Here is the point in which context, as a spatio-temporal arrangement, reveals itself as productive and plural (Thrift 1996: 43). Asserting a contrast between the folklorised and the traditional acquires a slightly different meaning when invoked in the US. In Portland, the pragmatic choices that involve making traditional *son jarocho* tend to be reproduced: tunings, repertoire, dance steps, verse structures and many other elements are articulated in a fairly consistent way. But as *son jarocho* musicians are not numerous in the US, such differences acquire a new character. In fact, the harpist who performed that day during the recital, and later in the *fandanguito*, is an experienced musician who has been playing folklorised *son jarocho* for decades. He migrated a long time ago from Mexico to the US, and has been partly making a living out of playing different forms of music and teaching private lessons. It was also in the US that he re-discovered a traditional way of playing *son jarocho*, and he occasionally attends the workshops. Far from overriding the differentiation between traditional and folklorised, the collaboration between these musicians confirmed it. Later that day, once the playing and dancing had finished and we were packing our instruments, I heard the harpist commenting to Gerardo:

> That was good playing. I liked playing with you because everything goes slower and smoother. And it was also good that you *declaraste* [introduced] the *sones*, otherwise I would have started them too fast.[77]

By acknowledging his playing as stylistically different, which in this case was evoked as performing *sones* too fast, the harpist confirmed the validity of the distinction between the categories of the folklorised and the traditional. At that event, a series of pragmatic choices (such as playing in specific tempos and *cadencias*) established the identity of the practice as traditional. Yet, such an enactment of constitutive elements needed to be adapted to the context in which the event took place. Clearly, the entanglement between reproduction and innovation is made material in the little *tarima*. This artefact establishes an epicentre for the circulation of elements, but its shape and size has different affordances than a regular *tarima*. Its portability and size make it possible to organise *fandangos* in unconventional spaces, establishing new forms of interaction. Dancing in groups or couples is replaced, for example, by the performance of a single dancer.

In its ordinariness, the modified *tarima* provides a materialisation of the interplay between reproduction and innovation: the material adaptation of this artefact is one among many other examples of ingenious adjustment of artefacts to enable the unfolding of events in particular circumstances. There are innumerable cases of improvisation and adjustment across communities of practitioners. A telling example comes from a workshop for children in the US that has introduced adapted ukuleles to cover the demand for *jaranas*, as the attendance at these workshops is much higher than the number of traditional instruments that they can currently provide. The need to make series of adjustments to reproduce a practice stems from a series of shared presuppositions about the appropriate ways of enacting it. This common ground is a product of the accumulation of enactments over time and space, and a necessary condition of performances to take place. The recurrent enactment of practices establishes an ideal form of 'correct' performance, which ranges from 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' (Kuijer 2014: 77-80). Therefore, meaningful

[77] Excerpt from the fieldnotes taken after that *fandanguito*, United States, June 15, 2013.

traditions are historical constructions that develop a distinct identity as practitioners conceptually delineate their boundaries. The following section analyses the use of these essentialised narratives.

ESSENTIALISMS

In the previous sections of this chapter I have argued that practices are both reproduced and transformed through the accumulation of enactments over time and space. Each enactment contributes to the simultaneous reproduction of its structural forms and to its transformation (Schatzki 2011). Two related questions arise from this paradoxical duality: How does the interplay between continuity and change intervene when old routines are performed in entirely new contexts? How do the specific characteristics of such contexts matter? As we have seen, performances are structured by relatively standardised elements: namely, rules and routines, and their adaptation to particular circumstances. *Son jarocho* has been diffused well beyond Sotavento in 'swaying' between continuity and change. Still, *jaraneros* establish various degrees of authenticity and adequacy by discursively evoking a tradition. Such representations are central to the ongoing construction of *son jarocho* as a recognisable entity and as performance.

There are two points that I would like to emphasise to examine further the ways in which contexts intervene in the reproduction and transformation of practice. First, there is a greater adaptation and flexibility in the adherence to the rules and routines, because practices are recurrently enacted in various contexts. This suggestion may appear as a straightforward truism: unsurprisingly, these 'mutations' (Law and Mol 2001) are a typical consequence of the adoption of socially recognised ways of doing in different environments. A significant point, however, is that such adjustment rests on the mobilities of practice-specific elements. Here I am not only referring to the fact of physical displacement – although it is a relevant facet of these processes as we saw in preceding chapters. Mobility is a much more comprehensive term that describes various forms of transmission, diffusion and circulation of both practice and practising. The mobilities of people, artefacts, ideas, musical phrases, chord

progressions, and many other entities make possible the continuity of practice through their constant adjustment to new arrangements.

Second, the dynamics of continuity and change are inevitably linked to questions of identity. Inquiring about the narratives that define the limits of a given practice is to examine the extent to which its mobilities leave it unchanged. Practices become consistent entities as practitioners recur in their enactment. As Shove and Pantzar (2007: 165) note, 'practices acquire a separate identity through repetition. Stabilisation consequently occurs as practices are replicated in increasingly faithful ways by existing and new practitioners alike'. Furthermore, this faithful reproduction rests on essentialist narratives that seek to anchor the significance of practice-as-entity. The construction of cultural practices as traditions is central to their stabilisation as entities. Moreover, the essentialisation of practices is characterised by the entanglement between the identity of the practice (the demarcation of what the practice is in its 'authentic' form) and the identities of those who practise it (collective identities).

It is generally agreed in the cultural research literature that identities do not constitute fixed entities, but rather dynamic, strategic and multifaceted processes (Hall and du Gay 1996). As Stuart Hall (1996: 4) reminds us, identities are 'processes of becoming rather than being'. Still, the pragmatic entanglement between ways of being and belonging is constantly confronted with discourses that frame these identities as bounded, coherent and motionless. In different locations in the US, for instance, *son jarocho* has been discursively constructed as a 'technology' for making communities. This perspective suggests that post-industrial societies have produced isolation and disconnection among groups of people, especially across age groups. Therefore, *son jarocho* could be used to reduce this deficiency through inclusive communities that encourage participation regardless of age. The cultivation of *son jarocho* practice has certainly produced communities of practitioners who share ideas and ways of acting and including people from different age groups. However, the notion of community in this narrative has acquired a positive value in itself. Therefore, the fact that groups of people get together and share common interests is considered as a 'good' outcome of this practice. To examine the complex

relationship between ways of being and belonging among practitioners, and the demarcation of what is authentic and acceptable in a practice, it is necessary to look at the processes through which this practice is both essentialised and put into action.

The narratives of authenticity and tradition that permeate *son jarocho* are forms of essentialism. By 'essentialism' I mean the belief that there are a series of characteristics that define the intrinsic nature of *son jarocho* as a tradition. Here I am not using the term in a platonic sense, that is the presumption that practice is an essence that precedes existence (Plummer 2007). As has been documented in previous chapters, there is no prior or after, but a reciprocal, co-constitutive relationship between practice and practising. The acceptance that something counts as an authentic element (namely a melodic line, a verse, a dance step or an instrument) usually takes the form of a narrative that presumes a congruence between the origins of this practice in a demarcated geographical region (Sotavento) and the enactment of these ways of doing. The narratives on tradition are essentialised conceptualisations that overlook the ways in which the practice becomes actualised. Of course, this is not to say that practitioners fail to notice the variations that the enactment of *son jarocho* presents from place to place, but it is as if these two elements were disassociated. Practitioners regularly presuppose that traditional *son jarocho* is somehow temporally distant to current forms of music making or consumption. The tradition is assumed to belong to a different time. In this analysis, however, I take a different stance: instead of establishing an abstract opposition between the reification of a practice and its enactment in specific circumstances, I highlight the tension between the two. In the following section I contrast evoking a practice as an essentialised activity with enacting it in varying conditions.

Complicity between narratives and enactments

While conducting fieldwork in different locations in Mexico and the US, my conversations with practitioners often led to narratives of authenticity and tradition. More interestingly, these conversations often took place while doing things that can be regarded as adaptations of such traditional elements into specific conditions. In one occasion, for example, a practitioner in Seattle was telling me how he was

looking forward to going to Sotavento at the end of the summer to learn '*de la mera mata*' (from the real source). We were having this conversation while getting ready to attend a *fandango*. Sitting on a couch facing a laptop, we were copying verses from a PDF file into little pieces of paper that were then glued onto the back of our *jaranas*. The digital file is a scanned version of a book that features a compilation of *son jarocho* verses. The trick of having a few 'cheat sheets' on the back of one's instrument makes performing easier, as I confirmed later that day.

This practitioner showed me an easier way of recalling verses during *fandangos*: as a beginner, he found it hard to concentrate in playing *jarana* and remember verses at the same time. The trick is an adaptation of the rules and routines of the practice to specific contexts. Moreover, the copied verses are traditional in the sense of being old, well known and reproduced from generation to generation. This apparently simple scene is an example of the various ways in which narratives of fixity coexist with the pragmatic circulation of elements: diffusing these verses through a PDF file and copying them into pieces of paper to remember them constitute forms of actualisation of structures designed for action. Verses are evoked as traditional elements of the practice, even if they are constantly adapted to the specificities of contexts.

As might be anticipated, my academic, constructivist and relativist perspective was constantly faced with such essentialised categorisations of *son jarocho* as a bounded and coherent tradition. Practitioners often referred to the ways in which they see tradition and the importance of preserving and valorising it. Contrastingly, I was prone to perceive those assertions from a scholarly point of view that, in the words of Roger Brubaker (2004: 175), does not approach them as 'things in the world, but perspectives on the world. These include ethnicized ways of seeing (and ignoring), of construing (and misconstruing), of inferring (and misinferring), of remembering (and forgetting)'. In some occasions I was so embedded in the context that my scholarly view was temporarily 'diluted' and allowed me to sense the significance of those narratives. But that feeling disappeared as soon as I referred to those events in my fieldnotes. This ambivalence can be illustrated with a short conversation that I had with Gerardo, the *jaranero* who played at the *fandanguito* in Portland described in

the previous section. I perceived such opposition as I introduced myself the day I met him:

> Gerardo: So, you are doing a PhD, then. What about *son jarocho*, are you researching?
>
> Alejandro: Yes, well, I'm trying to understand how *son jarocho* became mobilised as a way of making music in many different places.
>
> Gerardo: But, do you mean traditional *son jarocho*? Or *marisquero*,[78] you know, commercial music? Or both?
>
> Alejandro: Well, I don't really know if there is only one tradition because this music is played in different ways, in several places, by different people.
>
> Gerardo: Yes, but there is a tradition, the tradition from Sotavento [asserted with a hint of discomfort].[79]

How to reconcile Gerardo's interest for cultivating this tradition with my own intellectual concerns? The discrepancy of interests and interpretations between participants and ethnographers has been clearly pointed out by Michael Jackson (2012: 167), who asks how can we find a middle ground between doing justice to participants and meeting the expectations of the professional craft of ethnography. Ethnographic work may sometimes feel like a form of 'betrayal' (Hobbs and May 1993: xviii): *son jarocho* musicians patiently shared their craft, opened their houses and invited me to take part in their everyday activities. By inhabiting the same TimeSpace (May and Thrift 2003), I had the chance to appreciate the significance of making this type of music. Experiencing and researching practice in and through movement confronted me with both roots and routes (Clifford 1997); that is, essentialised discourses of a traditional form of music and the circulation of this practice across communities of practitioners. This process made me waver between the vernacular and the academic; between the 'collective belief in the game'

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[78] The term *marisquero* is pejoratively used to refer to a folklorised way of playing. See footnote 37, Chapter 3.

[79] Excerpt from the notes taken during a conversation conducted with an anonymous practitioner, United States, June 12, 2013.

(Bourdieu 1995: 230) attained while learning the *son jarocho* practice, and the belief in the social construction of the game that I gained through my own academic practice. This tension was deceptively alleviated with my return to the comfort and familiarity of an academic setting. The distance helped to lessen this ambivalence by approaching the notion of tradition as the reification of a rather dynamic, mobile practice. However, as Van Maanen (2011: 117) suggests, fieldwork '[…] is a long social process of coming to terms with a culture. It is a process that begins before one enters the field and continues long after one leaves it'.

It seems relevant to engage critically with both narratives of tradition and those that use the prefix 'trans', that is scholarly analyses that criticise essentialist categorisations of culture. This approach would not entail an indiscriminate acceptance of practitioners' discourses but, as Michael Jackson (2012: 169) puts it, '[…] a balance, as it were, between having it all one's own way and becoming so submerged in the lifeworld of the other that one's own sense of self is utterly eclipsed'. There is more to practitioners' essentialised narratives than a naive belief because framing cultural practices in relation to their contested authenticity is crucial to their mobilities. As a form of 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak 2006: 205), these narratives make it possible to frame the practice and contribute to putting it in motion as a recognisable entity. As James Clifford (2003: 66) suggests, '[…] in practice people are living all sorts of tactical combinations of roots and routes, experiences too easily mapped onto oppositions of stasis and displacement, essence and difference, native and cosmopolitan'. The dynamics of practice are set in motion through the clash between roots and routes. Further, there is friction between discourses of recuperation, preservation and valorisation on the one hand, and the diffusion and circulation of cultural practices on the other.

FRICTION AND TRACTION

Friction, the resistance produced by the rubbing of two surfaces, is an evocative term that has been introduced as a concept in the social sciences by reference to the heterogeneous realities produced through difference and encounter. In *Friction: An*

Ethnography of Global Connection, Anna L. Tsing (2005) uses the term to draw attention to the complex ways in which the global meets the local. Global trajectories, Tsing argues, are shaped through various forms of engagement. In her ethnography of resource extraction in the rainforest of Indonesia, Tsing examines the complex and problematic encounter between global networks of power and trade, and the local lives of the inhabitants of these regions:

> [...] capitalism, science, and politics all depend on global connections. Each spreads through aspirations to fulfill *universal* dreams and schemes. Yet this is a particular kind of universality: It can only be charged and enacted in the sticky materiality of practical encounters. (2005: 1, emphasis in original)

In her nuanced analysis of articulations of power, Tsing shows how culture is constructed through 'the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference' (2005: 4). The overarching argument of this thesis has emphasised the dynamic nature of cultural phenomena. Yet, the aim of this way of reasoning is not to praise mobility. In addressing a 'slippery' world in which ideas, people, commodities and information are in constant flow, a 'friction-based approach' (Tsing 2012) highlights the ways in which movement is prevented or put to a halt. Just as mobilities depend on moorings (Hannam et al. 2006), friction is logically linked to the ways in which potential movement becomes restrained. Therefore, the notion of friction is particularly useful to the task of contesting celebratory interpretations of global flows. The conceptual purchase of friction comes from its capacity to associate difference and encounter to aid the examination of unequal and disruptive encounters (Tsing 2005: 5).

Friction does not only prevent movement, but also enables it. A concrete example of the interdependence between friction and movement is walking: one relies on the grip between one's soles and the floor to establish a regular pace. A slippery surface provides no traction, making it difficult to move forward in a steady manner. Contrastingly, excessive friction prevents or slows down one's pace. The resistance produced by one surface moving onto another may have varied results. Friction may produce heated confrontations, although there are many cases in which these encounters take the form of translation, hybridity or alliance. Furthermore, two or

more entities rubbing against each other can provide adequate traction for movement, as the example of walking makes clear. The rhythms of walking (and those of mobility in a more general sense) are dependent on a specific type of traction. Drawing on conceptualisations of friction as a socially significant phenomenon (Tsing 2012; Cresswell 2014), I highlight the importance of looking at the 'grip' produced by the encounter of different entities to understand the mechanisms of the mobilities of practice.

Despite their complex historical trajectories, traditions are often portrayed as fixed, rooted and permanent. Traditions are also felt and defended as representative of one's identity (Connell and Gibson 2003). But as we have seen in the previous sections of this chapter, the enactment of traditional *son jarocho* requires a flexible adherence to rules and routines. As result of this paradox, essentialist narratives on tradition do not fix practices to immutable conditions, but rather enable their mobility. Put differently, practices are set in motion through the encounter between essentialism and the actualisation of practice. Motion, to borrow from Aristotle (Kosman 1969: 40), 'is the actualization of what potentially is, as such'. It is in the 'sticky' encounter between the rhetoric of fixity and the enactment of practices that reproduction and transformation become dynamically entwined.

Aware of the transformations that have come with the increasing popularity of *son jarocho*, practitioners worry about the disappearance of distinct elements of this practice. '*Se está perdiendo*' [it is being lost] is so often repeated that it has become a type of mantra at *fandangos* and workshops, both in Mexico and the US. If the practice was apparently rescued from its foreseeable extinction, its resurgence and diffusion across geographically dispersed communities of practitioners is certainly changing its dynamics. Practitioners are conscious of these changes and stress the necessity of sustaining the practice in its traditional form, just as the *jaraneros* from Sotavento are thought to have kept it alive for generations. Essentialising this practice as a tradition rooted in Sotavento is, in part, a reaction to such changes. An example of these concerns comes from the launch of a book written by Andres Barahona (2013), an ethnomusicologist and faithful *son jarocho* practitioner. The event took place in Xalapa, and in the concluding remarks of his intervention,

Barahona remarked on the relevance of this tradition:

> [This] reflection makes a parallelism between *son jarocho* and cooking because both are representative of the popular, ancestral culture in their own way. How can we name the new contributions that, even presenting themselves as traditional *son jarocho*, have a very different seasoning than the one that was used to spice up the *sones* of our ancestors? If in our search for new combinations of flavours we are based on the traditional recipe for making a *caldo de acamaya* (crayfish soup), but while cooking it, we decided to add other ingredients, we could achieve a tasty culinary experiment, but it cannot be called *caldo de acamaya*. But of course some may think that the point is eating tasty food, and the rest does not matter. (Tlanestli 2013)

By establishing an analogy between cooking and music making, Barahona highlights the relevance of the ways in which the enactment of a practice is represented. The identity of a practice is partially given by naming it, and this is why Barahona rhetorically asks what one should call those ways of doing that flexibly interpret the recipe. In asking about the limits of traditional *son jarocho*, Barahona elaborates an essentialised narrative that, among many others, is crucial for the circulation of this practice as a recognisable entity. *Son jarocho* has acquired a specific significance by being constructed as a musical tradition from Sotavento. The transnational processes involved in its actualisation in multiple locations across Mexico and the US have brought a series of dissonances that remind us of the fragile consistency of practices-as-entities. However, the enactment of practices is not a mere reproduction of structures of action. Through its gradual and continuous changes practice and practising are never entirely congruent, and never entirely disassociated: their friction is a space for contention, improvisation and innovation. The encounter between discourses on a fixed tradition and the actualisation of the practice produces the necessary grip to mobilise the practice. Far from bringing the practice to a halt, narratives of authenticity are crucial for mobilising practice.

CONCLUSION

In inquiring about the replicability and consistency of practices as they move, I have argued that *son jarocho* practitioners share sets of understandings and habitual dispositions that allow them to cultivate this practice within extended networks of relationships. There is, however, a flexible adherence to the rules and routines as it is necessary to adapt each enactment to the specific circumstances of performance. Listening to narratives of authenticity and tradition while performing a practice that needed to be adapted to varying circumstances led me to focus on the tensions between these two forces. Instead of relativising practitioners' discourses of tradition, I have highlighted the importance of such paradoxes for approaching mobilities.

I have also analysed the consistency among enactments in relation to the specific circumstances of their production. In contextualising mobile practices I have looked to go beyond the comparison between units of analysis such as countries or ethnicities. Of course, there are significant differences to take into account, but I have tried not to take those differences for granted by conflating categories of analysis and practice (Brubaker 2004: 31-33). Instead, I sought to engage with such differences as constituent of ongoing processes. Contexts are not containers of social action, but productive arrangements (Thrift 1996: 41-43) that shape the trajectories of multiple forms of circulation.

Traditions are meaningful, historical constructions. They overlap the identities of practitioners with the identity of a practice. This chapter analysed the ways in which essentialised narratives of authenticity and tradition are used to attain a certain consistency among enactments. While the apparent authenticity of a practice is delineated in its recurrent enactment, a constant adaptation of artefacts and flexible adherence to routines and rules is required for accomplishing these performances. Similarly, the boundaries that define the identity of practice are often breached or reshaped by enacting the practice in varying circumstances. I have also suggested that encounters between essentialised narratives and the enactment of practice create a type of friction that mobilises the practice. The tension between practice-as-entity

(as an essentialised tradition) and practice-as-performance (as an actualised and adapted enactment) produces the traction that enables the mobility of practice.

My purpose in emphasising the grip produced through friction has been to approach practice through a radical engagement with the unfolding of events rather than discrete instances. This approach has not only looked at how events occur in a given setting, but has sought to understand how such spatio-temporal arrangement is in itself produced through the actualisation of practice-as-entity - that is, its enactment and adaptation to specific circumstances. Although this thesis has focused on various forms of circulation and flow, it has been relevant to address also how these mobilities are enabled, hindered or halted by what Tsing (2005: 1) refers to as 'the grip of the worldly encounter'. The friction produced between discourses of authenticity and the circulation of elements across networks of relationships is critical to the production of multi-layered mobilities. In discussing the significance of studying these forms of mobility, the following chapter concludes the thesis by returning to its core argument.

Conclusion: Multilayered mobilities of practice

PRACTICE AS SMALL WORLD

In studying cultural practices in and through mobility, this thesis has examined the multiple ways in which socially recognised sets of doings circulate across networks of relationships. It has also emphasised the relevance of looking at the dynamics of culture by analysing the ways in which practices are diffused across communities of practitioners. While this study embraces the fact of physical displacement, it has been determined to put forward an encompassing view of mobilities that considers various overlapping layers of circulation, diffusion, transference and displacement. The unfolding of performances, the historical diffusion and transmission of specific ways of doing, the travels of practitioners, the transportation of artefacts, and the dissemination and adaptation of know-how are the most prominent forms of circulation addressed in this investigation. To capture the reciprocal relationship among these processes, I have advanced the term 'mobilities of practice'.

Overall, the core argument of this thesis is that a single practice can constitute a small world, even when it moves across geographically dispersed locations. In other words, culturally contained ways of doing are not necessarily fixed to the places and the ways in which practitioners enact them, but can be enabled by the circulation of elements and their adaptation in productive contexts. One of the core findings of this study is that the circulation of a practice as a recognisable entity relies on other forms of mobility that operate at different scales and rhythms. Despite the transnational character of the case that has been examined, these multilayered mobilities compose a tight constellation of social and cultural action because of the entanglement of the networks of relationships through which it circulates. Just as the local life of a single city street can be crucial to cosmopolitan formations (Hall 2012: 128), the cross-border, transnational and translocal mobilities of cultural practices are intrinsic to the continuity of localised traditions.

This investigation has been conducted as a mobile ethnography that puts processes of the making of culture at the centre of the analysis. By addressing culture as a verb, and not only as a noun (Law 1992: 389), I have focused on the complexities that stem from the enactment of practices in relation to systems of meaning and representation. More specifically, I have developed detailed descriptions of how assorted elements are assembled and articulated to put cultural practice in motion. This strategy sharpened my ability to perceive mobilities at various levels and contexts to analyse the circulation of people, artefacts, ideas and information. Therefore, this study gives a detailed account of the relational character of the making of culture, offering a nuanced empirical analysis and theoretical conceptualisation of how practices become simultaneously reproduced and transformed.

I have focused on the case of *son jarocho* to illustrate the mechanisms of these multilayered mobilities. As a distinctive practice originating in southeast Mexico, *son jarocho* has been used to reclaim a traditional identity and to elaborate discourses of authenticity and preservation of a regional musical heritage. Yet, these narratives have also been key to sustaining, informing and reshaping *son jarocho* as a practice that circulates across transnational and translocal linkages that mostly extend across the US and Mexico. The fact that this traditional practice is now shared across geographically dispersed communities has produced tension between various narratives of authenticity and belonging, and the inescapable transformations and adaptations of the practice. The opposition between roots and routes (Clifford 1997) provides the necessary traction for mobility. The friction between essentialised discourses of this tradition and its circulation across communities of practitioners is at the core of the dynamics of this practice. This argument leads me to conclude that, paradoxically, the transformation of *son jarocho* has been a noticeable outcome of its preservation and recuperation.

The logic that underpins the organisation of the previous chapters seeks to develop a cumulative display of the central argument of this study. This rationale is based on the analytical distinction between practice-as-entity and practice-as-performance. In this way, the chapters of this thesis interweave these two facets to address different

forms of mobility. In Chapter 2, the case of *fandango* was examined to discuss the mobilities of practice-as-performance by focusing on the circulation of elements as performances unfold. Chapter 3 analysed the diffusion of *son jarocho* as a recognisable practice to examine the mobilities of practice-as-entity. Chapter 4 interwove these two dimensions by analysing the travelling of practitioners, the transportation of artefacts and the diffusion of know-how across transnational/translocal communities of practitioners. While still grounded in empirical analyses, Chapter 5 took a more general perspective to propose the notions of rhythm and metre as heuristics to interpret the dynamics of practice. Here I argued that these concepts can be used to capture particular ways of flowing and, more generally, the tension between cultural continuity and change. Finally, Chapter 6 took this reflexive stance further to suggest that the mobilities of practice are enabled by the traction produced by the encounter between essentialised narratives of authenticity and tradition on the one hand, and the various forms of circulation and diffusion of this practice on the other. As a whole, the sequence of chapters demonstrates how multiple layers of mobility are at the core of the dynamics of culture. As was indicated in the first pages of this text, there are three key themes that feature across this thesis: the mobility of practice as recognisable entity and performance; the production of spatio-temporal arrangements in and through practice; and the interplay between the continuity and change which has been explicitly elaborated as the transformation of the *son jarocho* practice as faithful practitioners try to rescue it. These three themes are summarised in the following sections in order to provide a general perspective concerning how their links integrate the core argument of this study.

The circulation of practice and practising

The analysis of the multiple layers of mobility presented in this study draws on recent theorisations of social practice (Schatzki 1996; Shove et al. 2012; Hui 2013). I have focused particularly on two facets of these socially established activities, the first being practice-as-entity. Traditional *son jarocho* is currently moving fast and far as practitioners recognise it as a coherent set of doings. Its diffusion through workshops is an example of the mobilities of this practice across geographically

dispersed locations. Regardless of their background or place of residence, most contemporary *jaraneros* are conscious of being part of the ongoing cultivation of a tradition. Workshops have become the predominant space to attain the capacity to judge and be positioned in space and time that is required at performances, as well as the main device through which a tradition has been transmitted, mobilised and shared. These forms of mobility currently provide resources for the creation and negotiation of meanings in transnational and translocal contexts.

The second facet is practice-as-performance - that is the act of practising. This thesis provides a theoretical and empirical analysis of the circulation and articulation of elements during musical performances, conceptualising them as the production of spatio-temporal arrangements. Practices-as-performance are articulations that produce movement through the fitting together of different components. To analyse the dynamics of these articulations I have not only looked at the moments in which practitioners proceed to action, but also attended to the establishment of rhythms through waiting or pausing. This thesis documents with ethnographic detail the ways in which such rhythms are produced in practice. Although the production of rhythm is the consequence of meaningful actions executed by individual practitioners, I have argued that the interplay between pausing and proceeding is a form of collective agency that constructs arrangements of shared and synchronous space and time.

Spatio-temporal arrangements

As was shown in previous chapters, a significant body of literature on the contemporary flows of cultural practices has tended to emphasise the production and negotiation of meanings in and across social and geographical spaces. The enthusiasm for the analysis of spatial dimensions of the production and engagement with cultural practices has often overshadowed the consideration of their spatial and temporal unfolding as performances. This study has approached practices as articulations of social action in which multiple trajectories converge. In examining the assembling of people, artefacts, meanings, competencies, rules and routines, I have suggested that the enactment of practices 'produces' time and space. These spatio-temporal arrangements are constituent of small worlds, a fact that is clearly

visible in practices that tend to be used to distinguish a single place and group of people. Still, this thesis has shown how a single cultural practice is shared, reproduced and appropriated across networks of relationships as a recognisable and relatively coherent tradition.

A central aspect of the enactment of practices relates to the ways in which practitioners position themselves in space and time. The series of dispositions that are required to play a sports game, for instance, involve a tacit understanding of how to move across space and be located in relation to other participants and artefacts at specific moments in time. Playing football, cooking or having a conversation exemplify how dispositions, understood as ways of being in relation to other entities, structure the ways in which cultural practices unfold. Music and dance performances have been carefully analysed in this thesis to show how the enactment of practice is assembled as practitioners and artefacts become dynamically positioned in time and space. The interdependence that is constructed during performances exemplifies how the rhythms of interaction become articulated in the transient unfolding of events.

Various examples in the literature on culture and society (Bourdieu 2000: 210; Urry 2000: 116; Cresswell 2006: 6; Shove et al. 2012: 129) suggest that time and space are not external to practice, but are produced by its enactment. This process has been illustrated in fine-grained detail in this thesis by using the case of *fandango*. The previous chapters describe how practitioners position themselves and synchronise their actions in relation to other practitioners and artefacts. Based on these analyses, I argue that the enactment of practice produces spatio-temporal arrangements. Put differently, complex forms of rhythmic and metrical interaction develop various forms of contiguity – practitioners are more-or-less in time and in place as performances unfold. This empirical finding provides a nuanced understanding of the enactment of practices, therefore contributing to the empirical knowledge base of the study of TimeSpace as concomitant phenomena. This understanding provides the study of mobilities of practice with a means of addressing the tension between continuity and change.

Interplay between continuity and change

The focus on mobilities has led me to highlight the dynamic interplay between cultural continuity and change. I have sought to give importance to both elements as constitutive of multilayered processes. As Moore (1987: 729) suggests, '[a] process approach does not proceed from the idea of a received order that is then changed. Process is simply a time-oriented perspective on both continuity and change'. Across the chapters I have given an account of how a tradition is sustained and transformed in movement and through mobilities. More specifically, in Chapter 5 I addressed the notion of rhythm in relation to the tensions that stem from these poles. But instead of engaging with philosophical discussions of 'the flux of things' (Whitehead 1978: 208-215), I have rather provided an empirical foundation of a radically processual approach to cultural phenomena. Neither repetitions nor inventions operate independently of each other in the mobilities of practice. A way of tackling this paradox, I suggest, is through the use of rhythm and metre as heuristics to facilitate the analysis of the processual nature of practice.

The reciprocal relationship between continuity and change is also closely related to the identity of practice (the demarcation of what that specific practice is) and the ways in which it intersects with the identities of practitioners. In the case of *son jarocho*, this encounter rests on narratives of recuperation, valorisation and preservation of a practice that is seen as endangered. In this way, the construction of translocal *jaranero* identities has been key to the mobilities of this practice. This study shows how essentialised discourses of practice are crucial to the production of the various forms of mobility previously described. Investigating the uses of reification and essentialism is not only a way of attaining a better understanding of practitioners' narratives, but also a means of interpreting how these attachments and forms of belonging are used to mobilise culture. From the analysis of essentialist narratives in relation to processes of circulation and diffusion, it can be concluded that the friction between fixity and circulation provides the required traction for practices to move. The three foci presented integrate a theorisation of mobilities of practice that contributes to the study of the dynamics of culture.

A THEORISATION OF MOBILE PRACTICE

What does the study of the mobilities of practice have to offer to the multi-disciplinary field of cultural research? This thesis has contributed to the theorisation and conceptualisation of the mobilities of practice, which is an area that has not been explicitly developed despite the increasing interest in practices and mobilities in the literature on cultural research. Furthermore, this study provides an empirical and theoretical perspective on the making of culture by capturing the production of spatio-temporal arrangements and the processual character of culture. I have provided detailed analyses of the ways in which practice-specific elements, such as routines, rules, understandings and artefacts, circulate across networks of relationships. In doing so, I have shown that mobility is the key to the establishment of various spatio-temporal relations.

The perspective adopted in this thesis also constitutes a conceptual advance by highlighting the processual. Such an approach looks at the ways in which culture, as complex bundles of practices, is reproduced, diffused and transformed in relation to processes of mobility. By focusing on various forms of circulation and diffusion, the study shows how groups of practitioners become mutually susceptible (Barnes 2005: 34) through the alignment of actions in relation to rules and routines. Moreover, it demonstrates how this complicity extends through networks of practitioners by virtue of the overlapping of various layers of mobility. The empirical analysis of the significance of the circulation of elements during enactments, and the diffusion of a practice as a recognisable entity, provides a necessarily more nuanced understanding of the complexities of the making of culture. By developing an empirically grounded analysis of these two intertwined facets, this thesis, therefore, also contributes to the empirical knowledge base of the dynamics of culture.

Practitioners have a key role in the mobilisation of practices: musicians, dancers and enthusiasts of traditional arts have diffused the cultural form known as *son jarocho*. Yet, in looking at this object of study as process, this thesis has also emphasised the articulation of artefacts, know-how and other practice-specific elements as fundamental components of the making of culture. Human agency is only part of the

configuration. It has not been long since social theorists started to analyse systematically the role of material entities in the enactment of practices (Reckwitz 2002b; Schatzki 2010a). Theoretical approaches such as non-representational theory and actor network theory have elaborated sophisticated frameworks for addressing the materiality of cultural phenomena (Callon 1986; Law and Hassard 1999; Thrift 2008; Anderson and Harrison 2010). However, the mechanisms by which practice-specific artefacts become constitutive of global processes need to be further explored. This study has contributed to filling this gap through the analysis of artefacts as objects of cultural and historical interest associated with embodied dispositions, tacit forms of knowledge, habituated action, rules and routines. Moreover, it has shown how the circulation of materials across networks of relationships becomes embedded in the mobilities of cultural practices. The analysis of the trajectories of material and non-material entities has provided a detailed empirical account of processes through which cultural practices become appropriated and re-created.

This thesis has produced a theorisation of key processes of mobility in order to discuss cultural continuity and change. In doing so, it has given a detailed account of how *son jarocho* circulates. The bundles of routinised and improvised activities of *son jarocho* provide resources for the formation of identities that relate to place in multiple ways. While conducting fieldwork in the US and Mexico, I met numerous communities of practitioners that make *son jarocho* across several locations that range from megalopoli to small rural towns. Despite their contextual differences, these are the places in which *jaraneros* confabulate, play their instruments and learn the tacit rules and routines of this practice. In analysing how *son jarocho* changes as it moves, I have also provided a detailed description of a cultural phenomenon that has been insufficiently studied to date. In this way, this investigation's empirical novelty rests on taking further the scholarly understanding of the *son jarocho* practice. This thesis has also provided an original methodological approach to ethnographic research, as detailed in the following section.

Methodological novelty

Multi-site ethnography has been addressed in a number of dedicated publications as an approach that provides tools for studying the dynamic circulation of culture (Marcus 1995; Hannerz 2003; Falzon 2009; Coleman and von Hellermann 2011). However, it is not entirely clear what constitutes a site. Hage (2005: 463), for instance, proposes to think of it in terms of a 'single geographically discontinuous site', posing relevant questions regarding the practice of conducting ethnographic work in different locations. Inspired by multi-site ethnography, I looked for ways to fit my intentions of 'following the practice' with perspectives that problematise the methodological issues involved in conducting ethnographic work in multiple locations. However, I perceived that the focus of multi-site ethnography on 'sites' was not exactly what I was investigating. Instead, my priority has been the understanding of how cultural practices move across networks of relationships.

In searching for a suitable way of conducting the ethnography of a mobile practice I have produced a distinctive way of conducting mobile fieldwork. In this sense, the study constitutes a methodological innovation that contributes to the field of mobilities research and its methods. Its originality stems from the type of engagement with various forms of mobility that it has adopted. Conducting ethnography in multiple sites poses the risk of having a superficial engagement with the field (Marcus 1998, 2011; Fitzgerald 2006) that contradicts the depth that characterises ethnographic work. In the case of this thesis, the depth required to conduct a mobile ethnography was achieved by directly engaging with the practice. My methodological strategy consisted of joining *jaraneros* by putting myself in the places in which *son jarocho* was enacted. While I spent time in locations looking for interactions, comments, stories, and opinions, the thickness of my participation was achieved through a form of immersion that went beyond playing instruments, dancing and singing verses. Here I am referring to activities such as organising *fandangos*, carrying *tarimas*, recalling events in casual conversations, travelling with musicians to and from events and attending workshops, as all these are facets of the process of becoming a *jaranero*. The development of this mobile ethnography has been based on a radically processual analysis of practice, with which this thesis concludes.

TOWARDS A PROCESSUAL APPROACH TO PRACTICE

Through the emphasis of continuity and change, this study has analysed how experiencing practices in and through mobility unveils the dynamic character of culture. The term mobility has been used in this thesis to capture two processes: on the one hand, it encompasses the production of spatio-temporal arrangements in practice, and on the other the circulation of more-or-less standardised and shared routines, rules, understandings and ways of doing. The conceptual distinction between practice and practising has been crucial for breaking into this complex phenomenon. By focusing on the conceptualisation and theorisation of the mobility of practice, this analysis has been developed through the use of the notions of friction, rhythm, metre and the tension between structure and flow. Grounded in the empirical case of music making, the theorisation of mobilities provided is not so much an explicative model, but a strategy to develop conceptual devices and approaches that sensitise us to particular aspects of culture. The processual perspective that I have advanced, therefore, rests on receptiveness to the evanescent unfolding of events.

The study of mobilities of practice constitutes a way of conceptualising how socially recognised ways of doing are spaces of encounter among narratives of fixity, belonging and various forms of circulation. This processual approach to culture highlights how the constitutive elements of a given practice (namely rules, routines, artefacts and various forms of human agency) meet the specificities of context as they move. Far from being a celebration of cosmopolitanism, or a way of pacifying or reconciling difference, this perspective has looked to emphasise friction and traction. Although these tensions are represented in various ways across communities of practitioners, understanding the entanglement between such representations and processes of flux and stoppage has been crucial to this thesis. This examination of mobile practices has provided an alternative to the analysis of the dialectics of continuity and change.

Finally, future work is necessary to develop a politics of mobilities of practice in relation to multiple layers of timing, tempo, sequence, space and rhythm. There is a

shift towards a much more dynamic understanding of cultural practice and social change that has been signalled by new scholarly work on these themes (see, for instance, Cwerner 2000, 2001; Grzymala-Busse 2011; Adey et al. 2014). These new research directions can be further developed. In concluding, I would like to recall the argument that extends throughout this thesis: in spite of flowing across transnational social spaces, practices constitute culturally contained ways of doing that can form tight networks of relationships. It is through these small worlds that a broad spectrum of experiences is shared, appropriated and re-created.

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Glossary of selected terms

Cadencia: refers to rhythmic 'feel' and should not be confused with the English term 'cadence', which describes a modulation of the voice or, in music, a sequence of chords that close a musical phrase. The term can be translated as swing or groove.

Café-con-pan: basic rhythmic pattern for dancing 'El Siquisirí' and other *sones*. It is called this because the syllabic accentuation of the phrase 'ca-fé-con-pan' is that of the steps.

Chaquiste: A small type of *jarana*.

Charolero: in its literal form refers to a person who uses a tray (*charola*). The term pejoratively alludes to the image of folklorised musicians using a tray to collect money while serenading customers at a restaurant. Yet the word is frequently applied in a figurative way, that is, in reference to a group of musicians who dismiss the community of practitioners from which they emerged after brief commercial success.

Chicano: is a term used in the United States by some people of Mexican origin or descent to refer to their own ethnic identity.

Compadre: literally translated as godfather, it is commonly used to refer to a friend.

Décima de Espinel: verse form named after the Spanish writer and musician Vicente Espinel (1550-1624) (see Preminger et al. 1996: 382).

Fulanito (also *fulano*): placeholder name commonly used in Mexico that might be similar to the use of 'bloke' or 'mate' in Australia.

Hemiola (also known as *sesquialtera*): refers to a musical metre that alternates between duple and triple time within groups of eight notes. This way of organising

rhythms has been mentioned in Spanish musical treatises since the 16th century; for example, Juan Bermudo's *Declaración de Instrumentos*, published for the first time in 1555 (see Bermudo 2009).

Jarana: instrument with five double strings derived from the baroque guitar (see Pareyon 2007: 532).

Jaranero(a): refers to a person who plays the *jarana*.

Leona: a big four-string instrument with deep, bass-like sound.

Marisquero: pejorative term used to refer to a folklorised way of playing *son jarocho*. The word comes from *marisco* (seafood), in reference to the seafood restaurants in which folklorised musicians played.

Padrino: refers to a patron of the event and also to a godfather.

Quince años: refers to a type of celebration for a fifteen years old girl.

Requinto (also known as *guitarra de son*): is a four-string, melodic instrument played with a large plectrum.

Son (plural *sones*): refers to a tune that is part of the traditional *son jarocho* repertoire. More broadly, the term refers to various forms of dance and music developed in various regions in Latin America since colonial times (see Pareyon 2007: 978-979).

Tamal: maize-based dish, steamed and stuffed with various kinds of chillies, spices, meats, cheeses or vegetables.

Zapateado: comes from *zapato* (shoe), which denotes the use of the hard sole of one's shoe to stomp on the dancing surface. This term and other variants (*zapateo, zapateao*) are widely used across the Americas and the Iberian Peninsula, although they may refer to differing dance styles.

Appendix: Fieldwork activities

This mobile ethnography is based on a deep immersion in the *son jarocho* practice. The examples analysed throughout the thesis are excerpts taken from a larger corpus of data retrieved during six months of intense participation. The following table details the dates, places and activities involved.

Date	Place	Activities
1/03/13	Sydney - Los Angeles	Travelled to LA. After my arrival I called a *son jarocho* practitioner, we agreed to meet the day after in a gig they had in South Pasadena.
2/03/13	Los Angeles	Met key informants at a café; they played *son jarocho* on the sidewalk. Spent about an hour with them after the performance.
3/03/13	Los Angeles	Met a participant in Boyle Heights who makes custom strings for *son jarocho* and other instruments.
4/03/13	Los Angeles	Spent most of the day with a key informant who makes traditional instruments. We went to buy wood and to his workshop. He showed me his workspace and we talked about music making in LA.
5/03/13	Los Angeles	Extended fieldnotes.
6/03/13	Los Angeles	Went back to the workshop in which the strings for traditional instruments are made. The participant I previously met and I stringed my instrument (*requinto*), trying different string combinations. He explained how they make the strings and showed me the workshop.
7/03/13	Los Angeles	Walking around Boyle Heights and Downtown.

		Extending my fieldnotes in a Starbucks in downtown.
8/03/13	Los Angeles - Mexico City	Travel day.
9/03/13	Mexico City	Called informants to ask them about workshops in Mexico City and other locations.
10/03/13	Mexico City	Incidental day.
11/03/13	Mexico City	Met musicians who organise workshops in Mexico City. They invited me to a workshop they were holding the day after.
12/03/13	Mexico City	Attended a workshop.
13/03/13	Mexico City	Extended fieldnotes.
14/03/13	Mexico City	Went to the National Library of Mexico to look for the Saldivar Codex. Although I couldn't find a copy, I consulted several books about the region of Sotavento.
15/03/13	Mexico City	Went to the National Centre of the Arts, looking for bibliography that cannot be found in Australia and also for the Saldivar Codex.
16/03/13	Mexico City	Extended fieldnotes.
17/03/13	Mexico City	Attended a workshop.
18/03/13	Mexico City	Met a ethnomusicologist who had a copy of the Saldivar Codex.
19/03/13	Mexico City	Extended fieldnotes.
20/03/13	Mexico City	Attended a workshop.
21/03/13	Mexico City	Extended fieldnotes.
22/03/13	Mexico City	Incidental day.
23/03/13	Mexico City	Joined some musicians in an informal gathering at 'Alameda'. We played *son jarocho* for a couple of hours.
24/03/13	Mexico City	Incidental day.
25/03/13	Mexico City -	Spent the day preparing my backpack,

	Cosoleacaque	including my recording equipment. Overnight journey from Mexico City to Cosoleacaque.
26/03/13	Cosoleacaque	Attended a workshop. Travelled to Minatitlán with other practitioners and met people that later became key informants.
27/03/13	Chinameca	Attended a workshop. The practitioners taught me different tunings for *jaranas*. We also talked about *fandangos* in Chacalapa and their plans of making a *tarima.*
28/03/13	Cosoleacaque	Attended a workshop.
29/03/13	Cosoleacaque	Travelled from Cosoleacaque to Chinameca with a participant. We met other musicians and talked for hours about instruments and the old musicians of that region.
30/03/13	Cosoleacaque - Chacalapa	Travelled to Chacalapa to attend a *fandango*.
31/03/13 - 6/04/13	Chacalapa - Isla de Tacamichapan	Travelled from Chacalapa to Isla de Tacamichapan to attend a series of workshops. This annual event gathers people from different locations in Mexico and the US. We spent one week camping and learning to play, dance and sing *son jarocho* from experienced musicians and dancers.
7/04/13	Isla de Tacamichapan - Xalapa	Helped to clean up the ranch in which the workshop took place. Travelled from Isla de Tacamichapan to Xalapa with other practitioners.
8/04/13	Xalapa	Conducted an interview with a key informant that has extensive experience as musician and cultural promoter in southern Veracruz.
9/04/13	Xalapa	Extended fieldnotes.

10/04/13	Xalapa	Attended a workshop. We didn't play much because most of the practitioners were beginners and spent almost an hour tuning *jaranas*.
11/04/13	Xalapa	Attended a book presentation by Andres Barahona. He wrote about the historical transformations of *son jarocho*. We had a brief conversation after the presentation. There was a small *fandango* afterwards.
12/04/13	Xalapa	Extended fieldnotes.
13/04/13	Xalapa - Chinameca	Travelled from Xalapa to Chinameca. Participated in a *fandango.* This was the first *fandango* in which I played until dawn.
14/04/13 - 16/04/13	Jáltipan	Helped an American scholar to organise and digitise old archives in Centro de Documentacion del Son Jarocho.
17/04/13	Cosoleacaque - Minzapan	Travelled from Cosoleacaque to Chinameca and then to Minzapan, were we met an old *jaranero*.
18/04/13	Cosoleacaque - Xalapa	Played in a small 'jam session' with other musicians from Cosoleacaque. Travelled overnight from Cosoleacaque to Xalapa.
19/04/13	Xalapa	Met participants in Xalapa and informally talked about *son jarocho* in the cities. Busking in Xalapa.
20/04/13	Xalapa	Participated in a 'jam session' with musicians from different locations who happened to visit Xalapa. They explained to me the stylistic differences of *son jarocho* among regions.
21/04/13 - 22/04/13	Xalapa	Extended fieldnotes.
23/04/13	Xalapa	Attended a workshop.
24/04/13	Xalapa	Extended fieldnotes.

25/04/13	Xalapa	Joined a small 'jam session'.
26/04/13	Xalapa - Mexico City	Travelled from Xalapa to Mexico City.
27/04/13 - 28/04/13	Mexico City	Incidental days.
29/04/13	Mexico City	Extended fieldnotes.
30/04/13	Mexico City	Went to a *luthier's* workshop. She explained the different construction methods of traditional *son jarocho* instruments.
1/05/13 - 3/05/13	Mexico City	Extended fieldnotes.
4/05/13	Mexico City	Attended workshop.
5/05/13	Mexico City	Extended fieldnotes.
6/05/13	Mexico City	Attended workshop.
7/05/13	Mexico City	Extended fieldnotes.
8/05/13	Mexico City	Attended workshop.
9/05/13	Mexico City	Extended fieldnotes.
10/05/13	Mexico City - Córdoba	Travelled from Mexico City to Córdoba, a stop-over before continuing to Playa Vicente.
11/05/13	Córdoba - Playa Vicente	Tried to participate in a *fandango.* I did not have any contacts here and was hard to socialise. Left the day after.
12/05/13	Playa Vicente - Tlacotalpan	Travelled from Playa Vicente to Tlacotalpan.
13/05/13	Tlacotalpan	Attended a small *fandango*.
14/05/13	Tlacotalpan	Observed how a local *luthier* constructs traditional instruments. He showed me various techniques, different types of wood and construction styles.
15/05/13	Tlacotalpan - Mexico City	Talked to local arts promoters about son jarocho making and cultural events in Tlacotalpan. Travelled overnight from Tlacotalpan to Mexico City.

16/05/13 - 21/05/13	Mexico City	Extended fieldnotes.
22/05/13	Mexico City	Attended a workshop.
23/05/13	Mexico City	Participated in a small *fandango*. People gathered to play different types of Mexican music. After a few hours we played some *son jarocho,* although the musicians mixing styles.
24/05/13	Mexico City	Prepared conference paper.
25/05/13 - 28/05/13	Mexico City	Incidental days.
29/05/2013 - 09/06/2013	Mexico City - Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver	Travelled from Mexico to Canada. Attended the 'Music, mobilities and migration' conference at the University of Alberta.
10/06/13	Vancouver - Seattle	Travelled from Vancouver to Seattle. Unsuccessfully tried to contact *son jarocho* musicians in Seattle.
11/06/13	Seattle	Went to a cultural centre and asked for the activities of a group of *jaraneros*. They gave me the name of one of the most active *son jarocho* practitioners in that city. The first contact with that practitioner was a success that gave me access to that community of practitioners.
12/06/13	Seattle	Casual playing and dancing with two *son jarocho* practitioners. Had lunch at their place.
13/06/13	Seattle	Extended fieldnotes.
14/06/13	Seattle	Met three *son jarocho* practitioners from LA at a museum. We had a conversation on the *son jarocho* communities in the US.
15/06/13	Seattle	Attended a workshop. Then participated in a *fandanguito.* The day finished with a 'jam session' at the house of the practitioner who

		was hosting me.
16/06/13	Seattle	Attended a graduation ceremony of a *son jarocho* musician. Other practitioners joined in an improvised performance at university.
17/06/13	Seattle	Extended fieldnotes.
18/06/13	Seattle	Small ‘jam session’ at a café.
19/06/13 - 21/06/13	Seattle	Extended fieldnotes.
22/06/13	Seattle - Portland	Travelled from Seattle to Portland to a *fandango*.
23/06/13	Eugene	Attended workshop.
24/06/13	Eugene - Seattle	Travelled from Eugene to Seattle.
25/06/13	Seattle	Talked to an ethnomusicologist who has also been participating in *son jarocho* for several years.
26/06/13	Seattle	Spent the day with a practitioner that has been teaching *son jarocho* at a cultural centre.
27/06/13	Seattle	Extended fieldnotes.
28/06/13	Seattle - Yakima	Arrived in Yakima at a practitioner’s place. They hosted *jaraneros* from different locations, as there was a *fandango* the day after. We had a little ‘jam session’ at night.
29/06/13	Yakima	Attended a *fandango*.
30/06/13	Yakima - Seattle	Busking at Yakima’s market. Travelled from Yakima to Seattle.
1/07/13	Seattle - Los Angeles	Travelled from Seattle to LA. Hosted in Boyle Heights at the house of a *jaranero.*
2/07/13	Los Angeles	Extended fieldnotes.
3/07/13	Los Angeles	Spent the day with string makers. They explained the string making process; I unsuccessfully tried to make some strings.
4/07/13 -	Los Angeles	Extended fieldnotes.

5/07/13		
6/07/13	Los Angeles - Santa Ana - LA	Attended a workshop in Santa Ana.
7/07/13	Los Angeles	*Fandanguito* in San Fernando Valley.
8/07/13 - 9/07/13	Los Angeles	Extended fieldnotes.
10/07/13	Los Angeles	Attended a *son jarocho* performance at a café in Pasadena.
11/07/13	Los Angeles	Attended a workshop San Fernando Valley.
12/07/13	Los Angeles	Attended a *son jarocho* performance.
13/07/13	Los Angeles	Attended another *son jarocho* performance. There was a small *fandango* afterwards.
14/07/13 - 15/07/13	Los Angeles	Extended fieldnotes.
16/07/13	Los Angeles	Met with an instrument maker in East LA. We talked about music making, the transformations of the *son jarocho* practice and some of the problems that musicians are facing.
17/07/13	Los Angeles	Participated in a *fandanguito* in a park.
18/07/13	Los Angeles	Attended a workshop at San Fernando Valley.
19/07/13	Los Angeles	Extended fieldnotes.
20/07/13	Los Angeles - San Diego	Travelled from Los Angeles to San Diego with a *son jarocho* musician. Participated in a *fandango*.
21/07/13	San Diego - Los Angeles	Spent the day with musicians from San Diego. Travelled from San Diego to Los Angeles.
22/07/13 - 23/07/13	Los Angeles	Extended fieldnotes.
24/07/13	Los Angeles	Casual playing in a park.
25/07/13	Los Angeles - San Diego	Travelled from LA to San Diego. Attended workshop.
26/07/13	San Diego - Los	Returned to LA. Extended fieldnotes.

	Angeles	
27/07/13	Los Angeles - Santa Ana	Attended workshop.
28/07/13	Santa Ana	Interviewed a *son jarocho* practitioner who has been compiling verses for several years. We talked about the ways in which he uses this compilation and how others have taken this text to other communities of practitioners.
29/07/13	Santa Ana	Attended a workshop.
30/07/13	Santa Ana	Interview with a *son jarocho* practitioner.
31/07/13	Santa Ana	Extended fieldnotes.
1/08/13	Santa Ana	Gathering with musicians from Santa Ana. There was a 'jam session' that lasted several hours.
2/08/13	Santa Ana	Participated in a *fandango.*
3/08/13	Santa Ana	Extended fieldnotes.
4/08/13 - 14/08/13	Los Angeles	Extended fieldnotes. Wrote a short text on how my point of view changed as I conducted fieldwork.
15/08/13	Los Angeles	Attended a workshop.
16/08/13	Los Angeles	Extended fieldnotes.
17/08/13	Los Angeles	Met musicians that organise workshops in that city. Talked about issues related the organisation of *fandangos* in this city.
18/08/13	Los Angeles	Extended fieldnotes.
19/08/13	Los Angeles	Attended workshop.
20/08/13	Los Angeles - Mexico City	Travelled from Los Angeles to Mexico City.
21/08/13	Mexico City	Extended fieldnotes.
22/08/13	Mexico City	Attended workshop.
23/08/13	Mexico City	Extended fieldnotes.
24/08/13 -	Mexico City	Incidental days.

25/08/13		
26/08/13	Mexico City	Met a scholar who has been documenting *son jarocho* for several years. We had a coffee and talked about the possibility of developing an international network of researchers interested in this musical practice.
27/08/13	Mexico City	Attended a workshop.
28/08/13 - 31/08/13	Mexico City	Extended fieldnotes.
1/09/13	Mexico City - Sydney	Travelled from Mexico City to Sydney via LA.