

**THE ROLE OF NON-PROFIT CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS IN  
CULTURAL DIPLOMACY. EXPERIENCES FROM THE BORDER**

**Case Study: Fandango Fronterizo at the Mexico-U.S. Border**

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## ABSTRACT

Thesis

<p><b>Title</b></p> <p>The Role of Non-Profit Cultural Organizations in Cultural Diplomacy. Experiences from the Border.</p> <p>Case Study: Fandango Fronterizo at the Mexico-U.S. Border</p>	<p><b>Number of pages</b></p> <p>107+ appendixes</p>
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<p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p>Cultural diplomacy has historically been examined within a state-centric paradigm, embedded in colonial power structures and often reliant on Western frameworks in academic literature.</p> <p>This study seeks to introduce critical and decolonial perspectives by presenting a qualitative case analysis of Fandango Fronterizo, a non-profit organization at the Mexico-U.S. border, deeply rooted in a traditional form of communal celebration.</p> <p>The research aims to explore Fandango Fronterizo’s diplomatic role by presenting its impact on local and migrant communities in the border region. Additionally, it analyzes the bottom-up organizational strategies that support this diplomatic role. The outcomes, values, narratives, images, and principles of these practices are assessed in their capacity to mediate intercultural communications among diverse societies, particularly in regions marked by asymmetric power dynamics like the Mexico-U.S. border.</p> <p>The study reveals that by providing safe spaces for intercultural dialogue and contesting colonial narratives through non-Western organizational systems and values, non-profit entities like Fandango Fronterizo can effectively influence the diplomatic arena, thereby challenging the Western state-centric cultural diplomacy model.</p> <p>Ultimately, this study proposes the conceptualization of “border diplomacy”, an alternative non-state and decolonial form of cultural diplomacy inspired by Mignolo and Tlostanova’s border thinking theory.</p>	
<p><b>Keywords</b></p> <p>Cultural diplomacy, non-state actors, non-profit cultural management, decolonial thinking, border thinking, global south, migration, fandango tradition, son jarocho.</p>	
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the study

The need to mediate intercultural communications between diverse societies (Holmes & Rofe, 2016, n.p.) is the foundation of cultural diplomacy. However, this mediation process does not always convey a friendly trait.

The modern model of cultural diplomacy originated within a war context and featured an “adversarial orientation” (Zaharna et al., 2014, p. 3). Through propaganda, nation branding, and showcasing national culture, the primary role of diplomacy was to present a positive image of a country to foreign states and publics in order to gain power, persuasion, and influence in the international arena (Bound et al., 2007).

Most concepts and methods currently prevailing in the field are shaped under this adversarial orientation. Therefore, in recent decades, cultural diplomacy has been urged to revise the foundations and assumptions on which the discipline was developed (Ang et al., 2015; Grincheva & Kelley, 2019; Zaharna, 2019).

This revision has introduced new practices, actors, methods, and discussions. For instance, critical approaches problematize the instrumentalization of culture in a unidirectional manner and in terms of national reputation. Moreover, recent definitions rather embrace *mutual understanding* as one of the goals of cultural diplomacy (Cummings, 2003; Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, 2013). As a consequence, approaches that promote exchange, interaction, engagement, collaboration, and participation in a two-way or multi-way communication process are supported (Jora, 2013).

Furthermore, the modern model of cultural diplomacy, which is conducted unilaterally and as the activity of a Western nation-state, is also challenged by the appearance of non-state actors (NSA), which “are not (representatives of) states, yet that operate at the international level and that are potentially relevant to international relations” (LaPorte, 2012, p. 445).

The emergence of the NSA was catalyzed by challenges and transformations brought by globalization that led to a nation-state crisis, in which nations were perceived as

less capable and less convincing to fulfill their duties (LaPorte, 2012; Ang et al, 2015). As part of this crisis, official diplomatic bodies, such as ministries of affairs and embassies, began to encounter limitations in resources and capacity.

Given this, the current study aims to further examine the role of NSA in cultural diplomacy and the means in which they create spaces for mutual understanding. This is approached through challenging the prevailing Western and state-centric paradigm.

## **1.2 Problem formulation**

Non-state actors (NSA) are a disputed topic in the literature of cultural diplomacy. Although they have proven to be influential in the cultural relations of countries and their citizenries, their position in the field is often subjugated to official forms of diplomacy (G. Lee & Ayhan, 2015). This subjugation constrains the evaluation of their role and impact on cultural diplomacy.

Moreover, the wide diversity of NSA and the multitude of “societal traditions and ideologies around the world” (Anheier & Salamon, 2006, p.91) make this exploratory quest even more challenging, but not unnecessary.

The need to further study the role of NSA in cultural diplomacy is nurtured by the following gaps observed in the existing literature:

1. There is a predominant focus on large and influential actors, such as international and transnational institutions or entities, as well as multinational corporations, social enterprises, and cultural businesses that possess prominent economic power or other forms of authority and thus influence policymaking. Examples in the cultural field are large private museums, festivals, or agencies (Suárez Argüello & Sánchez Andrés, 2017).

Less attention, however, is given to medium and small-sized collectivities and individuals from civil society, who participate in a bottom-up manner and sometimes unintentionally. In other words, they do not actively seek diplomatic interests but their outcomes may offer potential for cultural diplomacy (G. Lee & Ayhan, 2015). Examples include non-governmental (NGOs) and non-profit organizations (NPOs), universities, criminal and terrorist networks, religious communities, advocacy groups, diasporas, celebrities, sports and entertainment



figures, popular and social movements, indigenous groups, communities, as well as artists, activists, and cultural collectives and organizations (Suárez Argüello & Sánchez Andrés, 2017). Within this group, the role of smaller organizations that “work in less high-profile areas” (Casey, 2015, p.12) is often overlooked.

2. There are a few approximations to the organizational forms that operationalize collective non-state action. The non-profit form of organization is a common operational framework for NSA, particularly in the fields of culture, arts and entertainment (Oster, 1995; Varbanova, 2013). Although the reach and significance of the sector are growing increasingly (Hudson, 1999; Handy, 1990), “the *nonprofitness* of organized interests, movements, and actors appears to be of little consequence” (Cassey, 2015, p.8).

3. There is a Western dominance in the concepts, frameworks, and cases presented in the literature in both cultural diplomacy (Grincheva & Kelley, 2019; Borges Carrijo, 2016; Abrahamsen, 2007) and cultural non-profit cultural management (Banerjee, 2021; Faria et al., 2010; Srinivas, 2010; Ibarra-Colado, 2006). In other words, these theories are Western-focused and developed in Western contexts. Additionally, many of the non-Western cases are interpreted through a Western lens. This dominance exemplifies “epistemic coloniality that maintains and reproduces colonial difference” (Banerjee, 2021, p.5). Essentially, Western approximations are legitimized and universalized, whereas non-Western knowledges, practices, and cases remain invisible (Srinivas, 2010).

Based on the aforementioned arguments, it is evident that the research on the role of non-state actors in cultural diplomacy must be urgently informed by the experiences of non-Western and smaller non-profit configurations.

It is, moreover, an invitation to adopt a critical and decolonial approach to expose some of the Western-centric foundations of non-state cultural diplomacy, and to explore the understandings, contexts, histories, values, and social theories on which the practices of non-Western actors are grounded (Grincheva & Kelley, 2019, p.204).

In addition, the current research aims to apply theories of non-profit cultural management to examine how collective non-state diplomatic action is managed under the non-profit organizational structure.

### 1.3 Research Approach

This qualitative research presents a case study of a small non-profit cultural organization operating in two countries, the United States of America (U.S.) and the United Mexican States (Mexico): Fandango Fronterizo. The organization produces an annual *son jarocho* (Mexican folk) event rooted in a traditional form of community celebration, uniquely held simultaneously on both sides of the Mexico-U.S. border.

The selection of Fandango Fronterizo as a case study and the focus on the borderlands between Mexico and the U.S. stem from several interests. Firstly, the complex political landscape of this specific area, particularly during the Trump administration, has attracted global attention and discussion, making it a pertinent subject to address. Secondly, my passion for studying and practicing *son jarocho* music led me to discover Fandango Fronterizo as a fascinating case study. Furthermore, Fandango Fronterizo presents unique event production and management challenges worthwhile for research.

To analyze Fandango Fronterizo, critical constructivism and decolonial approaches have been implemented. These paradigms have been instrumental in questioning the Western-centric foundations of the two theoretical frameworks employed: cultural diplomacy and non-profit cultural management, and have helped in obtaining a deeper understanding of the context, values, and practices of Fandango Fronterizo.

The research data mainly consisted of interviews with five current and former organizers of Fandango Fronterizo. These interviews aimed to capture their perspectives, and were complemented by documents, audiovisual resources, and observations in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the case's context.

A content analysis method was used for data analysis, with the ultimate goal of finding answers to the research questions in the form of themes, categories, or patterns. The transcription of the interviews and their categorization through an Excel spreadsheet proved instrumental, alongside the use of concept mapping methods to draw relationships among the emerging categories.

## **1.4 Aim of the study**

The current research aims to *expand the studies on the role of NSA in cultural diplomacy, focusing on the experience of Fandango Fronterizo, a non-Western and small non-profit organization operating on the border of Mexico and the U.S.*

The supporting research questions that lead the study are as follows:

- How do the outcomes and aims of Fandango Fronterizo denote a diplomatic role within the U.S.-Mexican border communities?

This question will be addressed by analyzing the narratives, imagery, values, socio-cultural outcomes, aims, and other elements produced by Fandango Fronterizo's mission, practices, and programs. These aspects will be assessed in terms of how they mediate intercultural communications among diverse societies.

- What are the managerial means employed by Fandango Fronterizo to fulfill its mission? And in which ways do these means support Fandango Fronterizo's diplomatic role?

These questions will be addressed in two parts:

The first part will explore the overall managerial practices, resources, and production processes of Fandango Fronterizo, with a particular focus on how the organization navigates challenges presented by the border and the fandango tradition.

The second part will examine the strategies outlined in Fandango Fronterizo's vision and assess their diplomatic implications.

## **1.5 Structure of the thesis**

This master's thesis comprises six chapters.

Chapter 2 presents the two employed theoretical frameworks: cultural diplomacy and non-profit cultural management. It discusses the key concepts adopted by this research and offers critical and decolonial discussions that question the universality of Western models in both disciplines. The first section presents critically revisits the modern model of cultural diplomacy and introduces alternative forms of diplomacy that align with the selected case study. The second part studies the means

by which these alternative forms of cultural diplomacy are organized and managed, while also addressing challenges posed by increasing market-driven logics.

Chapter 3 presents the qualitative case study methodology employed in the current research. It discusses the rationale behind selecting Fandango Fronterizo as a case study and the scope of the sample. Then the data collection and analysis methods are explained. The chapter finalizes with critical reflections on the research process from a methodological level and by positioning the researcher's locus of enunciation.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the case study, setting the groundwork for the analysis by introducing the general context and dynamics of the Mexico-U.S. borderlands. It summarizes the main aspects of the fandango tradition in which the case study is rooted. The section finalizes with a description of the main aspects of Fandango Fronterizo, such as its location, program, and other general dynamics.

Chapter 5 presents the findings derived from the analyzed data. The results are structured in three parts. The first part outlines the narratives, imagery, values, socio-cultural outcomes, and other elements produced by Fandango Fronterizo, and how these impact the local and migrant communities in the border. The second part evaluates the managerial practices, resources, and production processes in which these narratives are created. Furthermore, the managerial implications of organizing this event at the borderline are discussed. The final part presents some strategies adopted and developed by Fandango Fronterizo, as well as the diplomatic implications.

Chapter 6 provides a summary of the main findings, contributions to existing theories, and suggestions for further research. The research questions formulated in the introduction are also addressed.

## **2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The following chapter presents the two theoretical frameworks used to examine the case study: cultural diplomacy and non-profit cultural management. The aim is to identify the key concepts adopted in this research. Moreover, to better comprehend the diplomatic role of Fandango Fronterizo, this chapter offers a set of critical and decolonial discussions found in the literature that question the universality of Western models within both disciplines.

The chapter is structured as follows: The first part presents a critical revision of the modern model of cultural diplomacy. This revision covers three aspects: mutuality, participation of non-state actors, and introduces alternative forms of diplomacy. The subsequent part introduces non-profit management as a framework for studying the means by which non-state cultural diplomacy is organized and managed. Additionally, it examines the main implications of market-driven logics in alternative non-profit forms of organization.

### **2.1 Cultural Diplomacy**

#### *2.1.1 Cultural diplomacy. A term of multiple understandings*

Cultural diplomacy is a discipline that currently lacks a common or unique definition (Bound et al., 2007; The Institute of Cultural Diplomacy, 2013; Pajtinka, 2014; Ang et al. 2015). Moreover, it “seems to be as extensive in practice as it is theoretically confusing” (Chartrand, 1992 and Topić and Sciortino, 2012, cited by Zamorano, 2016). Therefore, it is no surprising that the term is constantly interchanged with others, such as public diplomacy, foreign relations, cultural propaganda, international cultural relations, international cultural exchange, or international cultural cooperation (Ang et al., 2015).

This vastness encompasses not only the definitions of cultural diplomacy or the scope of its practices but also other aspects such as its role, priority placement, aims, types of instrumentalization, the range of institutional locations, actors, achievements, and impact (Ang et al., 2015, p. 375).

As previously mentioned before, cultural diplomacy has evolved and broadened over time due to diverse factors such as technological advances and the participation of new actors (Bound et al., 2007). Hence, its organic evolution must acknowledge that old and new paradigms interact, coexist, and even contradict, resulting in hybrid conceptions and practices (Ang et al., 2015; Villanueva, 2019). Senkić (2017) exemplifies this situation by exposing that cultural diplomacy currently operates both as a “promotional activity conducted in the national interest” and as a “practice [outside the national interest] which enhances inter-cultural dialogue, promotes cultural diversity, and strengthens peace and solidarity between peoples” (p. 4).

However, this breadth and ambiguity are influenced by other factors as well:

Firstly, the term *culture* in cultural diplomacy, which is inherently polysemic and fluid. As Ang et al. (2015) point out, “consistency and coherence cannot be expected of a field that encompasses very different conceptions of culture” (p. 375). Therefore, the approaches to cultural diplomacy can be as varied as the number of countries practicing it and their definitions of culture (Zamorano, 2016).

Secondly, many authors agree that classical forms of diplomacy still underestimate, subordinate (Bound et al., 2007; Pajtinka, 2014; Ang et al., 2015; Zamorano, 2016), and instrumentalize culture (Jora, 2013; Zamorano, 2016). Despite the increasing importance and attention given to cultural diplomacy in recent years, its role is still perceived as “desirable but not essential” (Bound et al., 2007, p. 11). Consequently, it has supplemented other non-coercive forms of diplomacy such as *public diplomacy* and *soft power*. Therefore, little research, financial resources, and attention in cultural policy has been given (Ang et al., 2015; Zamorano, 2016). Nevertheless, Bound et al. (2007) argue that discussions around cultural diplomacy should not be cornered to its subordinated condition otherwise opportunities are missed in practice.

In light of the above, how should studies on cultural diplomacy proceed to build coherence among diversity and subordination?

In a field of an expanding and evolving range of understandings and practices, Pajtinka (2014) calls for attention to the specific needs and contexts of the object of study. Similarly, Ang et al. (2015) suggest disaggregating and individually studying the existing modalities of cultural diplomacy and their accomplishments within

their respective terms (p.337). Until then, strategic and systematic approaches, as proposed by authors like Bound et al. (2007), can be implemented.

### 2.1.2 *Backgrounds of the modern-Western model of cultural diplomacy*

Politicians and policymakers have historically used cultural expressions for different purposes, such as economic growth, employment, or social cohesion, with foreign policy being an important subject (Yúdice, 2003, cited by Isar, 2010).

The need to mediate intercultural communications between diverse societies (Holmes & Rofe, 2016, n.p.) explains the countless art exhibitions and expositions organized globally, including the exchanges of cultural goods among different governors and authorities. Examples include the construction of the Alexandria Library, educational policies by the Roman empire towards allies' children, and the support of orthodox evangelism by the Byzantine empire (Cull, 2009). Other noteworthy events include the Great Exhibition in 1851, the gifts exchanged between the Doge of Venice and Kublai Khan (Bound et al., 2007), or those between Moctezuma and Hernán Cortés prior to the Conquest of Mesoamerica.

According to Pajtinka (2014) and Zamorano (2016), the modern-Western model of cultural diplomacy originated during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the establishment of the first cultural-diplomatic institutions such as the Alliance Française or the Dante Alighieri Society. These entities aimed to connect with diaspora communities and promote national languages. Subsequently, the first official diplomatic bodies emerged during the World and Cold Wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century wherein Ministries of Foreign Affairs were created, and cultural diplomats or *attachés* were sent into missions to promote national ideologies through propaganda.

Overall, modern cultural diplomacy emerged within a context of war, leading to an “adversarial orientation” (Zaharna et al., 2014, p. 3). As a prime example of *soft power*, cultural diplomacy aimed to present a favorable image of a country to foreign states and publics in order to influence, persuade, and gain power in the international arena. This approach was subtler and less intrusive compared to other coercive diplomatic forms such as military intervention or economic sanctions (Bound et al., 2007, p. 11).

In this way, culture became an essential instrument in the ideological battlefield (Pajtinka, 2014), also labeled by Holden (2013) as the “race of soft power”. One

prominent example is the Jazz Ambassadors Program, where during the Cold War period, the U.S. government sent musicians like Dizzy Gillespie, Louis Armstrong, and Dave Brubeck to tour around East Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia to counteract the communist ideology and promote the U.S. American values (Perrigo, 2017; Berkeley, 2018).

Following the post-war periods, marked by conciliation needs, the reaffirmation of the welfare state model and its intervention in the cultural field (Zamorano, 2016), the adversarial, self-interested, and unilateral orientation transitioned into a more amicable one through negotiation and relationship building (Bound et al., 2007). UNESCO later appeared to promote cultural policies at a transnational level, incorporating discussions on neocolonial orders and traditional cultures. Cultural industries appeared as significant actors in the cultural sphere, shaping three distinct models of foreign cultural diplomacy led by France, Britain, and the U.S. (Zamorano, 2016). Since the 1990s, cultural diplomacy has been adopted by most countries (Ang et al., 2015).

This brief series of events outlines the evolution of cultural diplomacy into a more complex and extensive field, continually incorporating new practices, actors, methods, and discussions. This evolution has expanded the field to encompass multiple understandings (Zamorano, 2016) and hybrid practices (Villanueva, 2019), urging a revision of the adversarial fundamentals and assumptions underlying the discipline (Ang et al., 2015; Grincheva & Kelley, 2019; Zaharna, 2019).

The current theoretical framework presents this vision. Furthermore, understanding the diplomatic role of Fandango Fronterizo requires critical approaches that deconstruct the modern model of cultural diplomacy, often conducted unilaterally and as the activity of a Western nation-state. To achieve this, three reframing dimensions of cultural diplomacy are examined further: the development of a multilateral approach based on the principle of mutuality; the arrival of new players such as the non-state actors (NSA) that question the centeredness of the nation-state; and the restoration of non-Western forms of diplomacy through a decolonial approach.



### 2.1.3 Reframing cultural diplomacy: Mutuality

As previously mentioned, the adversarial orientation of cultural diplomacy has evolved to a friendlier one. One way this reframing is achieved is through the principle of *mutuality*, serving as a basis for negotiation and relationship building.

The current section presents how emphasis on mutuality has reconfigured the formulation and implementation of cultural diplomacy programs, as well as the construction of diplomatic relations among countries. Particularly, it explains the transition from showcasing to long-term projects, and from approaches focused on self-promotion and image projection to value promotion. It also includes concepts such as multilateralism, cooperation, collaboration, and co-creation, alongside two-way and multi-way dialogues where listening is as essential as telling, and where exchanges are favored to showcases (Jora, 2013, p. 52).

#### ***From showcases to projects, from images to values***

Even though the practice of cultural diplomacy is extensive, Pajtinka (2014) stresses that the range of activities is often limited to event organization, art exhibitions, and language promotion. These activities exemplify the showcase of national cultures approach, which involve the presentation, performance, or display of selected pieces of the national culture to project a positive image for immediate consumption. This approach serves a persuasive function to gain admiration and sympathy from foreign countries and their citizens (Green, 2010; Jora, 2013; Albro, 2015).

Albro (2015) and Ang et al. (2015) argue that the showcase approach is problematic due to misconceptions about culture and communication. When showcasing, culture is assumed as an entity holding fixed content that is transportable and presentable in any context. This implies that culture is self-evident and that the spectators passively absorb the inherent content through a one-way communication process. However, as Bound et al. (2007) note, “no longer can we think of relatively static cultures presenting themselves to each other for understanding and appraisal. Instead, cultures are meeting, mingling and morphing” (p.19).

Current discussions conversely remark the active role of foreign audiences as meaning-makers when consuming cultural content and the notion of culture as a *relational process* (Zaharna et al., 2014; Ang et al., 2015). This perspective leads cultural diplomacy programs to pursue different forms of exchange, interaction,

engagement, collaboration, and participation that convey a two-way or multi-way communication process. In essence, fostering a dialogue that involves active listening to the counterpart (Cull, 2009), not merely for persuasion but for co-creating meanings and building mutual understanding (Green, 2010; Jora, 2013; Zaharna et al., 2014; Ang et al., 2015).

As a result, long-term processes and projects are favoured, where opportunities for dialogue, exchange, and understanding are more significant. Thus, surpassing the unsystematic, isolated events of the showcase approach. Jora (2013) describes this shift as a transition from “product orientation” to “process facilitation”.

Furthermore, cultural diplomacy is reallocating from concepts such as propaganda and branding (Jora, 2013; Albro, 2015), both of which, despite their differences, operate in terms of messaging and image projection that, as Albro notes (2015), “disincentivize [intercultural] talk in favor of image making” (p. 393).

In this reframing, cultural diplomacy cannot exclusively rely on messaging or self-image projection but must emphasize values such as listening, mutuality, and trust, as well as other “elements of exchange and mutuality” (Jora, 2013, p. 51).

### ***Multilateralism, beyond the national interest***

The unilateral approach, that only serves individual national interests, has given rise to notions such as *bilateralism* and *multilateralism*. These notions appeared from the recognition that other parties in the international arena should also be considered to build peace and address common challenges. Multilateralism is, therefore, achieved when states act beyond their national interest and cooperate with others to pursue common objectives while relying on shared values (Green, 2010).

Multilateral relations based on mutuality and common interest have “triggered new behavior and strategies” for new diplomacy forms (Jora, 2013). Contemporary perceptions claim multilateralism as a method to “see nations from their best side, predisposed to cooperate and create long lasting peace” (Villanueva, 2010, p. 49). Thus, there is a recognition of “a new reality where the ability of any power to dominate the global agenda-no matter how strong, no matter how consensual in its form of leadership- is over” (Brule, 2009, cited in Green, 2010, p.14). Emphasis is placed on respecting common agreements beyond self-interested national agendas

(Villanueva, 2010), along with active listening to the perspectives of other countries to find common values, interests, and themes.

Consequently, contemporary issues like social cohesion, racism, inequality, and discrimination against minorities such as migrants have been added into the cultural diplomacy agenda as common global interests (Jora, 2013).

Nevertheless, some authors identify a bias in the multilateral approach as national interests cannot completely disappear. For instance, Langhorne (2005) exposes that since multilateral cooperation originated within the adversarial model of diplomacy, some countries tend to create relations with those from they can benefit. Thus, situations beyond their immediate control not always align with their interests.

Furthermore, Ang et. al (2015) recognize tensions and contradictions in implementing multilateralism that aims for dialogue and exchange. According to them, mutual understanding “is only sometimes the object” (p.367) of cultural diplomacy because state-conducted strategies inevitably follow a national interest. The real tension arises from competitive or adversarial discourses such as soft power and nation branding, which confer oppositional values between national and common interests. As a consequence, nations face a dilemma of serving a strategic interest to present a positive image while supporting a common good beyond the national interests (p.379). In their article, the authors propose reconciling this dilemma by asserting that cultural diplomacy can be both *in* and *beyond* the national interest.

The discussion presented so far is framed under the figure of nation-states. However, it is essential to note that this discussion is increasingly articulated beyond the scope of nation-states by non-state actors, who bring a wider range of priorities and needs. Consequently, approaches such as *polylaterality* (Wiseman, 1999 cited in LaPorte, 2012) appear to explain cooperation that does not lay exclusively on the common interest of nations but includes other participating actors as well.

The following section focuses on how non-state actors incentivize the reorganization of the diplomatic system.

#### 2.1.4 Reframing cultural diplomacy: From state to non-state actors

*The decentralized nature of contemporary communications privileges networks – not diplomats. (Zaharna et al., 2014, p. 2)*

Traditionally, diplomacy and cultural diplomacy have been practiced and theorized within the boundaries and actions of the state. Initially, diplomacy was conceived as an “elite-to-elite” action (Holden, 2013), meaning that only representatives of the state, such as the royal courts, ambassadors, or diplomats, were both the subjects and objects of diplomacy. Then, states recognized the significance of public opinion and as a result, the object of the diplomatic act expanded to foreign publics. This form of “elite-to-many” diplomacy (Holden, 2013), generally conducted through soft power tools such as broadcasting or cinema, is appointed as public diplomacy (Nye, 2005; Cull, 2009; Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2017; USC Center on Public Diplomacy, 2018).

In these two categories of diplomacy, the state is traditionally considered as the subject or the primary diplomatic actor. However, this order has been disrupted by the appearance of new actors, further referred as non-state actors (NSA). Their influence in the diplomatic arena has increased to the extent that today’s diplomacy can not be exclusively state-centric.

LaPorte (2012) argues that the emergence of the NSA, and therefore the emergence of the “many-to-many” (Holden, 2013) diplomacy form, resulted from two interrelated circumstances: the crisis of the nation-state and the appearance of an active civil society. Both circumstances were shaped and catalyzed by a context of globalization, marked by substantial technological and social transformations.

##### ***Crisis of the nation-state***

The phenomenon of globalization, characterized by increased human and information flows resulting from migration, travel, and digital technologies, has given rise to new cross-border dynamics and interactions among individuals that redefine the boundaries of the nation-state. Foundational elements of the nation-state, such as territory and cultural unity, are now threatened. Therefore, the notions of politically and geographically delimited territories over which power is exerted,

and the nation-state as a unique identity construction entity, have become less pertinent (Díaz Martínez, 2013).

Global dynamics are fostering conditions for *supranational*, *transnational*, *regional*, and *local* structures (Díaz Martínez, 2013, p. 12), that according to Isar (2010), operate beyond the grasp and control of the nation-states. Mann (1986, cited in Holmes & Rofe, 2016) clearly describes this phenomenon in the following quote: “No known state has yet managed to control all relations traveling across its boundaries, and so much social power has remained ‘transnational’.” (n.p).

This loss of control questions the state’s boundaries and domination, as well as its legitimacy, effectiveness, credibility and centeredness. As a result of new transnational social and cultural configurations, individuals feel less represented by their governors, thus diluting their power of representation and legitimacy (Díaz Martínez, 2013). States are also perceived as less convincing and capable of addressing the new challenges brought by globalization (LaPorte, 2012; Ang et al, 2015). Whereas in terms of diplomacy, authors like Nye (2005) question the state as the main and unique actor in international affairs.

Although global forces challenge the state in several ways and bring opportunities to build networks and exchanges with other communities, they do not entirely erase the social, cultural, and political ties to a nation. Cross-border dynamics only displace the state as the unique source of identity and representation; thus, the traditional role and power of states cannot be totally minimized (LaPorte, 2012).

Moreover, globalization also involves localization. Regional and local structures are developing as a response of resistance to globalization’s trend towards homogenization. Therefore, an interest in local cultures has re-emerged, giving rise to terms such as *glocalization* and *translocalization* to describe the parallel local and global dynamics that shape identities and spaces. In other words, local identities and spaces are influenced by both global networks and local circumstances (Díaz Martínez, 2013).

### ***The rise of the NSA through an active civil society***

Simultaneously with the crisis of the nation-state is the arrival of a powerful and active civil society. According to Langhorne (2005), global dynamics have provided opportunities for other actors to participate in matters concerning their respective

countries and to “exercise economic, political or social power and influence” (Grincheva & Kelly, 2019, p.201).

As the term suggests, NSA in diplomacy are defined as “those actors that are not (representatives of) states, yet that operate at the international level and that are potentially relevant to international relations” (LaPorte, 2012, p. 445). These actors encompass a broad spectrum, ranging from individuals to collectives, both formal and informal, as well as public and private entities.

According to Díaz Martínez (2013), the array of NSA oscillates between two categories in compliance with their form of participation. The first category involves international and transnational institutions or entities, multinational corporations, social enterprises, and businesses that exert prominent economic power, enabling them to influence policymaking and constrain state autonomy. Suárez Argüello and Sánchez Andrés (2017) claim that the importance of these transnational actors is widely acknowledged, as studies on NSA predominantly focus on this group.

The second category consists of civil society actors who participate in a bottom-up manner, thereby, diluting the authority of the state. The current research focuses on this latter category. When referring to NSA, it concerns actors from the third sector, including non-governmental (NGOs), non-profit organizations (NPOs), universities, criminal and terrorist networks, religious communities, advocacy groups, diasporas, celebrities, sports and entertainment figures, popular and social movements, indigenous groups, communities, as well as artists, activists, and cultural collectives and organizations.

Even though the NSA may be small and often fund their participation in international engagements through self-funding or volunteerism (Ang et al., 2015, p. 376), they have proven to be influential figures. These bodies have demonstrated a greater understanding of the changes in the international arena and have become more capable than states and their diplomatic structures in managing the relations between countries (Langhorne, 2005; LaPorte, 2012; Jora, 2013; Ang et al, 2015). In other words, “non-state actors may be more vulnerable to contextual forces, and yet more agile in navigating them” (Zaharna, 2019, p. 220), and with their adaptability to the new international dynamics, they maintain relevance, foster connections, engage in a continuous flow of ideas, and develop conjoint actions with a global outreach (Jora, 2013).

Moreover, these actors not only demonstrate interest in promoting their local development but also engage in global issues by providing funds, aid, or intervening in crises (Langhorne, 2005). Therefore, they are acknowledged for their capacity to operate based on principles of mutuality: building long-term relations, employing cooperative and horizontal logics, and surpassing national interests (LaPorte, 2012; Ang et al., 2015). Lastly, according to Jora (2013), the virtual space, in particular, serves as a crucial arena in which NSA act, acquire visibility, and disseminate their activities.

All in all, the state's loss of control, catalyzed by cross-border dynamics, has not only restrained its capacity to act in international affairs but has also opened the opportunity for other actors, including civil society, to fulfill the gaps and assume roles that traditionally belonged to the state. As consequence, NSA are gaining influence, power, legitimacy, and credibility (LaPorte, 2012). Simultaneously, they are challenging the state's dominance as the unique source of diplomacy (Holmes & Rofe, 2016), claiming their inclusion into the definition and practice of diplomacy as key elements in the equation (Jora, 2013).

### ***Placement of NSA in cultural diplomacy***

Even though the influence of NSA is more acknowledged, G. Lee and Ayhan (2015) observe that since their appearance, one of the disputed areas in the literature of cultural diplomacy is how to place the participation of these actors. The authors identify three tendencies: a traditional approach that accepts the NSA but continues to position the state as the main diplomatic actor (state-directed); an intermediary approach that confers a major role and autonomy to NSA (state-independent) but only admits intentional diplomatic aims (intentional diplomacy); and a broader approach that embraces the diplomatic potential of unintentional acts (unintentional diplomacy). Each of these three approaches are further developed.

In the first approach, the state remains as the main actor that directs the foreign strategies, while NSA are considered as outsourced players that complement and facilitate the state's strategies (LaPorte, 2012; G. Lee & Ayhan, 2015). As Zamorano (2016) describes, "their exchanges are usually pre-determined by the official definitions of culture and operationalized by the governmental institution and agents, which shape and promote a group of artistic and cultural goods and activities that identify with official cultural policy and national identity" (p.169). However,

this perspective reinforces a dynamic where the national interest is imposed in a top-down manner.

This approach is supported on Arndt's (2010) distinction between international cultural relations and cultural diplomacy: the former one occurs spontaneously among individuals as a result of intercultural encounters, while the later is a governmental strategy to support cultural exchange, mainly conducted by the national interest. Other concepts such as marketing, public relations, or lobbying are similarly used in this approach to distinguish it from cultural diplomacy directed by the state (LaPorte, 2012).

Conversely, alternative perspectives precise that the distinction between this two realms is becoming increasingly blurred (Bound et al. 2007), thus conferring a more significant role and autonomy to NSA.

Authors such as LaPorte (2012) observe that the persistent focus on defining cultural diplomacy based on its actors has limited the placement of NSA. Their appearance has triggered an overload of discussions on the actorness of diplomacy. Therefore, to detach from these limitations, the author suggests the development of a new concept of diplomacy based on the object of the action rather than the subject that develops it. In this way, the character of the actor becomes less fundamental (LaPorte, 2012) and diplomatic efforts pursued by both states and NSA are not subjugated but equally integrated (Grincheva & Kelley, 2019).

Furthermore, LaPorte (2012) detaches the NSA as simply publics or partners of governmental-led diplomacy. NSA can pursue influence in the international arena independently, without state direction or support. She argues that literature has failed to discern and study NSA as independent players, therefore limiting the review of cultural diplomacy. While collaboration to complement foreign strategy has been largely noted and researched (p.442), LaPorte (2012) suggests that the performance of independently acting NSA is conditioned by two factors: minimal institutionalization and a political agenda aimed at having "a permanent influence on policies, procedures and international relations" (p.450).

A third approach argues that centering on the objectives of the actors is insufficient (Lee & Ayhan, 2015). While the spotlight has been placed on actors with political and international relations interests, a considerable part of NSA pursue diverse aims that are not inherently political. These include economic, ideological, cultural, or



artistic motivations such as mutual learning, joint reflection, debate, research, experimentation, co-financing and funding, cooperation in creative processes, or the creation of new artistic works (Ang et al., 2019, p. 370).

Furthermore, Zaharna (2019) argues that despite being perceived as naïve, NSA do not always pursue interests beyond the mere act of relating. Thus, not all relations are instrumental, purposeful, or strategic. In the same logic, Lee and Ayhan (2015) observe that the participation of some NSA in cultural diplomacy is rather unintentional. This means that while these actors may not actively pursue political or diplomatic interests, their outcomes may non-deliberately impact the diplomatic arena and offer potential for cultural diplomacy ends.

Lee and Ayhan (2015) suggest that understanding the contribution and placement of NSA in cultural diplomacy can be enhanced by adopting an outcome-based approach. In order to ensure this, it is necessary to first acknowledge the diversity of objectives guiding NSA and second, to recognize and study the diplomatic potential of these objectives and their resulting outcomes.

#### ***Plural bottom-up diplomacies: in, beyond, and against the national interest***

As a result of NSA's inclusion into the field, different forms of non-state diplomacies are emerging in the literature. A common thread is the displacement of the state as the unique source of diplomacy. Some examples are diplomacy of the people (Díaz Martínez, 2011; 2013), everyday diplomacies (Marsden et al., 2016), indigenous diplomacy (de Costa, 2007), corporate diplomacy (Ordeix-Rigo & Duarte, 2009), celebrity diplomacy (L. D. Young, 2018), citizen diplomacy (Olsen Schodde, 2012; Heredia Zubieta, 2012), para-diplomacy (Rodríguez Gelfenstein, 2003), track two diplomacy (Palmiano Federer, 2021), non-governmental diplomacy (D'Orfeuil, 2008), and cosmopolitan diplomacy (Villanueva Rivas, 2010).

Furthermore, the placement of a broader range of actors in the equation of cultural diplomacy results in a more global and plural practice. This diversity brings a larger variety of perspectives and aims. In this sense, the pursuit of common interest transcends national boundaries to include other participating actors.

Whether intentionally or unintentionally, some outcomes of NSA may align with the objectives of the state, therefore reinforcing its foreign strategy. It is in this manner that the national interest can emerge as a bottom-up initiative rather than a "top-

down target imposed by government decree” (Ang et al., 2015, p.378). Consequently, cultural diplomacy can be both *in* and *beyond* the national interest, as proposed by Ang et al. (2015).

However, NSA may also radically challenge national objectives and its unifying narratives (Bound et al., 2007; Grincheva & Kelley, 2019; Ang et al., 2015). There are several examples of non-state practices employing cultural and artistic expressions as a mean, and that create counter-hegemonic diplomatic outcomes. For instance, the activist music group Las Cafeteras, based in East L.A., uses *son jarocho* music to internationally visibilize the migratory reality in the U.S. and to support civil right movements of the Latin communities. Similarly, issues such as femicides in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico are addressed in their music.

Other examples include the movie trilogy directed by Demián Alcazar, that criticizes the corruption and poor governance of political parties that held power in Mexico over eighty years, or Elena Poniatowska’s book, *La noche de Tlatelolco* (1971), which later inspired the movie *Rojo Amanecer* (1989) by Jorge Fons. These instances featured the testimonies of individuals who presenced the 1968 student massacre in Mexico City, showcasing a form of resistance against the government’s efforts to control the narrative.

Although these practices may challenge the national interest, contemporary approaches to cultural diplomacy search to “represent the nation in all its complexity by covering multiple facets” (Jora, 2013, p. 44), prioritizing a multiplicity of voices over the monological narrative of the state and its simplified image projection of traditional methods such as propaganda and nation branding (Ang et al., 2015).

Based on the last two sub-sections, a typology can be created for placing NSA’s participation in cultural diplomacy, as shown in Table 1:

*Table 1. Typology of NSA participation. Own elaboration*

State-directed	State-independent
<i>State-directed</i> refers to cases where NSA actions are directed by the state, whereas <i>state-independent</i> refers to NSA that act regardless of government direction.	

<b>Intentional diplomacy</b>		<b>Unintentional diplomacy</b>
<i>Intentional diplomacy</i> refers to actors that pursue political and diplomatic aims; whereas <i>unintentional diplomacy</i> refers to actors who achieve diplomatic outcomes despite not actively pursuing diplomatic interests.		
<b>In the interest of the state</b>	<b>Outside the interest of the state</b>	<b>State-defying</b>
<i>In the interest of the state</i> refers to outcomes of non-state action that align with the objectives of the state. <i>Outside the interest of the state</i> refers to outcomes that do not coincide with the objectives of the state and that can develop a defying posture.		

Finally, the pursuit of mutuality values, global aims, and voice plurality, needs moving beyond the decentralization of the state and the inclusion of NSA. In order to enable pluriversality in the field, the reframing process must remain self-critical and allow space for marginalized worldviews due to asymmetrical power dynamics.

#### 2.1.5 Reframing cultural diplomacy: Restoring worldviews from the borderlands

*International relations theory that is the product of Western thought in Western institutions cannot claim to be global theory*  
(Young, 2014, p.29)

The adversarial, monologic, and self-interested features of traditional cultural diplomacy are embedded in colonialism and its structures of domination (Borges Carrijo, 2016). These structures are also addressed by Quijano (2000) as the *coloniality of power*.

In order to consolidate and justify the colonial quest of land appropriation, empires and later nation-states aimed to assert power and influence through different means, with culture being one of them. Racial, ethnic, national, religious, or other cultural differences served to establish categorizations and confer qualities of superiority and inferiority about the self and the other (Mignolo, 2003). In the case of Latin America, racial labels such as “indigenous”, “black”, and “mestizo” have been the basis for this purpose. Additionally, categories such as “communist”,

“terrorist”, “immigrant”, “refugee”, or “underdeveloped” are used in the contemporary global context as well (Borges Carrijo, 2016).

These cultural differences created by colonialism have historically shaped relations forged under the name of the states, providing asymmetrical and violent features. Relations were built on the perspectives and interests of hegemonic powers, legitimizing their practices, identities, and narratives, while alternative subjects were silenced, repressed, and discredited (Borges Carrijo, 2016). These unequal relations and dynamics were also reinforced by the process of globalization (Díaz Martínez, 2013), despite the achieved interconnectivity and interdependency that fostered NSA’s participation.

Furthermore, colonialism transcends a historical division between colonized and colonizer countries. As previously illustrated, the structures of domination originally intended for land appropriation have expanded and acquired different forms. All based on power and privilege abuse, as well as oppressive mechanisms that lead to unequal and unfair relationships in the international arena (Santos, 2011).

Similarly, the terms *East-West*, *Third World-First World*, or *Global South-Global North* are metaphorical world-order dichotomies rather than geographical categorizations (Santos, 2011). Although dissimilar to some extent, these terms are used to “name patterns of wealth, privilege, and development across broad regions” (Dados & Connell, 2012, p. 13) created by power structures. The Global South-East-Third World, therefore, refers to those social groups who have suffered systemic oppression and discrimination at the hands of capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, patriarchy, neoliberalism as well as other unfolded naturalizations of inequality (Santos, 2011, p. 16). In the current text, the terms “Global South”, “South”, “non-Western”, “alternative”, “exterior” on one hand, and “Global North”, “North”, “Western”, “hegemonic”, and “center” on the other hand, will be used interchangeably, appealing to the metaphorical definition.

### ***Decolonizing cultural diplomacy***

Even though cultural diplomacy is undergoing a reframing process that appeals to mutuality and compassion, one that is more aware of the employed hostility, gradually modifying means of domination, and including a pluralistic perspective through NSA’s participation, the structures installed by colonialism persist in the

field (Abrahamsen, 2007). Moreover it “remains unembarrassed about it” (Borges Carrijo, 2016, p.33).

The need for a decolonial perspective is, therefore, stressed as part of cultural diplomacy’s critical revision (Abrahamsen, 2007). This is particularly crucial when analyzing cases at the Mexico-U.S. border, such as Fandango Fronterizo, where the colonial difference is embodied both physically and metaphorically.

In general terms, a decolonial mindset questions the hierarchical power structures and encourages their dismantlement through acts of resistance. These acts serve as “a mode through which the symptoms of different power relations are diagnosed, and ways are sought to get round them, or live through them, or change them” (Pile 1997, cited in Darby 2016, p. 984). In the field of cultural diplomacy, this relatively new perspective aims to “make the South more visible and also to expose some of the Western-centric foundations of conventional approaches” (Abrahamsen, 2007, p.112). In addition, the literature agrees that it aims the following:

First, revealing hegemonic practices and their oppressive effects, as well as claiming accountability for these repercussions (Mignolo, 2003; Borges Carrijo, 2016). Building on discussions of NSA in the previous section, this additionally involves revealing domination practices and narratives carried out by states, dominant states, and hegemonic NSA.

Second, addressing topics such as resistance, cultural encounters, construction of identity, and power asymmetries in South-North relations (Borges Carrijo, 2016).

Third, introducing perspectives and case studies from the South, as well as marginalized experiences from the North (Mignolo,2003), also referred as “the South inside the North”, or the “Third inner World” (Santos, 2011). Examples include cases regarding the Chicanx<sup>1</sup>, Latinx and immigrant communities in the U.S., refugees and other minorities in Europe, or indigenous groups situated in Canada, Australia, and Finland. All subject to asymmetrical dynamics within the North. Additionally, it implies considering alternative subjects such as social movements, activists, and other community organizations as actors in cultural diplomacy.

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<sup>1</sup> *Chicanx* refers to Mexican-U.S. American as well as Mexican descendants born in the United States. It is a decolonized political and cultural identity. The “x” is used to emphasize gender neutrality and non-binary

Fourth, acknowledging the Western academic predominance in studies of cultural diplomacy and questioning its epistemological assumptions and power relations in knowledge production (Mignolo, 2003; Abrahamsen, 2007; Young, 2014; Grincheva & Kelley, 2019; Zaharna, 2019). This entails recognizing that “the understanding of the world is much broader than the Western understanding of the world” (Santos, 2010, p. 8-9; Santos, 2011, p.16); advocating for the valorization and production of other epistemologies originating from the South (Santos, 2010).

Nonetheless, restoring the South does not entail a denial of Western knowledges and practices, as not all are conceived under a Western-centric framework (Quijano, 2000). Nor does it involve essentializing, privileging, or worshipping alternative worldviews (Banerjee, 2021, p. 11). Rather, it conveys a search for plural forms of wisdom, as well as hybrid and heterarchical dynamics (Mignolo, 2003; Santos, 2010; Borges Carrijo, 2016), where critical reflection questions “both the imposition of Eurocentric assumptions to other contexts as well as the ‘authenticity’ of concepts claimed by the local” (Banerjee, 2021, p. 11). This double reflexivity is distinctively denoted by Mignolo (2003) as part of his *border thinking* proposal, which is further elaborated on in the chapter.

Under this premise, Homes and Rofe (2016) express that instead of one monolithic concept of diplomacy, promoting different and plural diplomacies “produced by other worldviews” (n.p.) should be encouraged. This perspective can lead to eliminating West and non-West categories in favor of ‘global cultural diplomacies’, that better reflect the diversity of diplomatic interaction (Zaharna, 2019, p.223).

### ***Some Western assumptions in cultural diplomacy and NSA***

The current Western predominance in the academic literature of cultural diplomacy has perpetuated assumptions regarding NSA. These not only restrict the examination of non-Western cases in different ways (Grincheva & Kelley, 2019) but also restrain the acknowledgement and assertion of diplomacy as a global and plural practice (Young, 2014; Zaharna, 2019). Some of these assumptions are further explained:

First, there is a tendency to equate non-state diplomacy with Western democratic systems and principles. According to Grincheva and Kelley (2009), a prevalent trend

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inclusivity in Spanish language (IRL, 2017).

in the literature is to conclude that Western democratic systems facilitate the framework for the legitimacy of NSA, therefore, fostering the development of non-state diplomacy, whereas less democratic systems have limited potential in this regard. As consequence, the understanding and narratives of non-state diplomacy are often reduced to ‘progressive’, ‘liberalized’, ‘marketized’, ‘globalized’, and ‘democratized’ Western principles (p. 202-203).

Non-Western diplomatic practices, however, cannot be studied under this assumption or with Western principles. Primarily, because as proved by some non-Western cases, non-state diplomacy also thrives in “less-democratic” systems (Grincheva, 2019). Additionally, these practices are founded in a set of conceptions outside the Western framework that align more closely with their own understandings, contexts, histories, values, and social theories (Grincheva & Kelley, 2019, p.204). Therefore, categories conceived under Western paradigms, such as development, democracy, state, modernity, science, civilization, or even diplomacy are not universally valid.

Second, as previously discussed, studies on NSA significantly focuses on ‘actorness’ (LaPorte, 2012). Despite these actors deviating from the state-centeredness of traditional diplomacy, discussions have been focused on analyzing and identifying the subjects of the diplomatic act and their actions (Zaharna, 2019; LaPorte, 2012). According to Zaharna (2019), this perspective carries Western individualism, perpetuating the state-centered system, as it presupposes that one “distinct and identifiable” (p. 218) actor can cause an effect. As result, the complex dynamics of collective and “collaborative efforts by multiple players” (p. 220) are obscured.

Individualism is not universally shared. Certain ancestral or popular knowledge systems recognize that “all peoples are indivisibly part of a larger relational universe” (Zaharna, 2019, p.221). Thus, the author proposes a relational-networked-collaborative approach that emphasizes the nature of relationships as a fundamental unit of analysis for cultural diplomacy (Zaharna et al., 2014, p. 1), as these relationships actually “influence and shape the [actors] through the process of their interaction” (Holmes & Rofe, 2016, n.p.).

### ***Towards a pluriverse. Restoring Latin America and the borderlands***

As previously discussed, although cultural diplomacy is experiencing a revisionism that discards the adversarial approach and strives towards a plural universe, this

critical process is mostly situated within a Western place of enunciation. In order to restore other voices, this final section briefly introduces *border thinking* and *diplomacy of the people*. The former is an epistemology, while the latter is a form of diplomacy, both emerging from the South as alternatives to delink from hegemonic models, such as the modern Western nation-state in cultural diplomacy.

### *Border thinking*

Border thinking derives from decolonial theory. According to Mignolo (2003), it draws on Aníbal Quijano's (2000) *coloniality of power* and Enrique Dussel's (2016) *transmodernism*, Latin American critical lines of thought towards coloniality, modernity, and postmodernity. This theory is also nurtured by the work of Chicana poet, writer, and feminist theorist Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), who, shaped by her upbringing in the Mexico-Texas border region, introduced the concept of the *new mestiza*<sup>2</sup>. A concept that acknowledges the conflicting yet intertwined plural elements of Chicanx and Latinx identities.

According to Mignolo (2013), border thinking represents a “method of decolonial thinking and doing” (para. 8) that departs from exteriority, defined as “the outside created by the inside” (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006, p.206), serving as a place of enunciation. In other words, it integrates the possibility to speak from a position of displacement created by hegemonic powers. It allows to speak from the South, the East, the Third World, and other spaces at the margins of different social structures and asymmetries, including the borderlands. In this process, the exteriority is critically acknowledged and inhabited, rather than observed, described, or crossed (Mignolo, 2013, para. 7,8).

Moreover, it is a reflexive process situated at the conjunction of Western and non-Western thinking. Therefore, border thinking thrives at intersections like the borderlands, where Anzaldúa (1987) thinks from and where initiatives like Fandango Fronterizo come to life. As expressed by Mignolo in an interview, this theory is a “conceptualization of the experience of living in the border” (Weier, 2017, para. 6), where contradicting elements are dealt and negotiated. However, this reflexive process is featured by a dual criticism towards both traditions of thought (Mignolo, 2000).

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<sup>2</sup> Mixed-race



Finally, Mignolo (Weier, 2017, para. 8) acknowledges that not everyone inhabits the border, and that one cannot deny the existence of other traditions of thought but can delink from those. Therefore, border thinking represents just one possibility of a pluriverse of theoretical traditions. A pluriverse that is opposed to a Western form of universality, characterized by an “entanglement of several cosmologies connected today in a power differential” (Mignolo, 2013, para. 5), some cases in confrontation and others in commonality.

### *Diplomacy of the people*

Diplomacy of the people encompasses a decolonial and an alternative mode of diplomacy that disengages from the state as the center of power.

According to Díaz Martínez (2011; 2013), this form of diplomacy is framed in Latin America, specifically in countries like Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela, drawing inspiration from indigenous diplomacy. However, it not only embraces the knowledges and practices of native communities but also incorporates the experiences of peasant, popular, urban mestizx sectors, and other contemporary social mobilizations (Díaz Martínez, 2013, p.224). In this way, it emerges as a diplomatic practice of historically displaced societies and an alternative to perpetuating models of marginalization. The actors are collective entities encompassing forces, movements, political parties, peoples, cultures, civilizations, communities and various other organizations or collectivities where shared interests prevail.

Given its emphasis on collective subjects and shared interests, this form of diplomacy is characterized by relations and exchanges rooted in ancestral, traditional, and communal societal values such as reciprocity, mutual acknowledgement, and horizontality. Values that according to Díaz Martínez (2013) constantly navigate the contemporary global landscape (p.225).

It is worthy to highlight that this form of diplomacy was originally raised by Evo Morales, an indigenous activist and a former president of Bolivia. Therefore, it should be perceived as a form of empowering displaced communities and social movements. Diplomacy of the people does not aim to replace nation-state diplomacy but rather attempts to influence it, ensuring that the interests of these groups are considered in the state’s foreign policies (Díaz Martínez, 2013). Furthermore, this

aligns with Ang et al.'s (2015) proposition that the national interest can emerge as a bottom-up initiative.

All in all, diplomacy of the people serves as an additional example of a non-state diplomatic practice performed by collective subjects, primarily to advance the interests of displaced groups but in collaboration with the state. Although similar objectives may be pursued by other forms of cultural diplomacy originating from the North, this particular proposal is of special interest to the current research as it acknowledges traditional and communal values. Moreover, it proves that the model of modern diplomacy is also being questioned from the Global South (Díaz Martínez, 2011; 2013).

## **2.2 Management of Non-Profit Cultural Organizations**

As previously exposed, NSA have had a significant impact on the international arena, gaining recognition and legitimacy as influential actors in cultural diplomacy. Their participation not only challenges the figure of the state as the main source of cultural diplomacy, but also as the main form of social organization (Holmes & Rofe, 2016, n.p.).

While existing literature on cultural diplomacy often neglects to consider “the organizational forms that operationalize [non-state action]” (Cassey, 2015, p.8), the current section attempts to discuss the means in which collective non-state action is organized and managed.

It particularly focuses on non-profit forms of organization as a key operating framework in the fields of culture, arts and entertainment (Oster, 1995; Varbanova, 2013), where Fandango Fronterizo is inserted. In other words, this section studies non-profit cultural organizations (NPCOs) “engaged in the creation, production, presentation, distribution, preservation [or] education about aesthetic, heritage, and entertainment activities, products, and artifacts” (Salamon, 2002, cited in Ahmed, 2012, p.5).

In accordance to the current case study, a critical and decolonial approach is adopted in analyzing non-profit and cultural management theories.

### 2.2.1 *The Western neoliberal features of non-profit cultural management*

*Organizational knowledge produced in the West is an example of epistemic coloniality that maintains and reproduces colonial difference in a global neoliberal economy. (Banerjee, 2021, p.5)*

There is a Western and neoliberal undertone in management theories and concepts. This undertone not only lacks critical examination, but also has specific implications when applied to non-profit forms of organizations and non-Western contexts., such as Latin America or the borderlands (Ibarra-Colado et al., 2010).

This lack of critical revision, according to Ibarra-Colado (2006) and Faria et al. (2010), originates from the assumption that management, across its various subjects, is a “neutral and more practical discipline, [that unlike diplomacy, it is] committed to a stateless and extremely democratic representation of the market” (Faria et al., 2010, p. 99). However, this viewpoint is overly simplistic, as management has served as “one of the most important forms of epistemic coloniality” (Ibarra-Colado, 2016, p.2). According to Faria et al., (2010), management has perpetuated the same adversarial, asymmetric, and intrusive features of the unilateral and state-centric diplomacy. In this case, it serves as a soft power tool to legitimize a neoliberal project that is conceived in the Western world (in the U.S., to be more specific), promoting market-driven logic that is far from democratic.

The resulting Western and neoliberal traits are further discussed in relation to their implications on the definition and operation of NPCO.

### 2.2.2 *Definition of NPCO*

The non-profit orientation is a configuration in which non-state action can take form. Within the literature, it is also referred to with some nuances as non-governmental, third sector, non-commercial, volunteer, charitable, grassroots, civil society, independent, or community-based entities (Powell & Steinberg, 2006; Ahmed, 2012). As previously exposed, non-profits emerge from an active civil society seeking to address the service gap left by the public sector (Jung & Vakharia, 2019). Therefore, they are defined by their provision of services, goods, or programs

aimed at benefiting the common good of society (Varbanova, 2012; Byrnes, 2009; Hudson, 1999).

NPCO possess two distinct features that set them apart from both the business and public sectors, although their boundaries are becoming increasingly blurred over time (Casey, 2015; Hudson, 1999). Firstly, their goal is non-commercial; they do not intend to generate any profit and instead reinvest any surpluses into their activities and operations. Secondly, they function independently from the government, maintaining autonomy (Varbanova, 2013; Hudson, 1999; Anheier & Salamon, 2006).

The existing classifications and typologies within the non-profit sector are wide, reflecting a large variety of non-state action operating across contrasting fields, purposes, and structures (Oster, 1995). For example, organizations can adopt various structures such as charities, foundations, associations, or operate as unincorporated entities, and assist in fields like education, environment, health, social, or cultural sectors, like the current case.

In addition, Anheier and Salamon (2006) discuss that the understanding and classification of the non-profit sector become even more ambiguous due to the diverse “societal traditions and ideologies” around the world (p.91). For instance, research conducted by the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies (Salamon et al., 1999) on the dimensions of the non-profit sector in different countries, including the U.S. and Mexico, proves that the evolution and configuration of the sector in each country are influenced by their “distinct stories, cultures, and political traditions” (Anheier & Salamon, 2006, p. 91).

### ***Universalization and displacement***

Despite the heterogeneity within the non-profit cultural sector in terms of size, disciplines, managing styles, aims, or functions, Srinivas (2010) observes that the Western understanding of non-profits holds significant dominance. It is often universalized into a single “organizational type that somehow represents all possible organizational variations” (Srinivas, 2009 cited in Srinivas 2010, p. 119).

This universalized understanding expects organizations to rely on professional staff and volunteers, be formally registered, possess a tax-free status, claim expertise in its field, and be perceived as “specialized helpers”. However, this vision has led to

the assumption that “trained managers and formal techniques of organizing are equivalent to managing” and that “certified professionals are needed to enable social progress” (Srinivas, 2010, p.119). As consequence, the emphasis on administration overshadows the over common good. These assumptions are addressed in the literature as forms of managerialism or professionalism of non-profits (Darby, 2016; Faria et al., 2010; Srinivas, 2010).

The universalization of Western concepts corresponds as well to a form of colonization and displacement of alternative approaches. Ibarra-Colado (2006) observes a tendency to apply Western market-oriented models to non-Western contexts, often overlooking local realities and resulting in mismatches. In other words, this reliance on Western concepts proves insufficient for studying non-Western contexts and tends to be justified through cultural arguments that position “the periphery as imperfect expressions of [...] the Center” (Ibarra-Colado, 2016, p. 3), reinforcing the colonial difference and invalidating practices and organizational forms from the South (Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Srinivas, 2010). According to Srinivas (2010) this continuous process of universalization and colonization eclipses the diversity of non-profits and their management styles.

### ***Revindicating alternative understandings of NPCO***

Non-Western cases have challenged the universality of this paradigm. Authors such Banerjee (2021), Darby (2016), Faria et al. (2010), Srinivas (2010) and Ibarra-Colado (2006) urge for a critical and potentially decolonial overview of management and non-profit management disciplines. This demand extends to the fields of cultural and arts management (Henze et al., 2020), aiming to attend other “experiences of organization, management and resistance among companies, governments, peoples and communities in different parts of the world” (Faria et al., 2010, p.104) that may not function in accordance with Western models.

For instance, non-Western practices may be associated with rites, celebrations, traditions, or alternative logics outside the market-driven framework, such as magical, religious, communal, or collective thinking. Practices from the South may involve informal or different forms of non-profit organization such as grassroots, activism, cooperatives, *barrios* (neighborhoods), voluntary work, and social movements (Ibarra-Colado, 2016). Some of these not driven by professionalism

fundraising, legal formalities, and may even operate within the informal economy, prevalent in many societies.

This holds significant implications for NPCO, or non-state action that operates in the cultural sector. According to Dimaggio (2006), cultural organizations tend to maintain smaller or minimalist configurations, holding intermittent program activities with limited or non-existent budgets, and relying on part-time staff or volunteer work (p.444). Community orchestras, amateur theatre groups, or project-based initiatives are examples that challenge the universal understanding of non-profits.

A critical approach also conveys the usage of Western knowledges to interpret non-Western contexts (Ibarra-Colado, 2006). Moreover, Faria et al. (2010) advocate for a double reflexivity, that reviews alternative modes of organization without compelling them as “defective forms in ‘immature’ societies” (Ibarra-Colado, 2006, p.13). In other words, recognizing the complexities of these contexts, “not grading the[ir] roads of modernization” (ibid., p. 14) and shedding light on the implications of using Western concepts to understand non-Western contexts.

Building on this approach, Srinivas (2010) enriches the understanding of non-state action and non-profit organizational forms by exploring the means in which non-profit organizations in Latin America respond to neoliberal policies. His study identifies a typology of non-profits that “are instead rooted in political struggles of recognition and distribution” (p.123), highlighting the coexistence of formalized professional organizations with spontaneous and temporary associations.

### 2.2.3 *The operating domains of the NPCOs*

Organizations operate within two different domains or drivers that shape the functioning of the sector. Existing literature on non-profit organizations identifies these drivers as the *public benefit concern* and the *resource* domains (Brown, 2014). This aligns with the cultural production theory proposed by Bourdieu and Johnson (1993), where symbolic, cultural, and social capitals struggle and interact with economic capital. For the purposes of the current research, these domains are synthesized as follows:

*The sociocultural value domain.* NPCOs are acknowledged for understanding and attending the demands of their communities while creating sociocultural value.

According to Allison and Kaye (1997), this sense of purpose, articulated through values and mission, stands as the utmost feature of a NPCO. Thus, these elements are perceived as the core of the organization, directing many aspects of its operations. For instance, values and mission can serve as motivations for stakeholders to engage and participate in the organization, shaping program content and management practices (Hudson, 1999).

The creation of social value, however, “does not automatically translate into sustainability” (Brown, 2014, p. 49). Therefore, attention to the second domain is imperative.

*The resource domain.* This domain significantly influences the operations of NPCOs by ensuring the continuous delivery of services and goods, and therefore contributing to the creation of sociocultural value. In order to achieve sustainability, organizations must define and secure a diverse range of financial, material, human, and social resources (Brown, 2014; Ahmed, 2012).

In the case of the NPCOs, primary financial and material resources may originate from direct consumer contributions such as entrance tickets or merchandise, as well as monetary and in-kind support from foundations, other nonprofit organizations, governmental funds, or individual donors (Allison & Kaye, 2017; Varbanova, 2012; Oster, 1995).

In addition, due to the mission-driven orientation and engagement capabilities, NPCOs leverage voluntarism as a key asset. Volunteers, committed individuals that support the cause, contribute their time and efforts, whether experienced in the field or not. Volunteers are a fundamental labour resource for the sector (Hudson, 1999; Varbanova, 2012; Oster, 1995).

According to Salamon (2003), both domains have implications for diverse aspects of organizations. These include their role, operations, strategies, management style, organizational structure, decision-making processes, and funding composition. Therefore, the way these domains are intertwined plays a crucial role in shaping the character of the organization.

### ***Marketization: the challenge of domain balance***

Despite not operating in direct opposition, literature has recognized an ongoing tension between the domains, given their distinct approaches and objectives

(Brown, 2014, p. 50, 59). This tension is often addressed in the literature as the “blurred identity” (Schmid, 2013, cited in Lee, 2016), “dual identity”, “multiple identity” (Salamon, 2003), and “identity crisis” (Ahmed, 2012) within the non-profit sector.

Organizations seek to both maintain relevance within the community and achieve economic sustainability to sustain their mission (Jung & Vakharia, 2019). Balancing these dual priorities poses a consistent challenge for NPCOs, particularly within a world-order dominated by a market-based logic. According to Darby (2016), NPCOs face increasing pressure to adopt business management principles and practices. For instance, organizations are expected to generate revenue, compete for funding, diversify income streams and reduce reliance on grants and public funding (Pynes, 2011, n.p.).

Moreover, ongoing economic crises, resource scarcity, and budget cuts in the cultural sector intensify the struggle for audiences, funds, and volunteers (Courtney, 2002, p. 5), ultimately threatening the sustainability of NPCOs. So, many NPCOs are engaging with business management practices to navigate these challenges, gradually adopting a more market-driven and professionalized. approach

This shift is redesigning the purposes and operations of NPCOs, to such an extent that, as noted by Darby (2016), it may compromise their sociocultural priorities (p.106, 109).

### ***Dynamic resistance***

Amidst this evolving landscape, NPCOs are exploring strategies to ensure sustainability without compromising their core value.

Darby (2016, p.110-114) introduces a concept called *dynamic resistance*, to combat ‘mission drift’ and prioritize socio-cultural values. This proposal consists of four interconnected dimensions forming a cyclical process:

- **Rejection:** This dimension is translated into rejecting profit-centric relations or facing rejection through different mechanisms as a form of active resistance.
- **Resilience:** Serving as a reactive response to rejection, this dimension involves coping mechanisms such as downsizing, budget reductions, prioritization, and potential engagement with neoliberal mechanisms. While



this may lead into conflicts with the socio-cultural value, it could facilitate the long-term delivery of this value, ultimately securing longevity and stability for the organization.

- Resourcefulness: This proactive dimension focuses on creating ways to access resources, developing skills, and consolidating legitimacy.
- Reflexive: Translated as a reflective practice, this dimension involves evaluating the organization's mission, values, practices, and plans.

NPCOs can use this proposal to find balance and navigate the complex interplay between the two dimensions of the non-profit sector.

### 3 RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter presents the qualitative case study methodology employed in the current research. In addition, the rationale for selecting Fandango Fronterizo as a case is discussed, along with the sample scope. Then, the data collection and analysis methods are explained. The chapter finalizes with critical reflections on the research process, not only at a methodological level but also by positioning the researcher's locus of enunciation.

#### 3.1 Methodological Approach of the Study

“The value of a research method should properly be gauged solely in relation to what you are trying to find out” (Silverman, 2014, p. 10). Therefore, based on the research aim of the current study (*to explore the role of NSA in cultural diplomacy, focusing on the experience of Fandango Fronterizo, a non-Western and small non-profit organization operating on the border of Mexico and the U.S.*) and the discussions presented in the theoretical framework suggesting that studies of cultural diplomacy should individually assess the different existing modalities (Ang et al., 2015; Pajtinka, 2014), the most natural decision was to select a case study as a methodological approach to examine its particular terms, needs, context, and accomplishments in detail.

According to the literature on research methodology (Simons, 2014; Flyvbjerg, 2004; Punch, 2000; Stake, 1995), a case study involves an in-depth examination from multiple perspectives of a particular phenomenon, enabling an understanding of its complexity and uniqueness within a context. In other words, case studies are characterized for producing context-dependent knowledge from a “project, policy, institution, program or system” (Simons, 2014, p 455).

For the current study, the chosen case is Fandango Fronterizo, an annual *son jarocho* (Mexican folk) music celebration that is held simultaneously in the cities of Tijuana, Mexico and San Diego, U.S., on both sides of the borderline. Given its geopolitical position, this case required considerable effort to examine the conditions and interactions of the sociopolitical context to secure an in-depth understanding. Additionally, contextualizing this case within the framework of

cultural diplomacy not only directed the analysis and findings but was also essential to draw a better understanding of the case.

According to Simons (2014), case studies are flexible and not defined by methodology or models. They can be designed in quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods, and conducted from diverse paradigms or metatheories. This thesis is conducted qualitatively, emphasizing “subjective ways of knowing” (Simons, 2014, p.458) and involving verbal descriptions of the phenomena, interpretations of processes and meanings, and theoretical concepts. In contrast to quantitative research that is mainly based on statistical calculations, numerical analysis, and numerical correlations (Silverman, 2014, p. 5-6).

The current research is built on critical constructivism and decolonial paradigms. Critical constructivism sees phenomena as holistic and multidimensional constructions and not as objective entities that must be discovered. This paradigm suggests that knowledge and perspectives of the world are contextually constructed, moreover, it searches for alternative discourses to establish intercultural dialogue and epistemic diversity. (Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998). These principles are grounds to decolonial thinking which “recognizes the presence of subjectivity in knowledge construction and challenges Western-centric’s modernity assumption of rationality and objectivity in epistemology” (Borges Carrijo, 2016, p.35). In addition, decolonial thinking speaks from a condition of displacement and asymmetries created by hegemonic powers (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006).

Both critical constructivism and decolonial paradigms helped question some of the Western-centric foundations of the two theoretical frameworks, cultural diplomacy and non-profit cultural management, and provided insights to better grasp the context, values, and practices of Fandango Fronterizo.

Robert Stake (1995) identified three different types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective: “for intrinsic case study, case is dominant; the case is of highest importance [whereas] for instrumental case study, issue is dominant; we start and end with issues” (Stake, 1995, p. 16). The collective type is equivalent to the instrumental but uses more than one case study. The current research falls under the intrinsic classification, as it emerges from a defined issue: Fandango Fronterizo is *a case study of* NPCOs as independent non-state actors in cultural diplomacy. Given the context of the case, its organizational dynamics, managerial conditions,

and processes are of intrinsic interest and serve as instruments for understanding broader issues and categories.

Choosing one case aims to deepen understanding of the phenomenon and obtain a holistic view of it while having a defined research problem to focus on a specific feature of the case (Punch, 2000). As discussed above, Fandango Fronterizo is a case of NPCO as an independent non-state actor in cultural diplomacy. Therefore, the specific features examined in the current thesis are the diplomatic practices and managerial processes, structures, and strategies of Fandango Fronterizo.

### *3.1.1 Case selection*

Merriam (1998) states that delimiting the case study is an essential factor in research. Similarly, Stake (1995) suggests that instead of focusing on the number of case studies, the selection should be a crucial aspect. Therefore, the rationales and process are explained below.

The selection of Fandango Fronterizo resulted from a deductive process that started by establishing a set of criteria that could serve the elected topic (non-state actors in cultural diplomacy) and initial questions derived from the literature review. I was looking for a small, independent non-state cultural organization whose income sources do not merely rely on public support, that has been functioning for at least three years with tangible results to analyze, and that its operations and activities show international exposure or some level of intercultural exchange to be analyzed from a diplomatic perspective.

Thereinafter, the general context was selected based on theoretical, global interest, and personal reasons. Given the prevalent Western focus in current academic literature on non-state cultural diplomacy (Grincheva & Kelley, 2019) and cultural management, it seemed valuable to present a case study from the Latin American region to “balance the field” (Zaharna, 2019, p. 217). This would expand the studies of this region in the English language and contribute to a contextual exploration. The context demarcation was Mexico, leading to three possible scopes for locating a case: an organization based in the country with international relations, an organization outside the country led by individuals of the Mexican diaspora, or an organization operating in border territories.

Electing the environment of the borderlands between Mexico and the U.S. arises from personal circumstances and interests. As a Mexican migrant in Finland with a background in cultural studies, I became mindful of migration processes and appealed by border spaces and their practices. Moreover, the ongoing complex political situation in this specific area has attracted global interest and discussion, particularly during Trump's administration. Thus, addressing a current issue from cultural diplomacy and cultural management disciplines seemed worthwhile.

Finally, during the course of my master's studies, I flourished a deep passion for studying and practicing *son jarocho* music. This interest led me to become acquainted with Fandango Fronterizo and identify it as a fascinating case study. In addition to meeting the established criteria, Fandango Fronterizo suggested unique challenges and characteristics in terms of production and management. In conclusion, this case not only fulfilled the aims of the present research but also provided insights into the fields of arts management and cultural diplomacy.

Further information on the case study and its context is developed in Chapter 4.

## **3.2 Data Collection**

According to the literature, the most common methods for data collection in qualitative case studies that facilitate in-depth understanding are interviews, observation, and document analysis. However, the selection of data collection methods, like in the rest of the methodology, should be based on their ability to answer the research questions rather than following common paths (Simons, 2009).

The data for this research was mainly collected through interviews, although documents, audiovisual resources, and observations also provided valuable insights to the case's context.

### *3.2.1 Interviews*

As in any research, one "cannot study everyone everywhere doing everything" (Miles and Huberman, 1994 cited in Punch, 2000, p. 54). Therefore, it is essential to set delimitations on what to observe and establish "a second set of criteria [apart from the case study selection] to purposefully select whom to interview, what to observe, and which documents to analyze" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p.100).

To study the diplomatic practices and managerial processes, structures, and strategies of Fandango Fronterizo, the main unit of observation from which data was collected were the organizers of the event. Fandango Fronterizo is largely constructed by the opinions, narratives, and practices of the organizers, although this is in collaboration with participants and other involved stakeholders.

To grasp the organizers' perspectives, carrying interviews was the most appropriate method to adopt. Interviews also offer an optimal approach "to get to core issues in the case more quickly and in greater depth, to probe motivations, to ask follow-up questions and to facilitate individuals telling their stories" (Simons, 2009, p.43).

### ***Gaining access and selection of interviewees***

I first contacted Fandango Fronterizo in July 2019 through their Facebook Fan page, where I provided my contact details and received an institutional email for further communication. By email, I elaborated on the topic and aims of the study. I also explained my needs for the organization to facilitate the research in terms of data collection and asked their requirements or conditions as well. The goal was to set a trustful and equal atmosphere where all parts involved could be satisfied.

My email correspondent was Gustavo Vargas, responsible for social media communications and the Memory Center at Fandango Fronterizo. He facilitated my connection with Jorge Castillo, the founder and director of the organization, enabling me to conduct one first interview with him, start the data collection and based on that encounter and the information gathered, define the following interviewees.

As explained by Merriam & Tisdell (2015, p99), "the data lead the investigator to the next document to be read, the next person to be interviewed, and so on". In this case upon contacting Fandango Fronterizo, I was initially unaware of the organizational structure and the people involved. Therefore, specific information sources were identified after the first interview with Jorge Castillo. For example, it was until then that I considered including not only the active organizers but also former contributors to organization's development to my list of interviewees.

Additionally, Jorge Castillo and Gustavo Vargas became key informants in the data collection process. Like in snowball or chain-referral sampling methods, where one informant provides the researcher with access to their networks to expand primary data sources (Gobo, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), Jorge Castillo provided a

contact list of possible interviewees and facilitated introductions through social media or e-mail. Complementarily, Gustavo Vargas forwarded supplementary written and audiovisual documents that served for the analysis and contextualization of the interviews.

In general, gaining approval for the realization of the thesis in collaboration with Fandango Fronterizo was relatively straightforward. The organization's small size streamlined the access process. Nevertheless, since the organizers volunteer for Fandango Fronterizo and have other occupations throughout the year, not all the individuals in the organization whom I wanted to engage with could participate in the interviews. Thus, the final sample was determined by those who were available. Five people in total were interviewed, and a summary is presented in table 2.

*Table 2. Summary of interviews*

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Role in Fandango Fronterizo</b>	<b>Date, place and duration of the interview</b>
Jorge Castillo	Founder and Organizing committee member	31.08.2019 Tijuana-Helsinki (Skype) 138 min.
Gabriela Muñoz-Meléndez	Former committee member (2013-2017)	14-15.02.2020 Tijuana-Helsinki (Skype) 62 min.
Gustavo Vargas	Responsible of social media and the Memory Center of Fandango Fronterizo	15.02.2020 Tijuana-Helsinki (Skype) 94 min.
Aldo Flores	Coordinator of Fandangos Hermanos program	16.03.2020 Zurich-Helsinki (Skype) 80 min.
Marcos López	Current committee member	02.05.2020 Tijuana-Helsinki (Zoom) 107 min.

### ***Planning and execution of interviews***

Interviews were conducted between August 2019 and May 2020 using Skype and Zoom, both video call applications. Even though I would have preferred to have face-to-face conversations and include on-site observations of the event and organizational processes, several reasons influenced on the decision to opt long-

distance data collection. First, the logistical impracticality and high resources required to organize a trip from Helsinki to Tijuana. Second, the timeframe of the interviews did not coincide with Fandango Fronterizo's implementation dates, normally occur during the last weekend of May. Third, the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic during the data collection process left remote interaction as the only possible way. Fourth, the availability of secondary data on the internet, such as videos, photos, documentaries, media coverage, and documents, supported an in-depth immersion while mitigating the challenges of in-person data collection.

According to Simons (2009), resources such as video calls offer access to personal connection, "it can be intrusive, if not sensitively handled, but is economical in cost and time" (p.50). Particularly in this case, implementing video calls proved very practical, enabling interviews to develop quite smoothly without technical issues. All interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the interviewees, and the video call format did not compromise the quality of the data collected. Challenges associated with this form of collection primarily occurred during the planning phase of the interviews.

The 10-hour difference between Tijuana and Helsinki presented some implications. As interviewees work on Fandango Fronterizo as volunteers and have other occupations throughout the year, interviews were arranged during off-office schedules, mostly on Tijuana's weekend mornings and Helsinki's evenings. During the planning, I had to be careful in clearly communicating the time difference to avoid misunderstandings. In addition, discussing the technical details of the videocall platforms in advance was essential to ensure a smooth process, use the time effectively, and reduce stress during the interviews. Despite these efforts, communication and planning were problematic in one case, leading to a hurried interview several attempts and misunderstandings. However, the relaxed setting and flexible attitude from all interviewees contributed to an enjoyable and fruitful data collection process.

In research methodology, diverse interview approaches exist. One of those approaches is the semi-structured interview format, where there is some predetermined order of questions or topics to cover but compels flexibility in the way these are addressed (Kallio et al., 2016). The interview guide was prepared, reviewed, and tested beforehand, containing not only a list of questions but also



conversation topics to cover. This system helped to easily add, eliminate, or rearrange questions to adapt to the interview situation. Furthermore, it granted interviewees the freedom to develop their answers and express their opinions while giving some direction and focus. Before each interview, I revised and adapted the interview guide to fit the roles of the different interviewees within the organization. The interview guide is included in Appendix 1.

The interviews lasted between 60 to 140 minutes and were held in Spanish. In general terms, it was quite easy to create a trustworthy and relaxed atmosphere even though we were not sitting face-to-face. Interviewees easily elaborated long and deep answers with little intervention from my side, allowing me to listen and find the proper moments to ask follow-up questions and direct the conversation towards a specific topic. While striving to adhere to an hour timeframe for each interview covering the predefined topics was sometimes challenging. Fortunately, interviewees did not mind to surpass that time, enabling extended conversational exchanges after the formal interview sessions, a gesture deeply appreciated.

### 3.2.2 *Secondary data*

Even though the interviews served the main data source for analysis, the research was complemented by other sources about the U.S.-Mexico border, son jarocho and fandango expressions, and Fandango Fronterizo.

To gain a better insight into the socio-political context of the U.S.-Mexico border, particularly San Diego and Tijuana, I consulted bibliographical sources including academic articles, news, reports, and media publications. Similarly, sources on son jarocho music provided valuable insights into the historical backgrounds, evolution, and current discussions surrounding this expression. Besides, my personal experience in learning this style of music since 2018 has been crucial in enhancing my general understanding of the case and son jarocho tradition.

Videos retrieved from YouTube, on-site news reports, and photographs were helpful to visualize the dynamics, format, and atmosphere of Fandango Fronterizo. Other data sources included the organization's social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube), webpage, event posters, a dissertation on Fandango Fronterizo by Cecilia del Mar Zamudio Serrano (2014) titled *Dos tarimas, un fandango*, border and the event's location maps, stakeholder webpages (Friends of

Friendship Park, the Border Patrol, the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra, Artist, La Casa del Túnel), Facebook Groups of diverse son jarocho communities locally and internationally, and media interviews featuring Fandango Fronterizo organizers. These resources supplemented my interviews and validated my analysis by providing perspectives from organizing committee members who were not available during the primary data collection phase.

Furthermore, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 2020, an online celebration of Fandango Fronterizo took place due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I was able to participate virtually, making some observations that served to validate the results of the analysis.

Lastly, unlike other case studies in the arts management field, the analysis of the cultural policies of Mexico or the U.S. were not relevant as the case lays outside the public support system and its diplomatic practice is rooted to global values and not linked to nation-states.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

When conducting data collection and analysis in qualitative research, it is crucial to acknowledge that the researcher is the primary instrument that mediates the data (Punch, 2000). Thus, the researcher is obliged to systematize the process in order to establish rigor and trustworthiness (Nowell et al., 2017).

With this in mind, the analysis process in the current research is based on a content analysis method that focuses on “transforming a large amount of data to themes that can encapsulate the overarching meaning in the data. This involves sorting, refining, and refocusing data until they make sense” (Simons, 2014, p. 464). Similarly, Merriam (1998) defines the analysis as “the process of making sense out of the data [which] involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read” (p. 178).

The final goal of the analysis is to address the research questions by identifying themes, categories, or patterns that, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), are understood as “something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (p.10). To put it in other words, these located themes do not necessarily

depend on the frequency with which they appear in the data set, but rather on their relevance to the research question.

According to Simons (2014), there are three stages in the analysis process: sense-making, identification of themes, and examination of patterns and relationships (p.464). Similarly, Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a more detailed process in six stages: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, generating themes, revising the themes, defining and naming the themes, and producing the report.

For the current research, the process followed the subsequent phases: initially, the interviews were carefully transcribed. In order to identify and familiarize with the data, two approaches were employed. Firstly, I repeatedly read the transcriptions to highlight the phrases or fragments that seemed relevant. Secondly, I used a formal approach to code and categorize the information to locate the different issues or topics addressed by the interviewees. The coding and categorization were done using an Excel spreadsheet that included the complete transcriptions. These categories were withdrawn from the interviewees' talk and later coded or abstracted "in terms of a social science category" (Silverman, 2014, p.122). An excerpt of the Excel spreadsheet is included in Appendix 2.

As suggested in the literature (Stake, 1995; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), the data collection and analysis processes were conducted simultaneously. Initial categories and themes from the first interviews were subsequently refined according to the input from the new data until saturation was reached.

As Merriam and Tisdell (2015) express, the analysis is normally done in a dialectical approach, where the particulars and generals are studied in an iterative, non-linear, and reflective manner (Nowell et al., 2017). Thereinafter, to see the bigger picture and draw broader relationships among the emerged categories, the *concept mapping* tool was employed. According to Simons (2009), this strategy visually represents the data, assisting the researcher not only in coding, categorizing, or identifying themes but also in mapping out interrelationships. An example of the usage of this tool is included in Appendix 3.

The final element in the sense-making process was the secondary data. As appointed earlier, this data was crucial as it not only helped in understanding the context of the case study but also provided a framework for developing some sections of the analysis, for example, the implications of the border and the fandango tradition on

the organization. Additionally, this stage involved the refining of the theoretical framework. New approaches and theories on cultural diplomacy were explored, whereas others were discarded. Nevertheless, theories and concepts related to the management of non-profit cultural organizations were introduced. This proves the non-linear and dialectical nature of the research process.

### **3.4 Critical Reflections on the Research Process**

*The case story is itself the result*  
(Flyvberg, 2004, p. 395)

For being described as “the sample of one” (Simons, 2014), qualitative case studies have been questioned for their ability to prove trustworthiness (Flyvbjerg, 2004). Consequently, concepts such as validity and reliability are helpful for the researcher to evaluate the quality and, therefore, the trustworthiness of the study. After all, every research endeavor should be “concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge on an ethical manner” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p.237), which can only be reached through a rigorous study design.

Reliability evaluates the consistency of a measure or result and the potential for replication when the research is repeated; whereas validity is related to the representability and accuracy of the measure, assessing if the data collected corresponds to the phenomena being studied (Silverman, 2015). Although these concepts were first generated in a positivistic tradition, Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995), stand that their application to qualitative research is challenging.

In qualitative research, concerns arise regarding consistency and replicability as human behavior is not static nor isolated like in experimental research. Even from a constructivist approach, no common experience should be placed above the experience of a singular one (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Hence, the question would rather be whether there is consistency between the results and the data collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 in Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Validity also faces challenges due to three facts highlighted by Merriam and Tisdell (2015): a phenomenon does not speak but is interpreted by an observer who abstracts it, and this observer leaves a trace on the phenomenon while studying it. As expressed before, cases are multidimensional and historic, making validity

relative to the “purposes and circumstances” of the study. In a constructivist approach that centers on participant’s constructions of the phenomenon, validity is more naturally achieved.

Both the validity and reliability of the current research are further ensured through two commonly used methods: *triangulation* and *respondent validation*. Triangulation involves using multiple methods of data collection, sources of data, investigators, or theories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this case, triangulation was mainly achieved by using multiple methods, where information derived from interviews was supported or contrasted with secondary data and observations from videos available on the web. Additionally, respondent validation method involved seeking feedback from interviewees on the findings to guarantee that their perspectives were accurately captured. In general terms, the interviewees considered that their opinions and answers corresponded to what was presented in the research. All in all, these methods have contributed to the credibility of the research by assuring that the findings were not “simply an artifact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator’s blinders” (Patton, 2015 cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 246).

Generalizability is also another main issue discussed by case study critics (Flyvbjerg, 2004; Simons, 2014; Silverman, 2015). Generalizability concerns the ability to widen or universalize the findings of a particular case study to a broader theory or other cases. However, this urge of universal applicability, inherited by quantitative studies, is criticized by Flyvbjerg (2004), Simons (2014), and Silverman (2015) who argue that pursuing a wide universal outcome may not be relevant, particularly when qualitative research is context-dependent, and particularities are a standard. These authors defend that, contrary to generalization, the value of case studies lies in their *particularization*, which offers in-depth learning resulting from the unique nature of the case. In this sense, generalization can only emerge once a deeper understanding, or particularization, is reached. This paradox is what Simons (2014) refers to concerning case studies.

Furthermore, if generalization is intended, it should be reached to a framed extent. According to Lamont and White (2005, cited in Silverman, 2015), case studies can “seek to inform us about smaller groups or patterns of interaction that can have great significance for our understanding of social processes [...] these can range

from subpopulations [...] to types of interactions [...] or to sets of institutions” (p.72). Fandango Fronterizo, for instance, can inform processes and challenges faced by cultural organizations that deal between two or more different communities. In particular, its interactions and approaches to overcoming challenges can be extrapolated to other organizations that do not exactly share the same border conditions as the US-Mexico border. In this sense, this work supports the paradox presented by Simons (2014). It also offers insights into the general characteristics of non-profit cultural organizations. However, in a discipline where the type of non-state actor represented by Fandango Fronterizo has not been thoroughly studied, further research involving similar case studies shall be performed in the future.

Even so, Fandango Fronterizo provides material from which broader “concepts may be identified that make sense in the one case but have equal significance in other cases of a similar kind, even if the contexts are different” (Simons, 2014, p.466).

One of the main ethical considerations in case study research is negotiating the use and publication of information, particularly when diverse interests of stakeholders are put together in the same study. Case studies may make individuals identifiable, therefore confidentiality, negotiation, and accessibility become important principles (Simons, 2014). In the current research, the sample was reduced to individuals of the same group, the organizers, which ideally would not lead to conflicts despite the diversity of perspectives within the unit; however, to follow ethical guidelines, I asked written permission to disclose the interviewees’ identities and attribute their statements. Additionally, the respondent validation strategy supported the ethical treatment of the research.

The last aspect to discuss is the researchers’ reflections regarding their position and involvement. As the researchers are the main instrument of data gathering, their values and actions inevitably shape the study, while the studied individuals and events reciprocally impact them (Simons, 2009 & 2014).

Undoubtedly, my position carried advantages but also some limitations or biases. First, I approached the case as someone who is getting involved in the son jarocho tradition, which facilitated to get access to the community and facilitated an understanding of the sociocultural meanings and values of the tradition. This proximity enhanced my comprehension of the format and ways of organization of Fandango Fronterizo. Second, my migrant status allowed me to empathize and

reflect on the different situations and perspectives shared by interviewees, particularly concerning the border setting in which the case is situated. However, this proximity might have biased my observations and interpretations, particularly given my political position and my place of enunciation as a Latin-American migrant woman studying in a Finnish institution.

## **4 THE CASE AND ITS CONTEXT: FANDANGO FRONTERIZO AT THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER**

The following section presents an overview of the case. In order to build foundations for the analysis, it introduces the general context and dynamics of the Mexico- U.S. borderlands and summarizes the main aspects of fandango tradition and its adoption in international communities. This section finalizes with the description of the main aspects of Fandango Fronterizo, such as its location, program, and other general dynamics.

### **4.1 The U.S.-Mexico Borderland: An Asymmetric Nation Between Two Nations**

According to Centro de Estudios Internacionales “Gilberto Bosques” (2017), the Mexico-U.S. border is catalogued as the world’s busiest land crossing point, for trade and human flows. Every day, over a million of legal crossings of people are registered, whereas vehicles and cargo sum up to three hundred thousand. Moreover, according to the U.S. border crossing data (Bureau of Transportation Statistics, n.d.), San Ysidro, which connects San Diego and Tijuana, is the most used port to access the U.S. by land.

These figures illustrate the dimension of the existing dynamics and flows in the Mexico-U.S. borderland, particularly in Tijuana and San Diego. According to Oliveras-González’s discussion (2016, p. 136), these dynamics give rise to two conflicting yet interweaved connotations of the border region: a (1) hybrid and transborder nature<sup>3</sup> characterized by connections and flows, alongside a (2) sense of separation, where contrasts, inequality, and power asymmetries are reaffirmed.

Bellow, both traits are presented, together with some examples of the political and sociocultural relations that evidence the dynamism, tensions, and complexity of the area.

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<sup>3</sup> As if a “third nation” (Dear, 2013) or “third space” (Bhabha, 1994).



#### 4.1.1 A reaffirmed separation: the political and migratory context

*Border communities are where the burdens of enforcement are geographically concentrated.*  
(Dear, 2013)

Political relations, shared problematics such as illegal immigration and organized crime, and the approaches taken by both Mexico and the U.S. have contributed to the prevailing negative perception of the border, perpetuated by the media. These issues have not only influenced the physical configuration and transformation of the border but have also impacted the actors and dynamics within the region.

In general terms, the policies and means employed by the U.S. have been characterized by a “material, legal and psychological harshness” (Oliveras-González, 2016, p. 133). A position that was amplified during Donald Trump’s arrival to the White House, highlighted by his proposed border wall project. Even though the wall remains inexistent, it symbolizes a long-standing trend of security enforcement that started back in the twentieth century, underpinned by a “complex binational relationship marked by multiple crossings, permissions and prohibitions” (Hernández Hernández, 2020, n.p.). Regulations that are the result of power relations dictated by the colonial difference.

The first agreement in the history of relations between Mexico and the United States was the *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo*, signed in 1848 after the Mexico-U.S. War. In this document, the borders of both countries were agreed and settled, resulting in the cession of half of the Mexican territory to the U.S.

After the political delimitation, few stone monuments demarked the international boundary. However, access was gradually regulated and controlled over time when the U.S. established migratory policies during the twentieth century, starting from the Prohibition era. According to Lytle Hernández (2015), the “1924 Law” was one of the first attempts to control the entrance to foreigners, as it enabled the creation of crossing ports with migratory fees. This regulation derived on illegal crossings, and subsequently, undocumented and deported people.

In efforts to reinforce the border security, the U.S. Border Patrol, colloquially known as *la migra* in Spanish, was established in 1924 (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2020). The Border Patrol has since played a key role as an agent of control

and permission in the borderland and its surrounding activities (Lytle Hernández, 2015), including events like Fandango Fronterizo.

The fast-economic growth of the U.S. after World War II attracted migrants, both legally and illegally, drawn by the so called “American dream”, promising social and economic opportunities. Within this context, some programs and policies at federal and local levels have fostered cooperation and openness.

For example, the *Bracero Program*, operating from 1942 to 1951, allowed Mexican work force to enter the U.S. on short-term contracts in the agricultural field. This has been so far the largest U.S. contract labor initiative. During that period, the workers were able to enter and leave the country to visit their families. However, when the program closed, many workers decided to establish on ‘the other side’ and send remittances to their families in Mexico (Center for History and New Media, n.d.).

Another example of cooperation initiatives at local level are some transborder official acts and celebrations, where local authorities from both territories shake hands across the border. According to Oliveras-González (2016), these acts support the integration discourse by evidencing the high interactions and the shared aims of economical and regional development. However, these also hide power-imbalances between both countries (p.139).

Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the escalation of drug-related violence in Mexico starting in 2006, border restrictions have been reinforced. These events not only influenced border security measures but also impacted the sociocultural dynamics of the area and the transborder environment: the southern part was also perceived with fear.

#### 4.1.2 *Hybrid sociocultural dynamics as an act of resistance*

*To survive the Borderlands/you must  
live sin fronteras/ be a crossroads.  
(Anzaldúa, 1987, p.195)*

The powerful activist motto “we didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us”, perfectly reflects the lasting impact of military conflict and political boundaries on communities residing in the U.S.-Mexico border region. Although the separation

and implemented harshness, interactions continue to occur, as evidence by the frequency of transborder dynamics (Hernández Hernández, 2020; Dear, 2013).

The border, while a physical barrier, also holds a cultural significance, serving to define and identify the unique character of the region (Suárez Ávila, 2007). Therefore, the border areas have shaped a conjoint dynamic where the population is more interconnected to each other than with other parts of the U.S. or Mexico.

Comprising twenty-seven pairs of sister or bordering cities with official crossing points, including San Diego-Tijuana. For years, Tijuana was physically more connected to San Diego, not only by the communication channels and infrastructure, but by proximity, as the distance between both cities is short.

This interconnectedness has led to situations where individuals cross the border daily for work or education, with U.S. residents also crossing to access cheaper goods and services (Hernández, 2020; Dear, 2013).

Social interactions are also a natural part of daily life:

*When you live in the border you realize that there is no border [...] we used to have a baseball game. We just drove across the river and had a Mexican-American baseball game once a week. That is obviously gone. This place used to be category B for the crossing [...] this was a real community, but after 9/11 [...] they started raids across the border. (Border Stories, 2015, 26:56-28:08)*

Sociocultural dynamics in the border manifest at different levels. For example, in the form of exchanges and a lively cultural agenda, where in addition to the official transborder acts and celebrations, diverse independent festivals, conferences, exhibitions, or other cultural events are binationally organized.

These dynamics occur as well in more complex manners, shaping the identity and culture of the region (Suárez Ávila, 2007). An evident example is the usage of a mixed spoken language: Spanglish, which is the combination of English and Spanish.

In the poem “To live in the Borderlands”, Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) perfectly illustrates this complex border identity in the following ways. As a hybrid space: “you are

neither *hispana india negra española /ni gabacha*<sup>4</sup>, eres mestiza, mulata, half-breed/caught in the crossfire between camps/while carrying all five races on your back/ not knowing which side to turn to, run from” (p.194).

As a loss of belonging to the *here* and *there*:

*To live in the Borderlands means knowing/ that the india in you, betrayed for 500 years,/is no longer speaking to you,/that mexicanas call you rajetas*<sup>5</sup>,/ that denying the Anglo inside you/is as bad as having denied the Indian or Black;/ [...] In the Borderlands/ [...] you are at home, a stranger. (p.194).

As an asymmetric territory: “*Cuando vives en la frontera*/people walk through you, the wind steals your voice,/you’re a *burra*<sup>6</sup>, *buey*<sup>7</sup>, scapegoat/ [...] To live in the Borderlands means to/ be stopped by *la migra* at the border checkpoints” (p.195).

And as a state of resistance: “Living in the Borderlands means you fight hard to/resist the gold elixir beckoning from the bottle,/ the pull of the gun barrel,/the rope crushing the hollow of your throat” (p.195).

Finally, as Suárez Ávila (2007) discusses, the multiplicity of transborder dynamics and exchanges encourage to rethink and revindicate the understanding of the border within its complexity: as an asymmetric constrainer as well as a continuous, hybrid, and lively space.

## **4.2 From Veracruz to the Border: Son Jarocho and Fandango Tradition**

### *4.2.1 The son jarocho and fandango tradition*

#### ***About son jarocho***

*Son jarocho* is the term used to name the music practiced in the Sotavento region, located in the south of the state of Veracruz, and that comprises other areas of Oaxaca and Tabasco states that are close to the Gulf of Mexico (also known as the Atlantic Coast). To be more specific, the Sotavento region (see Appendix 4) is part of the Afro-Andalusian Caribbean, a term appointed by musicologist and historian Antonio García de León (2016) that accounts the socio-cultural origins of the genre.

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<sup>4</sup> A Chicana term for a white woman.

<sup>5</sup> Betrayer

<sup>6</sup> Donkey

<sup>7</sup> Ox

This music style originated on the XVII century, during the colonial period of Mexico. For this reason, son jarocho is a result of the mixture of local Indigenous, African, and European, primarily Spanish, cultural elements. Elements that intersected in Veracruz, the principal port of the Viceroyalty of the New Spain (see García de León, 2006, for more detail on the musical and lyrical characteristics, and their cultural origins).

Son jarocho is mainly played with locally adapted string instruments, like the *requinto* and *jarana*, the latter being the most present and characteristic since it carries the music's harmony. And percussions, such as the donkey jawbone, the tambourine, and the *zapateado* –tap dance- (Figuroa Hernández, 2007). The instrumentation and execution forms are diverse according to the region and time period (see García de León, 2006, for more detail).

As many of the folk music traditions around the world, this style originated from a social practice where dance and singing are important components, and which cannot be separated from each other. This is the reason why son jarocho is commonly defined as a “festive lyrical-choreographic genre, interpreted by the mestizo population” (Sánchez García, 2002, p. 121), having its utmost expression at the *fandango* tradition.

### ***About fandango tradition***

Attached to a rural context, *fandango* or *huapango* is the name of a “communal socio-festive universe” (Velázquez Mabarak Sonderegger, 2019), that until the mid-twentieth century supported the kinship ties and close friendship relations in the villages (García de León, 2006). Nevertheless, it sustains until today a strong social weaver function within the people that practice this tradition.

Fandangos accompanied the village's religious festivities, fairs, funerals or family celebrations such as birthdays or weddings, even though nowadays no reason is needed, but the aim to gather and play together. In a descriptive manner, fandango has, as a central point, the *tarima*, a wooden box where the dancers do zapateado. They tap their feet while everyone gathers around, playing and singing improvised verses. And since the celebration brings together an entire village, including children and elderly people, offering food and drinks to the attendees is essential. Especially

when improvisation would result in songs that could last over a half hour, and the whole celebration for hours.

Throughout the entire celebration, there are some values and codes of conduct that fulfil a social function, and at the same time characterize the tradition:

Firstly, participation within the tarima area is regulated by some codes, for example, there are songs that are danced by couples or groups; songs for the sunrise (because fandangos usually last to the next morning) or for asking permission to the tarima in order to start the dancing; signs for starting and finishing a song, and for knowing who comes next to improvise a verse (Delgado Calderón, 2018). Always respecting the established hierarchies where seniors, experienced and skilful ones are playing in the front, while the young people and amateurs are playing at the back (Zamudio Serrano, 2014, p. 115).

And secondly, the reason that fandangos are described as communal, collaborative, and participative is because in order to support a structure that prioritizes the community, they require the collaboration of several individuals and an active participation of all the attendees. Thus, the tradition is framed not only from the music and dance or what happens in the tarima area, but in its surroundings as well. For this reason, it is said that a fandango begins with the preparations and not when the music starts (González, 2018). Hence, the participants who are not playing, dancing or singing, perform other roles that are seen at the same level of importance.

According to González (2018), active participation involves activities such as inviting the musicians, collecting the tarima, setting up the decorations, chairs and tables, as well as the food preparation that normally takes days. Therefore, voluntary work of a large group of people is crucial for supporting a communitary organization system.

Overall, what it is crucial to highlight about fandango is that although modernization has menaced its most traditional form. The dance, the verses, the music, the codes of conduct, and the values, all together continue to express the identity, memories and worldviews of a community (Velázquez Mabarak Sonderegger, 2019).

#### 4.2.2 *Son jarocho in other territories*

Nowadays, son jarocho is interpreted differently in urban zones, on stages such as clubs, concert and recording halls, festivals and so on. Nonetheless, the initial recorded moment in which this music was taken outside the Sotavento region was during the first half of the twentieth century.

In addition to the multiple emigration of musicians and young population from the villages to cities that cause the abandonment of fandango tradition (García de León, 2006), President Miguel Alemán (1946-1952), who was originally from Veracruz, supported intensively the development and promotion of the genre in order to serve a national identity discourse, where *mariachi* music was also part of (see Jáuregui, 2018, for more detail on mariachi music).

Immediately, this music became a tool for the foreign relations and an identity referent of Mexico abroad. However, as Cardona (2011) explains, the support led to a stylistic development of the music where virtuosity, stylization, and standardization for staging were prioritized while the rural and community values were left aside. Thus, disassociating the music from the celebration.

Within this stylized format, son jarocho travelled around the world, and undoubtedly reached Mexican and Chicanx communities in the U.S. In 1958, rock and roll musician and forefather of the Chicanx rock movement, Ritchie Valens, popularized “La Bamba”, a son jarocho song. However, it was not until the seventies when a new son jarocho wave appeared that focused on “decolonizing” its institutional identity and restoring the tradition through the revival of the endangered fandango format. This revival was strongly attached to the social functions of the rural context.

The rescue of the “genre’s intrinsic elements” emerged as a reaction to the domination of the official style. In addition, it supported the sense of identity of those that conformed the new movement (González, 2018) as the majority had a direct relation to Veracruz. In this way, son jarocho was restored from the effects of new forms of supremacy (García de León, 2006).

One of the key actions of this revival was the *Encuentro Jaranero* in Tlacotalpan, Veracruz in 1979. Followed by multiple efforts of preservation and promotion, led by ensembles and musicians, promoters, cultural institutes, and researchers with

the support of the state and public cultural instances (Delgado Calderón, 2018; García de León, 2006), the so-called *Movimiento Jaranero* (the Jaranero<sup>8</sup> Movement) was established. Consequently, the Movement created a second son jarocho boom, this time with a rural approach. This revival surpassed the boundaries of the Sotavento region and Veracruz, and reached other areas of Mexico and the U.S. And more recently, other countries in the American continent (such as Canada, Peru, Colombia or Argentina) and Europe (Spain, France, Germany, Switzerland and many others, including Finland).

This dispersion is believed to be the result of internationalization efforts by several music groups that with the support of the state, perform on international stages (González & Guevara González, 2018). Moreover, the sense of belonging and community-building role of the tradition have transformed the music into a “powerful voice” for the Mexican diaspora communities. Being the U.S. the principal extension of the movement (Raussert, 2018).

Different kinds of projects and initiatives are increasing in this country, for example Jarana Beat and Radio Jarocho in New York (see Bartra, 2018, for more detail of son jarocho’s development in NY); Sones de México Ensemble and Son Chiquitos in Chicago; Seattle Fandango Project in Seattle; Son del Centro, Son Armado, Quetzal and Colectivo Altepee in California; Fandango sin Fronteras network in the border; and many others, Fandango Fronterizo being one of those.

These initiatives use son jarocho for different means, such as expressing the problematics regarding the migrant population in the U.S., for creating exchanges, for promoting the Mexican culture, for building-up communities or for giving educative tools to migrant families, among other purposes (Santos Briones, 2013).

In fact, as Bartra (2018) points out, these efforts in territories outside Mexico not only include the Mexican migrant communities and their hosting cultures, but other diasporas that share the same territory, for example other Latin Americans residing in the U.S. Eventually, making the expression richer, more diverse and very different.

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<sup>8</sup> Jaranero is a person who plays the jarana. Being jaranero means to be part of a community as well. (Fandango Fronterizo [@fandangofronterizo], 2019).



#### 4.2.3 *A tradition in a contemporary world: debates on the evolution of son jarocho and fandango*

*Folk music exists not because it is performed by popular singers, peasants, illiterates, practitioners, or by the poor. But by its condition as surviving music. —Carlos Vega.*

At this point of growing internationalization, there have been discussions towards the future of the son jarocho tradition and its evolution. Due to current cross-border dynamics of the interconnected global world, this expression has reached new territories and new communities. Moreover, it has been confronted to new consumption models and different ways of doing and experiencing the music.

Despite the achieved goals by the restoring efforts, it is thought that the Jaranero Movement is facing a new set of limitations. This means that the traditional values and format continue to be confronted by new consumption models and new territories. For example, urban spaces carry new challenges in terms of organizing fandangos, collaborative work is menaced due to less participation, venues' formats oblige the performances to be passive instead of participative, and to be more private instead of communal (González, 2018, p. 185). In addition, Cardona (2011) refers to a professionalization process in which many jaraneros are starting to live out of their performances. Nevertheless, according to González, et al. (2018), it is not the arrival of this music to urban territories nor to performance spaces that threatens this time the communal and socio-festive essence of the tradition. But the capitalist bombing with its market-oriented logic.

Conversely, younger generations are refreshing and reinventing, in a positive way, the traditional forms and the social roles of this expression: by adapting it, spreading it, and putting it in dialogue with other cultures and realities (González, 2018; García de León, 2006). This results into the diversification of the aesthetics, experiences, and approaches of son jarocho, therefore continuing the exchanges and migrations that gave origin to this tradition some centuries ago.

*The tradition is experienced differently from the perspective of villages, from the state capital, the national capital, in other countries, from a child's perspective, a homosexual's, an elderly woman's, from someone who was born into a son jarocho family, or someone who has had to conquer a place in this music, someone who was born near the border of the state [of*

Veracruz] and Oaxaca, someone born in the Port or in Misantla where they still play but less archaic than in the previous zone, or someone who was born in Veracruz but in an area like Cordoba and Orizaba, where there was son jarocho at one point but there are no more remnants. The tradition is seen differently from the point of view of someone who has never been to a fandango, someone who has played music at home, someone who is a musician in profession and decodes son as if it was a simple equation (González et al., 2018, p. 158).

Yet, tensions among that plurality of experiences and approaches are not an exception. For example, there are perspectives that strictly attach to the rural components and formats, while others aim to innovate and create fusions. Perspectives where the contact to the origin of the tradition is seen as primordial, and that oppose to those in which the lack of this contact does not impede developing this expression outside the region. Even so, Cardona (2011) encourages to acknowledge these tensions and differences in order to strengthen the movement. Similarly, González et al. (2018) and Figueroa Hernández (2019) urge to visualize the different son jarocho experiences as a galaxy “with stars of many sizes, systems, planets, and satellites revolving around each other with their own orbit” (González, et al., p.157). A galaxy that recalls Mignolo’s (2013) pluriverse.

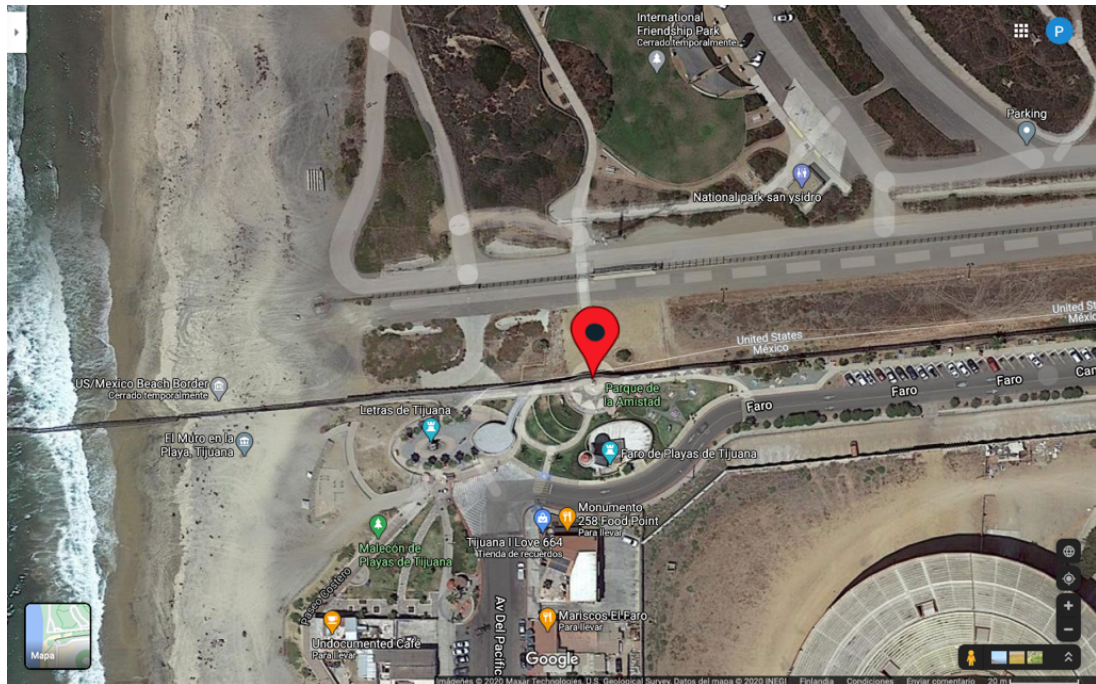
### **4.3 Fandango Fronterizo**

Fandango Fronterizo is an annual cultural event that, since 2008, gathers the jaranero community, as well as other local and migrant communities of the border territories of Mexico and the United States. The gathering has a binational component, as it is held at the fence that divides the cities of Tijuana (Mex) and San Diego (USA); therefore, the attendants at both sides interact, dance and play music together, despite of the physical division.

#### *4.3.1 The location*

The event is held at Friendship Park/ Parque de la Amistad, an historic site at the U.S.-Mexico border nearby the Pacific Ocean, that was built during the boundary negotiations after the U.S.-Mexico war in 1849 (The Friends of Friendship Park,

n.d.-a). This space was originally conceived to commemorate and promote cross-border relations.



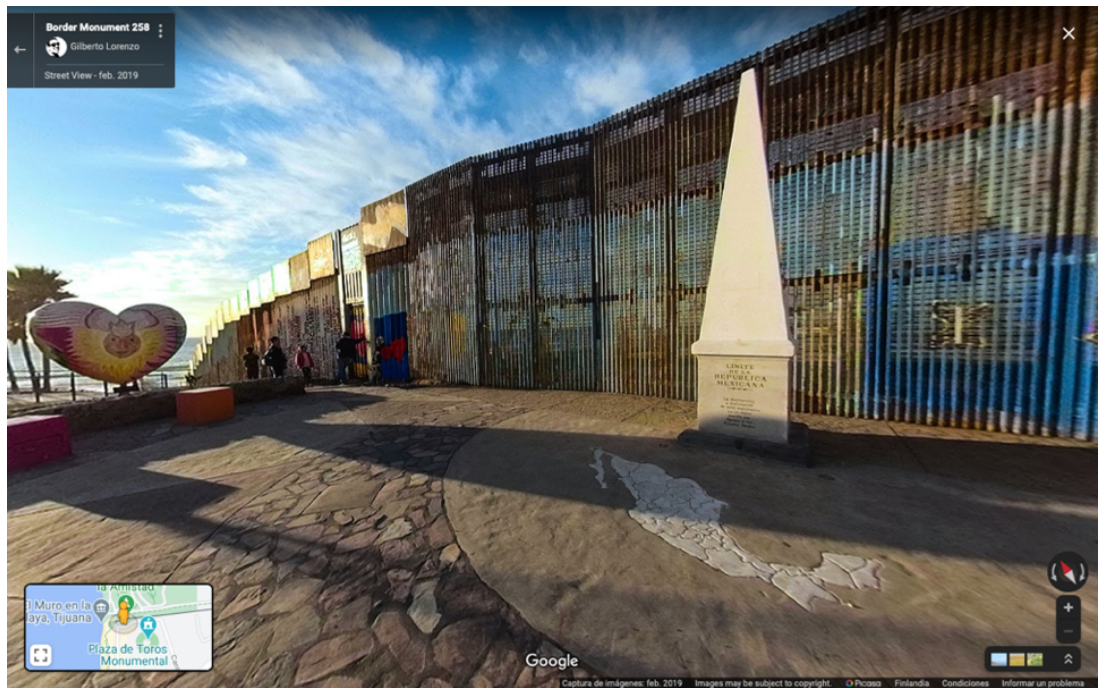
*Figure 1. Location of Fandango Fronterizo.  
Sight from above. Retrieved from Google Maps.*

This site has served as a meeting place where people from both territories, particularly separated families, are able to freely gather. Nevertheless “the current restrictions on public access to Friendship Park make a mockery of the notion of international friendship” (The Friends of Friendship Park, n.d.-a).

Since the immigration policies became stricter, particularly in the last decades, the access from the U.S. side, which is under jurisdiction of the Border Patrol, is more and more restricted:

Firstly, the area is open to the public only on weekends from 10-14 hrs.; secondly, entrance is limited to a certain number of people at a time and a U.S. proof of residence is sometimes required; thirdly, passing objects is forbidden, including food, money, gifts and notes; and fourthly, the delimiting fence is currently covered with a metal mesh which barely allows people to touch, except for the fingertips (The Friends of Friendship Park, n.d.-b).

Besides from the restrictions mentioned above, in order to participate in Fandango Fronterizo at the U.S. side, attendants need to walk 1.7 miles through a wildlife reserve. Whereas the location at the Mexican side is easier to approach as it is a public space close to the heart of Tijuana city, and 24/7 accessible.



*Figure 2. Top: Fandango Fronterizo's location from the U.S. side. Bottom: Location from the Mexican side. Retrieved from Google Maps*



Figure 3. Instructions for getting to Fandango Fronterizo's U.S. side.  
Retrieved from FF's Facebook fan page.

#### 4.3.2 General dynamics of Fandango Fronterizo

As its title refers, Fandango Fronterizo has the format of a traditional fandango celebration, with the only difference being that the two groups of participants are separated by the fence. Two tarimas are placed face to face at both sides while people congregate around them with their instruments and dancing shoes.

In general terms, Fandango Fronterizo follows as close as possible the structure of a traditional fandango yet adapting to the border conditions. Therefore, it does not correspond to a concert or festival setup with audiences watching performers on a stage, but to a participative happening where most of the attendees are either playing, dancing or singing. Food and beverages are also served for all the guests, as an important element of a fandango's hospitality.

The binational part of the fandango starts approximately at 11 a.m. with a welcoming speech followed by the first chords of son jarocho music, zapateado and verses dedicated to the gathering. And as the sung verses in a fandango are based on a question-and-answer system, the same structure is followed but from country to country. Below, an example of the inaugural verses:

*En el muro corroído  
por la fuerza de la sal  
se puede ver el final*

*de los Estados Unidos,  
los muros nunca han servido,  
siempre han sido un fracaso,  
jamás detendrán el paso  
del migrante errabundo,  
para componer el mundo  
mejor darnos un abrazo*<sup>9</sup>

(F. Guadarrama, 2019 cited in Fandango Fronterizo, 2019b)

After over three hours of continuous music, the binational fandango finishes at 14 hrs. But given the nature of the tradition, the celebration continues on the Mexican side with a “Post-Fandango” that starts a couple of hours later (in order to provide enough time to those in the U.S. who are able to cross to Mexico) and continues until the next morning. This Post-Fandango is celebrated on the same spot as the binational fandango, but only on the Mexican side of the park.



*Figure 4. Images of the event.*

*Photographs courtesy by the organizers. Credits: Photo 2 by Gustavo Vargas. Photo 3 by Adrián Florido*

<sup>9</sup> In the corroded wall/ by the force of the salt /you can see the end /from the United States/ the walls have never served/ they have always been a failure/ they will never stop the step/ of the wandering migrant/ to compose the world/ better give us each other a hug.

In addition to this program, each year there are special guests who are representants of the son jarocho tradition. The aim is that they interact and play with the rest of the attendants during the fandango. They also offer a talk during the Post Fandango and facilitate workshops on the previous days (Thursday and Friday) of Fandango Fronterizo. The workshops are held in both cities, Tijuana and San Diego and the guests split into two groups in order to cover the different countries. Appendix 5 offers an example of the detailed program.

## 5 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In the current chapter, the following topics are analyzed: first, the narratives, images, values, socio-cultural outcomes, and other elements produced by Fandango Fronterizo, and the means in which these impact the local and migrant communities at the border. Second, the managerial practices, resources, and production processes in which these narratives are created. The managerial implications of organizing this event at the borderline are also included. Third, I discuss some of the strategies that Fandango Fronterizo has adopted and developed, as well as the diplomatic implications of these strategies.

### 5.1 Playing son jarocho at the border for...

The values of the son jarocho tradition have a profound impact on the border territories and their communities. This impact includes the creation of safe spaces and supporting communities, fostering root connections, and reinforcing identity for event participants. Simultaneously, Fandango Fronterizo provides a space for the practice of this tradition, along with parallel activities carried in both Tijuana and San Diego. Nevertheless, Fandango Fronterizo has a peculiarity that stands out: a message concerning frontiers and the migration process.

Fandango Fronterizo takes place in the border line, and the deliberate decision of this location has many connotations. Firstly, it has led to the resignification of The Wall from a barrier to a unifying symbol. Secondly, it creates a message on migration and borders that extends beyond Mexico and the U.S., addressing to a global community. And lastly, it brings other readings about Tijuana, Mexico, and other border territories.

#### 5.1.1 *Re-signifying The Wall: our patron that invites us to meet*

Fandango Fronterizo was initially conceived with the aim of finding a gathering place for the *jaranero* community in the border territories (i.e., son jarocho musicians from California, in the southern U.S. and from Baja California, in northern Mexico) to come together and play.



Inspired on previous interventions at the fence, popularized as “The Wall” in Donald Trump’s era, this space emerged as the ideal setting for the encounter. Therefore, it solved the main challenges that the jaranero community faced due to the geopolitical separation. Some examples include:

1. Visas, passports and other migration requirements for cross-border travel.
2. Long queues at the crossing points, principally on the Mexican side where stricter controls are enforced: “The crossings are very complicated. It can take over four hours, according to your luck, and during weekends [it gets even worse]” (Castillo, 2019).
3. Insecurity and violence in Tijuana, which at the time drove residents of San Diego away from the southern border.

Ironically, this encounter re-signified the wall and conferred a dual connotation: as an element of separation and simultaneously a sacred meeting point where migration documents were not required.

This sacred connotation is beautifully explained by Jorge Castillo. Traditional fandangos in Veracruz have a religious base, and Fandango Fronterizo is not an exception: “here we don’t have a [real] holy saint. I think that our patron is the wall. We have a wall that invites us to meet” (Castillo, 2019). Fandango Fronterizo is not dedicated to a saint or deity but rather venerates the wall itself, which year after year has assumed this sacred role.

Even though Fandango Fronterizo was initially organized to fulfil the needs of the jaranero community, the event has transcended its initial boundaries to encompass communities outside son jarocho. Some individuals see this event as an occasion to reunite with their relatives on the other side of the border without physically crossing, as Marcos López (2020) explains:

*People gather here to see their families because there is no other way. [They] as non-jaraneros use this as an opportunity to meet while enjoying the music and the celebration. [They] can see each other, without hugging or touching, except for the fingertips. [...] We are privileged for creating these opportunities for those that can’t cross the border. Of course, nowadays it is different with the technology [...] but still, it is not the same.*

The following images present different Fandango Fronterizo's posters where the fence serves as a distinctive element of this celebration:



*Figure 5. Fandango Fronterizo's posters (II, VI, VII, XII and XIII editions) where the relevance and significance of the fence are presented. Courtesy of the organizers.*

Furthermore, the realization of this year's edition (2020) in digital format due to Covid-19 pandemic emphasised the symbolic significance of the fence as a unifying element and highlighted Fandango Fronterizo's capacity to create meeting points around this symbol.

In 2020, it was impossible to physically gather at the fence; nevertheless, the event continued to be a unifying element, enabling participants at different parts of the world to interact on a digital platform. The initial announcement regarding the 2020 digital event on Fandango Fronterizo's Facebook page reads:

*Dear Fandango Fronterizo's Friends. Due to times of isolation, and because son jarocho unites us and knows no borders, let's virtually gather to share and recreate the celebration! [...] the purpose is to meet and keep feeding the ties of friendship and solidarity which results every time we gather at the border to play. (Fandango Fronterizo, 2020)*

***No more borders!***

After the first, and so-described improvised edition of Fandango Fronterizo in 2008, a narrative of unity intertwined with a political undertone emerged:

*We realized that the wall didn't exist [by the time we were playing]. It does exist, but it is symbolic. While we are there, music comes and goes. Music doesn't have borders, and we shouldn't either. (Castillo, 2019)*

This message evolved throughout the following editions of Fandango Fronterizo, and the official description of the event now states: “it is an event that brings down bounds and walls, and reaches other latitudes in order to cultivate empathy through son [jarocho music]” (Fandango Fronterizo, n.d.).

The public communications of Fandango Fronterizo and descriptions provided by interviewees coincide that it is a “protest”, a “manifestation” to “visualise”, and to symbolically “break down” borders. Simultaneously, it is an “encounter” that unites diverse people, that fosters “empathy” for others through the cultural expression of son jarocho.

As some interviewees express, the event inherently carries political connotations regarding borders and migration due to its nature and the atmosphere of the location where Fandango Fronterizo takes place:

*It didn't just happen. It results from a broad migratory process, a process of much stronger cultural relations that not only link Mexico to the South, but Mexico and San Diego, creating a space of very interesting border dynamics. (Vargas, 2020)*

Contrary to this, Jorge Castillo explains that “it is not a protest where we claim [things such as] ‘out Bush, out’ [...] It is not presented as a political event but as a cultural event, a tradition. [And] the message is palpable without the need of speeches or propaganda. The message is experienced” (Castillo, 2019). To this,

Marcos López (2020) adds: “through son jarocho we protest without actually protesting”, which results to be even more effective.

In this context, Fandango Fronterizo conveys a message of unity and protest against separation that transcends the boundaries of the local communities of jaraneros and residents of Tijuana and San Diego. It has the potential of becoming universal as borders and migration are global issues.

When inserting Fandango Fronterizo within a global political context and beyond the relations of Mexico and the United States, this ‘no border’ perspective becomes another reason for appealing other communities where similar asymmetric borders exist, as Gabriela Muñoz-Meléndez (2020) highlights:

*[Fandango Fronterizo] speaks not only about Mexico but also similar realities with asymmetric borders. This is why it attracts other individuals who do not necessarily belong to the legitimate circle of son [jarocho].*

Furthermore, Alddo Flores (2020) and Marcos López (2020) reflect on the existence of non-physical borders that are rooted in political divisions: ideological barriers driven by behaviour, race, gender, social class, origin, and principally, migration status. They highlight how Fandango Fronterizo can contribute to raising awareness on these aspects: “Non-physical borders exist even within a city, among its people [...] and Fandango Fronterizo can help to raise awareness on these issues around the world” (López, 2020).

In conclusion, Fandango Fronterizo, through the medium of son jarocho and fandango tradition, bring a message that echoes other similar realities, as it belongs and results from a global migratory phenomenon. This message is not confined to the boundaries of Tijuana and San Diego but intended to extend and be replicated in other spaces and contexts. Therefore, accomplishing a “translocational” (Raussert, 2018) outreach.

### *5.1.1 Safer spaces for the participants and the public eye*

As evidenced in the contextualization of this thesis, the San Diego-Tijuana border crossing is the most crowded in the world, which makes this place quite problematic and challenging. This, along to the current political landscape of Tijuana, and Mexico in general, contributes to the area’s reputation for violence and lack of safety.

When Fandango Fronterizo was first organized in 2008, Mexico and Tijuana were hit by high levels of violence, likely linked to the Drug War proclaimed by the Mexican government in 2006. Jorge Castillo describes that “those times weren’t that easy because policemen used to appear hung by sunrise. It was possible to see images of encased bodies in pieces. The news was really shocking” (Castillo, 2019). Currently the situation is not so different, yet is not an impediment for organizing Fandango Fronterizo each year.

According to Jorge Castillo, son jarocho and fandango have traditionally been practiced in Veracruz as a way of protection against superstitions, such as evil thoughts and envy. Some jaraneros see their instruments as amulets, and fandangos as spaces for protection in addition to fostering a sense of community: “nothing [bad] happens during a fandango, and it seems that our jaranas are our amulets that take care of us and give us protection” (Castillo, 2019).

By bringing the son jarocho tradition to border territories, Fandango Fronterizo plays a crucial role in establishing safe places within Tijuana, offering participants a sense of security: “the people living in the US is not so worried when coming to Fandango [Fronterizo] in Tijuana, because they know that it will be safe” (Castillo, 2019).

Furthermore, Fandango Fronterizo serves as a medium to explore alternative readings of Tijuana and Mexico, as well as of border lines and migration.

*This kind of efforts [such as Fandango Fronterizo] shows us up that there is a way to use the borders that help to understand migration, and analyse the violent conceptions about borders, [... which also] are not simple and that [require] a real mutual responsibility. (Vargas, 2020)*

The reputation of violence and danger in the southern side of the border should not be dismissed; however, interviewees highlight the diverse perspectives and experiences that these places offer to the world’s understanding. It is essential to illuminate these alternative narratives and engage in meaningful discussions surrounding them:

*Tijuana is a city or region that is highly hit by violence, and outside Mexico it is one of the most known or named cities in the world [for being dangerous], I believe. People knows its existence through the tv series. Even*

*at the Simpsons, Tijuana appeared. But Fandango Fronterizo [...] evidences that Tijuana is not only that [referring to violence]. There are indeed problems, violence and a huge crisis, but there are people living a daily life. They enjoy, they walk through the streets, they talk to their neighbours [. ... There is] a friendly side of Tijuana, and [there are] other readings and points of view. (Vargas, 2020)*

While Fandango Fronterizo is just one of many cultural events organized along the fence, its impact alongside other son jarocho and fandango initiatives, contributes significantly to the vibrancy and appeal of Tijuana for both its residents and visitors.

### *5.1.1 Community building and identity reinforcement*

Even though the son jarocho and fandango tradition originated in Veracruz, individuals from other backgrounds have been drawn to either the music or the culture and practices that surround it. Therefore, this tradition is not exclusively limited to the people of Veracruz but also by other Mexicans, Chicanxs, Latinxs, Latin Americans, U.S. Americans, Europeans, and beyond.

*Son [jarocho] is what it is because it has been able to resonate with many people who are not necessarily jarochos [from Veracruz], who may not have been raised there or have familial ties. So, I think that if son [jarocho] thrives today, it is because it appeals to many people. (Muñoz-Meléndez, 2020)*

Expanding on this perspective, I will elucidate the significance and impact of son jarocho and Fandango Fronterizo within the local community at the border. This impact is characterized by building-up supporting communities in this territory and the identity reinforcement of the participants amidst a context of migration.

#### ***Creating a supporting community for the everyday life***

Gabriela Muñoz-Meléndez (2020) asseverated that what makes Fandango Fronterizo unique is not only its location or message but its people. An asseveration that the 2020 edition in the middle of a pandemic reaffirmed. In the same line, Gustavo Vargas (2020) pointed out the creation of a fraternity where migration plays a central role. These insights suggest the capability of son jarocho for building heterogeneous communities and Fandango Fronterizo's role in cultivating these at the border.

*Fandango [tradition] creates communities. It has created communities here, in Chicago, in New York, comprised of individuals who are interested in the tradition and the music [...] There is a sense of camaraderie, how we support one another, how we become part of a family that we have chosen. It is not an assigned family, but one we choose. (Castillo, 2019)*

Gustavo Vargas (2020) echoes:

*What I see is people of different ages, from different regions, some come not only to play but to sit down to eat, take photos or simply enjoy the music. Some bring other musical instruments not typically used in son jarocho, yet join in and play. (Vargas, 2020)*

As in any fandango, it is during the celebration that participants can create an atmosphere that reinforces their social networks, where the music and the tradition are the common excuses not only for socializing but for sharing, exchanging, offering support, and creating lasting bonds.

The interaction among participants extends beyond Fandango Fronterizo and continues throughout the year. Other son jarocho events are held in Tijuana and San Diego, while virtual tools like social media play an important role in sustaining these exchanges and interactions.

For instance, Facebook groups such as “Jaraneros Fronterizos”, “Fandangos Europeos”, and “Son jarocho en Europa” are spaces where the participants of Fandango Fronterizo and other members of the jaranero community share general content regarding son jarocho, keeping them engaged and informed. However, not everything is about playing music:

*If someone is going through a difficult situation, the community can react and help. Or if you are having a birthday: congratulations! [...] whenever you want to come to Switzerland, you're welcome! Here I can help you, serve as a city guide or treat you with a coffee. You can stay at my place, or we can organize a gig together. [...] You know? We are all far away from our homes, so playing, singing, and dancing is cool to accompany each other. I could play and sing alone, but that makes no sense. (Flores, 2020)*

This quote underscores that given the social and communal nature of the tradition, other aspects of life are easily involved. And in a border context where migration is

present, these networks, whether physical or virtual, become crucial spaces for providing and receiving support in multiple ways. Again, not only including “the Mexicans or Jarochos, but all individuals that play the music, sing it, dance it, or appreciate it” (Flores, 2020).

### ***Going back to the roots***

Another implication that emerges from the interviewees is the connection with roots and the identity reinforcement arising from this link. These root connections are main motives for the participants to practice the tradition and partake in Fandango Fronterizo.

Drawing on the participants origins and backgrounds, three main paths of root connections are catalyzed by son jarocho and Fandango Fronterizo. These paths are informed by Cecilia Zamudio’s research (2014) on the identity formation of jaraneros in Tijuana and San Diego:

First, the *jarochx* root. In Tijuana, “a considerable migration from Veracruz has led to the flourishing of the jaranero movement, which has also gained momentum in San Diego, California” (Vargas, 2020). So, individuals who were raised or born in Veracruz might seek to reclaim and preserve their cultural heritage in this new territory, as Gabriela Muñoz-Meléndez explains: “I was raised in Xalapa. I am familiar with fandango, the songs. These are part of my childhood; they signify to me a lot of things [...] My motivation lies in rediscovering and reconnecting with my roots, no matter how bland this might sound” (Muñoz-Meléndez, 2020).

Second, the *mexicanx* root. In cities marked by constant transit and presence of diverse people, the U.S. American culture is still predominant (Zamudio Serrano, 2014). Individuals originating from other regions of Mexico may feel compelled to affirm their Mexican identity and align themselves with the national culture:

*We are at the border and most of the people that participate in Fandango Fronterizo is not from Veracruz, they are simply Mexican [...] I am from Chihuahua [...] and by listening son [jarocho] which is traditional, which is Mexican, supported my sense of identity, even though I am not from Veracruz. I felt like everyone else, reinforcing my identity.* (Castillo, 2019)

This category includes the Mexican U.S. American community, particularly the Chicanx, who seek to reconnect with their Mexican heritage: “there is a generation



of people born in the U.S., who to my perception, are aiming to reconnect with their roots and find an identity” (Muñoz-Meléndez, 2020).

Third, the *latinx root*. Latin Americans<sup>10</sup> and Latinxs<sup>11</sup> in search of belonging within a broader community in this socio-temporal space: “she was Colombian [...] and I asked her why she didn’t search for someone who played *cumbia* or *vallenato* instead of son jarocho, so she said that son jarocho was somehow the Latin American music in San Diego” (Vargas, 2020). Moreover, they identify similarities to their home-country’s culture and use son jarocho as a means to reconnect with their roots: “I compared it to the ways of making music in some parts of the Colombian Caribbean like *vallenato*, or to the ways of telling stories, such as *cumbia*” (Vargas, 2020).

### ***The role of migration in the identity-community building equation***

The affiliation of the Latin American participants to son jarocho music as means of connecting to their cultural roots while living abroad is a common experience shared with Mexicans and other Latin Americans participating in fandangos around the world: “those far from their birthplaces need something to remind them of their origins [...] you try to recreate a piece of Mexico there [...] and traditional music is a tool for identity reinforcement [...] for not forgetting where we come from” (López, 2020).

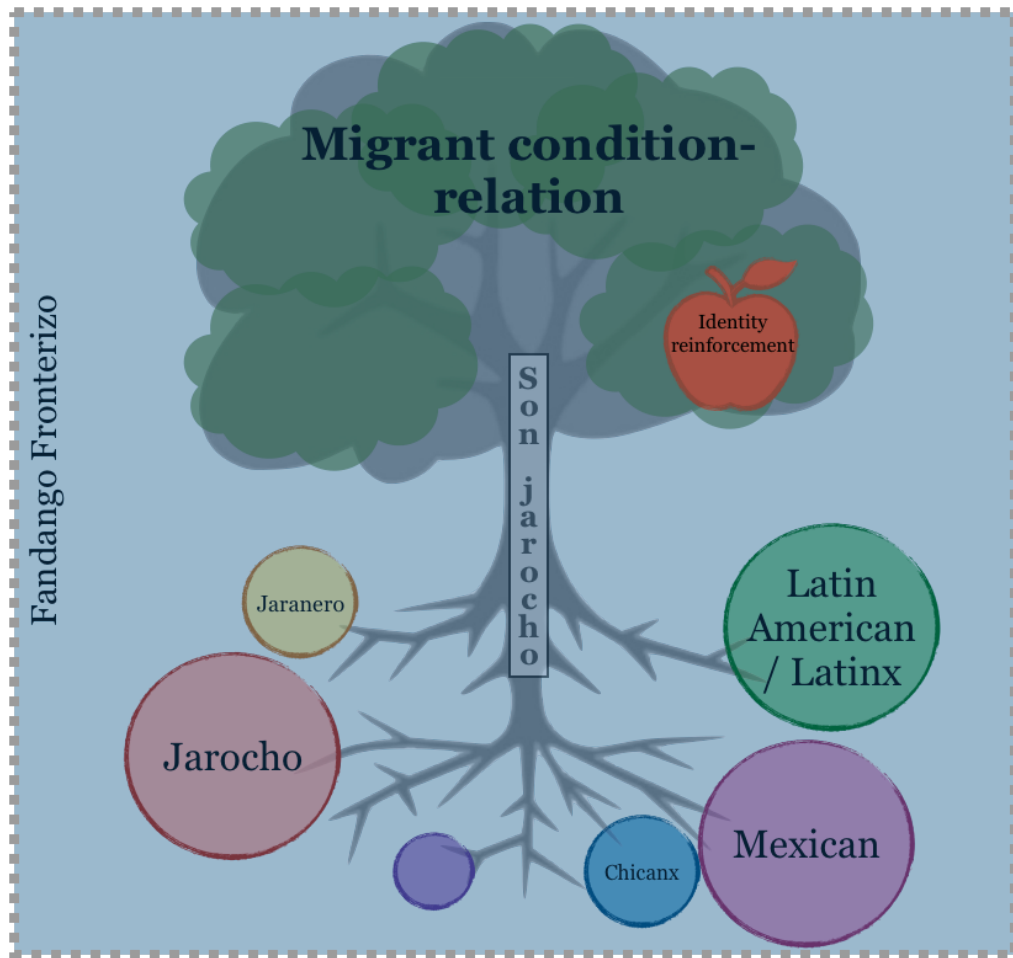
This quote highlights that the need for root connection and identity reinforcement is mainly driven by the participants’ experiences and relation with migration: besides from gathering in an event that is framed within this phenomenon by contesting borders, a considerable part of the participants have personally experienced it.

Figure 6 presents the processes of root connection and identity reinforcement. For that, I am using the shape of a tree where the son jarocho tradition (trunk) is the element that feeds the participants’ relationship with their migrant condition-relation (foliage) and their need for connection to their roots (roots). Fandango Fronterizo serves as the platform for connection and expression of those diverse roots, ultimately leading to the identity reinforcement (apple) of the participants.

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<sup>10</sup> A person born in a country of the Latin American continent.

<sup>11</sup> A person born in the U.S. with Latin American roots.



*Figure 6. Fandango Fronterizo as a space for enabling identity reinforcement.*

It is important to remark that identity is a complex category beyond the scope presented here, but this particular topic kept appearing during the interviews and analysis. This recurring theme likely reflects the experiences of individuals that live and act in the intersections of two nations and diverse cultures, leading them to constantly questions their sense of identity.

Migration not only plays a role in individual identity reinforcement but also serves as a thread that connects a big part of the participants of Fandango Fronterizo as a collectivity. This shared experience of migration forms the basis for a community that transcends national and geographical boundaries, creating bonds and connections that go beyond cultural and national affiliations. It becomes, as previously said, a translocational phenomenon where “son [jarocho] is the base, but what it is being built is a comradeship, ties where migration is present” (Vargas, 2020).

## 5.2 For playing son jarocho at the border...

*Para bailar la bamba, se necesita una poca de gracia. Una poca de gracia y otra cosita...  
“La Bamba”<sup>12</sup>*

For the first editions of Fandango Fronterizo, Jorge Castillo (2019) recalls that the planning and production process was quite simple:

*It was like if you were organizing a fandango at your own place. Not much was needed as there were no special guests, nor other things that we currently do [...] That first year we just asked the people to take water with them [...] and as the event kept prolonging till the next morning [...] we passed a hat to collect money among us for buying some food and drinks.*

Regular or traditional fandangos are organized privately among friends and family or in the local community, but Fandango Fronterizo eventually evolved into a public cultural event whose audience continues to grow and diversify throughout the years. This situation required a more-formal structure and a planning process where different managerial aspects had to be considered.

Additionally, authors such as González (2018) concluded that “fandangos change their organizational system based on the place where they are carried out” (p.185), and Fandango Fronterizo is not an exception. It navigates the challenges that the border entails, particularly as a restrictive entity. Simultaneously, the event deals with a tradition whose values, formats, and practices are negotiated among the diversity of perspectives of the jaranero community in the border.

That is how, current Fandango Fronterizo’s organizational system is the result of a negotiation process with the border and its stakeholders, and well as the tradition it upholds.

This section will discuss how these factors influence the organizational structures of Fandango Fronterizo, as well as the main managerial resources that have been adopted to navigate them.

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<sup>12</sup> To dance La Bamba, a bit of grace is needed. A bit of grace and another little thing...

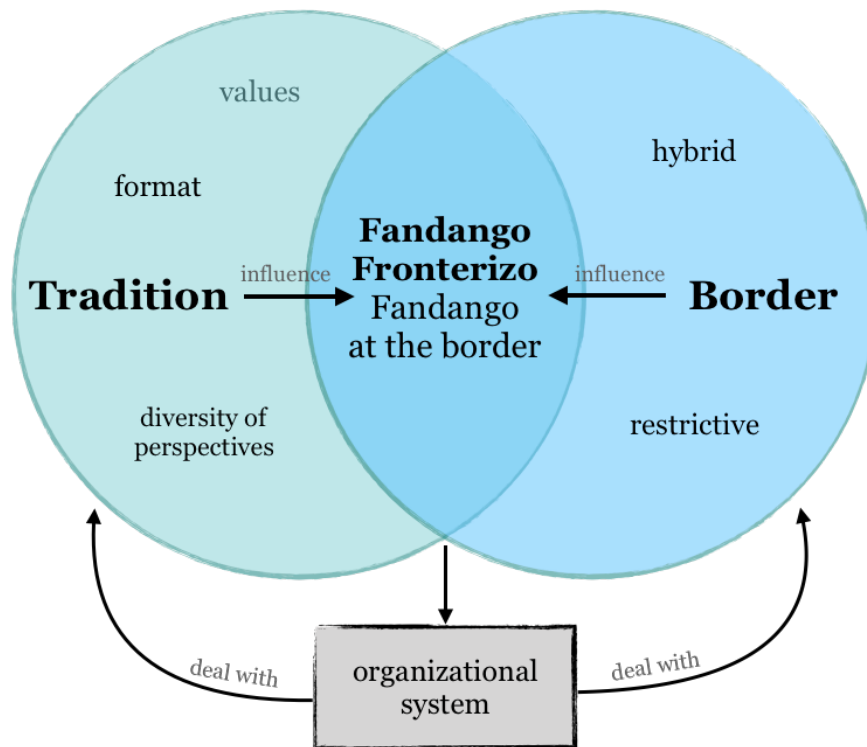


Figure 7. Interrelations between Fandango Fronterizo with the border and the tradition.

### 5.2.1 Managing the border

Given the restrictive characteristic of the border as a legal and a physical constrain, Fandango Fronterizo’s main managerial challenge, as deduced from the interviewees, has been to deal with the key actors of the region, particularly with the Border Patrol, in order to secure not only the realization and permanence of the event but its binational character as well.

As presented before, the Border Patrol is the body in charge of the security of the northern side of the fence, and the U.S. American segment of the Friendship Park is under their regulation. This means that each year, the organization has to negotiate a special permit in order to give access to the participants and make use of the area: “the negotiations with the Border Patrol are not easy, and every year they surprise us with something new: ‘you won’t be able to do this’, ‘you won’t be allowed to bring instruments’ or ‘this time we are changing the rules’” (Castillo, 2019).

It is possible to bring some observations regarding the means in which this actor influences the event.

First of all, the date election. Jorge Castillo (2019) recalls that since the sixth edition in 2013, the organization was able to hold the event during the Memorial Day, a

holiday on the U.S. This decision is understood as a turning point in Fandango Fronterizo as it brought larger audiences and from further places. Nevertheless, the resolution on the permit has sometimes broken this regularity:

*This year the date was changed. They had been attempting to do this before, but we didn't let them. This year they had a new boss who said, 'if you want the permit, it has to be done on another date'. This modifies the whole dynamic because the participants don't have this extra free day to travel. We missed many people who normally attend. (Castillo, 2019)*

Second, the number of attendants. For some editions, the participation on the U.S. side has been limited to twenty-five people at a time, which unbalances the dynamic of the fandango. According to Jorge Castillo (2019), in 2018 around two hundred people were at the Mexican side, whereas at the U.S. only twenty-five at a time were allowed to play at the fence, while the other participants were placed thirty meters away. Whereas, for 2019 the Border Patrol removed this restriction just a few days before the event.

Third, the duration of the event, since the area is only open to the public from 10 to 14 hrs. And fourth, the binational character. The interviewees recognize the possibility of not being granted with the permission, meaning that the binational nature of the event is always on risk.

Contrary to the media discourse, unsafety does not seem to be a threatening aspect in the southern part of the fandango (Castillo, 2019; López, 2020). Indeed, a permit from the local administration is easily processed, and security guards are hired by Fandango Fronterizo following the regulations for public events.

Given these conditions, Fandango Fronterizo holds a binational working team in charge of solving the logistics presented in both sides of the border, giving special emphasis to the process of obtaining the permit with the Border Patrol. A task that is normally assigned to a one person in particular.

### *5.2.2 Managing the tradition, a matter of adapting and preserving*

*Son music has no limits, but it does have roots*  
Arcadio Baxin

As previously discussed, the fandango tradition carries a set of values and practices, a particular format, and a diversity of perspectives within the jaranero community.

Each of these aspects are brought by Fandango Fronterizo to a hybrid and complex context where some negotiations and adaptations are needed in order to preserve the essence of the tradition. Simultaneously, these aspects in turn influence Fandango Fronterizo as an event and as an organization.

### ***Operating with strong values***

Based on the interviews, it is quite clear that the social function of the fandango tradition is ingrained in the identity of Fandango Fronterizo. Consequently, the values of this socio-communal function, such as the active participation, the horizontality, and the collaboration in favor of the community, are intended to be preserved as much as the context allows. These values influence Fandango Fronterizo and are negotiated in several ways.

First, the meaning of participation. All attendees, or at least the majority, take an active role, or rather *participative*, in the creation of music and dance in a fandango. This erases the division between audience and performers, and therefore, everyone is rather considered as *participant*. For the case of Fandango Fronterizo, this implies that as a cultural event, its content and creative value are result of the participation and interactions of the entire group as a collectivity, and not by individuals.

However, because Fandango Fronterizo has attracted the media, and has given the opportunity to other audiences to use it for meeting and socializing, this participatory aspect is relatively disrupted. Indeed, everyone is welcomed to attend and participate, but that has brought the challenge to find alternatives to be inclusive and diverse, while preserving and respecting the value system of the tradition (Vargas, 2020).

Second, the horizontal approach. As the function of this celebration is rather social, the division between professionals and amateurs is non-existent either, thus, the hierarchies given by the skills and experience are subject only to the arrangement around the *tarima*, and not to the possibilities of participation. For example, in Fandango Fronterizo, the role of the special guests is regulated by this horizontality, as during the fandango they are not soloists but rather accompany and play together with the rest of the participants. The same dynamic is reflected in the decision-making process and organizational structure, even though the correlation to this value has not been proved in this study.

Third, the extension of the participation. In order to maintain the celebration alive for many hours and maintaining this participatory aspect, performance of the participants must be constantly rotated and extended to other duties. This means that while some are playing, others are resting, serving the food, or dancing. In the case of Fandango Fronterizo, this is also reflected in its task division, which is based on the abilities and possibilities of the individuals available on the spot, and not necessarily on a categorization in functions.

And fourth, the preparations and celebration are also directed by a collaborative sense. Everyone contributes with something under their own capabilities, whether by bringing or preparing food, by donating materials, by working or helping in the different tasks of the organization, or even by participating at the *tarima*. As these contributions are seen as an exchange in favor of the community and the celebration. On the one hand, entrance fees do not exist, and the offering of food and beverages to all participants becomes vital. On the other hand, the voluntary work of all the actors, including the organizers, becomes the main source of support in Fandango Fronterizo.

However, because this event is inserted in a modern and non-communal system, the fact of depending on the community is not completely feasible. And even though Fandango Fronterizo has the ability to strongly engage its community, it has had to look for contributions outside of it (or rather bring new actors), in order to secure the subsistence of the event. This simultaneously leads the organization to require a stable working team in charge of the organization and fundraising; while at the same time, to face a challenge of autonomy and restrain the nature of collaborations and partnerships to those who share the same values.

For example, according to Jorge Castillo (2019) they have rejected partners and funding in order to protect the event from political, official or commercial acts that indeed downsize the values of Fandango Fronterizo.

### ***Adaptations to the fandango format***

Fandango Fronterizo intends to retain elements of the tradition's format according to the existing conditions. Mainly, those elements are hospitality services such as the free entrance and the food and beverages offered to the attendants, the decorations and setting up, and the prolongation of the celebration. Simultaneously,

given the disruptive conditions of the area, Fandango Fronterizo has introduced a decalogue to regulate participation and ease the dynamics.

Regarding hospitality for the participants, Jorge Castillo (2019) affirmed that apart from the special guests, food is one of the biggest expenses of the event. This has led to the creation of different funding and partnership strategies to support those expenses. For the first editions, food was provided by individual cooperation as each participant would bring a dish to share with the rest. Currently, the organization satisfies those expenses through funds from organizations and donations in kind by local businesses.

Another element that is strongly considered is the need for extending the celebration. Even though the Border Patrol restricts the duration of the event to four hours, the organization has adapted a space for the inclusion of a side-program to enable the prolongation of the gathering as it is traditionally done: at least, until the next morning.

The Post-Fandango naturally emerged when some of the participants freely offered their homes in order to continue the already initiated celebration at the fence. The first three Post-Fandangos were held in this spontaneous way. Then, as Fandango Fronterizo was growing and formalizing, the organizers agreed with a local business, “Café Latitud 32” to move the Post-Fandango there. However, after four years of constant growth, the capacity of the space was surpassed which led to a search for a new location.

Since the eighth edition in 2015, the location for the Post-Fandango has been the exact same spot where the binational fandango is held in the morning: at the Mexican side of the Friendship Park. An area that resulted safe and spacious enough to hold this activity.

Additionally, other side activities introduced in the program, such as workshops and talks, have been the result of the gathering prolongation and the event’s formalization.

Finally, another aspect regarding the format is the regulation of the fandango’s dynamic. Due to the separating-fence, the participatory format where there is no stage, as well as disruptive aspects such as the increasing presence of the media; Fandango Fronterizo has had to create some participation regulations in order to



ease the dynamics. Some examples include balancing the number of participants on both sides in order that everyone hear each other, controlling the duration of each song, organizing turns to use the *tarima* or arranging a special area for the media and photographers (Fandango Fronterizo, 2019a. See Appendix 6 with the translation of Fandango Fronterizo's Decalogue).

***Tensions of perspectives: the cut and thrust on the special guests***

By the sixth edition of Fandango Fronterizo in 2013, the organization realized that the local character of the event was surpassed as jaraneros from further locations were attending the event. The willingness to support those visits uncovered a particular inclination to include the presence of jaraneros from Veracruz, as a way to reinforce the connections with the origin of the tradition, with the intention of "gaining legitimization" (Zamudio Serrano, 2014, p. 83).

The presence of the guests revealed the need of a funding strategy to cover the travelling and daily allowance expenses. Nevertheless, it is the selection process that is currently identified as a key aspect, as it needs to be satisfactory for the community and at the same time avoid divisions or tensions among the participants. So, starting from the mentioned need to connect with Veracruz, a selection criterion has been established, suggesting the following characteristics of the guests:

- Jaraneros who are considered pillars of the fandango tradition.
- Jaraneros who belong to the rural communities where son jarocho was originated and therefore, bring the authenticity of the tradition.
- Jaraneros who do not necessarily make their living from this music and have not had the possibility to travel outside their villages.

In addition, a balance of gender representation has been also considered since 2019 (Castillo, 2019). Nevertheless, it is possible to observe that these criteria have not been always applied and that have been influenced by the organizers in turn.

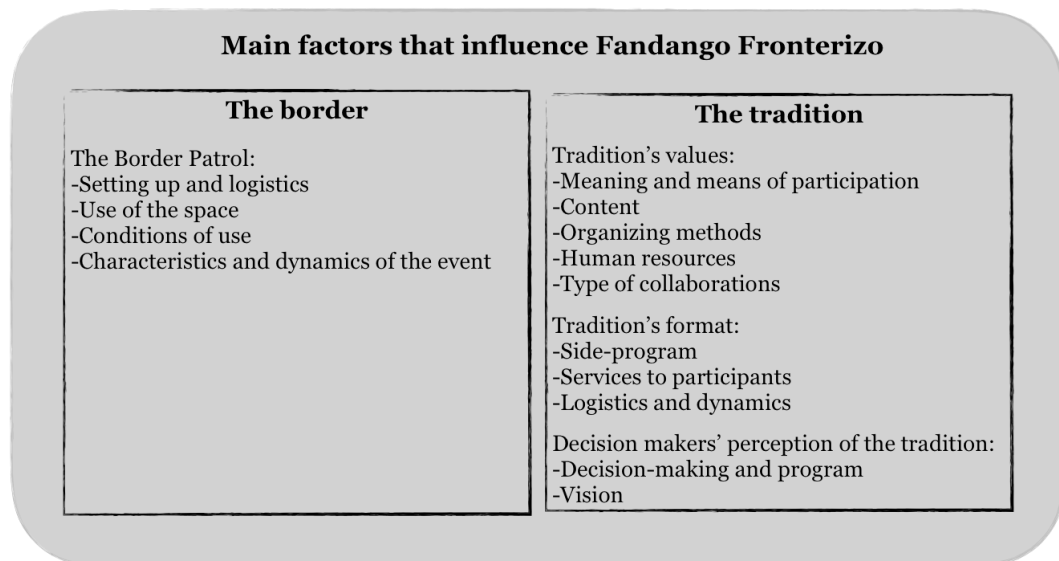
The discussion on the evolution and tensions of son jarocho presented in the contextualization, is undoubtedly reflected in the different perspectives of the organizing committee. Particularly, their opinions on the authenticity, which range from the most conservative that defend the rural components, to perspectives that accept innovative inputs, have been a point of continuous debate: "it was a constant

push-and-pull. I noticed the concern to look for the rural format and conceive it as authentic [whereas] I thought that if this tradition has subsisted until now is because it has been adaptable and inclusive” (Muñoz-Meléndez, 2020).

Simultaneously, other factors unrelated to the tradition, such as funding, networking or collaboration opportunities have bend the criteria as well. For example, for the tenth edition in 2018, the CECUT, a federal cultural center, provided the funds to particularly bring the Vega family to play for different events in Tijuana, including Fandango Fronterizo. This circumstance led to prioritize the recognition and value that the Vega family holds, regardless of their international trajectory.

The selection of the special guests is in reality achieved within tensions among the decision-makers, where their own perspectives towards the tradition and the direction of the organization are negotiated. Those negotiations are eventually solved by the organizing committee.

The following Figure 8 summarizes the elements of the organization that are influenced by the border and the tradition.



*Figure 8. Fandango Fronterizo's managerial aspects subject to two main factors: the border and the tradition. And how these influence Fandango Fronterizo.*

### 5.2.1 Managing the organization of Fandango Fronterizo

In order to deal with the challenges and issues previously discussed, Fandango Fronterizo has adopted the following managerial aspects.

### ***The organization of Fandango Fronterizo***

The results of the first Fandango Fronterizo edition in 2008 together with the desire to continue the project in the following years, evidenced the need to create a working group in charge of organizing the event, as well as managing the necessary resources for its realization.

Different forms of organization were explored over several years, such as a “collective” and a “society”, and in the process people on those teams kept varying. Today, the team in charge of organizing the event works under the name of the Organizing Committee and is conformed of enthusiast members of the local jaranero community who gather on a voluntary basis to serve in this committee.

Jorge Castillo (2019) appoints that the event is still organized between friends and in a “hippie-style”. But even though this group is unincorporated, meaning that it does not have a legal registration, it does function under the definition of a NPCO, developed in the theoretical framework, with sufficient structures and processes to solve the challenges involved in holding this event. Structures that indeed need to be flexible due to the defying environment presented before, and that are in transformation due to the fast-growth and acquired-complexity of Fandango Fronterizo.

### ***The Organizing Committee***

The current Organizing Committee oversees the decision making, planning and leading of the event. Given to the small size of the organization, all the operational and production tasks are mostly undertaken by the committee as well.

The committee possesses a binational nature. Given the circumstances and location of the event, representation of both sides is needed particularly for aspects such as logistics, partnerships or funding. Nevertheless, some members do not own a visa for entering the U.S., therefore they are restricted to operate on the Mexican side of the border.

The appointment of new committee members is not formalized. Therefore, it is subject to the decision of the committee in turn, and it is based on gained trust. Regarding this, Marcos López (2020) recalls when he was invited to take part of the committee:

*Little by little I reached the organizers, and during the fandangos and*

*conversations, I gained their trust as they saw my interest on the project. They invited me to join and said to me: ‘You have talent, you are interested, so go ahead and take part’.*

This coincides with the experience of Gustavo Vargas (2020):

*The biggest challenge for me was to get in contact and establish a relationship of trust with them, as a foreigner and non-jaranero [. ...] They always have been very kind and attentive [...] but now that they see that I have stronger intentions of studying the music, at least as an amateur, I stop being an outsider that only takes photographs and interviews them.*

On the other hand, permanency is affected mostly by lack of time availability, disagreements inside the committee, or certain individual life circumstances, which are normal in any voluntary based organization (Handy, 1990):

*There has been quite many people that approaches to us with enthusiasm and energy. Then, their life circumstances change. Some of them move out from the city, get a job after finishing their studies, or they get married and have kids. Sometimes they leave due to disagreements. People choose not to continue in the committee because they can’t or just don’t want to. (Castillo, 2019)*

This last condition has not proved to hinder the continuity of the event, as throughout the thirteen editions there has been a variable number of people outside the committee volunteering with the operational tasks. The limitations derived from this rotation are rather related to long-term planning or decision-making, such as the selection of the special guests or the continuation of collaborations.

By the time of collecting the data (2019-2020), the total number of people in the committee kept changing. Initially two members were based in Tijuana and three in San Diego. Still, one left during the process, and two extra persons were in consideration to be included.

### ***Decision-making process***

The Organizing Committee of Fandango Fronterizo has the faculty and responsibility for the decision making and direction of the whole event.

They determine the special guests of the year, the food that will be served, and comment and give feedback on the poster’s design or other audio-visual materials

for promotion. For example, in one edition the committee organized an open call among visual artists from California (U.S.) and Baja California (Mx), and the elected design was used for the event's image.

The committee is also in charge of finding an available date for the event, plan and schedule the side-program, and divide the main production tasks among the volunteers, including themselves. Communication and funding plans are also discussed and decided during the meetings.

According to Jorge Castillo (2019) and Muñoz-Meléndez (2020), the decision-making process is based on negotiation and voting, where input from all the members is worth equally. For example, when deciding on the guest performers of the year, Muñoz-Meléndez (2020) recalls that despite of the tensions and diversity of perspectives everyone would suggest different names, the committee makes a list and discuss their suitability. Then, an iterating process of voting and discussion takes place until agreement is reached.

The following quote illustrates the expressed horizontality of the committee and decision-making: "It was quite democratic [...] and even though Jorge was considered a leader, we could easily disagree with him. He had to take the decisions together with us." (Muñoz-Meléndez, 2020).

### ***The organizational structure and task division***

Besides from the committee, there are a few other people with a closer level of involvement in the implementation and planning. Although, without the faculty to participate on the decision making as the rest of the committee. Currently, those collaborators, or "comrades" as Castillo (2019) calls them, oversee specific roles such as the communications and social media, and the coordination of an international program of Fandango Fronterizo. Finally, there is a group of volunteers who join during the implementation of the event.

The total amount of the core team (excluding the volunteers) is less than ten people, therefore evidencing a small size organization. In the team Jorge Castillo is the only member who has prevailed since the foundation of Fandango Fronterizo.

As it is visible in the Figure 9, the organizational structure is rather flat, which results not only from the horizontal hierarchy of fandango tradition's dynamics but from the natural need of an organization to be flexible enough to support the

environmental challenges.

Regarding the roles, Fandango Fronterizo does not hold a meticulous separation of labour and it follows the “we all do everything” precept, that Muñoz-Meléndez (2020) pointed out. However, there are some key tasks that the organization locates and distributes among the committee, such as the permits with the local authorities or the relations with collaborators and sponsors.

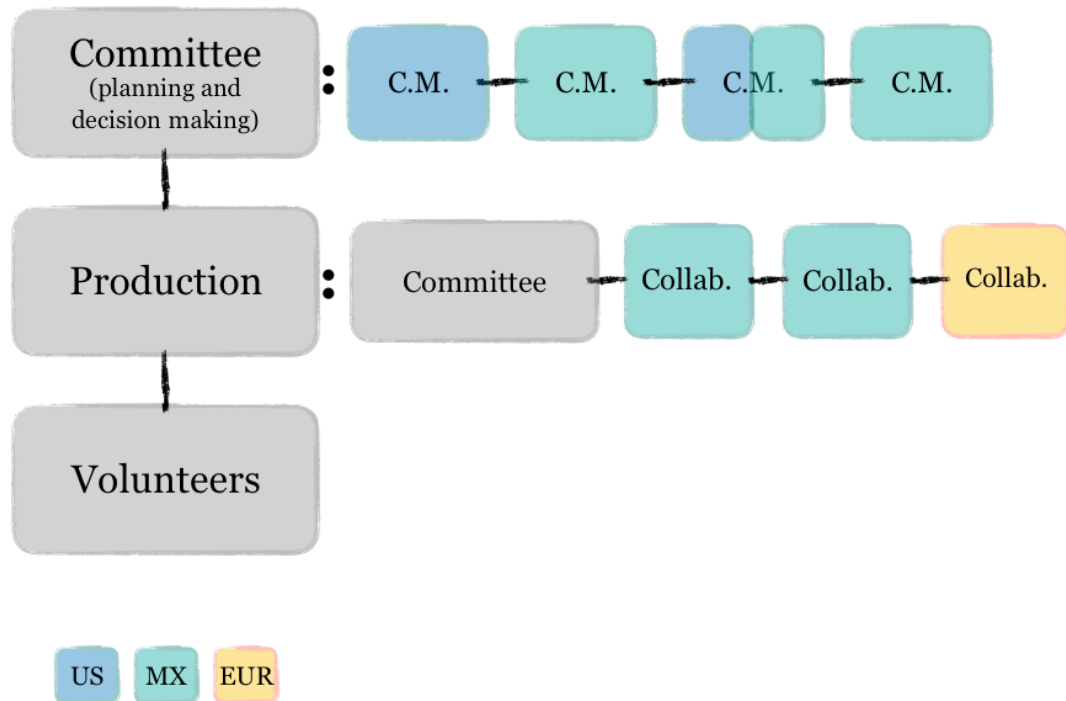


Figure 9. Fandango Fronterizo's organigram

The rest of the tasks are allocated according to the interests, abilities and resources, including networks, of each team member. The tasks are not necessarily given on an area of work or specialty. Therefore, the responsibilities acquired can be as extensive and transversal as possible. For example, one person can deal with a particular partner, and at the same time coordinate aspects of the food that will be served, host one of the guests, or negotiate the space for the workshops.

Jorge Castillo (2019) exemplifies how his assigned tasks are based on his possibilities:

*Given the circumstances [...] I do quite many local tasks. I believe it is due to my personality, as I like things to be in order. Also, I have more time and my timetables are quite flexible. The majority don't have a car and I can drive. I am based in Tijuana as well, where the biggest part of the work is*

*done. So unintentionally, I have to do a lot. (Castillo, 2019)*

Another example is given by Marcos López. He is a folk music and dance professor in the public high schools in Tijuana, and because of this, he has contributed to Fandango Fronterizo with his network of students who participate as volunteers. Therefore, during the event, he is in charge of coordinating them.

In this regard, it seems that despite the located key tasks, the existence of other duties and their fulfilment are determined by the individuals in turn. Which explains the concern of Gabriela Muñoz-Meléndez (2020) in terms of continuity in the case that a collaborator leaves the organization or takes a pause. For example, when she left the committee, the founding that she initiated with an institution through her contacts has been in pause.

Then, during the implementation of the event everything becomes chaotic. Evidently, as part of the unstable nature of event productions and of the context where this in particular is held, it is perfectly normal that more practical needs have to be attended, and that unforeseen situations occur: “I have a bigger car’, ‘then go and fetch the pozole <sup>13</sup>’, ‘we are out of bread’, ‘then go to the shop to buy more’, ‘the pozole just fell on the floor’.... you end up doing what's useful. There is no minor task” (Muñoz-Meléndez, 2020).

In these circumstances, the interviewees report that the whole team is “willing to help each other” (López, 2020) despite of the assigned tasks, because they see it “as part of [their] contribution, [they] feel good doing it” (Muñoz-Meléndez, 2020).

### ***The resources***

As it has been pointed out before, what makes Fandango Fronterizo unique is its people. Therefore, it is not surprise that the main resource is the workforce of volunteers who, according to their time availability, resources and commitment, fulfill a diverse range of tasks and levels of responsibility. As it has been explained, they assist either for very specific tasks during the event or for the planning process, in the creation of content as participants, and even in the decision making as committee members.

Apart from the committee and the collaborators, the majority of the volunteer group belong to the local youth and jaranero communities. In the aspect of involving the

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<sup>13</sup> A traditional Mexican dish.

youth community, Marcos López (2020) adds:

*They get interested and ask: 'how can I help?'... This fraternal part of Fandango Fronterizo encourages the willingness to help, to contribute, to be part of this event and get to know it better. And what better than involving the younger generations to secure the continuation of the knowledge, the tradition and the event itself.*

Additionally, the jaranero and local community's contributions are another important resource. They get involved through donations or contributions in-kind, such as food, flowers, sound equipment, and other needed materials. There are even people who offer their houses to host participants that visit from further places (Castillo, 2019). According to Muñoz-Meléndez (2020), if enough funds were raised, guests were placed in a hotel but initially the committee members would offer their homes.

However, depending only on this resource seems not feasible anymore because the voluntary work has some limitations. As it has been previously discussed, voluntary work is not stable and relies on the availability and capacities of the individuals. This is how funding is considered an increasing issue in the organization (López, 2020). Therefore, there have been some strategies to search for resources.

First, the external funds from organizations and institutions. In the history of Fandango Fronterizo, there have been two main organizations that have provided funds for the organization. The first one is El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF), a university in Tijuana that for three years (2014-2016) supported with expenses related to the special guests, such as airplane tickets and accommodation. According to Jorge Castillo (2019) this was the first partnership accomplished, which revealed an opportunity in this source of founding. Therefore, it is considered as a turning point in the organization of Fandango Fronterizo. Unfortunately, this partnership is paused.

The other entity that provides funds is Artivist, a non-profit organization in the U.S. that since 2015 grants a big share of Fandango Fronterizo's monetary income.

Second, the external funds from individuals. For 2013, the committee decided to organize a crowdfunding campaign in order to fund the expenses of the new implemented program: the special guests. This campaign was successful but has not



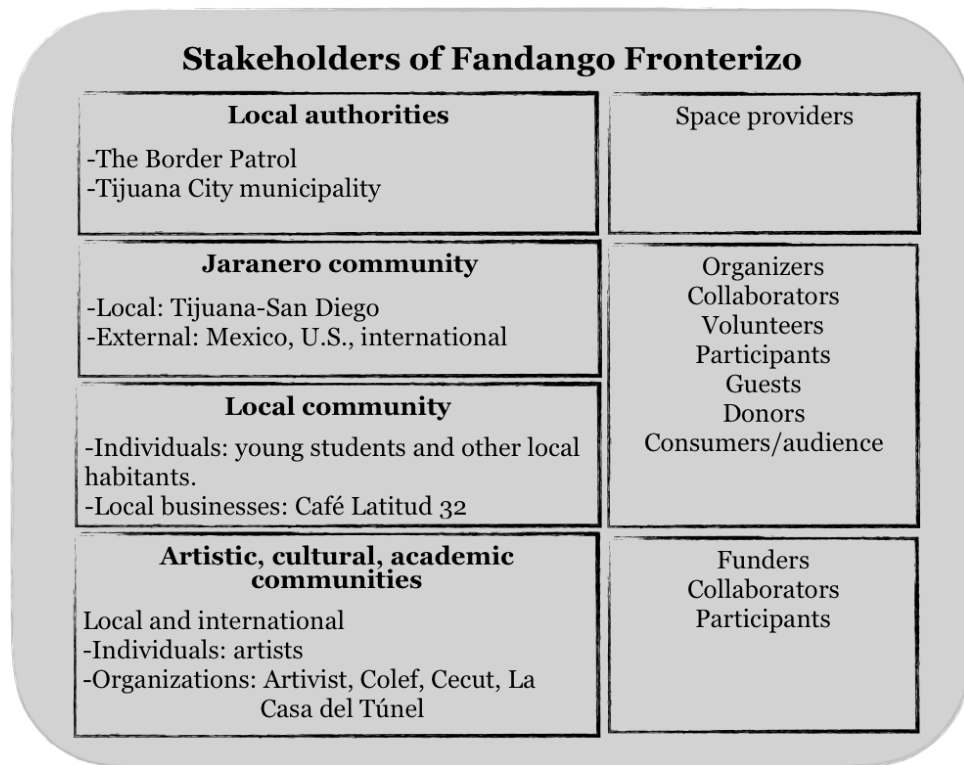
been repeated, because according to Jorge Castillo (2019) it implied a big amount of coordination and marketing efforts.

And third, internal funds that are self-generated. Even though there is no economic entry for ticket selling as in many other cultural events, Fandango Fronterizo obtains funds by selling merchandise products, such as t-shirts with the logo and image of the year's poster. Then, the workshops that are organized in both cities, on the previous days of the main event are held on a voluntary cooperation basis. The earnings of these workshops are given to the guest artists as a symbolic fee payment. Finally, other fandangos are organized at different moments of the year in order to collect more funds. The most remarkable one is the fandango organized in Santa Ana, California.

The percentage of self-generated income from these efforts is quite considerable (Castillo, 2019), if not the biggest. This proves the engagement and self-sustainability potential of Fandango Fronterizo. As well as the high accountability that the organization holds to the community that not only participates or volunteers, but also consumes these services and products.

This discussion leads to conclude that the engaged community composed of jaraneros and locals are the largest resource force of Fandango Fronterizo, or in other words, a main stakeholder followed by the local authorities and cultural-academic communities (see Figure 10). Jaraneros and locals provide work as collaborators or volunteers, content as participants, legitimization as guests and attendants, and monetary and material resources either by making donations, consuming merchandise products or attending to other fandangos organized by Fandango Fronterizo.

Finally, it is also worthy to highlight that Fandango Fronterizo subsists without any direct public support from neither of the two countries where it operates. This provides political freedom and autonomy to the organization, which is crucial for its mission; however, this also restrains from the funding opportunities of both countries.



*Figure 10. Fandango Fronterizo's stakeholders and resources*

All in all, it seems that the current funding scheme is not fully stable, despite the fact that the event itself holds an appealing message, an engaged community, and a binational nature, which in turn could potentially be beneficial in order to enhance a sustainable and long-term financial scheme.

### **5.3 Connecting beyond the border**

#### *5.3.1 A non-deliberated strategic vision*

Throughout thirteen editions, Fandango Fronterizo has shown growth symptoms. For the interviewees, growth is interpreted as increased attendance and interest in the event, particularly from the jaranero communities outside the borderland and from the international media and organizations, such as the New York Times or the Smithsonian (Brown, 2016; Sheehy, 2017). Another symptom is the acquired similarity to traditional fandangos in Veracruz and its capacity of engagement:

*I think that, without being arrogant, Fandango Fronterizo is already one of the largest and most recognized fandangos outside Veracruz. For many, it is a dream to be able to come and experience it [...] besides, traditional fandangos in Veracruz host quite many people, [meaning that] the*

*celebration will be extended until next morning, so the participants know they can go to sleep and come back [...] Small fandangos are not extended like this [...] Here in Fandango Fronterizo we know it will last until the following day, there is always someone playing.* (Castillo, 2019)

Nevertheless, the vision that the interviewees reported for Fandango Fronterizo's future is rather far from growing in attendance or massification, which is no surprise given to the defended communal values and the unstable conditions of the location discussed before: "we are not interested in having an event of thousands of people as other cultural festivals. We want it to continue being a celebration of the local community, of the people" (Castillo, 2019).

That is why the future of Fandango Fronterizo is reported as having the faculties to "keep it happening" (Castillo, 2019) and disseminating its existence and message on the elimination of borders (López, 2020; Vargas, 2020; Flores, 2020). And in a long-term, "make it a worldwide movement with not only cultural but political repercussions" (Flores, 2020).

Currently, Fandango Fronterizo is articulating strategies that support this vision, even though those have not all emerged deliberately nor been written down on a strategic plan: "we only had a meeting after the event to evaluate the results and plan the following year's event, but mid-term or future planning was absent" (Muñoz-Meléndez, 2020). The strategies consist of extending its community to other spheres and territories, and to pursue administrative development and continuity.

### 5.3.1 *Grow to the outside. Building extended communities*

*Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity or genuineness, but in the style in which they are imagined.*

Benedict Anderson

Fandango Fronterizo extends its community to other spheres and territories through communicating the project and its narratives extensively, growing its collaborations with communities outside son jarocho and replicating the format to

other locations and therefore creating geographical networks. This supports a translocational and glocal role character.

### ***Spreading the word through collective memory***

The first method to spread Fandango Fronterizo's message is through communication, not from a marketing approach but rather from an audience development that is focused, as in the tradition, on community building. The resources that the organization use for this purpose are social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, and the under-construction-project *Centro de Memoria del Fandango Fronterizo* (Fandango Fronterizo's Memory Center).

According to Gustavo Vargas (2020), the Memory Center project is a platform, initially a virtual one, that seeks to compile the story of Fandango Fronterizo and its environment at Tijuana and San Diego, as well as its relationship with Veracruz and the son jarocho tradition, and with the migration phenomena. Its main target is reaching the people outside the jaranero communities that increasingly approach with curiosity but also it is a tool for the participating actors to recognize themselves within a process.

It is called a memory center because the approach is not to tell a one story but to gather all the different perspectives and voices of everyone involved in the celebration, including the younger generations. Therefore, instead of focusing only on those who are organizing or on some selected participants, it emphasizes the collectivity: "we hope that the community here recognizes itself in the project and begins to participate. That instead of one person, they generate the content and even upload it [...] That makes it more collective" (Vargas, 2020).

What results from writing down this collective memory is the strengthening of ideological bridges, à la Anderson's imagined communities, between San Diego-Tijuana to Veracruz. Additionally, Gustavo Vargas (2020) reaffirmed that through the written material, connections with academic fields and NPOs could be articulated for possible funding, as well.

### ***Reaching communities outside son and bringing down other borders***

A second approach is raising the connections and collaborations with communities outside son jarocho. Whereas in spheres such as the academia or in the artistic and musical fields.

Example of this is the recent collaboration in 2018 with the Grammy award winner Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra (ALJO), directed by Mexican-Cuban-U.S. American pianist Arturo O’Farril. This collaboration resulted in an ambitious project called *Fandango at the Wall* that consists of an album featuring the ALJO with fifty guest musicians from diverse cultural and musical backgrounds, including son jarocho musicians; a book written by Kabir Sehgal on Fandango Fronterizo and the relations between Mexico and the U.S.; and a documentary, directed by Varda Bar-Kar and released on the summer of 2020, that captures the fandango tradition in Veracruz and in the border at Fandango Fronterizo (see more at Fandango at the Wall, n.d.).

What is noteworthy from this collaboration is the fact that, on the one hand, this level of exposition is occasioning a powerful echoing of Fandango Fronterizo’s narratives among the artistic community and its audiences, particularly in the U.S. On the other hand, the space of intercultural artistic creation that was conjointly built, supports the notion of tearing other non-physical borders, such as the cultural and musical among genres.

A similar example is the visit, in 2017, of hip-hop artists, Anna Tijoux from Chile, and Shadia Mansour from Palestine. Their participation at the fandango emphasized the existence of those other asymmetric border conditions discussed before, such as the ones resulted from political conflicts in other parts of the world, as well as the gender boundaries that are raising global attention (Vargas, 2020).

### ***Reaching other territories: The Fandangos Hermanos network***

*Deja de ser fronteriza/ esta fandanguera fiesta,  
/porque la gente se presta, /desde Mérida hasta  
Suiza, /la lucha como la brisa/llega donde Las  
Patronas, /poco a poco se sazona/en este mundo al  
revés, /de Montreal a San Andrés, /el muro se  
desmorona.*

Aldo Flores <sup>14</sup>

Fandango Fronterizo is eventually not attached to a one territory, Tijuana and San Diego, but to many others where migration and borders are present. Since 2010, the activist jaranero, Aldo Flores, and who is currently based on Switzerland, has taken the lead to create the *Fandangos Hermanos* (Sibling Fandangos) program. It consists of fandangos and other son jarocho activities performed on the same date as Fandango Fronterizo in other locations of Mexico, the U.S. and the world, with the aim to accompany, support and extend the outcomes and messages of Fandango Fronterizo.

“For me it seemed important to accompany Fandango Fronterizo no matter where we were. The idea is to do something symbolic” (Flores, 2020). The first Fandango Hermano organized in 2010 was in San Andrés Tuxtla, a town in Veracruz. Aldo Flores (2020) recalls that its organization developed quite simple: they connected to the border fandango via Skype, played some music for them, and in the location created a graphic arts exhibition in relation to the border.

After that, Aldo Flores has used his and Fandango Fronterizo’s networks to encourage other jaranero communities to join. So far, there has been around twenty Fandangos Hermanos in cities of the U.S. and Mexico, such as New York, Philadelphia, Los Ángeles, Mexico City, Ciudad Juárez, Monterrey, Mérida, Tulum, San José del Cabo, Guadalajara, Puebla, Chiapas, Tenosique, Catemaco, Xalapa, San Andrés Tuxtla, Amatlán de los Reyes and the Port of Veracruz. And in other countries such as Canada, Spain, France and Switzerland.

Beyond the fact of connecting to other territories and extending the presence of Fandango Fronterizo, what can be significative is the means in which this network of initiatives is articulated to build coherence:

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<sup>14</sup> It stops occurring only at the border/ this fandango celebration/ because people takes part as well/ from Mérida to Switzerland/ like breeze the protest arrives to Las Patronas/ and little by little spices up/ in this upside-down world/ from Montreal to San Andrés/ the wall crumbles.

First of all, it integrates the migration and border features according to each local experiences and realities. This means that some fandangos might either highlight the other non-physical types of borders. For example, in the case of other countries, question the local migration regulations and their own experience as migrants; evidence the same asymmetric dynamics of other political borders; or simply display the reality of Fandango Fronterizo at the Mexico-U.S. border.

One of the most exemplary cases is the one celebrated in Amatlán de los Reyes, Veracruz. It is organized by a jarocho band, Los Pájaros del Alba, in order to support Las Patronas. A woman collective, based in the same locality, that has been acknowledged with the National Human Rights Award due to their labor in assisting and providing food to Central American and Mexican migrants riding *La Bestia* (“The Beast”) train on their way to the U.S.

This fandango is held in Las Patronas’ premises and its main purpose is to collect money or groceries for the migrants, with the means of a fandango celebration. A second example is held at Basel in Switzerland where the local jaranero community gathers, in an activist approach, outside the premises of a federal asylum center and play for the migrants who are on a “sort of a confined space” (Flores, 2020). Both examples present in a very clear way their purpose of accompaniment towards Fandango Fronterizo (to illustrate better, see Appendix 7).

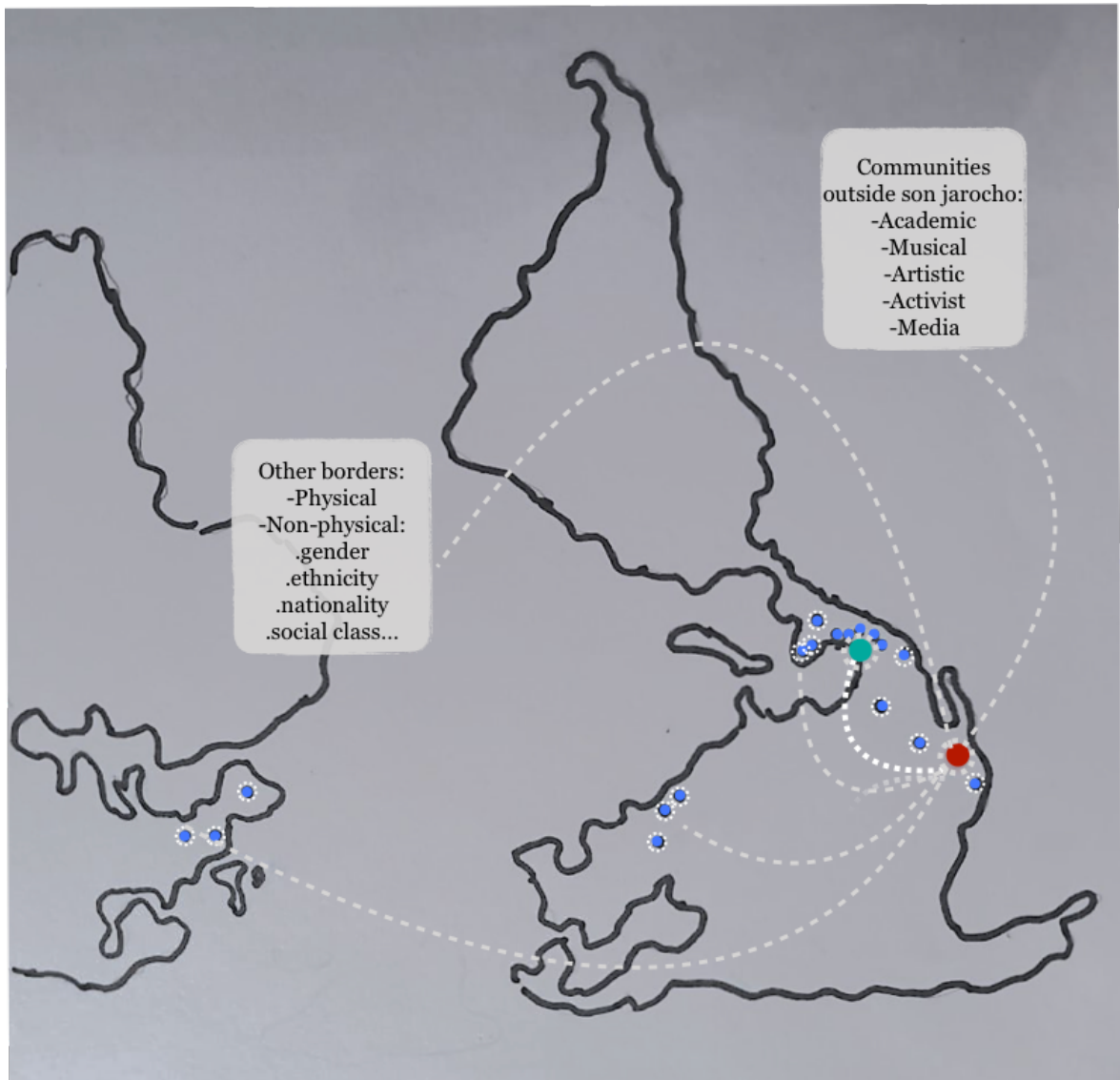
Second, the articulation also depends on the resources and possibilities of the local initiative, beyond the support that Fandango Fronterizo can provide. Meaning that each node possesses autonomy, and the outcomes might be different among each other:

*In some places they organize a fandango, in others they just prepare food or exhibit a movie on migration. There is no control on that, because if there is only three people, it is impossible to have a fandango, but they have the chance to do another type of programs. Each group is responsible for the realization of their own activities, for deciding on their reasons, audiences and means of doing it. Some even receive sponsors. (Flores, 2020)*

At this point, the level of coordination among the different Fandangos Hermanos still needs to be tied up. Some fandangos are already well articulated, though others are not yet, which as it is stated before, depend on the local communities of the network.

Given said the above, Fandango Fronterizo through its Fandangos Hermanos and other mentioned projects, undertakes a translocational and glocal role that creates a network where the jaranero communities of Tijuana-San Diego are connected to Veracruz, to other parts of Mexico, the U.S. and the world; that transcends those connections to other types of communities and spheres; and that simultaneously enables each node of this network to connect and impact their local communities (see Figure 11).

It is possible in this way to understand the influence that Fandango Fronterizo could encompass in a long-term and macro-level aspect, be it cultural, social or political.



*Figure 11. Map of Fandango Fronterizo's extended networks.*



### *5.3.1 Grow to the inside. Building stability and continuity*

The projects and exposition that Fandango Fronterizo has recently achieved, particularly since the collaboration with the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra, have made the organizers realize even more the necessity of growing organizationally, specifically in terms of formalization. In this way, the organization will acquire better capabilities to satisfy the needs of the upcoming projects, optimize the organization process for future editions of Fandango Fronterizo, and build more stability.

According to the interviewees, formalization will mean to adopt a more structured planning process that starts with more time in advance (Castillo, 2019), to make a conscious revision of the successes of the organization (Vargas, 2020), even to hire someone in charge of the management and follow-up on a more regular basis (Castillo, 2019), and, as it is developed below, to register as an association.

Additionally, growing to the inside and building stability is also translated into the development of a continuous program throughout the year.

#### ***The plans of a registered association***

Fandango Fronterizo's organization is not currently incorporated which, according to the interviewees, is a key strategic aspect that has been raised in the committee's meetings but so far has not been achieved.

According to them, registering as a civil association will bring benefits, particularly in terms of funding. Considering that one of the growing challenges for Fandango Fronterizo has been the funding (López, 2020) and the creation of a stable income structure, the legal registration is recognized (Castillo, 2019; Muñoz-Meléndez, 2020) as an important administrative step that once it is achieved, it will enable the organization to apply for other funds.

For example, the regulations for the civil society organizations in Mexico (*Ley Federal Del Fomento a Las Actividades Realizadas Por Organizaciones de La Sociedad Civil*, 2004) indicates that the legal registration enables the access to public monetary and administrative support, acquire tax incentives and acquire the authorization to issue tax deductible receipts. The same occurs, though with some nuances, in the U.S. system.

By doing this, it will impact on the diversification of their funding sources, it will give the possibility to allocate the expenses and invest in services or equipment, for example, “pay salaries or rent an office” (Castillo, 2019), and relief at some degree the monetary concerns: “you can relax a little bit because there are more chances to secure the payments of the guests, for example” (Castillo, 2019).

Besides from the funds, Gabriela Muñoz-Meléndez (2020) noticed that other benefits from the legal conformation are securing the continuity and protection of the organization. First, because the legal structure will support the project through “shared leadership and responsibilities” (Muñoz-Meléndez, 2020) despite of the people in it, so whenever someone leaves, the event will be able to hold its continuity. And second, because as it was mentioned before, Fandango Fronterizo has dealt with appropriation attempts from external organizations and individuals, therefore its autonomy and concept could be protected: “it has been more than ten years of Fandango Fronterizo. This challenge [of the legal registration] is worth it” (Muñoz-Meléndez, 2020).

### ***Son jarocho for the rest of the year***

Fandango Fronterizo has acknowledged the feasibility to diversify and expand its program in a wider timeframe than the one-year event at the fence. And even though they have previously organized some occasional workshops and some fandangos in different dates, whether for mere celebration or fundraising purposes, concrete plans to establish a more permanent program with son jarocho activities at a local level are being developed.

For this reason, at the beginning of 2020 they started a collaboration with “La Casa del Túnel” in Tijuana, a space that used to be the entrance to a tunnel where persons and drugs were passed illegally, and that currently functions as an art center. This space hosts Fandango Fronterizo’s “Hogar del Son Fronterizo” (Home of the Border Son) program which currently consist of permanent son jarocho music and dance workshops, that due to the pandemics are now shifted to virtual format.

The idea is that in the future, other activities are included in order to “give us opportunities to bring more son jarocho musicians to the border. Not only for Fandango Fronterizo in particular, but for promoting this expression throughout the year” (Castillo, 2019). And even though this project is quite recent, a great number of possibilities can be identified.

First, it is a method to extend the presence of Fandango Fronterizo throughout the year, and therefore increase its social-weaver impact in the local and migrant communities. Second, it strengthens the relations of Fandango Fronterizo with other cultural actors in the locality, and simultaneously increases the opportunities to connect with the jaranero communities outside the border. Third, it brings the possibility to expand into other types of content around son jarocho outside the fandango format, such as workshops, talks, or other artistic and research projects which could bring other audiences as well. And fourth, it can eventually become a funding source, as a self-generated income or through grants or public funding for specific projects.

## 6 DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter discusses the means in which the research fulfills the aim specified in the Introduction chapter, which is to *shed light on the role of NSA in cultural diplomacy through the experience of a non-Western, small non-profit form of organization operating on the Mexico-U.S. border*. In order to achieve this goal, the main findings are summarized and discussed in connection to the theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, the chapter presents the study's contributions to existing theories, along with recommendations for further research.

### 6.1 The diplomatic role of NPCO in cultural diplomacy

The inclusion of a broader range of actors in the equation of cultural diplomacy clearly advances the field towards a more global and plural practice. These actors bring a variety of perspectives, aims, and practices, thereby bridging the gaps that states have failed to address. However, the diversity of practices, together with continuous subjugation to official acts of diplomacy, introduces additional complexities when assessing NPCO's role and impact in cultural diplomacy (G. Lee & Ayhan, 2015).

Establishing clear parameters to formulate this evaluation remains a challenge. Definitive conclusions can only be drawn through a contextual examination of Fandango Fronterizo, considering the existing modes of cultural diplomacy and achievements under its own terms (Ang et al., 2015; Pajtinka, 2014). Only then can deliberate, strategic, and systematic approaches be undertaken (Bound et. al., 2007).

Building upon G. Lee and Ayhan's paper (2015), which observes the importance of evaluating outcomes and practices in addition to stated aims, as suggested by LaPorte (2012), holds value in determining diplomatic potential. Particularly when the diplomatic role of an actor is unintentional. In light of this, evaluating the narratives, imagery, values, socio-cultural outcomes, aims, and other elements produced by Fandango Fronterizo's mission, practices, and programs, as presented in the results, contributes to delineate the diplomatic role of NPCO in the following ways:

First, the results of this study report the capacity of Fandango Fronterizo to generate significant socio-cultural impacts for diverse communities on the border. This impact is translated in terms of fostering heterogeneous communities, reinforcing participants' identities, and building safe spaces in a migratory context marked by political harshness, violence, and other "unfolded naturalizations of inequality" (Santos, 2011, p. 16).

Consequently, the diplomatic role in this study means to *provide safe spaces for intercultural dialogue among individuals and communities from diverse cultural backgrounds*. These spaces empower participants with autonomy and agency to articulate their perspectives authentically, free from preconceived images or stereotypes imposed by others. Moreover, Fandango Fronterizo's approach to establishing these spaces aligns with strategies of mutuality advocated by contemporary perspectives of cultural diplomacy discussed in the Theoretical Framework of this thesis.

These strategies emphasize dialogue, long-term and participatory projects, engagement, value promotion, cooperation, collaboration, cocreation, and exchanges over showcases, self-promotion, and image projection (Jora, 2013), thereby deviating from the modern-Western-state-centric diplomacy model.

Second, Fandango Fronterizo implements different narratives that contest the physical and psychological harshness of borders while raising awareness on rigorous migration policies. These narratives counteract the negative perceptions of Tijuana and border spaces, "represent[ing] them in all its complexities" (Jora, 2013, p. 44). Moreover, by gathering at the border itself, Fandango Fronterizo proves that a diplomatic role in the context of this study also means to *contest and create awareness on the elements of colonial difference, in ideological or performative realms*. Indeed, this study asserts that such colonial differences transcend acts or narratives in terms of nation-states.

Additional to the meaning of non-state diplomatic role, the study elaborates on the following:

Unintentional participation of NPCO in cultural diplomacy is feasible. Contrary to LaPorte's (2012) proposal, direct political aims are not mandatory for participating in the international arena. However, this study acknowledges the inherent political nuances within Fandango Fronterizo's narratives, hinting at the intersection

between cultural expression and political undertones. In this way, this study does not fully contradict LaPorte's (2012) arguments and adds that political features can manifest not only as aims but also as undeliberated outcomes. Consequently, the diplomatic role in the context of the study *cannot be reduced to political aims, but it can entail political features*.

Moreover, the results suggest that a diplomatic role *need not directly impact official diplomatic relations*. This observation resonates with Bound et al.'s (2007) perspective on how NSA and NPCO cultivate the operating context within which official relations are created. Lastly, NSA's placement in cultural diplomacy needs acknowledgement from key entities with the power to legitimize practices and knowledge production, such as the state and academia.

## **6.2 A border diplomacy proposal**

Fandango Fronterizo challenges the Western state-centric model of cultural diplomacy in several ways. Not only in the form of a NSA, but also because its practices, and therefore its diplomatic role, are rather built from alternative values and principles of a non-Western tradition: son jarocho and fandango, which are the result of colonization effected over five hundred years ago. These communal values, although rooted in tradition, dialogue in many ways with values of mutuality that global and critical approaches of cultural diplomacy aim to promote.

In light of this, Fandango Fronterizo partakes in building *border diplomacy*, a counter-hegemonic proposal of cultural diplomacy conceptualized within the framework of border thinking theory by Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006). This proposal is situated at the intersection of borders, drawing from the lived experiences of individuals and collectives in border regions, rather than centering around state action. It is characterized by alternative values originating from a tradition, implemented through a non-Western communal and festive form of organization, and shaped by a sense of displacement, such as that experienced by migrants or communities separated by a border.

In conclusion, this research suggests that the borderlands, both physical and metaphorical, enact a fertile territory for the emergence of "other" forms of cultural diplomacies.

### **6.3 The non-profitness of non-state cultural diplomatic action**

In terms of organizational forms that “operationalize” collective non-state action, the results of this research conclude that:

Small organizational configurations can have a significant diplomatic impact, suggesting that size and organizational form do not necessarily influence diplomatic capacity. What can restrain NPCO’s participation in diplomacy is their acknowledgement as non-state actors, particularly by profit-centric mechanisms (Darby, 2016) that may offer economic resources to the organization.

Moreover, a strong clear mission and adherence to core values enhance the diplomatic role of NPCO; therefore, when sociocultural values are threatened, the diplomatic role is also at risk.

NPCO must navigate a delicate balance between the sociocultural value domain and the resources domain. Moreover, the results also reveal a third influential factor, which is the context. Fandango Fronterizo exemplifies how the border region, combined with limited financial resources, has posed significant challenges. In order to counteract threats to the resource structure, the organization engages with strategies of managerialism and professionalism.

### **6.4 Final words**

- Although Donald Trump’s term is over, and the construction of the Wall seems to be in pause at the time of the study, migratory policies and other protocols implemented in the border of Mexico and U.S. continue to exhibit harshness. Both governments’ foreign strategies and official diplomatic bodies prioritize hard power tools (in the case of the U.S.) and strategies such as nation branding and image projection (in the case of Mexico). As a result, there is a lack of emphasis on creating spaces for collaboration, intercultural exchanges, and cooperation, which are relevant to counteract this existing harshness. Even so, the relations between Mexico and U.S. are much more complex and involve power structures and different political and economic interests of multiple actors.

Fandango Fronterizo, as a non-state actor, proves a strong capacity to

mediate positive intercultural communications among diverse societies. Its practices are valuable in encouraging increased participation of non-state actors, particularly those from non-Western backgrounds, and fostering more dialogues between the North and South. These efforts aim to counteract asymmetries, harsh migratory policies, hate speech, discrimination, oppression, and other forms of power assertion, including stereotypes “in which the ‘other’ is reinvented” (Ibarra-Colado, 2006, p.7).

- My locus of enunciation has inevitably introduced a set of biases and limitations to this research, alongside many challenges and questions. Nevertheless, this study has underscored the significance of operating from a standpoint of self-awareness. Thus, I acknowledge myself in the border: as a Latin-American migrant woman studying in a Finnish institution, struggling and identifying with both traditions.

*To belong in ‘the international community’, you must speak the Centre’s language, use its concepts, discuss its agendas and conform to the stereotype of the ‘imperfect south’ while keeping a ‘polite silence’ on the real causes of your problems. (Ibarra-Colado, 2016, p. 8).*

## **6.5 Further Research**

In theoretical and methodological aspects, this research encountered certain limitations that may also serve as recommendations for further research:

This study was placed in a context of North-South intersections; therefore, the results may be mostly generalized to this type of relationships. Further studies on South-South relations could be of interest in exploring how they respond to the same research questions. It would also be intriguing to observe the power relations within these contexts. Moreover, this same approach could be extended to analyze other border dynamics. For example, exploring the practices of NPCOs at the border of Mexico and Guatemala could be highly informative. In the same way, further exploring Fandangos Hermanos network can bring valuable insights.

In terms of methodology, this study is built on the perspectives of individuals involved in the committee and production team. However, it is worth considering expanding future studies to include a broader range of participants and



stakeholders, such as the audience/participants, special guests, and funders in order to diversify the perspectives presented. After all, Fandango Fronterizo is constructed in a collective and participatory way.

Lastly, the data collection method was limited to interviews due to the impossibility to travel to Tijuana. Although this did not hinder the production of results, conducting on-site-observations could offer alternative approaches to examining the case.

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## **APPENDIXES**

### **1. Interview guide**

#### **Background and lifecycle. Position in the ecosystem**

- How and why did FF was first organized?
- Which have been the turning points in the history of the collective or the main changes?

#### **Mission, vision, values and value proposal**

- Fandango in general is a celebration, as well as FF. So, what does it celebrate?
- What makes your uniqueness?
- What does the organization aim to be in the future?

#### **Organization's structure**

- Tell me briefly about the team that is part of the organization of FF

About the production of FF:

#### **Program**

- How is the program created? Who takes the decisions?

#### **Funding**

- Funding model: Where does your funds come from?
- How is the fund allocation?
- What is your approximated budget?

#### **Collaborations**

- Are there any collaborations? Who are your partners and where do they come from (private, state, individuals, third sector)? What kind of collaborations do you make?
- What is the role of the state or city in both countries?



### **Challenges**

- Which have been the biggest challenges in the organization and in the production of the festival?
- Which are the challenges associated to the border? Which are the advantages of doing the festival at the border?

### **Audiences, reach and communication**

- Who is your audience? How many people attend?
- Which are the communication tools of the organization?
- What does Fandango Fronterizo want to say about Mexico, the border and son jarocho? How, why and for whom?
- Do you think that the festival has had an international reach with other media and communities?

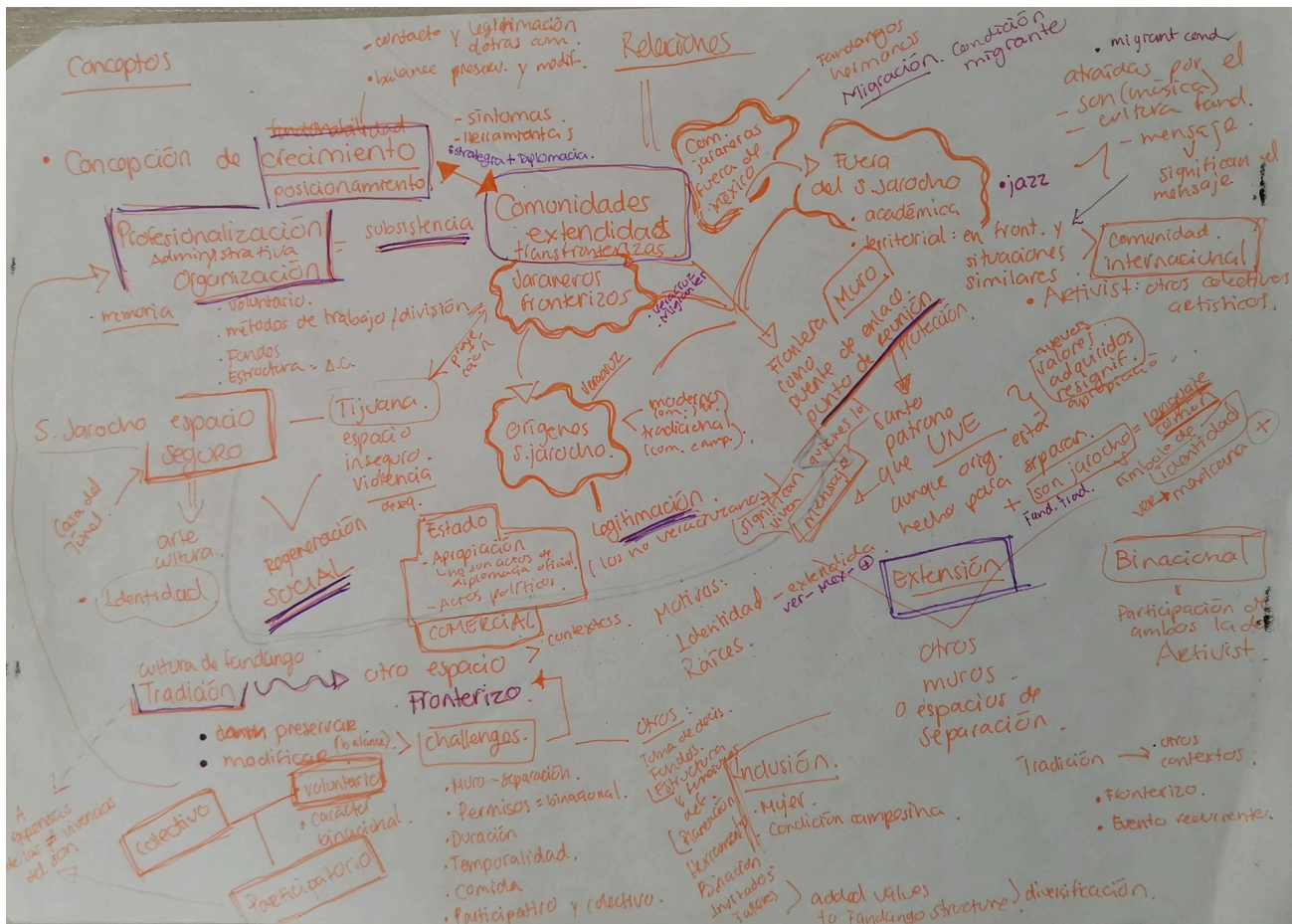
### **Position and impact in the border territory**

- What do you think is the role or position of Fandango Fronterizo in the border territory?
- What do you think is the organization's position in the relations between Mexico and US?
- Do you think that FF has influenced the policies of both countries? Has it influenced other groups or individuals?
- Is there any dialogue or support from the political elites in both countries? From NGO's? Artistic-cultural organizations?

## 2. Excerpt of thematic analysis

	A	B	C	D
1	Entrevista Jorge Castillo			
2				Content analysis
3	Quote	Label	Category	Theme
15	Nos hemos dado cuenta en la parte positiva que andando en el fandango la onda es tranquila, no nos metemos en otras cosas.	El fandango es tranquilo, algo positivo	Fandango vs violencia	Fandango es un lugar seguro
16	La gente que cruza, viene al fandango cruza la frontera, la comunidad jaranera es tranquila, te vas a tu casa, regresas y no pasa nada.	Comunidad jaranera es tranquila	Fandango vs a la violencia	Fandango es un lugar seguro
17	Si andas en otras cosas, si ahí decides ir a otra cosa, a los bares o a los antros, y ahí la cosa se pone más peligroso, pues ya es decisión de la gente.	Otros lados sí son peligrosos	Contextos ajenos al fandango	Fandango es un lugar seguro
18	Pero nunca ha pasado nada. Siempre hemos tenido suerte de que no pasa nada.	Nunca ha pasado nada, por suerte		Fandango es un lugar seguro
22	Pero Patricio cuenta que él siente que, incluso en Veracruz habiendo tanta violencia en estos tiempos, que el fandango es la ruta de la paz.	Violencia y fandango (son) para la paz	Fomenta paz	Fandango es un lugar seguro
30	Pero en aquel tiempo no era tan fácil porque amanecían policías colgados, veías las imágenes de gente encajuelada hecha pedazos, Y era muy fuerte las noticias, y la gente escuchaba eso.	Imágenes y eventos violentos	Condiciones en la frontera	Condiciones en la frontera
31	Escuchaban que les decían en las noticias que no salieran después de las 10pm, y a los americanos les decían en las noticias que el gobierno recomienda altamente que no crucen a Tijuana, que no vayan, que no está seguro, no dejen ir a sus hijos. Todo eso era difícil.	Tijuana inseguro	Percepción del lado americano: violencia en el lado sur de la frontera	Condiciones en la frontera
35	Yo no desistí. Yo lo quiero hacer. Me apoyaba en la idea de que el fandango era tranquilo, de que nunca había visto nada.	no desistí. El fandango era tranquilo	fandango seguro: motivo emprendedor	Fandango es un lugar seguro
	Incluso ahora que fui a París, en el encuentro de junio, y estábamos afuera de la torre Eiffel en el fandango Y dos veces llegaron unos chavos que parecían, vamos a decir, árabes, no sé de qué parte pero de origen árabe, borrachos	en París estaban molestando a las muchachas.	Violencia en todo nivel y latitud	Fandango es un lugar seguro
<p>◀ ▶ <b>Análisis Jorge</b> Análisis Gustavo Análisis Gabriela Análisis Alddo Todos Sheet3 +</p>				

### 3. Concept map



#### 4. Map of Sotavento region



Programa de Desarrollo Cultural del Sotavento (2010, April 15). Map of Sotavento region [Map]. Sotavento. Programa de Desarrollo Cultural.

[http://programasotavento.blogspot.com/2010/04/actividades-recientes.html%20\(12](http://programasotavento.blogspot.com/2010/04/actividades-recientes.html%20(12)

## 5. Example of Fandango Fronterizo's program

### MAYO 2018. PROGRAMACIÓN/PROGRAM



<b>JUE 24</b>	6pm -8pm	Taller Tijuana/workshop	Antigua Bodega De Papel Tijuana
	8-12pm	Fandango/convivio	
<b>VIÉ 25</b>	6-9pm	Taller/Workshop Tendremos comida para comprar	Worlbeat Ctr San Diego
<b>SÁB 26</b>	10-11am	Lado de SD – Caminata al Parque de la Amistad. Traigan agua, bloqueador solar, y snacks.	Parque de la Amistad
	11-2pm	Fandango Fronterizo En punto/Sharp	Faro Playas/ Friendship Park
	3-4pm	Recargar la pila/Break	
	4-5pm	Todos a preparar el espacio/ Set up	Faro Playas de Tijuana
	5:00pm	Tamales/Dinner	
	6:00 – 7pm	Música/Music	
	7-8pm	Dialogo, invitados especiales/ Dialogue, special guests	
	8:30pm – Amanecer	Fandango Hasta que el cuerpo aguante	
<b>DOM 27</b>	12pm	Concierto/Concert Invitados especiales y el Afro Latin Jazz Organization	Casa de la Cultura de Playas

Provided by the organization

## 6. Fandango Fronterizo's decalogue

1. In Fandango Fronterizo, the *jaranas* are our heart. In order to hear them beat we can balance the number of *jaranas* that are played on each side. If in San Diego only 25 or 30 *jaranas* can sound, nothing better than allowing them to be heard and respond with another 25 or 30 *jaranas* from Tijuana.
2. Singing is one of the greatest joys, even more when a verse is recited at Fandango Fronterizo. In son jarocho singing means learning to listen to whoever has the turn to sing. This is a dialogue with the music, therefore time is allowed for response, whether in Tijuana or San Diego.
3. We want Fandango Fronterizo to be an inclusive space. That is why we seek that the duration time of a *son* is of 10 or 12 minutes. In this way we can play many more sounds and the *jaraneros* and *jaraneras* will have a greater opportunity to participate.
4. The *tarima* of Tijuana and San Diego is for the dancers. Whoever wants to *zapatear* is invited, always! But you have to respect the shifts for the dance that are organized on one side of the stage.
5. The Border Fandango appears in photographs and videos. Nothing gives us so much joy than receiving people who want to know and register this great celebration. But the enjoyment of our family is the priority. So for this XII Fandango Fronterizo there will be a special area from which photographers, journalists and documentary makers will be able to approach the stage of Tijuana and San Diego without obstructing the passage of those who want to sing, dance or play.
6. Fandango Fronterizo brings together *jaraneros* and *jaraneras* from Mexico and the United States. However, it is easier to access the fandango on the Tijuana side, which means that there will be more people compared to San Diego. Let's organize rotations of groups of *jaraneros* and *jaraneras* in Tijuana every time a *son* is played, so we will enjoy our music on both sides and our whole family will have the opportunity to sing.
7. El Fandango Fronterizo is a dynamic party, full of singing and dancing. Bring water so you can charge energy.
8. Fandango Fronterizo takes place in an open space, in the morning and at noon.

For this reason, try to use sunscreen and a hat when participating.

9. Bring your family and friends to Fandango Fronterizo. The jaraneros and jaraneras embrace anyone who wants to know the son jarocho. In this great party the welcome is for all human beings and there are no labels or restrictions or phobias.

10. The son jarocho is shared and lived. In Fandango Fronterizo we want you to enjoy every moment and every *son*. Respect and tolerance is always present when we enjoy life through music.

Fandango Fronterizo. (2019a, May 27). *Decálogo del Fandango Fronterizo* [Facebook status update]. Facebook.  
<https://www.facebook.com/FandangoFronterizo/posts/2370628469822940>. Own translation.

## 7. Fandangos Hermanos

*Poster of Fandangos Hermanos in XII Fandango Fronterizo*



Provided by the organizers



*Fandango Hermano at Las Patronas*



Retrieved from Grifo de Luz. (2016, May 30). *Fandango Fronterizo en Amatlán, Veracruz, “Las Patronas” Mayo 2016 Señor presidente* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABmtO8zjvzY> (1:26; 1:13; 2:45)

*Fandango Hermano at Basel, Switzerland*



Retrieved from Barfuss Kollektiv. (2018, June 4). *Fandango Fronterizo Basel, Suiza* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hf8Xgq6obla> (3:13; 5:39)