

**Reshaping policy: Creativity and Everyday Practice in an
Arts Organisation in Mexico City**

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Abstract

This research is concerned with how policy becomes practice. It examines the ways by which a policy is reshaped through its encounter with people, architecture and facilities, documents and specific realisations in art projects. In particular, it is concerned with how a left-wing arts education policy, one that aimed to emancipate disadvantaged people, worked in practice – including how it sometimes ended up running counter to its stated aims.

The policies that are followed here were first devised by the Leftist government in Mexico City between 1997 and 2000, and then expanded through various revisions and new policies in the following years. As part of the initial policy, an arts organisation, Faro de Oriente – Lighthouse of the Orient – was constructed in a deprived area in the East of Mexico City to give ‘access’ to ‘arts’ and opportunities for ‘creativity’ for the local population.

This thesis provides an in-depth study of how this specific arts policy was experienced on the ground between 2011-12 by the various participants in FARO –permanent staff, temporary teaching staff and also students who participated in arts workshops. Based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork, including participant observation, interviews, archival research, and photographic documentation, the thesis charts the ways in which particular aspects of the policy were mobilised and to what ends, and how these were reshaped through practice. This thesis highlights the significance not only of intentional actions by people but also of implements of work, such as the architecture of the FARO main building and its physical condition, the role of teaching staff and artistic projects.

Inspired by actor-network and assemblage theory which emphasise the interactions of human with non-human actors and processes that shape entities, the thesis maintains that a policy concerning arts education and creativity refers to the processes, practices and meanings of creativity that participants produce at FARO through everyday practice. A policy is an unfinished social process shaped by technical concepts, materialities, implements and reshaped through the practices of participants. Empirically, this research provides understanding of the everyday dynamics inside FARO, highlighting contradictions and ambiguities for the experience of students. This thesis contributes to debates surrounding policy and creativity through the processes of the everyday life in an arts organisation.

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Author's Declaration

This is to certify that I am responsible for the work submitted in this thesis, and that the original work herein is my own; neither the thesis nor the original work contained within has been submitted to this or any other institution for a higher degree, or to external sources for publication. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Chapter 1 Introduction: Policy and Creativity

For the first time, in 1997, the inhabitants of Mexico City participated in elections to choose the city mayor. This was a significant event because prior to 1997, it was the president who chose the *regente* (mayor) who governed the capital city, and the inhabitants of Mexico City had no opportunity to choose their mayor. In these first elections, the *Partido Revolucionario Democrático* (Revolutionary Democratic Party) (PRD) was voted in, and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas was elected as the first Left-wing mayor to represent the city. For many people, this was significant for the city because they believed that the repression and dictatorship imposed on the country by the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (Revolutionary Institutional Party) (PRI) had come to an end. The PRI had governed the country for 70 years despite the nonconformity of many people who did not feel represented by their presidents. Consequently, students from universities and *campesino* movements took actions to criticise and challenge the institutional power that had not included any projects that met the actual demands of society. During the years in which the PRI governed Mexico, there were various events that explain why, in 1997, the inhabitants of Mexico City shared such happiness and such hope for change.

The economic crisis of 1982 was the result of oil exportation to the US and the government's lack of attention to the diversification of the Mexican economy. The sale of oil was the main source of foreign income for the government at the beginning of the 1980s. When international oil prices stabilised, however, the Mexican economy failed. The Mexican *peso* was devalued, causing a negative impact on the people, whose salaries were insufficient to pay their everyday expenses, and additionally, unemployment levels increased. Since the 1980s, vulnerable economic conditions impacted the *economía informal* (informal economy). In order to deal with the economic crisis, people sold street food (e.g. *tacos*) at markets or on stalls (García-Garza, 2010, p. 41)¹. In the face of the financial crisis, Mexican society continued with its own activities, including building solidarity networks with relatives and finding strategies for survival, such as opening their own businesses or selling street food on the streets of Mexico.

¹ In his research on *tacos callejeros* in Mexico, Domingo García-Garza (2010) explains how various economic crises since the 1980's have accentuated the informal economy. The sale of street food, such as *tacos*, has become a 'survivor strategy' for dealing with loss of employment, low wages and long working-hours (Garcia-Garza, 2010, p. 41).

Nevertheless, a natural event again disrupted the social life of inhabitants in Mexico City. On the 19th of September 1985 an earthquake of 8.1 magnitude killed around 10,000 people. In view of the lack of organisation offered by the State in co-ordinating the rescue of people and the repair of damage, the people organised themselves and participated in rescue activities. They also organised activities in order to raise funds and help people who had lost their possessions. Their actions challenged the capacity of the State to deal with natural disasters. The financial crisis of 1982 and the Mexico City earthquake reinforced a 'cold relationship' between civil society and the State, or rather, the political class represented by the PRI (Hernández-Ortiz n/d). Perhaps it was a sense of annoyance that, in 1988, motivated the inhabitants of Mexico City to create organisations that aided them in criticism of the political life of the country. An example of this is the *Asamblea de Representantes* (Representative Assembly), a political entity allowing that inhabitants could choose their own local government and their own mayor. The work of the Representative Assembly reflected this in 1997, when inhabitants voted for Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and a government with a Leftist ideology governed the capital city of Mexico for the first time.

Cárdenas's governmental team included people who had previously participated in university movements as well as writers and academics who were critical of the repression of the PRI governments. The participation of these social actors in Cárdenas's government meant alliances with people who were critical of the dictatorship of PRI and the 'institutionalization of civil society's demands' (Hernández Ortiz, n/d, p. 5). One of Cárdenas's initiatives was to foster dialogue with civil servants, academics, and the representatives of civil organisations. An example of this is reflected in the kind of public policies that would tackle social inequalities. By considering the points of view of civil society, Cárdenas's team intended to foster democratic processes and tackle inequalities in the city. In line with such intentions, a policy concerning the 'arts' and 'culture' was launched in 1997.

Taking on board advice from artists and activists, Cárdenas's government established an autonomous institution devoted to the *atención a la cultura* (attention to culture) (Álvarez-Enriquez et al., 2002, p. 300; Nivón Bolán, Portal and Rosas-Mantecón, 2002). The *Instituto de Cultura de la Ciudad de México* (Institute for Culture of México City) (ICCM) launched an ambitious Left-wing 'arts education' policy that aimed to emancipate disadvantaged people.²

² For example, the people who worked for both the ICCM and FARO (for example, as organisation makers) were university students with experience of participation in social movements. In the same way,

The goals of the policy intended to open up ‘arts’ and ‘cultural’ institutions and services in deprived areas of Mexico City in order to tackle exclusion through ‘arts education’ and ‘participation’. Furthermore, the political intentions of the arts policy was to promote ‘respect’, ‘tolerance’ among citizens, and to overcome ‘social problems’ (Rosas-Mantecón and Nivón-Bolán, 2006, p. 62). According to Eduardo Nivón-Bolán et al., (2002), the ICCM created 12 programmes, all of them related to the promotion of the *arte y cultura* (art and culture).³ The ICCM opened an arts organisation, Fábrica de Artes y Oficios de Oriente (Industry of Arts and Crafts of the Orient) (FARO) in a socially disadvantaged area in the East of the city. This is a school of arts and crafts that promotes ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ through workshops, exhibitions, concerts and book presentations for the lay public. The ‘arts education’ policy that gave birth to FARO underwent various revisions and was modified over the following years. When the Cárdenas government came to an end, the second Left-wing government, led by Andrés Manuel López-Obrador (2000-2005), disbanded the ICCM and instead established the *Secretaría de Cultura* (Ministry of Culture). This new entity gave continuity to the programmes and organisations opened during the Cárdenas government, although the budget for such programmes and organisations was reduced. Arts organisations such as FARO were affected. Similarly, it can be claimed that the third Left-wing government, led by Marcelo Ebrard (2006-2012), more or less sponsored the Left-wing arts education policy. ‘Creativity’ - associated with economic growth - and ‘cultural industries’ were terms incorporated in the language of the Left-wing policy. In doing this, the rhetoric modified the initial purposes of the ‘arts education’ policy. FARO has evolved within a policy that, on the one hand, promotes participation through arts education, and on the one hand, speaks the language of ‘creativity’ –associated with economic growth and consumption.

My ethnography tells the story of the students I met when I joined the workshops on offer at FARO. Through this story, we will see how they experience, produce and reshape ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ and the reasons for this. This story examines the tensions and difficulties that they experience, especially when they try to explore arts education and creativity

writers, journalists and artists (mainly those familiar with Leftist ideals) advised the new ‘cultural activities’. This information was taken from my own research, both archival and empirical.

³ These activities were associated with theatre and cinema activities; appropriation of streets and squares for music concerts; dance and poetry; painting activities on streets where painters would hold talks and seminars; financial support of music organisations; activities for children; music workshops; literature and cinema festivals.

in a way that is not expected by those who promote ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’. My interest is to show, how, despite the difficulties and tensions that exist at the organisation, students develop their creativity and the reasons of this.

1.1 Research question and argument

The broad goal of this thesis is to understand the processes through which policy becomes practice. It seeks to answer the question: How is a policy reshaped through its encounter with the people, architecture, documents and specific realisations in arts projects? In order to answer this question, I will examine an ambitious Left-wing arts policy, which aims to encourage arts education and creativity in the arts organisation FARO. Three aims guide this research: to explore the kind of ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ that FARO is shaping; to examine how students experience ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ at FARO; and to examine how the practices of the students at FARO reshape ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’.

The research question is investigated based on my fieldwork among students that I met at the arts organisation between November 2011 and September 2012. The focus of this research is the everyday practices of the students at FARO. My interest in exploring their practices at the organisation has focussed on examining the ways in which subjects’ social relations and their interactions with the material, the technical, and their circulation of meanings reshape a body of political purposes, expectations and strategies concerning ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’. By focusing on the everyday practice of the students, I am interested in exploring how they experience and reshape ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ and the reasons for this.

In this thesis I will argue that policy concerning arts education and creativity is not merely a fixed body of purposes, expectations and strategies ready for implementation. Instead, policy is unfinished, processual, a kind of living being. Policy can be described as an unfinished continuous process shaped by the political, the technical and the material, and reshaped through the practices of subjects. The Left-wing policy concerning arts education and creativity is not only about definitions, purposes and strategies, but also the ways in which subjects produce, experience and reshape ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’. Subjects’ practices, social relations and interactions continually produce and reshape policy, by incorporating their meanings, values, and appropriation to the ways in which ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ have been defined and implemented.

This research is relevant for academic discussion about cultural policy, creativity, everyday practice and the experiences of people in public organisations. The chapters of this thesis explore how and why the documents generated by FARO have framed its purposes and expectations concerning arts education and creativity; the ways by which ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ are implemented at the organisation and how students I met experience it; and the reasons students have for attending the organisation and their convivial experience. Each chapter highlights the experiences of students I met and the ways by which they reshape ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ through everyday practice. I hope that this research contributes to an understanding of how and why subjects experience and produce creativity in a public organisation, and the ways in which students’ practices are affected and challenged by political processes and social actors.

This introductory chapter is divided into four sections. Firstly, I present the literature review of policy and creativity in public policy. Particular attention is given to the aims of public policy and how creativity is articulated in political agendas, and to what ends. Then, I discuss how creativity has been explored from an anthropological perspective. This anthropological perspective –and my participant observation in the field- has enabled me to construct an understanding of creativity as process and embedded in everyday life of individuals. Secondly, I present the study case: the ‘cultural policy’ of Mexico City. I introduce how the arts and cultural activities organised by the Mexican State were modified, in part because of the intervention of national and international agents that have privatised ‘cultural’ activities in Mexico since the 1980s. These processes have produced another way to ‘reorganise the cultural activity’ in Mexico and affected the arts education policy that gave birth to FARO (García-Canclini & Piedras-Feria, 2006) in Mexico City. Thirdly, I introduce the analytical perspective of this thesis, Actor Network Theory (ANT) and an assemblage perspective. ANT and an assemblage perspective is useful to explore the ordinary and subtle processes through which the Leftist arts policy become practice in FARO. Such processes include an examination of the interactions of research participants with non-humans. The last section of this introductory chapter describes the organisation of the thesis.

1.2 ‘Culture’ and ‘creativity’ in public policy

The literature concerning the functions and ends of ‘policy’ is partially inspired by Foucault’s concept of ‘governmentality’. This sets out that institutions are ‘forms of power’ that exercise

power over populations (Burchell et al., 1991). The ‘forms of power’ or in other words, the government result in ‘specific governmental apparatuses’ and ‘savoirs’; that is, the government views its population as the ‘object’ to be governed in a ‘rational and conscious manner’ (Burchell et al., 1991). The concept of governmentality highlights that there are multiple mechanisms, instruments and techniques for exercising power relationships. In this respect, policies and institutions are instruments for regulating social relations among individuals or shape individuals (Shore and Wright, 1997). In their *Anthropology of Policy*, Chris Shore and Susan Wright (1997) argue that a policy shapes individuals. They use the concept of ‘governance’ to explain that there are processes through which a policy, not only set out norms from ‘outside’ or ‘above’, but also exerts ‘influence [on] people’s indigenous norms of conduct so that they themselves contribute, not necessarily consciously, to a government’s model of social order’ (Shore and Wright, 1997, pp. 5-6)⁴. In this respect, they say that ‘governance is a ‘type of power’ that has effects ‘on and through the agency and subjectivity of individuals’(Shore and Wright, 1997, p. 6). For them, a policy is an ‘organising concept’ in the social life of individuals. Policies are masked by ideas of efficiency and effectiveness, yet behind the mask of such ideals, Shore and Wright say that there are processes by which modes of power come into being, for example, ‘techniques of the self’ (Shore and Wright, 1997, p. 9). This means that people naturalise norms which may influence their behaviour and actions (Lukes, 1973 in Shore & Wright, 1997, p. 7). For Raymond Apthorpe, the language of policy ‘is to persuade rather than inform’(Apthorpe, 1997, p. 43;55). This implies that there is a type of power because ‘cultural values’ and ‘moral systems’ are represented in the language of policy. The language of a policy involves categorizations to individuals. Inadequate ‘categorizations may lead to further victimization and blaming of vulnerable populations’ (Seidel and Vidal, 1997, p. 59).

In the field of ‘cultural’ policy the concept of culture illuminates two meanings: the ‘aesthetic’ and the ‘anthropological’ (Nivón Bolán, 2006; McGuigan, 2003; Miller and Yudice, 2002b; Bennett, 1998a). The aesthetic concept is about the ‘artistic criteria’ that emerges from people’s artistic expressions (Miller and Yudice, 2002a). The anthropological is about the forms by which people produce, share and circulate habits, symbols and costumes, or ways of life (Miller

⁴ See for example Shore and Wright (2011) who raise a critique to conventional models of policy and suggests an ‘interpretive approach’. This approach opens up the question ‘how do people engage with policy and what do they make of it?’ (Shore and Wright, 2011, p.8). It is about exploring the behaviour of a policy from the experience of people.

and Yudice, 2002a). For Justin Lewis and Toby Miller (2003) a cultural policy is a 'site for the production of cultural citizens'(Lewis and Miller, 2003, p. 1). They go on to say that the maintenance of cultural citizenship is through education, custom, language, and religion' (Lewis and Miller, 2003, p. 1). Cultural institutions, such as museums, are some of those spaces that make up individuals in particular ways. In his analysis of the birth of museums in the nineteenth century, Bennett (Bennett, 1998a, 1995) argues that 'culture' was a resource to modify people's behaviour. The governmental programmes in the nineteenth century intended to 'bring about changes in acceptable norms and forms of behaviour and consolidating those norms as self-acting imperatives by inscribing them within broadly disseminated regimes of self-management' (Bennett, 1995, p.23). Museums and galleries were instruments that functioned as part of governmental programmes to shape and civilise people. Bennett's arguments echo those of Annie Coombes (1994), who explains how, in the early twentieth century, the British government implemented an educational policy entitled 'Education for All'. Under this policy, Coombes highlights how museum exhibitions contributed to the education of people, especially the working classes. Museums were intended 'to educate the masses to accept the existing order' (Coombes, 1995, p.20) ⁵. This literature discusses the power relationships between the state and its institutions, and the ways in which 'policy' and institutions do indeed produce individuals with particular values and behaviours. The literature introduces as top-down relation between the state and individuals, in which power is centred and executed in order to act on 'passive' individuals. However, the literature says little about how neoliberal logic has altered the ways in which the state organises 'culture' and the implications of this for the participation of individuals in activities concerning 'arts' and 'culture'.

A cultural policy is not isolated from neoliberal processes. Alliances among States, companies and international organisations means participating in establishing forms of government that blur the boundaries of nation-states. These processes that Clive Barnett calls 'restructuring of modes of government', bring about effects for the so-called (re) spatialisation of the government across heterogeneous scales and through a variety of spaces (Barnett, 1999, pp. 376-377). Similarly, James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta (2002) argue how in neo-liberal times, the contemporary politics of globalisation affect the state into 'changing forms of state spatialization' (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002, p. 982). Global markets and international organisations not only make political alliances with governments, but also, their alliances also

⁵ See also Bennett (Bennett, 1998b); Strathern (Strathern, 1992).

produce ‘a new modality of government’ that impacts on individualisation processes and the ‘responsabilisation of subjects who are increasingly empowered to discipline themselves’ (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002, p. 989). Public policy and institutions have key role for the formation of individuals with certain attributes. One of those attributes is ‘creativity’.

In the language of policy and education, ‘creativity’ seem to be a value either to achieve or to support in order to get success in ‘knowledge based-economies’ (Ingold and Hallam, 2007, p. 2). It is a kind of ‘moral imperative’ that individuals should develop or accomplish (Osborne, 2003, p. 508). Cultural policy linking ‘creativity’ highlights ‘therapeutic roles’. This implies to ‘optimize the creative and expressive capacities of individuals, to facilitate social cohesion and to reinvigorate and activate the citizenry in the name of stakeholder governance’ (Grundy and Boudreau, 2008, p. 350). In this respect, critiques of ‘cultural’ policy, tackling exclusion and promoting the repair of the social bond, highlight the instrumental role of the ‘arts’ and ‘creativity’ in reducing anti-social behaviour or violence. For Mirza (2005) this rhetoric is a ‘tool to engage citizens emotionally’ (Mirza, 2005, p. 350). In this respect, policies concerning arts education and creativity have a role in the formation of creative individuals. Creativity seems to be a value to achieve in knowledge-based economies. Various perspectives of knowledge link creativity with economic and individualization processes.

1.3 Creativity, innovation and creative individuals

Creativity has become a term broadly used in public policy and economic processes. Policy-makers and urban planners design ambitious programmes to make ‘creative cities’, highlighting the economic benefits for the creative industries and social benefits for the population (Atkinson and Easthope, 2009; Schulz and Okano, 2012). For Osborne, areas such as psychology, business and education are considered fundamental in constructing a ‘doctrine of creativity’(Osborne, 2003, p. 508) that boost economic growth, creative and innovative individuals (Osborne, 2003, p. 508; Raj Isar and Anheier, 2010; Florida, 2013). Psychologists emphasise that ‘creative’ individuals are those who possess talents that only few people have (Osborne, 2003; Giuffre, 2009). Business and management areas encourage individuals to share ideas and strategies to be implemented in the creative industries. Education seems to be a mechanism through which people are taught to become creative. In this respect, ideas that can be described as novel – that challenge previous conventions or provide solutions – are regarded as valuable within a knowledge-based economy (Ingold and Hallam, 2007, p. 2). Education

encourages programmes concerning arts and creativity. Developing ‘creative thinking’ and ‘artistic expression’ implies ensuring the ‘cultural health’ of individuals (Foster, 2009, p. 259).

In times where international markets are highly competitive and people are expected to become consumers or subjects with innovative ideas, creativity is seen as ‘a major driver of economic prosperity and social well-being’ (Ingold and Hallam, 2007, p. 1). The view of creativity with economic growth has historical roots. John Liep (2001) argues that, since the Enlightenment, economic processes have shaped our ideas on creativity. He says that new ‘modes of production’, ‘the decentralization of capital’, ‘the extension and intensification of the international economy’ and ‘the globalization of the media’ have impacted the lives of individuals, particularly modes of consumption and the perception of creativity in western societies. For Liep, this view is associated ‘with the increasing reification of culture as spectacle and performance and with the aestheticization of everyday life’ (Liep, 2001, p. 4). Following this he says that ‘new professionals’ intervene in the ‘mediation of culture’ and creativity is a ‘strategy’ to shape values, ‘lifestyles’ and offer ‘distinction’ among individuals. Similarly, Orvar Löfgren (Löfgren, 2001) is critical about the idea of creativity that has been embedded in the media since the 1980s. For Löfgren, media have played a role in celebrating creativity as a matter for solving problems, for differentiating between creative individuals and the rest, and for associating creativity with the aesthetisation of people’s everyday lives (Löfgren, 2001, p. 71;75). By examining this view of creativity, the concept is highly structured and associated with individualisation and economic prosperity for markets. People’s “innovative” ideas seem to be a supply through which markets and governments are being nurtured for economic growth. However, creativity is not just the production of “innovative” ideas and the production of creative individuals. Anthropological literature offers other understanding of creativity in a way less individual and more social.

1.4 Creativity as improvisation

Literatures of creativity have gradually evolved in anthropology. For anthropologists Renato Rosaldo, Smadar Lavie, Kiring Narayan (Rosaldo et al., 1993) creativity is the capacity of humans to ‘transform existing cultural practices in a manner that a community or certain of its members find of value’ (Rosaldo et al., 1993 p.5). Creativity is part of the social life of individuals. An example of this is Renato Rosaldo’s chapter ‘Ilongot Visiting: Social Grace and the Rhythms of Everyday Life’ (1993), who explains how in circumstances characterised by

'indeterminacy', 'variability' and 'unpredictability', improvisation is a human 'capacity' that arises in response to circumstances, or rather to 'zones of indeterminacy' (Rosaldo, 1993, p. 256). He also explains how Ilongot people respond to the tensions of everyday life by way of 'sensitivity', 'responsiveness', and 'flexibility' (Rosaldo, 1993, p. 263). These 'quality[ies] of action' are 'open-endedness' and manifest improvisation (Rosaldo, 1993, p. 263). This echoes Borofsky (2001) who argues that 'creativity' is 'the act of exploring beyond the habituated and is basic to dealing with the unknown, the uncertain, in our lives' (Borofsky, 2001, p. 69). Both Rosaldo (1993) and Borofsky (2001) highlight how in moments of tension and the everyday, people 'improvise' in order to habituate to the circumstances or to continue with their lives 'exploring and dealing with the unknown' (Borofsky, 2001, p. 69). A key term from this literatures is everyday life, in part because it let us see how creativity as improvisation is continuously produced through the processes of the everyday life. For Bruner (1993) culture is 'always in production, constituted and reconstituted in every act (...) alive, in constant movement' (Bruner, 1993, p. 322). This view, one that seems to me democratic, lets us see that people, in their everyday lives, continuously produce culture and this does not necessarily imply a kind of 'change' and 'transformation'. Furthermore, for Bruner 'improvisation' and 'creativity' are pivotal to understanding how culture is produced (Bruner, 1993, p. 326). In others works, creativity and improvisation are theorised separately. Whilst creativity is understood as 'innovation', improvisation is understood as an 'exploration of possibilities within a certain framework of rules' (Liep, 2001, p. 2). As John Liep (2001) says:

[Creativity is] An activity that produces something new through the recombination and transformation of existing cultural practices or forms. As I suggest below, one may envisage a continuum from small-scale everyday creativity to intensive creativity concentrated in a single place or period (Liep, 2001, p. 2).

Although Liep is critical to the idea of creativity within the context of economic process which highlights creativity as a value to obtain success in a knowledge based-economy, his view on creativity is criticised in turn in the work of Tim Ingold and Elizabeth Hallam (2007). For Ingold and Hallam, creativity as improvisation is about the ways in which people respond to circumstances that can be described as 'contingent' (Ingold and Hallam, 2007, p. 2), that is, circumstances in which there are no procedures or systems of norms that can indicate to individuals how they should respond to certain circumstances. To put it quite blatantly, the moments when life is less structured and ordered allows for 'spaces of improvisation' to arise (Ingold and Hallam, 2007, p. 2). A reading like this implies that the cultural practices of people are being made continuously and they manifest creativity. Thus, Ingold and Hallam say that the

difference between creativity as ‘innovation’ and as ‘improvisation’ is that the first emphasises creativity ‘by way of its products’ whilst the second ‘by way of its processes’ (Ingold & Hallam, 2007, p. 2-3). They say that understanding creativity as innovation is ‘to read it backwards’, that is, in terms of its outcomes, however, creativity as improvisation is ‘to read it forwards’, in terms of its ‘processes’ for these are ‘always in the making’(Ingold & Hallam, 2007, p. 2-3). They describe four characteristics of improvisation: ‘generative’, ‘relational’, ‘temporal’ and ‘the way we work’. In the first case, improvisation is continuously made through the cultural practices of individuals. This includes practices that can be perceived as imitations of previous practices. For example, copying is generative in that it involves a continuous ‘alignment of observation’ (Ingold & Hallam, 2007, p. 7). The process by which a person appears to copy a model is ‘alignment’ and therefore such a process is generative. Second, it is relational in that cultural practices do not break with their ‘predecessors’. For Ingold and Hallam, ‘social life is a task, and for those engaged in it the overriding concern is to keep going, rather than coming to a dead end or becoming caught in a loop of ever-repeating cycles’ (Ingold & Hallam, 2007, p. 7). This seems to me one of the main points against the idea of creativity associated with innovation, that is to say, people’s cultural practices are processes involving movements and they manifest creativity, especially in circumstances of challenge or difficulties. Third, creativity as improvisation is ‘temporal’, in that the time is not subordinated to western systems of time, ‘but one that is lived and felt in the pulsating rhythms of life itself’ (Ingold & Hallam, 2007, p.10). Fourth, it is the way we work, meaning that:

life cannot be fully codified as the output of any system of rules of representations. This is because life does not pick its way across the surface of a world where everything is fixed and in its proper place, but is a movement through a world that is crescent (Ingold and Hallam, 2007, p.12).

These four points highlight how creativity is produced through processes that take place in everyday life. In this line, James Oliver (Oliver, 2009) argues that creativity is ‘openness’. For Oliver, creativity as openness means ‘to question the very demand for a fixed definition or outcome, product or proof. It is to shift the emphasis from innovation to improvisation, and to incorporate the social, cultural and embodied context’ (Oliver, 2009, p. 300). Finally, his concept, creativity as openness, suggests a view on creativity that is ‘pre-eminently subjective, relational, situational and temporal’ (Oliver, 2009, p. 320).

Others works point out the ‘situations’ or ‘environments’ through which creativity ‘by way of its processes’ (Ingold and Hallam, 2007, p. 3) comes into being. Such situations are observed in the

field of cinema and in community activities associated with the production of postcards. For Ligia Dabul (Dabul, 2011; Dabul and Pires, 2008) the field of film production and the experiences of those involved in the production of a film, can be described as ‘creative experiences’ or rather *dimensões da criação em arte* (dimensions of creation in art) (Dabul and Pires, 2008, p. 79). Some of these dimensions are ‘interactives’ (Dabul and Pires, 2008, p. 80) and through such social interactions, filmmakers are able to instigate creative processes. Dabul also highlights that creative processes are ‘situational’ in that there is a socially constructed ‘space’ and ‘time’ that intensify the social interactions needed for the production of a film, and therefore, the creative processes (Dabul and Pires, 2008, p. 80). For Dabul, the ‘set’ is the space through which filmmakers, producers, actors and photographers produce *processos de criação* (processes of creation) (Dabul and Pires, 2008, p. 85). Moreover, Dabul (2011) explores how poetry published on the internet becomes ‘democratic’ (Dabul, 2011, p. 3) because of the interactions that ‘poets’ and ‘the public’ carry out when producing poetry on blogs and websites. Along the same lines, Robyn Mayes (2010) pays attention to the ‘contexts’ of creativity through which postcards are produced among those living in a rural community in Western Australia (Mayes, 2010, p. 4). Mayes highlights the ‘creative environment’ that emerges because the production of postcards involves the participation of community members (Mayes, 2010, p. 5). He highlights that this kind of creativity is described as ‘useful’ because it sorts out specific problems, such as people’s ‘need to keep busy’ and ‘fundraising’ events. In this respect, he argues that creativity is ‘multidimensional’ and ‘collective’ because it involves social relations and benefits to the local economy⁶.

Both Dabul and Mayes highlight the situations or the contexts through which creative processes emerge. The importance of these readings is that they let us see how creativity is social and situational. Another work pointing out how creativity is social and ‘collective’ is Katherine Giuffre (2009). From her ethnography about the ‘art world’ on the island of Rarotonga, Giuffre says that ‘the collective’ is part of creativity and emerges from ‘the macro level of cultural heritage to the micro level of friendship groups’ (Giuffre, 2009, p. 11). For Giuffre, creativity is a ‘social phenomenon’ and that ‘social interactions themselves are constitutive of creativity’

⁶ John Vail and Robert Hollands (2013) argue that social relations and collective work highlight a type of creativity associated with democracy. For Vail & Hollands (2013, p.353) social relations such as cooperation, egalitarian relations, solidarity and friendship allows for longevity and maintenance among members of an arts collective. For Vail and Hollands, the practices of the art collective are a ‘way of life’, or rather, a set of norms socially shared and accepted among members. In doing this, a mode of ‘creative democracy’ takes place.

(Giuffre, 2009, p. 10). Furthermore, she says that social structures, such as a group of people or galleries, can 'facilitate' or 'constrict' creativity (2009, p.1).

I agree with Giuffre that social interactions are constitutive of creativity and that there are structures that can produce particular reactions to people's creativity. However, I would argue that creativity is not a 'social phenomenon'. To suggest that would imply to think about creativity in the sense of 'innovation' or the idea that some individuals are creative. My point is that creativity is embedded in the everyday life of subjects and there are processes that encourage people's creativity.

From the literature review above examined, it can be argued that there is no consensus about what creativity is. This is not to suggest that should be a consensus. Rather, it is to point out that the ways in which creativity, or modes of creativity, can be understood has implications for how and why certain practices are framed as 'creative' and others are not. We have seen how areas such as business, education and psychology associate creativity with particular attributes, such as 'innovation' or creative individuals. We have also seen how creativity as improvisation is embedded in the social life of individuals. To understand creativity as improvisation is to do a 'forward reading' that pays attention to social processes and relations that let us see how creativity comes into being through everyday practice. The literature also lets us see that in circumstances characterized by 'indeterminacy', 'variability', and 'unpredictability' (Rosaldo, 1993 p. 256) creativity is a way to respond to such situations, or rather, 'zones of indeterminacy' (Rosaldo, 1993 p.256). The importance of these literatures is that they give us two perspectives on creativity: one associated with 'innovation' and creative individuals able to transform their social context, and the second perspective, pointing out how creativity is embedded in the social life of individuals.

The literature review above has characterised creativity as process, highlighting its social and situational components. However, it does not tell us in what moments and how social processes are encouraging the creative processes of subjects. Similarly, it does not tell us how the ordinary activities of subjects are manifesting creative processes and the ways in which their activities are reshaping policy concerning 'arts education' and 'creativity'.

Political discourses often highlight creativity as a kind of value outside of people's experiences and as something that must be obtained, which suggests a backward reading of creativity. In

contrast, the way in which the students I met experience their creativity has allowed me to understand how the policy concerning ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ is experienced and reshaped on the ground; that is, through subjects’ interactions with the material, their social relations and circulation of meanings. This view of creativity leads our attention to processes, the ordinary, and the experience of subjects whose everyday practices reshape policy. Since my focus in this research is on subjects’ everyday practice, I came to learn that creativity, or rather, creative processes are subjective, collective and situational. Therefore, this view on creativity challenges the idea of ‘creativity’ as something to learn.

I will argue that creative processes are embedded in the everyday life of individuals and they are manifested through situations such as challenges or difficulties. In this respect, creative processes are about the ways in which individuals respond to the problematics of everyday life. Such responses do not necessarily imply a resistance, but rather negotiation, collaboration and accommodation. Creativity is a social practice because it is manifested through people’s social relations and the ways in which they respond to difficulties or challenges.

The chapters of this thesis examine the political purposes, expectations and strategies in implementing ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’, as well as how and why students I met produce, experience and reshape arts education and creativity. In the next section, I introduce how the ‘cultural’ policy in Mexico has been (re) organised and the purposes of such organisation, in particular, I introduce the political and economic processes of the ‘cultural’ policy and how ‘creativity’ is situated in such sociopolitical processes.

1.5 ‘Reorganising culture’: ‘cultural policy’ in Mexico

For Mexico, the financial crisis of 1982 had effects on areas such as education, science and ‘culture’. According to Bordat (2013, p. 229) between 1985 and 1986, the public budget was reduced on four occasions and the distribution of the budget for educational and cultural activities reduced from 5% to 2% of GDP. Likewise, since the 1980s, the State allowed international and national companies alike to participate in the ‘cultural’ sector, or rather, activities concerning high arts, and institutions such as museums (García-Canclini, 2008; García-Canclini and Piedras-Feria, 2006). The reduction of public expenses to fund the ‘cultural’ sector in Mexico, and, instead, the participation of the private sector is a process that García-Canclini calls *privatización neoconservadora*. This is a process through which ‘culture is

reorganised', in part, because of the participation of national and international agents (García-Canclini and Piedras-Feria, 2006; Nivón Bolán, 2002). In 1994, this process was reinforced when the president, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and forthcoming presidents have also supported policies benefiting the national and international private sector.

Through NAFTA, the Mexican government openly accepted the participation of North American companies – e.g. cinema, TV programmes – into the Mexican audiovisual field. According to García-Canclini & Piedras Feria (2006) and Sánchez-Ruiz (2006) before the 1990s, it was a usual practice for the State to sponsor local film studios, distribution companies and exhibition companies. However, the participation of international cultural industries highlighted the 'inefficiency' of local studios and the 'corruption' of trade unions (García-Canclini & Piedras Feria, 2006, p.17). The government reduced its support in Mexican cinema in three ways. First, it 'privatised' and 'sold off' enterprises devoted to the production, distribution and exhibition of Mexican films. Second, it sponsored activities concerning the preservation of its cinema archive and the exhibition of films at the institution, *Cineteca Nacional*. Third, it provided minimal sponsorship of filmmaker initiatives for films or documentaries (García-Canclini & Piedras Feria, 2006, p.17). The Mexican government also reduced its investment of public expenses for museums and educational services. According to García-Canclini, (2006), the opening of museums in the country has been nearly nil since the 1980s and a lack of political initiatives has blocked museums from increasing their collections. Consequently, individuals' initiatives have included opening museums in wealthy neighbourhoods in Mexico City or buying arts collections to be exhibited.⁷ It can be argued that the NAFTA has reinforced the participation of the national and international private sector through the 'cultural' activities organised by Mexican governments. In this respect, the government and the private sector have transformed the ways in which cultural policy is made up. García-Canclini (2008, p. 14) highlights that:

[the role of the State has been] administrator and manager of artistic and historical heritage; provider of scholarships and financial support for creators and owner of museums [while] international cultural industries have appropriated the

⁷ For example, the Mexican businessman, Carlos Slim, bought art collections and opened two museums on the west and south side of Mexico City. Similarly, another business man, Jorge Vergara, intended to open the museum Guggenheim in the city of Guadalajara (García-Canclini, 2006)

communicational field and national companies and entrepreneurs negotiate the purchase of museums.

The participation of the private sector in organising Mexican cultural policy has remained unaltered since the 1990s. As Bordat (2013) says: ‘despite the power alternancy in 2000, the national cultural policy has remained unalterable and keeps developing under the advent of neoliberalism, which led to the progressive, yet drastic withdrawal of the State’ (Bordat, 2013, p. 41). Given these privatising processes, the national cultural policy has undergone an *escisión* (split) (García-Canclini, 2012, p. 28). For Canclini, Mexican cultural policy is fragmented at various levels: ‘[the] public/[the] private’; policies devoted to heritage and policies devoted to communication media. Within this national context, the ‘arts’ and ‘cultural’ activities in Mexico City have been affected. Firstly, the city council of Mexico City provides the governors of each *delegación* (district) with a budget to administer their activities – including money for the ‘arts’ and ‘culture’ - in the district that they represent. In this respect, I would suggest that arts projects and organisations are encouraged to show a kind of social impact in the area where they are implemented, as well as an economic impact.

Secondly, economists, anthropologists and people involved in policy-making in Mexico City have celebrated ‘creativity’ because of its ‘economic potential’ (Piedras-Feria, 2006, p. 49) and because both ‘creativity’ and ‘knowledge’ are characterised as a ‘field of strategic intervention’ for economic processes (Nivón-Bolán et al., 2012, p. 136). In the first case, Ernesto Piedras-Feria argues that an ‘economy based on creativity’ is a process that includes four stages. An individual who creates specific ‘ideas’ with a ‘cultural value’; the materialisation of the creative idea through material products; the distribution and publicity of the material product in the market; and finally, ‘public policies’ that support the development of the creative economy (Piedras-Feria, 2006, pp. 52-54). In the second case, a group of academics, directors of arts organisations and *gestores culturales* (cultural managers) set out that ‘creativity’ and ‘knowledge’ are constitutive of wealth, productivity, competition for enterprises, cities, regions and countries (Nivón-Bolán et al., 2012, p. 136)⁸ and that educational programmes encouraging

⁸ In 2010, the *Unión de Ciudades Capitales de Iberoamerica* (UCCI) named Mexico City, the ‘Ibero-American Culture Capital’. Given this recognition, the Secretary of Culture organised *mesas de discusión* (seminars) to discuss the ‘cultural policy’ of Mexico City. One seminar was devoted to proposing lines of cultural policy and ‘problematizing’ areas of strategic intervention in Mexico City, such as: arts education and cultural participation, cultural enterprises and creative enterprises, and an economy based on creativity. Anthropologist, Ana Rosas-Mantecón; the Director General of the network *Fábrica de Artes y Oficios* (FARO), Lilitiana López-Borbón; the Coordinator of workshops at FARO de Oriente, Jose Luis Galicia-Esperón were some of the participants in that seminar. Their recommendations and diagnoses

people's 'creativity' may reduce 'violence', 'insecurity' and 'social fragmentation' (p.136). In this respect, 'arts education' should 'encourage cultural participation in a broad sense' (Nivón-Bolán et al., 2012, p.138). Their proposals suggest that 'arts education' is key factor for *la regeneración del tejido social* (regeneration of the social fabric) and their understanding of 'arts education' is as a repertoire of 'knowledge' and 'practices', such as: 'literacy associated with creativity, social inclusion and *formación* (make up) of citizens in areas such as reading, listening, writing and visuality' (Nivón-Bolán et al., 2012, p.140-141).

Since the 90s neoliberal processes have 'reorganised' the 'cultural' activities of the State. The PRD governments have implemented programmes intending to tackle social exclusion, to repair the social bond and to make up consumers. 'Arts education' and 'creativity' seem to be a kind of instrument in order to achieve such ambitions. Since 1997 the Mexican Left-wing governments celebrates 'arts education' and 'creativity', in part, because of the social impact for the population, such as to reduce violence, anti-social behaviour and to promote education. This kind of rhetoric has similarities to the ways in which the arts sector in the United Kingdom has justified its arts and cultural activities since 1997, when the New Labour initiated a cultural policy emphasising the social impact of the arts on individuals (Belfiore, 2002; Bishop, 2012; Oliver, 2009; Morgan, 2011).

In a context where the State has supported privatising processes in the arts since the 1980's, the arts sector 'justify' the public expense spent on it, and also demonstrate through quantifiable methods the social impact of the arts among people. According to Belfiore (2002) and Bishop (2012), the New Labour implemented an instrumental policy because it must give reasons and evidence by which the arts should be subsidised. The rhetoric emphasises that, through the arts, it is possible to tackle social exclusion and encourage social inclusion. Under this vision, the arts activities seek to do *do something good* (my emphasis) for, say, 'young people' and the 'lower social classes' (Belfiore, 2002, p. 2;10).

Critiques of this political view on the arts say that the arts disguises social inequalities. For Claire Bishop, arts programmes intending to reduce inequalities 'conceal[s] social inequality,

were published in *Libro Verde para la institucionalización del Sistema de Fomento y Desarrollo Cultural de la Ciudad de México*. This book, edited by Eduardo Nivón et al., reflects the ideas of academics, policy-makers, cultural managers and the directors of arts organisations about the cultural policy in Mexico City.

rendering it cosmetic rather than structural. It represents the primary division in society as one between an included majority and an excluded minority (formerly known as the working class)' (Bishop, 2012, p. 13). This echoes Levitas, arguing that the political discourse on exclusion presents the 'socially excluded as culturally distinct from the mainstream' (Levitas, 1998 p.21). Those living in disadvantaged situation are understood as lacking moral and cultural values. In the same line, Eleonora Belfiore (Belfiore, 2002) and Belfiore and Bennett (Belfiore and Bennett, 2007) question whether community arts projects and even museums promoting 'social change' can demonstrate, via research methods, the social 'impact' on individuals. She asks: 'do the arts really have these transformative powers? And, if they do, is it not possible that the transformations they induce may have negative as well as positive consequences?' (Belfiore & Bennett, 2007, p.137).

These critiques concerning the social impact of the arts have shaped my arguments in that 'arts education' and 'creativity' become debatable when they are envisioned as a kind of cure in order to 'lift' (Coffey, 2012) people living in disadvantaged situation. Social divisions are reinforced in a simplistic way, that is, a number of people with 'culture' and those without 'culture' that should be 'reformed'. Another point is that arts education and creativity for making up individuals, say, less violent, less illiterate and more educated implies an emphasis on the arts and creativity as social transformer. Yet this political view only 'mask' (Belfiore, 2002 p. 8; Bishop, 2012) structural situations that the State has not addressed. Public policy, in particular, cultural policy seem to highlight subjects as if they were the only responsible for their individual limitations and the state is characterised in a paternalistic way. The state that 'helps', through designing instrumental policy able to reduce violence, illiteracy, and to promote, social inclusion. Claire Bishop (2012, p.14) remind us that the social inclusion agenda is about 'enable (ing) all members of society to be self-administering, fully functioning consumers who do not rely on the welfare state and who can cope with a deregulated, privatised world' (Bishop, 2012 p.14). I suggest that arts organisations can contribute to diverse issues, such as, reinforce social relations among people, produce conviviality experiences among subjects, reinforce people's motivations to pursue an 'artistic' career. However, it seems to me that emphasizing arts education and creativity as cure for those "excluded" masks social inequalities. For example, from my research I identified that cultural centres, universities, museums, recreational areas are still limited in number compared to other areas of the city. The lack of such institutions seemed to me part of the urban social inequalities in the East of the city that local government has vaguely addressed. Because of the lack of institutions at the East of the city, students whom I

met traveled long distances either to study or to work (e.g. about three hours in one way to study the university). They had to pay expensive public transport, and some of them, traveled long distances to study the university because they were not willing to study a technical degree.

Whilst the subsidised arts sector in the United Kingdom justify how community arts projects and museums (Morgan, 2011) have a positive impact on people (in part because of privatising processes which have held sway since the 1980s and in order to receive public money), in Mexico City, the rhetoric of Leftist policy emphasizes that ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ do something good for individuals⁹. I suggest that the privatising processes of ‘culture’ since the mid-nineties in Mexico played a role in (re) organising the ‘cultural’ policy of Mexico City, therefore, neoliberal processes have shaped the discourse of the policy and its practice. The view that ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ contributes positively to people living in disadvantaged situation –e.g. reducing violence, anti-social behaviour and repairing the social bond- are purposes that shape distinctions between ‘an included majority and an excluded minority (formerly known as the working class)’ (Bishop, 2012, p. 13)¹⁰. Below, I introduce part of the political purposes of ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’.

⁹ In order to rethink the demands of the social impact of the arts, Belfiore (2002) and Belfiore and Bennett (2007) suggest examining analytical categories in order to evaluate the social impact of the arts. Thus categories such as ‘quality’ should be reformulated to ‘dignify participatory arts projects [and that such projects become] recognised [by] their specific characteristics and aims’ (Belfiore, 2002, p.16). Questions about the impact of the arts and the methods to measure it are debatable because of the difficulty evaluating social practices and processes in accordance with the logic of public policy. As Oliver says (2009, p. 322) ‘the tendency within public policy to read creativity backwards, as an innovation, reflects a core ontological issue - one that defines how (epistemologically) participation in the arts is reviewed and positioned in policy’. In response to critiques that demand evidence of community arts projects, Oliver suggests that a different sort of research should be utilised. Rather than asking, ‘what is the effect/impact of the arts?’ another possibility is to ask ‘what is happening in the practice and process of a participatory arts project? (Oliver, 2009, p. 323). And I would add who facilitates or produces the tensions in people’s practices that occur within participatory arts projects?

¹⁰ The purposes of ‘arts education’ in Mexico have historical roots. Soon after the Mexican Revolution in 1910, the Mexican population faced poverty including social and economic problems such as lack of schools and health services in rural areas (Gamboa-Herrera, 2007, Tinajero-Berrueta, 1993). José Vasconcelos, a politician and writer, took on the directorship of the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP), from 1921 to 1924. He initiated a project trying to reconcile the post-revolutionary environment in Mexico by implementing an educational project concerning the arts among various ethnicities. Led by Vasconcelos, this arts education project intended to ‘redeem the indigenous for their barbarism’ (Nivón-Bolán, 2006, Rubio, 1978, p. 165) and to ‘civilise’ people through art, reading and educational projects that reflected ‘Enlightenment ideals’ (Nivón-Bolán, 2006, p. 35). Vasconcelos supported artists in painting murals in the streets and in Mexican institutions, opening Open-air Painting Schools for ‘indigenous’ people and the ‘low social classes’ who lived on the periphery of Mexico City (Gonzalez-

In 1997, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas named Alejandro Aura as the first director of ICCM. Alejandro Aura was a poet, essayist, playwright and *promotor cultural* (cultural promoter) whose vision of ‘culture’ was focused on human transcendence, arts education and equality. Metaphorically, he said that ‘universal literature is the best gate to enter the world of civilization’ (Aura, 1999, p. 23). He observed that economic differences in populations, diversity in the city (due to immigration, both international and from other states), as well as poverty and extreme poverty, made the *integración* (inclusion) of the city difficult (Aura, 1999). For these various reasons, the arts policy in 1997 was mainly addressed to those living *fuera de* (outside of) the geographic area where ‘cultural’ institutions and services are located and for those whose ‘arts education’ was minimal or nil¹¹ (Aura, 2002, p. 286). Aura intended to ‘make the culture horizontal’, meaning distributing the number of arts and cultural institutions across the city equally and providing services concerning ‘arts education’ in disadvantaged areas of Mexico City (Aura, [1999] 2006).

It seems to me that the idea of making ‘the culture’ horizontal implied a fixed body of practices ready to be implemented in the city and among people who should be “cultivated”. This suggests a way of democratizing the ‘arts’ and ‘culture’ from a kind of top-down approach, in which certain privileged social actors assume the kind of artistic programmes to be implemented in the city. One of the purposes of this ‘horizontal process’ would be to ‘shape new publics, involve communities and enhance the knowledge of those who already had access to arts and culture’ (Aura, [1999] 2006, p. 23). However, other expectations characterise ‘arts education’. Aura expected that by *formar nuevos públicos* (making up new public), it would be possible to support ‘producers’ and ‘cultural industries’, that is, editorial industries, theatre, *música de sala de concierto* (e.g. classic music) and sculptors. He assumed that the ‘new public’ would be shaped such as the *ciudadano lector* (reader citizen) or the *ciudadano espectador* (spectator citizen). The *formación de públicos* (make up new public) would increase people’s ‘cultural

Matute, [1999] 2006, p. 67). The purposes of such projects were not only to ‘lift up’ the population (Coffey, 2012, p. 8) but also to consolidate a ‘national identity’ (García-Canclini, [1989] 2004, Coffey, 2012, Nivón-Bolán, 2006). See also: Bolívar-Moguel (2013); Rosas-Gutiérrez (2009); Gamboa-Herrera (2007); Tinajero-Berrueta (1993); Rubio (1978).

¹¹ Geographically, ‘arts’ and ‘cultural’ institutions and services are concentrated mainly in the south and west of the city. As a consequence, those who live in other areas are unable to participate as easily. Some of the challenges for access include long distances, the high cost of attending events, and the difficulty in establishing a dialogue with the ‘arts’. See: Rosas-Mantecón (2007; 2005); García-Canclini (1998); García-Canclini et al., (1991).

criteria' and 'new relations between market and culture would appear' (Aura, 2002, p. 286); that is, people whose 'criteria' would enable them to develop criticisms, taste and the consumption of literature.¹² As part of these various purposes and expectations, FARO de Oriente was opened in 2000 in the East of the city, in an area characterised as disadvantaged and with few governmental cultural institutions. Locating FARO in the East, rather than in the centre or the South, where many cultural institutions are situated, was presented as a way of reducing inequalities in access to state-organised cultural participation. This was further emphasised by the fact that FARO offered its activities free of charge, and to a wide lay, non-academic population, including children, young people, adults and seniors.

When the Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas government came to an end, the new mayor of the city, Andrés Manuel López-Obrador, disbanded the ICCM for the *Secretaría de Cultura* (Minister for Culture) and reduced the budget for cultural activities in the city to prioritise other emerging areas. The reduction of budget brought about a negative impact on the arts programmes and institutions that Alejandro Aura had already started. Given the reduction of budget, Alejandro Aura quit and the historian and academic, Enrique Semo, took over as the new *Secretario de Cultura* (Minister for Culture), and was in office from 2000 to 2006. Soon after the governmental period of López-Obrador, Marcelo Ebrard became the new mayor of the city, and from 2006 to 2012, Cecilia Zepeda became the *Secretaria de Cultura*. The three political administrations in the capital maintained various goals concerning *atención* (attention) of 'arts' and 'culture' for disadvantaged populations. The cultural services organised by the government intended to be distributed in the city to promote 'access' to the programmes and services organised by the government (Semo, 2004, p. 111). For Enrique Semo, arts education would continue to be an instrument in order to deal with *conductas individuales y sociales indeseables* (individual and social undesirable behaviour). Arts education should contribute to 'better life expectations' among the population. Workshops and educational activities were addressed especially in disadvantaged areas of the city (Semo, 2004, p. 116)¹³. Likewise, Semo associates 'culture' with economic growth. He claims that 'culture' should be perceived as a possibility to

¹² Some programmes, whose purpose was 'civilising', included reading activities. An examples is the programme, *Libroclub*, which promoted 'universal' literature in small libraries, rehabilitation centres, and individuals' houses (Vazquez Martin, 2001, Aura, 1999, Vazquez Martin, 1999).

¹³The lines cited above were taken from the *Programa de Fomento y Desarrollo Cultural del Distrito Federal 2004*. This is a document describing the programmes and strategies for organising the arts and cultural activities organised by the government. I found this document in the book 'Políticas Culturales en la Ciudad de México 1997-2005'. A book published by FARO.

promote employment, and suggests to pay attention to the ‘cultural industries’ as productive for economic growth (Semo, 2004, p. 113).

During 2007-2012 the *Programa General de Desarrollo del Distrito Federal 2007-2012* stated that culture is related to a ‘sector of the economy’, in particular, a sector of ‘cultural industry’ where dynamics of production, distribution and consumption are established. It was expected that culture would contribute to the city’s social needs such as employment, better conditions of equality and the development of ‘social creativity’ (2007-2012, p. 54). This programme claims that through a *reordenamiento territorial* (territorial re-order) and *formación de talentos* (make up individual talents) people’s ‘access to culture’ would ‘be fostered’ (2007-2012). The programme highlighted that cultural democracy ‘respect[s] the creativity that promotes the production, circulation and consumption of culture’ (2007-2012, p. 113). Cultural democracy is associated with ‘economy and cultural development’, prioritising ‘creativity’.

In recent times, the *Programa de Fomento y Desarrollo Cultural del Distrito Federal* has highlighted that, to receive an education is a ‘human right’ for people in Mexico City (2014, p. 21). Among various goals of the programme, it seeks to ‘[encourage] personal and collective development’, ‘diminish anti-social behaviour’, and ‘*formar* (shape) consumers’. Similarly, the document says it is the responsibility of the government to encourage ‘access’ to ‘cultural services’ among people and that ‘arts education’ should promote ‘creativity, innovation and cultural diversity’ among those in the process of being educated (2014, p. 9; 30). ‘Arts education’, ‘creativity’ and ‘participation’ are key areas that allow access to activities concerning ‘arts’ and ‘culture’, ‘diminish anti-social behaviour’, especially in areas around FARO, and encourage ‘personal and collective development’ among young people, children and adults (2014, p. 31).

The various political purposes of the PRD governments tell us that ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ seek to ‘reform’ (Bennett, 1998) individuals and to make consumers. This view can be described as a ‘backward reading’ (Ingold & Hallam, 2007) of arts education and creativity, in the sense that policy makers have constructed for whom arts and creativity should be addressed, how it should be implemented and to what ends. As mentioned above, this political view of arts education and creativity is challenged for masking social inequalities and for making divisions between those ‘included’ in the ‘culture’ and those that should get ‘access’. Regardless of the ways in which policy makers have delineated ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’, little is known

about how the policy of Mexico City concerning arts education and creativity is experienced and reshaped by those who attend the community arts organisation FARO. The policy and the arts organisation that I examine provide ethnographic materials to understand how and why subjects experience and reshape ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’, as well as the ways in which subjects respond to situations concerning difficulties and challenges. Students’ motives for coming to the organisation, their use of the FARO physical spaces, their participation in arts projects and social relations, and their creative processes allow us to see some of the contradictions and ambiguities in relation to an ambitious policy rhetoric. In order to lay out the framework for carrying out this ethnographic research, next I introduce the analytical perspective.

1.6 ANT and an assemblage perspective: the ‘everyday’ and social practice

As mentioned in the literature review on policy and creativity, policy produces individuals’ behaviour and regulates social relations. Similarly, the views on ‘arts’ and ‘culture’ in the case study seek to inculcate values and morals for those living in a context of social disadvantage. Although the purposes and strategies of the case study are considered for examination in this thesis, I have prioritised students’ social relations, interactions with non-humans, and meanings at FARO. I suggest that these elements tell us how and why those who attend the organisation reshape the policy concerning ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’. The importance of examining processes and everyday practices is that it allows us to see that policy is not fixed and structured, but is unfinished, processual and continuously being reshaped. My analysis is centred on: a) the everyday, b) the examination of policy concerning arts education and creativity –i.e. its purposes, expectations and strategies, and c) the social practices of subjects within FARO. Before explaining these analytical units, I will introduce the assemblage perspective.

An assemblage perspective focuses on the processes, the ordinary, and the interactions of subjects with non-human elements, such as the material and the technical. These elements of analysis are not so different from that of ethnographic research, which involves the ‘direct experience’ (Macdonald, 1997 p. 20) of the ethnographer in the field, the ‘quotidian rather than the exceptional’ (Welz in Macdonald, 2011 p.4), and the ‘lived experience’ of those being studied (Pink and Mackley, 2014 p.2). I chose ANT and an assemblage perspective because it allows me to examine the everyday, and the social relations of subjects and their interactions with non-humans (at FARO). These aspects are crucial, as I will show how they are part of the processes reshaping policy on the ground. Furthermore, given that the ordinary, the social

relations of individuals and their interactions with non-humans are part of the interests of an ethnographic research, the methodological approach adopted here is linked to the analytical perspective of this research.

According to George Marcus and Erkan Saka (2006), ANT and an assemblage perspective is a 'middle range theory' (Marcus and Saka, 2006, p. 1) because it highlights '[the] social processes and cultural meaning on the ephemeral, the emergent (...) the heterogeneous while not giving up on a long-established commitment to account for the structured and systemic in social life' (Marcus and Saka, 2006, p. 1). Rather than taking structures for granted, researchers who guide their investigations using an assemblage perspective examine processes and complexities in the production of an entity. This argument has shaped my analysis as I intend to 'suspend' (Oliver, 2009 p. 325) a dichotomy such as structure/anti-structure (e.g policy/subjects' practices) and prioritise the social and political processes which are interrelated, and themselves assemble and reshape policy. Included in this examination is the aim to 'foreground' (Morgan, 2011 p. 38) the agents and their actions, non-humans and processes. Because the focus is on processes, an assemblage perspective is considered a 'method' in that human life is more disordered than ordered, but there are 'realities that might be best to bring into being' (Law, 2004, p. 39). For Latour, 'assemblage' is about following the 'associations' that build up an entity. Latour suggests understanding relations that are associated and assembled (Latour, 2005), and includes the relations of humans with non-human elements.

For Sharon Macdonald, to study 'heritage' through an assemblage perspective is to focus on the 'processes and entanglements involved in their coming into being and continuation'(Macdonald, 2009b, p. 118). Further, she asserts that an assemblage perspective does not understand entities (e.g. 'heritage') as a result of mere political interests. Instead, she argues that although 'policy decisions' are relevant for examining how 'heritage' is made up, other elements are also worthy of exploration, such as the interactions of subjects with the material and the technical. For Macdonald, 'the emphasis is on the multiple, heterogeneous and often highly specific actions and techniques that are involved in achieving and maintaining heritage' (Macdonald, 2009b, p. 118). The emphasis on the 'heterogeneous' refers to other kinds of associated elements which 'play a role in the construction of an entity, such as humans' interactions with the material or technical' (Macdonald, 2009b, p. 119). As part of this research, I examine the interactions of students, and some of the teachers, with the material and the technical. An example of the former is the interactions of students with a damaged building, while the latter is the interactions

of students with technical definitions of ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’. By focusing on processes and everyday practice, I will introduce how ‘policy’ is reshaped through the everyday in an arts organisation. Below, I discuss the everyday.

The everyday

There have been a number of ethnographic studies involving the processes by which an entity, such as ‘science,’ is continuously produced in the everyday (Cressman, 2009). Ethnographic research has examined the ‘social construction of scientific facts’ by studying in detail the activities of scientists (Latour and Woolgar, 1979, p. 32). This resonates with ethnographic work, which examines the production of scientific knowledge in laboratory sciences (Latour, 1987), or the production of scientific and technological knowledge, highlighting how machines define research questions and how machines shape scientific practices (Traweek, 1988). Ethnographic research projects in museums and old buildings have examined how physical spaces and objects alter a scientific exhibition (Macdonald, 2002); the ways in which a biotechnological building is a ‘structure structuring agency’ (Gieryn, 2002, p. 45), and the ways in which historical buildings are less passive and exhibit a ‘mediating role’ (Yaneva, 2008, p. 10) in the renovation process. The literature review above has been useful for understanding how an ‘entity’ is produced through the ordinary and the ways in which non-humans have agency (Latour, 2005; De Landa, 2006; Clough, Hand and Schiff, 2007). These works emphasise the ‘agency’ of non-humans and how ‘agency’ is manifested. From this literature, I have directed my attention towards *seeing* non-human entities within the social life of individuals, as well as the ways in which the subtle and the ordinary activities of subjects are part of the processes that constitution an entity.

Nevertheless, recent ethnographic works have been less interested in exploring whether non-humans have agency, and instead focus on humans’ responsibility for attributing agency to materialities and how subjects interact with non-humans. Sharon Macdonald (2009a, p. 26) suggests examining ‘how’, ‘when’ and ‘why’ agency is ‘attributed’. Jennie Morgan’s (2011) ethnography seeks ‘to identify the moments, to what or whom, and for what effects agency is attributed’ by human actors (Morgan, 2011, p. 40). Her detailed work, focused on ‘the mundane’ and everyday practice in a museum, reveals the processes through which the museum is refurbished and ‘change’ is an ongoing process manifested in museums. As part of the goals of this research, I explore how and why agency is attributed to materialities at FARO; and how and

why the everyday interactions of subjects with materialities seem to produce difficulties for their experience. Particular attention is given to the ‘politics of attributions’ that emphasise ‘human responsibility’ in the course of actions that shape an entity (Macdonald, 2009a, p. 27). Cracks, leaks, noise, or damaged paintbrushes did not seem to be minor issues for the kind of experiences felt by students and teachers. While in the field, I wondered why the facilities in FARO’s main building were damaged. Who was responsible for this? What were the effects of a damaged building on the ordinary activities of students and teachers? What kind of arts education and creativity was being produced by the interaction of students and teachers with the material? My participant observation at the organisation was useful as it allowed me to notice that the activities of students and teachers with the building architecture of FARO deserved attention, not only for the political purposes and expectations ‘attributed’ to the main building’s architecture, but also for the ways in which students and teachers stabilised their activities through interacting with the main building.

The aforementioned literature review has shaped my analysis for examining the ordinary activities of students and some teachers that were manifested every day. By focusing on the ordinary activities of students and teachers, I will examine their daily experience concerning ‘arts’ and ‘creativity’. Sarah Pink and Leder Mackley (2014) argue that everyday life is ‘ongoingness and [an] unstoppable flow’ (Pink and Mackley, 2014 p. 146). In order to explore the continuous movements of everyday life, ‘the practices’, ‘emotions’, ‘routines’ are ‘entry points to research subjects’ events, experiences and temporalities’ (Pink and Mackley, 2014 p. 147). For my research concerning how policy becomes practice in an arts organisation, the everyday is an examination of the social relations of students and teachers’, and interactions with non-humans and social practices. By focusing on the ordinary daily activities of students and teachers, this research will argue that the daily interactions of students and teachers are carriers of meanings and practices concerning their views and experiences of ‘arts’ and ‘creativity’. Such meanings and practices not only challenge public rhetoric on ‘arts’ and ‘culture’, but also allow us to see how arts education and creativity are being produced through the everyday. Exploring the everyday at FARO involved me continually observing and participating with students and teachers. Through participating in their common activities (e.g. doing paintings, collaborating in ‘performances’, listening to accidental noise), I wanted to understand the kind of creativity that students experience and produce. Participant observation has been crucial to study the everyday at FARO, in particular, subjects’ social relations, and their interactions with non-humans and practices. Exploring such ‘domains of everyday life’

(Pink and Mackley, 2014 p. 148) has allowed me to argue that ‘creativity’ -and even ‘arts’- are social processes incorporated in the everyday experience of people. This view of creativity challenges political discourses emphasising ‘creativity’ as if it was an external thing to pursue and to obtain. Instead, a focus on the everyday leads our attention to processes, the ordinary and the experience of subjects. Although the ordinary activities in an arts organisation can be irrelevant for those I worked with, I have come to learn that the ordinary is crucial for understanding the processes, meanings and practices which gradually produce a kind of ‘arts’ and ‘creativity’. The everyday is an approach to understand the processes, entanglements and social experience of subjects who gradually produce arts education and creativity.

Policy: making up ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’

Museum scholars such as Tony Bennett have focused on examining how activities organised by the state and propagated by institutions (activities labelled as cultural) are intended to shape individuals’ behaviour. Drawing on a Foucauldian perspective and including ANT and an assemblage perspective in recent research, Bennett explores the actors and processes by which culture is ‘made up’ in cultural institutions and how ‘culture’ acts on programmes of civic management. Bennett (2005; 2007a) analyses the processes through which museums ‘make up’ entities, such as, ‘art’ or ‘heritage’, paying attention to ‘the relations between individual objects that are assembled together in museums [and which] bring into being the more abstract entities’ (Bennett, 2005, p. 529). Attention is given to the ‘operations,’ or what I would call the technical procedures, that play a role in shaping ‘culture’ and how these procedures gradually make distinctions between ‘culture’ and the social (Bennett, 2007). For Bennett, culture becomes a ‘public organisation’ different from the social through ‘mechanisms’ that can be described as ordinary and interrelated, such as ‘texts’, ‘humans’, ‘material objects’ and ‘technical procedures’ (Bennett, 2007a, p. 43). Bennett’s arguments have been useful to allow me to examine how ‘art’ and ‘creativity’ is made up at FARO. In this sense, I have paid attention to questions such as: how have the documents of the organisation described those who attend FARO and why? to what ends has FARO’s main building been designed and for whom? and how have teachers introduced ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ to students?

For Bennett, ‘culture is an assemblage of heterogeneous elements whose ‘culturalness’ derives from, rather than precedes, their assembly’ (Bennett, 2007b, p. 614). The concept of ‘culturalness’ refers to the result of processes concerning the accumulation, classification and

ordering performed by institutions through which ‘forms of cultural knowledge and practices are produced’ (Bennett, 2007a, pp. 34-35). He identifies ‘culturalness’ through the processes of ‘accumulation’ and ‘assemblage’ that seek to, for example, shape morals, values and knowledge in order to ‘regulate relationships between ways of life’ (Bennett, 2007a, p. 35). Bennett’s discussion of culture highlights the processes, technical aspects and objects that ‘make culture’ within cultural institutions. Inspired by these various ideas, I am interested in how policy makers and staff members have understood ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’, and why? How have these understandings been implemented at FARO? What are the implications of such implementation for the ways in which students experience ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’?

Through these questions I seek to examine the mechanisms by which arts education and creativity is ‘made up’ (Bennett, 2007a, p. 34). It can be argued that the projects of ‘arts’ promoted by teachers and staff members, the architecture of the FARO building, and the ordinary letters and documents of the organisation are ‘cultural assemblages’ which make up a kind of ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’. These cultural assemblages affect the experience of students concerning arts and creativity. In this sense, I will examine their experiences and the everyday practices which seem to me a response to the administrative view on ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’.

Everyday practice

Policy makers and staff members have organised ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ with defined purposes and ends. Yet the methodology of this research has been useful to analyse the experience of subjects in a public space such as FARO, that is; what they do –or do not do- and the reasons for this. The social practices of students are the ‘entry points’ (Pink and Mackley, 2014) in order to understand their experience, how they reshape ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ and the reasons for this.

According to Michel de Certeau (1984), everyday practice or ‘ways of operating’ are manifested in the everyday life of individuals. These practices let us see how subjects ‘reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production’ (de Certeau, 1984 p. xiv). He distinguishes two kinds of practice: ‘strategies’ and ‘tactics’. Whereas the former (strategies) refer to the operations through which a particular ‘space’ is constructed and organised from the point of view of the powerful, the latter refers to the operations by which subjects reappropriate,

manipulate or transform the space previously organised. De Certeau highlights the power relationships between those who have the ‘will’ and ‘power’ (de Certeau, 1984 p. 36) to construct a space and those who reappropriate such a space through their ‘ways of operating’. De Certeau’s theory of practice is useful in that it is possible to distinguish *how* policy makers conceive and organise a particular space and *how* subjects, through their ‘ways of operating’, reappropriate such spaces. However, some criticisms of his work challenge his view of everyday practice as ‘binary’ or ‘structural’ (Pink, 2008 p. 182).

For Sarah Pink, de Certeau’s understanding of practice does not consider that practices can be ‘diverse, subjective and embedded in hierarchies of power that are contingent’ (2008 p.182). To rethink practices in this way is to pay attention to the sensoriality, the material, and the contingencies within everyday life. These analytical units can be described as the ways to understand, for example, how ‘home’ is ‘experienced’ and ‘constituted’ (Pink and Mackley, 2012 p. 4). Pink’s theory of ‘place-making practice’ describes how subjects’ practices constitute a ‘place’ (Pink, 2008; Pink and Mackley, 2012). Drawing on Ingold’s concept of ‘environment’ (Shotter 2012, p.382) Pink says that place is constituted ‘through entangled pathways’ (Pink, 2008), meaning that people are not situated within a place (i.e. in a spatial and temporary dimension). Instead, people’s practices make up their own places. For Ingold as for Pink, the places where we live ‘are not something we act *in* or *on*, but are inextricable *a part of who we are* with the “inner world” of the musician being different from the inner world of the butcher or baker or mathematician’ (Shotter, 2012 p. 382). Thus, ‘walking’, ‘food preparation’ and ‘eating’ are practices that make up a place (Pink, 2008 p. 182). Furthermore, the concept of place-making practices is an invitation for ethnographers to think of how they are ‘situated as embodied beings’ in the places of research participants, that is, ‘how researchers themselves are enplaced in ethnographic contexts’ (Pink, 2008 p.179). For Pink, ‘practice’ and ‘place’ allow the researcher to understand ‘the material, social, sensory and mediated environments of everyday life’ (Pink, 2012 p. 13; Pink and Mackley, 2014; Pink et al, 2015). Elsewhere, anthropologists Sarah Pink, Jennie Morgan and Andrew Dainty (Pink et al, 2015) explore how ‘the material, sensory, affective and social contingencies’ become ‘entangled’ and perform a sense of ‘safety’ among people’s homes (Pink et al, 2015 p.1).¹⁴

¹⁴ One of the criticisms of Pink’s ethnographic research is the use of video to reenact the everyday activities of people in their homes or carrying out laundry activities, for example. The use of video as an ethnographic method is limited in that examining everyday activities ‘after their occurrence is not how people move around within the uncertain and yet-to-be-determined circumstances of everyday life’

Pink's understandings of practice and place present the diverse analytical units through which is possible to examine the experience of subjects in activities such as 'laundry' or 'work'. Some of her interests concern how cultural values 'are manifested in and maintained through particular sensory practices' (Pink 2005, p.4) and how such values are 'challenged' or 'resisted'. Although I sympathise with these questions, my interest in this research is in exploring who challenges the practices of subjects, how these practices are challenged, and how subjects respond to this. For example, Chapter 6 provides empirical material for understanding the difficulties for making a visual work, partly because students' lived experience in the East contrasts with the perception of some staff members about what is a suitable view of the East. Further, in Chapter 4, I will examine how sociopolitical processes and staff members' decisions have effects on the ways in which students and some teachers experience 'arts education' and 'creativity'.

The literatures above examined have been useful for addressing my analysis of social practice at FARO. In this sense, my analysis of social practice focuses on subjects' social relations, social interactions with the material and tactics for responding to situations concerning difficulties and challenges¹⁵. By focusing on social practice, I seek to understand how students 'reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production' (de Certeau, 1984 p. xiv) and the contradictions and ambiguities that result from such reappropriation.

(Shotter, 2012 p. 383). Another criticism is that the use of video raises questions about whether it is possible to understand in depth subjects' practices 'from within' (Shotter, 2012 p. 383). The use of video to reenact subjects' everyday practices involves risks. One of those risks is that research participants execute 'performances' (Miller, 1997; Macdonald, 2001 p. 86) in order to show the ethnographer what she/he wants to see. It seems to me that the everyday experience of the ethnographer with research participants reduce the risks of performances, partly because the ethnographer invests time and he/she is continuously establishing social relationships with participants. The social relationships of the ethnographer implies that his/ her presence has come to be accepted by participants and that they forget about being observed (see Chapter 2).

¹⁵ Anthropologist Ana Virginia Pérez-Mora (2012) explores the *prácticas culturales socio espaciales* (socio spatial cultural practices) of three arts collectives based in the East of Mexico City. Her research focuses on the 'cultural practices' of subjects and the power relationships manifested within institutional public spaces, such as FARO. She argues that subjects' practices 'transform' the 'public space of culture' into *lugares emblemáticos* (emblematic places) that she defines as *los espacios de relación desde donde la cultura popular resiste la dominación y subsiste* (the spaces of relation where popular culture resists domination and is able to survive) (Pérez-Mora, 2012 p. 1; 16). Inspired by Michel De Certeau and Michel Maffesoli, her research explores what she calls *los dos planos de la cultura* (the two levels of culture) (Pérez-Mora, 2012 p.32), emphasising the experience and cultural practices of those who belong to the arts collectives. Although I sympathise with the examination of subjects' practices and their resistances, I am interested in examining in what moments and why contradictions, ambiguities or negotiations are manifested through subjects' practices.

I suggest that students I met are not passive consumers of the ‘arts’ and ‘creativity’ organised by the state. Instead, even within organisations that address ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ in a way that can be described as controlling, students ‘reappropriate’, or rather, reshape a body of political purposes and strategies concerning ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’. My view on subjects’ practices is that they are diverse, uncertain, and respond to situations concerning difficulties or challenges. Through exploring how the policy concerning arts education and creativity has become practice at FARO, policy can be described as an unfinished social process shaped by political purposes, expectations and strategies and reshaped by the interaction of subjects with the technical, the material, their own social relations and their collaborative processes. I suggest that by examining policy on the ground, that is in the experiences and practices of subjects, is possible to understand the contradictions, ambiguities and processes in the course of a public policy.

In the course of this thesis, I have paid attention to institutional documents which conceptualise arts education and creativity, in particular in relation to; how potential participants are imagined in such documents; how agency is attributed to the architecture of FARO buildings; how teachers introduce ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ to students; and the dilemmas and experiences of students participating in ‘arts’ projects. These questions are relevant as they allow me to understand how, on the one hand the organisation makes up ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’, and on the other hand, how such entities are reshaped through subjects’ practice.

1.7 Organisation of the Thesis

The examination of how a policy concerning arts education and creativity has become practice at FARO highlights particular kinds of practice, meanings and processes through which ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ comes into being. In this introductory chapter, I have set out the historical and political processes through which the activities concerning arts and culture intended to promote arts education and creativity within deprived areas of Mexico City. This chapter also includes the literature review and analytical perspective that guides this thesis. Chapter 2, ‘Methodology: Ethnographic research at FARO’, describes the methods employed for this ethnographic research, as well as my positionality during fieldwork. This section discusses how far my gender, identity and class altered the dynamics with staff members, students and teachers I met. Chapters 3 to 7 analyse the practices of the students and teachers who I met. Chapter 3, ‘Translating Arts Education: Words in texts and the practices of creativity’, examines

how 'arts education' is 'translated' into the experience of subjects. In order to unpack such an aim, I examine how the notion of 'arts education' is encoded in FARO documents, and how my peers 'translate' arts education and creativity into practice. This chapter looks at the experience of students working on an arts project, highlighting processes of creativity. Finally, this chapter offers a snapshot of the daily activities that take place at FARO. Chapter Four, 'Architecture at FARO: Pacific stabilisations and cold contradictions' discusses the architecture of the FARO building itself. Attention is given to the experience of students, teachers and some staff members within the main building. This includes highlighting who, why and how the FARO architecture and its facilities were designed, the kind of use it has been put to, and the experience of the building for students I met. The architecture and facilities were attributed with a kind of mediatory role in order to trigger collaborative 'arts' projects and 'creativity'. However, certain practical decisions and the facilities seem to produce difficulties for students and teachers, therefore, their dynamics are affected. Following the idea that the FARO architecture and facilities were designed to mediate processes concerning 'creativity', I expand this in Chapter 5 'Behind face-to-face dialogues: Teachers mediating 'arts education''. This chapter considers the ways in which teachers introduce 'arts education' to students. Here, I examine the work of teachers as 'mediators' and particular mediations that shape their activities with students. Having examined the architecture of FARO (i.e. the materialities) and the role of teachers as 'mediators', Chapter 6, 'Collaborative Creativity: The East of Mexico City reflected in a mural' discusses the participation of painting students in the production of a mural concerning the 'identity of the Orient of Mexico City'. Particular attention is given to the ways in which the students provided meanings about Mexico City and the processes of creativity. Chapter 7 'Active participants: Motivations, interpretations of arts and convivial experience', explores why students come to the organisation and the ways in which they interpret their activities. Drawing on a number of 30 interviews with students I met throughout my fieldwork, I examine the issues mentioned in the title of this chapter. The final section, the concluding remarks, discusses the themes of this thesis such as policy, creativity and an assemblage perspective. Given that my intention has been to present the agents and the processes through which the case study becomes practice, a policy concerning arts education and creativity is also meanings, processes and everyday practice. The section entitled 'Biographical Profiles' gives information about the students, teachers and staff members whom I met during my fieldwork.

Chapter 2 Methodology: Ethnographic research at FARO

This thesis adopts a qualitative perspective for examining the processes through which policy has become practice. It seeks to answer the question: How is policy reshaped through its encounter with the people, architecture, documents and specific realisations in arts projects? The broad goal of this research is to understand how the students I met produce, experience and reshape ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ at the arts organisation, and the reasons for this. Three aims guide this research: to examine the purposes, expectations and strategies of the policy concerning arts education and creativity; to examine how students I met experience arts education and creativity at FARO; and to examine how their practices reshape the political view of arts education and creativity. This research has focused on everyday practice, that is, subjects’ social relations, social interactions with the material, and tactics for responding to situations concerning difficulties and challenges. By examining the agents, non-humans and processes, I intend to show how ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ is experienced and reshaped through everyday practice.

In this chapter, I explain my methodological approach and I discuss my positionality in the field. The first part introduces the methods employed for the ethnographic research, including participant observation, interviews and informal conversations, photographs and archival research. The second part of this chapter discusses my positionality in relation to the field site. I discuss how my identity, as a ‘woman’, ‘student’ and ‘middle-class’ inhabitant of Mexico City affected the dynamics in FARO as I conducted fieldwork, in particular, I highlight my participation with the students, teachers and staff members I met at the field site.

My methodological approach at FARO had not been previously fixed and ordered. Instead, it can be described as interactive and a process. Participating every day at FARO allowed me to construct ethnographic knowledge with research participants. Macdonald reminds us that ‘being in place means that our knowledge does not just rely on one source –it comes through an untidy mix of what we observe, what people say, how they say it, what they do next, what we experience’ (Macdonald, 2011 p. 5). In this respect, the ethnographic knowledge in this thesis has taken shape from my observations of the experiences and practices of research participants. For example, I have paid attention to how people described their experience while painting or drawing; in what moments and why they said they were ‘creative’; what kind of challenges and

contradictions were manifested while painting a collective visual work; why teachers seemed more inclined to present a view of 'arts' and 'creativity' as therapeutic; and why the main building was damaged and the effects of this for the everyday experience of students and teachers. I developed these questions during my fieldwork, firstly because my quotidian and 'direct experience' (Macdonald, 1997 p.20) in the field allowed me to problematise the dynamics observed at FARO. Secondly, such questions allowed me to raise questions about the experience of subjects in the organisation. Finally these questions were useful to understand how, in the ordinary activities of students and teachers, a particular kind of arts education and creativity was being assembled.

By participating in the everyday dynamics at FARO, I have been able to understand the contradictions, ambiguities and silences. For example, in the first case, the policy discourse presents 'arts education' and 'creativity' in a romantic and ambitious way; however in practice, political choices and the ordinary decisions of staff members allow us to see contradictions in relation to policy discourse. In the second case, the multiple views and strategies of staff members and teachers for implementing 'arts education' and 'creativity' raise questions about its aims and goals. In the third case, it seems to me that what people do not do and do not say through their everyday practice at FARO is a manifestation of social inequalities. The lack of 'cultural' institutions in the East limits the possibilities of those attending FARO for exploring more diverse views on 'arts education' and 'creativity'. The lack of educational programmes limits people's awareness of the importance of, for example, backing up their works. Furthermore, if those attending the organisation naturalise interactions that can be described as tensions, this may be a manifestation of social inequalities.

To reveal contradictions, ambiguities and silences through this ethnographic research has been important because an 'anthropological approach endeavours to understand, and engage with, the ambiguities that ethnography reveals' (Pink, 2005 p. 288). The empirical chapters of this thesis seek to make visible these ambiguities, contradictions and silences when a policy becomes practice. I describe below how it was that I came to be involved with this field site.

2.1 Getting involved: my days at the field

In December 2010, I visited the organisation for the first time and asked the Director for permission to conduct fieldwork at FARO. Access was negotiated on condition that I submit a copy of the thesis to the organisation. After this meeting, I occasionally kept in contact with him and his assistant via email to let them know that I would start fieldwork by the end of 2011. A year later, in November and mid December, I formally began conducting the research on 9 November 2011. My first conversations with the workshop coordinator and her colleague allowed me to become familiar with their activities and to observe their routines. During those months I met staff members, students and teachers. I joined the design workshop approximately five weeks before it ended.

Prior to my participation in the workshop, I explained the purposes of my research to the *talleristas* and asked whether they would allow me to follow their workshops. No one denied me access. Then, I introduced myself to the students as a student of anthropology conducting research about the dynamics in the organisation and why people came to FARO. I asked them whether I could join in the workshops. Students did not reject my participation (it was *ok* for them) and I was gradually accepted as a peer. I noticed this especially when they joked with me, asked me about my personal life or told me about their personal issues. Since January 2012, I attended six workshops either in the afternoons or in the evenings. Before or after each workshop, I interviewed students and teachers. At times when I was not attending the workshops, I went to the FARO's library to write notes about my observations after my informal conversations with students. Likewise, I carried out various activities which are described below.

I participated in some activities with the workshop coordinator, for example, the registration process for the new students; I assisted her to translate conversations that she held with a German and an English artists; I attended few meetings with the teachers run by the workshop coordinator. I had lunch with the workshop coordinator and her colleague as this was a time when they were less busy and we could talk about, say, their work and their personal lives.

I visited the *Secretaria de Cultura* to collect documents about the Left-wing policy. I also visited several public libraries, a research centre for a conference, and two museums. My visits to the first museum were in order to participate in a project concerning the creation of a mural

(Chapter 6). The visit to the second museum provided me with an opportunity to listen to the comments of two peers (Jaime and Lourdes) about an arts exhibition. Furthermore, on one occasion, I accompanied Dario to the library at his university to observe an exhibition of his paintings. I interviewed staff members, teachers and students (the section entitled ‘Interviews’ below describes the number of interviews I carried out). I also attended the events organised by staff members throughout the year: the anniversary of FARO, concerts featuring different musical styles (e.g. rock and reggae music), the annual exhibition in which students and teachers exhibit their productions (e.g. photography, painting, drawing, theatre) and an event in which staff members invited students and visitors to do graffiti on some walls inside the organisation. I saw that the FARO anniversary, the music concerts and the graffiti activity attracted a large number of people. According to several short interviews with visitors and observations, such events produced enjoyment among those who attended them. I observed that the public appeared to be mainly aged in their twenties.

Approximately 25 administrative staff worked at FARO when I carried out fieldwork. They were divided into teams or, as they say, one *subdirección* and five *coordinaciones* (offices and one subdirection). A person called the *Subdirector* was responsible for the organisation. Along with two staff members, they coordinated the activities with governmental offices, private and civil organisations. Five *coordinaciones* (offices) divided up the tasks at FARO: *difusión* (diffusion), *servicios culturales* (cultural services), *talleres de artes y oficios* (arts and trades workshops), *talleres infantiles y servicios a la comunidad* (children’s workshops and community services), and *servicios generales* (general services). As part of the activities of the first office (the diffusion office), four staff members were responsible for advertising FARO events and activities within the organisation and to the media. Four staff members were responsible for the *servicios culturales* (cultural services) office. They contacted ‘artists’ to see if they were interested in exhibiting their works in the spaces offered by the organisation and planned activities such as concerts, theatre and children’s events. The *talleres infantiles y servicios a la comunidad* (children’s workshops and community services) offered 25 workshops for approximately 700 participants ranging from about 4 to 15 years of age.

Two staff (i.e. the workshop coordinator and her colleague) and some undergraduate students organised the *talleres de artes y oficios* (arts and trades workshops). When conducting fieldwork, they offered approximately 51 workshops to people over the age of 16. Approximately 1,500 people over the age of 16 were registered on the workshops and a number

of 30 led the workshops. As part of the purposes of the workshops, people would develop skills in activities such as photography, painting, sculpture, soldering and carpentry. Staff members called those leading the workshops, either *tallerista* or *maestro* (teacher). Similarly, staff members and teachers called those registered on the workshops, *alumnos* (students). During the course of my research at FARO I conducted participant observation, interviews and informal conversations, archival research and I took photographs.

2.1.1 Participant observation

The importance of conducting participant observation at FARO was that I was able to observe the subjects' social relations, subjects' interactions with non-humans and processes taking place through their ordinary activities at the organisation. To follow subjects' ordinary activities was important because I was able to observe how in the everyday a kind of creativity was being experienced and reshaped. I paid attention to students' (my peers) social relations. I joined in with their conversations, paying attention what they said and how they understood their activities such as, painting and writing. I also paid attention to what they did and how they carried out their activities. My participation as student allowed me to understand how creativity was being developed through everyday practice, as well as, how arts education and creativity were being encouraged at the organisation and the reasons of this (Chapter 4 and 5). I conducted participant observation in six workshops designed for people aged 16 years and above. The workshops I attended were: *arte y performance* (art and performance), *periodismo comunitario* (community journalism), *pintura* (painting), all of which lasted three months and each took four hours per week. *Graffiti* and *Termofusión* (plastic recycling), which ran for one month and two hours; and *graphic design* (diseño gráfico) which I joined partway through¹⁶. Each workshop ran for four hours per week and for twelve weeks. By attending the workshops, I came to realize that they can be described as 'environments' (Mayes, 2010, p.5) through which the teachers and students I met reinforced their views and experiences of creativity.

Either before or after the workshops, I spent some time with my peers, just hanging out. Seated outside the classrooms or in the tunnel of the organisation, I listened to their personal stories. For example, the kind of TV programmes or films they had seen recently or the concerts they

¹⁶ Chapter 3 examines the design workshop; Chapter 5 examines three permanent workshops (painting, journalism, art and performance). I decided to examine in the thesis only these because the others were temporary workshops and I did not noticed variations between painting, performance, graffiti and plastic recycling.

would have liked to attend, but (due to lack of money) they could not, their jobs and their individual journey. I intervened in the conversations asking them about the activities they carried out when they did not come to FARO. To hang out with the students I met was important not only because I gained rapport with them, but also, because it helped me to understand more about areas of their lives that made a connection with their participation in the organisation and the reasons for carrying out their own activities. I collected materials about the place where they live, their level of studies, whether they were working at the time of the research. Informal conversations with students while painting, drawing or doing any other individual or pair activity were effective spaces in which to receive explanations about the process of, say, painting and writing. In these conversations, I gathered material on their reflections concerning creativity. The best information I was able to collect came from informal conversations while observing what they were doing. By spending more listening to them, I found the answers I was looking for, while significant topics that enhanced the research were highlighted.

I carried a small notebook with me to take notes about teachers' dialogues with my peers and about my own observations. Soon after the end of a workshop, I went to the library to write further details about the dynamics observed. This helped me to check missing points and things to do next. My reflections were either written in the notebook or spoken into a voice recorder. Additionally, I used my camera to take photographs of the workshops, except for *art and performance* and *periodismo comunitario*. This is because in those workshops I was encouraged to work individually or in teams with my peers and I had no opportunity to stand back and take pictures. Additionally, in those workshops teachers raised explanations and discussions with students and I decided to follow them by taking notes.

2.1.2 Interviews

Drawing on Alain Touraine (1995), 'subject' refers to the capacity of individuals to be less determined by a 'social system' and more 'creators and producers of society' (Touraine, 1995, p. 206). 'Subject' is an analytical category that recognises people's struggles with social conventions within an established social order. In line with the question of this research, concerning how policy is reshaped through its encounter with people, architecture, documents and art projects, I would argue that the students I met can be defined as 'subjects' whose meanings, processes and practices about creativity indicate they are 'producers' of creativity. The material gathered through interviews is important for understanding how students and

teachers 'encode meaning' to their activities (Hall, 1980). This lets us see how they verbalise their experience of creativity and arts and the reasons for this (see Chapter 7).

During my fieldwork, I conducted semi-structured interviews and informal conversations with six groups of subjects: a) 33 students, b) 12 teachers, c) 9 staff members, d) 1 founder of FARO, e) 1 ex-staff member, f) 2 ex-staff members and founders of FARO. Additionally, the informal conversations with the above mentioned 33 students examined how and why they attended the organisation. The interviews were conducted after I had spent approximately four or five weeks in the field. This is because I prioritised the importance of creating empathy with the students, teachers and staff members I met prior to any interview. In order to keep anonymity of students and teachers, I replaced their names. At the end of this thesis there is a Biographical index giving information about research participants. It highlights participants' age, educational background, activities they were doing when I met them.

The students I interviewed comprised 19 men and 14 women, ranging in age from 20 to 60 years old. At the time I conducted the interviews, they had almost all finished either high school or undergraduate studies. Those who had finished high school were studying for a technical degree or undertaking undergraduate studies. Just one person had only completed primary school and two people had completed secondary school.¹⁷ Inspired by John Falk (2009), the topics of the interviews were related to their motivations, life expectations, and family background. I also asked them the reasons why they painted, drew, or played an instrument; the reasons for going to FARO; and how they perceived it. I interviewed four students in more depth to get information on their background. Visiting their homes was useful for understanding part of the sociocultural dynamics of the East, such as why the people migrated there from southern Mexican states; and the kind of solidarity networks that exist between families who live in the East. The results of the interviews with students are examined in Chapter 7. They were recorded and took between 20 and 60 minutes. I decided to stop interviewing the students when the data became repetitive; this was also the case for the interviews with teachers, staff members and ex-staff members.

¹⁷The conventional education system in Mexico starts with primary school (6 years), then secondary school (3 years), high school (3 years) and university (from 4 years to 5 years).

Interviews with teachers were with two women and ten men out of 30. Given that they visited the organisation frequently and some of them allowed me to join in the workshops, I interviewed them. The reasons for not interviewing all of them were that data from interviews became repetitive. The teachers whom I interviewed had finished their undergraduate studies and some were taking training courses or diplomas in their own specialist areas. The topics of the interviews included their reasons for teaching in the organisation; whether their activities were guided by the workshop coordinators, and if so, how; and what they intended to teach to students and how they thought they were doing. Alongside my participation in the workshops, the data collected from these interviews are examined in Chapter 4. The interviews with teachers ranged from 40 to 60 minutes.

Interviews with staff members were five men and four women. They were asked about their tasks, and when and how they had started to work at FARO. The interviews were recorded and lasted from 60 to 90 minutes, taking place in a café or in the gardens of FARO. The material recorded was useful to understand the historical aspects of the organisation and their work experience in FARO. Particular attention was given to the workshop coordinator and her colleague. This is because they were responsible for organising the workshops for people over the age of 16. With the aid of FARO Director General, Agustín Estrada, I also interviewed Eduardo Vázquez-Martín. Along with Alejandro Aura, Vázquez-Martín designed the policy of the first Left-wing party in the City. Similarly, I also interviewed Benjamín González, a founder of the organisation, and the first Director of FARO. He currently works in a civil organisation that promotes arts education through workshops and *servicios culturales* (cultural services) in a disadvantaged area of Mexico City. I introduce their names in this thesis because their statements appeared in FARO documents and newspapers.

2.1.3 Photographs

The photographs collected at FARO are not only images intended to evidence situations, but part of ‘ethnographic knowledge’ (Pink, 2007, p. 21). Along with my fieldnotes, the production of photographs accounts for part of the social interactions and processes of creativity. Unlike fieldnotes and the writing of this ethnography, my photographs intend to describe – visually – upon processes that I observed at FARO. Despite the debates surrounding the use of images in an ethnographic text - which address the ‘dominance’ and ‘iconophobia’ of including images as part of anthropological knowledge (Grimshaw, 2001, p. 6; Pink, 2007) - the images that appear

in this ethnography intend to accompany the written text. My use of the term ‘accompany’ is because the photographs neither substitute the written text nor are a kind of secondary material. Instead, I intend to put in relation two kinds of knowledge, visual and written. As Pink (2007) says:

while images should not necessarily replace words as the dominant mode of research or representation, they should be regarded as an equally meaningful element of ethnographic work. Thus visual images, objects, descriptions should be incorporated when it is appropriate, opportune or enlightening to do so (Pink, 2007, p. 6).

The examination of specific practices and processes at FARO, via the production of visual images, is relevant in that it provided information about how students I met interacted with the main building architecture (Chapter 4), how we worked collaboratively to produce visual objects (Chapter 3 and 6) and the manifested processes concerning creativity, such as the production of drafts (Chapter 3). Photographs introduce situations by which processes of creativity were being manifested through the course of actions of subjects. Through photographic material and written text, processes of creativity are examined in this thesis.

The photographs were modified during the fieldwork, from images describing physical spaces and activities, to images that were more related to the aims of this research. As Evans-Pritchard says ‘the work of the anthropologist is not photographic. He has to decide what is significant in what he observes and by his subsequent relation of his experiences to bring what is significant into relief’ (Evans-Pritchard, 1952, p. 82 in Morton, 2009, p. 269). For this research, the criteria for deciding ‘what is significant’ implied a temporary process that appeared through my interaction with research participants and familiarisation with the organisation. In this sense, I suggest that the goals of this research oriented the visual material to collect, however, the visual material collected polished the goals of the research. For Morton (2009), the ‘photographic engagement’ of the ethnographer can be ‘influenced by the agency of the gathered group’ (Morton, 2009, p. 271). In other words, people’s interactions mobilise the ethnographer’s eye so that he/she can gather particular experiences that become materialised as a visual image. For example, I gradually paid attention to the main FARO building and the ways students and teachers used it. By observing these dynamics, I started to take photographs because such dynamics provided information through which to answer the experience of people in a building and the effects of this for the kind of creativity produced in interaction with the material.

The photographs that I produced were important for the writing up of this thesis. They helped me to remember faces and their names, episodes and places that were not recorded in my fieldnotes. Often, events and processes happened so quickly that I was unable to take adequate notes at the time, and later the photographs solidified such facts and processes. Along with interviews and fieldnotes, the photographs captured some of the everyday practices of the organisation. About 1000 photographs (2.23 GB) were taken describing people working together, discussing a project, having fun, and working on their objects. The production of these visual images were negotiated in that I asked participants for their permission to take a picture of them. Finally, some of my photographs were employed by participants in order to have a record of their own participation in an arts project (Chapter 6).

2.1.4 Archival research

I conducted archival research at FARO, the *Secretaria de Cultura* (Minister of Culture) and public libraries. I collected three types of documents: articles in newspapers, documents from the organisation, and documents describing the policy I was examining. In line with the aim of this thesis, the importance of such documents is that they are ‘knowledge practices’ (Holmes and Marcus, 2005, p. 243) through which I examine how ex-staff members’ and policy makers’ interpret arts education and creativity and also how they characterize the imagined public. Documents let us see how policy makers’ ‘cultural values’ and ‘moral systems’ are represented (Apthorpe, 1997, p. 43; 55). I suggest that, FARO’s documents and those describing the purposes of the leftist policy are not neutral, but rather, the words and meanings have weight for the characterisation of the imagined public and for the ways in which staff members guide their activities. My use of the term ‘Left-wing arts policy’ refers to the interpretation and implementation that policy makers have attributed to arts education and creativity, as well as the practices of students. I have focused on the documents of FARO: *Documento marco* (framing document) and the *Modelo pedagógico* (pedagogic model). In the first case, FARO purposes, imagined public and characterisation of the geographic area are explored. In the second case, I examine the ways arts education is implemented through the workshops and the architecture of the organisation’s main building. From Chapters 3 to 5 I simultaneously examine students practices and part of the expectations and purposes of ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ reflected in the documents above.

2.2 Empirical research in the East of Mexico City

FARO is located in Iztapalapa, the biggest *delegación* in Distrito Federal whose population is nearly two million compared to eight million living in Distrito Federal. Alongside other municipalities of the State of Mexico - Nezahualcoyotl, Los Reyes la Paz, Ixtapaluca, Valle de Chalco, Chimalhuacán - these municipalities make up the *Orient* of Mexico City. During fieldwork, I realised that teachers, students and staff members I met referred to the East of Mexico City as the *Orient*. The *Orient* is characterised by social inequalities and a negative image. Students and staff members told me that the *Orient* is perceived as a place of violence, robbery, anti-social behaviour; the area where the biggest city dump is located; the area that experiences the most lack of basic services, such as a water supply (Chapter 6). They pointed out that it was mainly the ‘media’ and people who lived in other areas of the city who had contributed to construct this negative image. Alongside these ‘guilty agents’ (Millington, 2011a, p. 169), politicians have also contributed to impose these meanings, desqualifying residents in order to justify projects concerning ‘arts’ and ‘culture’ (Chapter 3). Students I met (my peers) negotiated such perceptions on the grounds of a kind of defence and sense of belonging to the *Orient*.

They said that ‘in the Orient of the city, not everything is like that’. Although they recognised thefts, assaults and violence as part of the dynamics of the East, they also highlighted other routines that challenged the negative image. For example, they claimed that in their *barrios* ‘there is culture too’ (*¡el barrio también es culutra!*). Their idea of culture emphasised local ceremonies, visits to natural places, and *sonideros* (a kind of party where people from different neighbourhoods meet and a combination of music styles such as salsa and cumbia are played by a DJ).¹⁸ A kind of culture that seems to be invisible for the body of arts education that the local government promotes. Students I met also told me that their relatives (e.g. grandparents) had migrated from eastern and southern states of Mexico to Iztapalapa and other areas in order to find a job. They said they were the second or third generation living in *the Orient*. When they talked about their familial stories, they said that at least one of their parents or close relatives (e.g. uncle, sister) had migrated to the US in order to find a job and sent remittances home to their family. They described their relatives as ‘hardworking’ people. In doing this, they intended

¹⁸ During my participation in a workshop I listened to a teacher encouraging students to reflect about adjectives that people from other areas in the city used to refer to *the Orient*. *Iztapamata*, *Iztaparata* are combinations of words that describe crime and robberies. *Nezahualodo* refers to the municipality *Nezahualcoyotl*, though the word *lodo* (*mud*) implies the municipality has no pavement and in times of rain is full of mud.

to challenge the idea that only anti-social behaviour takes place in the East. Students' personal stories of their relatives moving from the places where their born to find a job constitute a response to the 'symbolic violence' imposed by other subjects. As Millington says:

residents (...) construct their own oppositional representational spaces. That is not to say they are happy with their exclusion from the city and their living conditions; rather, they seek to extricate themselves, however temporarily, from what they recognise as the unfair and illegitimate symbolic violence imposed upon them (Millington, 2011a, p. 170).

Furthermore, based on their life experience, social relations and interpretations of the East, the students I met also defended their space, or rather, the social relations they constructed every day. From my experience, I observed that in the mornings (i.e. about 6 am) public transport was full and traffic problems started to occur as people travelled to other areas of the city, such as 'the centre' or any other area of the south. I assume those who travelled were students and workers as they carried backpacks and wore quite comfortable clothes such as hoodies, jeans, and trainers.

The students I met at FARO travelled to other areas of the city either to study or to work. They could travel for up to two hours one-way. Reasons for traveling so long include their educational aspirations not matching up with the education on offer in the East and perhaps they could not afford to pay the fees at a private university.¹⁹ In my own search through various websites I found that in Iztapalapa there are 4 public universities and 14 private institutions and universities.²⁰ This number is reduced compared to the number of technical schools. I could identify a number of 57 *escuelas de formación para el trabajo* (schools of work formation) and 17 *escuelas en profesional técnico* (schools for professional technician).²¹ The comparative number of educational institutions raises questions about the imbalance in the educational

¹⁹ In some public universities the fee is less than \$10 pesos (50p).

²⁰ I found these numbers from website searches:

<http://universidades.estudia.com.mx/i09010-universidades-particulares-iztapalapa-distrito-federal.html>
http://www.estudia.com.mx/busqueda.php?q=&num_page=1&ba=1 [Accessed 13/09/2014]

²¹ At the schools for professional technicians, people attend training courses related to services and 'productivity'. Those who register at such schools can obtain a certification in electricity, English, dressmaking and confectionery, but this is not a professional qualification. See: <http://app.empleo.gob.mx/STPSEmpleoWebBack/cursoFormacion.do?method=init> [Accessed 13/09/2014]

infrastructure, as well as inequalities, in the sense of people's possibilities for learning, and not just technical issues. The jobs of students, however, were not related to their studies at all. Those who I met held part-time jobs in bakeries, fast food restaurants and some worked in the customer-services section of banks. Other students worked in public bazaars as *comerciantes* (sellers), or as *bicitaxi and mototaxi* drivers, (a form of public transport where drivers use bicycles and motorcycles to take passengers' short distances). Their wages were not paid per hour but rather every two weeks. For those working as sellers and on public transport, they earned money according to the sales made over the course of the day and how many passengers they transported. Those without a job spent their time at home helping with the household chores, studying to pass their high school exams and looking for employment.

The importance of describing some of the social inequalities and the negative image of the East is that it shows part the sociocultural processes in the East, and how, students' everyday activities challenge the negative public image. As I live in the North area of the State of Mexico, I could have visited the organisation to conduct ethnographic research and easily get back to my house. Yet I moved to Iztapalapa to explore the dynamics at FARO in connection with wider dimensions, such as the ways in which the East is characterised, the experience of students I met living in the East and how they respond to the negative public image. The relevance of this is that I could understand the reasons of students for attending the organisation. Furthermore, my move to the East was motivated by the purposes of the policy which intended to promote 'inclusion' through 'arts education' and 'creativity'. I felt motivated to understand from my experience how such inclusion was happening in practice. This experience can be described as contradictory. I explain below how the arts organisation was conceived.

2.3 A project of urban development

The *Fábrica de Artes y Oficios de Oriente* (Factory of Arts and Crafts) (FARO) is a project of urban development that provides permanent services (e.g. exhibitions, concerts, library) and arts education through workshops. The organisation was opened in an area where the lack of governmental organisations was visible compared to the South or the West. Based on the fact that 'young people' in Mexico City live in a context characterised by violence, distant relationships with the authorities (e.g. the police) and lack of 'spaces' for youth, the opening of FARO meant an initiative from the government that aimed at producing a 'respectful and friendly relationship between young people and the government' (ICCM, 1999, p. 12). The

organisation creators were of the belief that *el arte y la cultura* (arts and culture) would enable young people to ‘express themselves’ and allow them to ‘perform their personal and collective development’ (ICCM, 1999, p. 12). In the same way, FARO was opened with other purpose, including being:

a project of urban development that prioritises the culture. A project of cultural formation whose arts workshops are the baseline [for opening] dialogues of creators and trainees. A place for cultural services including permanent activities, galleries and a library. (Vazquez Martin, n/d).

The *founders*, or rather, the organisation creators - Eduardo Vázquez-Martin, Andrea González, Guillermo Perucho, Benjamín González, and Agustín Estrada - called the organisation *Fábrica de Artes y Oficios* (Factory of Arts and Crafts) because this name mirrored some of the purposes mentioned above. The organisation creators expected that the activities in FARO would allow the public to ‘express’ themselves and that (the activities) would contribute to their *formación* (shaping). These would be related to the acquisition of ‘knowledge’ and ‘skills’ so that people could develop their own ‘languages’. FARO was conceived a space for ‘work and creation’ (Vazquez-Martin, 11 January 2011) and for ‘young people’s expressions.’

From FARO’s opening in 2000, however, young people were not the only people who visited the organisation, this modified the original purpose. Children, women who worked at home and people who had retired also visited the organisation. This entailed new staff recruitment, specialised workshops for the new public, as well as the opening of other physical spaces. That other people participated in the organisation and not only the ‘young’ brought about an impact on people’s participation in the ‘arts’. For example, a group of persons organised their own art collective after they had participated in the organisation for several years. One of them told me that their participation in the workshops was useful in that they were able to make their own ‘art collective’ and some of their work had been exhibited overseas. Likewise, a publication of the organisation described cases of students whose participation in FARO was useful for helping define their vocation. Those students continued their studies in music or ‘arts’ in academies or at universities. The participation of new publics implied that staff members needed to implement specialised activities for them. In doing so, staff members stabilised five main public activities: a) *talleres de artes y oficios* (‘arts’ and ‘crafts’ workshops) b) physical spaces for exhibitions c) physical spaces for music concerts d) a public library and e) artist residencies. The workshops, spaces for exhibitions, public library and artist residencies would be the material actions for promoting ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ at FARO. Based on these services, staff members

who I met defined FARO as an *escuela de artes y oficios* (school of arts and crafts) and a *centro cultural* (cultural centre).

FARO has offered services concerning arts education for about 15 years. To date three more FAROs operate in unprivileged areas of the city and each one offer services to a large number of people. Similar to the purposes of the *main* organisation, they also seek to give ‘access’ to ‘arts’ and ‘culture’ to people who appear to be excluded. That more organisations were opened in other areas of the city raises questions about the kind of ‘arts education’ implemented, the ways in which people participate or not in such organisations and why. I would argue that these questions are important for the anthropological field in that they produce knowledge about how policy, intending to shape individuals, becomes practice in community arts organisation. In FARO, I suggest that it is possible to understand not only the kind of ‘creativity’ and ‘arts education’ that the arts policy and the organisation promotes, but also how subjects’ experience and their practices gradually assemble and reshape ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ through the everyday. By examining subjects’ practices is possible to understand the contradictions, ambiguities and silences manifested through the everyday.

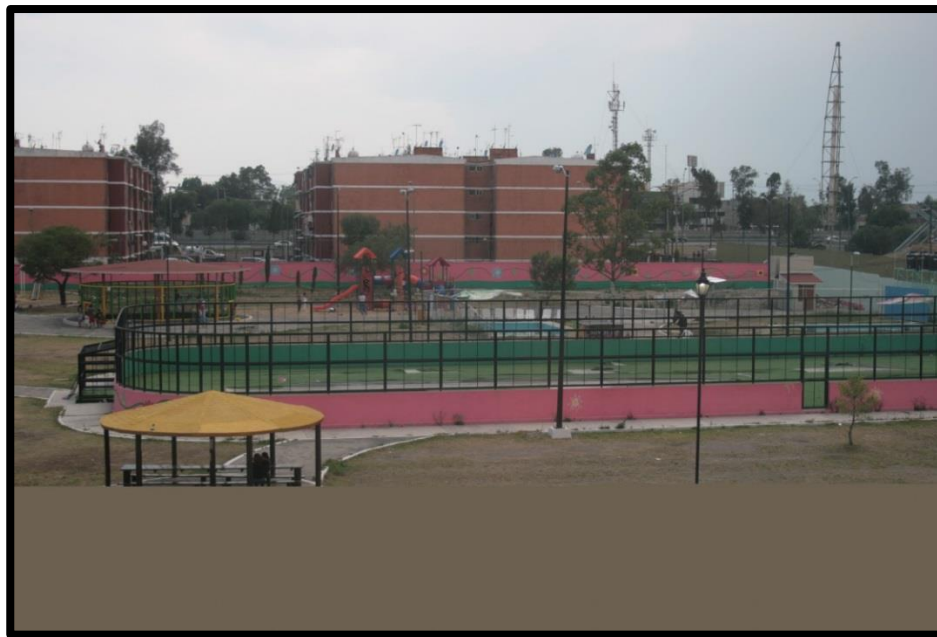


Figure 1 Opposite the FARO main entrance a recreational area and apartment blocks.

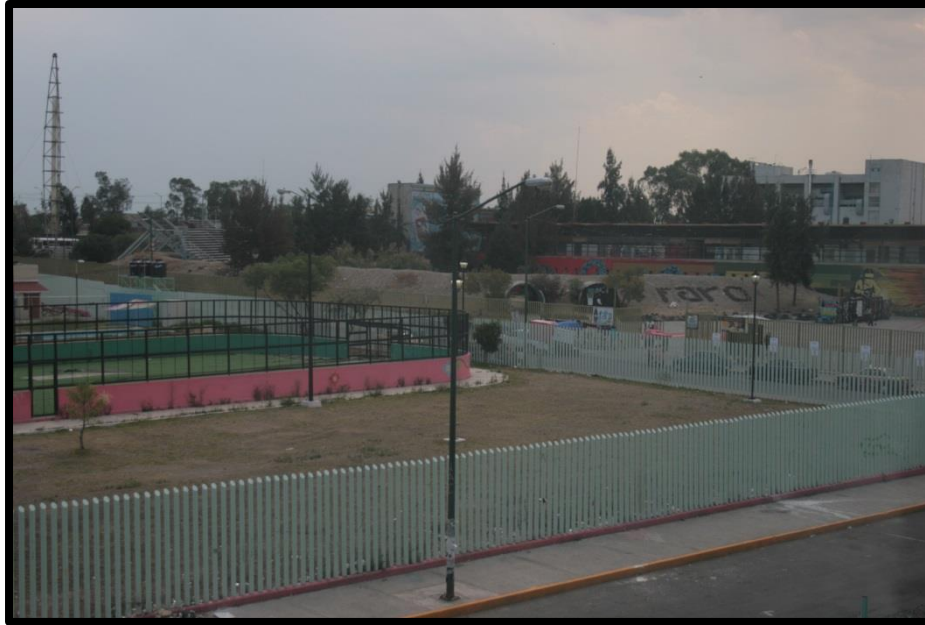


Figure 2 A partial view of FARO.

2.4 Participation at FARO: ethnographic ‘commitments’

Traditionally, it has been argued that ethnography entails a combination of various methods (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p. 1) or ‘a set of activities, a way of doing research work “in the field”’ (Hirsch and Geller, 2001, p. 1). Although ethnography can be defined as a ‘set of methods’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995); ethnography is far from just a combination of methods to observe people, or rather, ‘to grasp the native’s points of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of his world’ (Malinowski, 1922, p. 25). Ethnography not only entails the experience and the points of view of those being studied, but also the experience of the ethnographer to produce knowledge. For Pink, ‘[ethnography is an] ‘approach to experiencing, interpreting and representing culture and society (...) [ethnography] is a process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) based on ethnographer’s own experiences’ (Pink, 2007 p.22). Ethnography is also characterised for its ‘open-ended flexibility’ in that ethnographers can be taken to unexplored areas of research when they are conducting fieldwork (Macdonald, 2001, p. 78). This view reminds us the various pathways that ethnographers may follow to produce knowledge in the fieldsite. For Daniel Miller (1997) ethnography is a ‘series of commitments that together constitute a particular perspective’ (Miller, 1997). The importance of these definitions is that they point out that ethnography is not

reduced merely to a tool for observing people over a period of time. Instead, the experience of the ethnographer in the fieldsite is crucial for the production of ethnographic knowledge.

My ethnographic study has involved not only the application of a number of methods, but it was also an experience socially shared with research participants in order to produce ethnographic knowledge. My informal conversations and interviews with staff members, students and teachers were not only data collection, but also a reflexive conversation through which ethnographic knowledge was constructed. Inspired by the literature above, I understand ethnography as a broader approach in which participant observation has been useful for unpacking the everyday dynamics of research participants at FARO. My personal experience with the students I met has been useful in allowing me to build up knowledge regarding how they/we experience, produce and reshape 'arts education' and 'creativity'. Taking on board Miller's (1997) 'commitments' and Macdonald's discussion of Miller's commitments in her ethnographic study of a museum, I next examine why my ethnographic research at FARO is characterised as a broader approach for understanding how the Left-wing arts policy becomes practice at the organisation.

The first commitment highlights that the work of an ethnographer is 'to be in the presence of people one is studying' (Miller, 1997, p. 16). For my fieldwork, this commitment intended as much as possible to follow students' ordinary activities, such as attending the workshops, making projects, listening to their chats. In some cases I visited with some students museums and places where they were exhibiting their works. Rather than knowing them through what in Spanish is articulated as *apariencia* - i.e. a superficial and ephemeral contact with people – my intention has been to know part of their personal context. The importance of this is that I have been able to understand how they engage in the organisation and their interpretations of their activities described as 'artistic' and 'creative'. To 'be in the presence of people' in this context has implied not just observing their activities at FARO. Instead, I tried to follow particular cases (e.g. Francisco, Dario, Jaime) to understand why and how they visit the organisation.

Miller's second commitment is about, 'to evaluate people in terms of what they actually do, i.e. as material agents working with a material world, and not merely of what they say they do' (Miller, 1997, pp. 16-17). Given the nature of this research, I came to realise that staff members, students and the teachers whom I met were 'material agents' in that their everyday actions allowed me to listen to their words and to follow their activities. To observe their everyday

activities reduced the risk of being driven to other ideas by research participants. As Macdonald says:

those we are studying may actually wish to dissemble or at least to ‘tidy up’ an account. In other words, what they say may be shaped through their own expectations of what they think we want to hear, or what they think we should not hear, or what they want us to hear (Macdonald, 2001, p. 86).

Crucial to this research has been understanding how the policy concerning ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ become practice in FARO and why. Because the focus of my research is everyday practice, Miller’s second commitment is significant in that I not only read policy documents and interviewed research participants. Instead I was able to evaluate subjects’ activities in relation to their responses and in relation to the words written in documents.

The third commitment is about a ‘long term investigation that allows people to return to a daily life that one hopes goes beyond what is performed for the ethnographer (Miller, 1997, p. 17). This commitment emphasises the importance of long-term research because under such conditions, those being studied gradually accept and naturalise the presence of ethnographers, therefore, people’s ‘performances’ reduce through time. As Macdonald says ‘even though the ethnographer’s presence is likely to be something of which those studied remain well aware, it is difficult to maintain a performance for outsiders over a long period’ (Macdonald, 2001, p. 88). For example, when conducting fieldwork, the workshop coordinator introduced me to her colleagues, teachers and students as the student *of anthropology* who would be conducting research in FARO. At the beginning of my fieldwork, she used to have lunch with me nearly every day and I received from her documents and books about the organisation without asking her. I understand this behaviour as a kind of ‘performance’ in that at the beginning of the field work, I perceived I had received support from her. However, at some point she did not have lunch with me as frequently, and later on, I was asked to support her in some activities, for example, registering new users or translating some conversations from English to Spanish for her. I interpret it that, by assisting her in some tasks, my presence had been naturalised.

To think about these moments during the ethnographic research made me reflect on the possibilities of going on the ways in which my positionality was being negotiated. In the case of my peers, I met them in so far as I participated with them in the workshops everyday. In this respect, activities run by teachers were useful for negotiating my position. Activities in teams, games and the production of visual works were interactions that made it easier for me to be

accepted by my peers. Again, I felt I was fully interacting with them when I listened to their personal stories, or when, seated in the yard or outside the classrooms, I listened to their conversations (that included their childhood memories, the films and music they liked, their opinions about the social conflicts in Mexico). Through my informal conversations and participation with them, I noticed that the data produced were useful material for examining not only how objects were produced, but also their personal context and the physical space in which they were working. This relates to the fourth and last commitment, namely the 'holistic analysis'. For Miller, holistic analysis is about:

[people's] behaviours be considered within the larger framework of people's lives and cosmologies, and thereby is to include the speculative construction of much that is not observed but conjectured on the basis of what can be observed' (Miller, 1997, p. 17).

Before conducting my fieldwork I intended to explore students' interactions and their production of objects. However, I began examining the architecture of the organisation. Given that policy makers and the architect expected that people would develop 'artistic' projects combining 'arts' and 'techniques', the architecture was designed in order to trigger collaborative projects between those studying 'arts' and 'crafts'. This tells us that the kind of arts education and creativity at the organisation was not only reduced with the production of objects or social interactions in the workshops. Instead, the physical spaces had influence on the kind of arts education and creativity promoted at FARO. To observe the experience of my peers in architectural spaces allowed me to examine how the arts policy becomes practice. By exploring the context in which such production takes place, I identified contradictions compared to the ambitious ideals of the architecture (Chapter 4).

I would describe my experience with the students I met as friendly. The people I met spoke the same language (Spanish) as me; we all lived in a peripheral area of Mexico City; and as a child I also lived in an apartment block, as some of them did. With this positionality in mind, as a student conducting research at FARO and sharing a familiar background, it might be the case that our similar personal context was actually useful in producing a sense of identification and establishing a relation that could be described as less hierarchical. Below, I discuss my positionality in fieldwork in more detail.

2.5 Conducting fieldwork at home: a half familiar position

Some of the challenges for anthropologists who are studying the societies in which they grew up is related to their difficulty in distancing themselves from their observations. For Marilyn Strathern (1987), although an ethnographer can easily connect to the dynamics and the language of those being studied, his/her familiarity might take for granted specific meanings and practices. For Shahaduz Zaman (2008) conducting research at home is 'twofold' (Zaman, 2008, p. 143). This is because the ethnographer's nationality minimises the 'emotional' and 'cognitive' task necessary for participating in an alien culture (Zaman, 2008, p. 150) and her/his background provides advantages for gaining access to the site of research (Zaman, 2008, pp. 145-147). Marta Kempny (2012) discusses her status as 'a native anthropologist' who conducts research with a group of migrants in another country. By sharing the same ethnicity with a group of migrants, Kempny highlights how she is 'simultaneously confronted with the socio-cultural realm of the receiving society' (Kempny, 2012, p. 43). For Kempny, to study fellow citizens in another country is to situate her research at a 'sort of cultural crossroads' (Kempny, 2012, p. 47); this implies recognising her/his own ethnicity, and, defamiliarising the familiar. She describes her positionality as 'ambiguous' and points out how this was actually beneficial to criticising the cultural practices of migrants in another place. To conduct research in Mexico City did not necessarily mean that I was in a place totally familiar to me. From my experience, my fieldwork position was half familiar. This position brought about some challenges.

Initially, my interest in examining an arts organisation in an area with minimal institutions is related to my life experience. I grew up in Atizapán, a municipality that belongs to the State of Mexico and the Metropolitan area of Mexico City. Along with my family I grew up in an apartment block located in a working class *colonia* (neighbourhood), and at a time when the municipality was not fully populated. As we were among the first people living there, public transport, supermarkets and educational institutions were lacking. That remained the case for universities which were far from my home, and I traveled to another municipality to study for my undergraduate degree. Similarly, I had to travel for an hour or two to visit museums as they were located mainly in the Distrito Federal, or rather *el DF*, as inhabitants usually call it. Traffic, long distances and expensive public transport were the common dynamics to consider when visiting *el DF*. These dynamics were also not entirely unfamiliar for the students I met at FARO. In our conversations, I came to realise that they also traveled long distances to get to DF and dealt with the same dilemmas as I had: expensive public transport and organising one's time to

do the activities they wanted to do and experiencing a sense of unconformity because ‘everything’ is in DF²². To live in the ‘peripheral area’ of Mexico City (with students in the East and me in the North) implied that I could identify with their dynamics and a sense of familiarity emerged between my peers and I. I decided to explore an organisation outside the area where the museums and galleries are located because I grew up in an area where the lack of such institutions was evident. This situation can be described as part of the social inequalities in the city.

Because of these experiences, this research partly mirrors my own experience as an inhabitant of the Metropolitan Area of Mexico City. During the fieldwork, I not only raised reflections about a specific space but I was able to look at myself through the experience of other inhabitants of Mexico City. Yet, there were dynamics in the fieldwork that were quite unfamiliar to me. For that reason, although I conducted research in Mexico City, I was not conducting fieldwork entirely at home.²³ For example, from my experience, people who live within the metropolitan area might say ‘I am from DF’ rather than saying which specific area. They claim that the city has grown so much that they do not identify any difference between one place and the other. Partly this is because many people like me have to travel to DF for jobs, entertainment or studying. Although my peers also travel to DF for working, studying or entertainment, they say they are not from DF, but from the municipality they live in or from *the Orient*. Part of the reasons for these distinctions is that the social relations in some areas of the East can be described as ‘close’ and consequently my peers use the words *comunidad* (community) or *barrio* when they referred to the areas where they lived. Unlike my life experience as an

²²For García-Canclini (2009; 1998), the city is a ‘multicultural’ place, in part because of the historical and cultural processes in the city since postcolonial times, and the coexistence, of four dynamics in Mexico City: ‘the historical city’, ‘the industrial and metropolitan city’, ‘the communication city’, ‘the multicultural city’. For Carlos Monsiváis (2008; 2005) the city is ‘heterogeneous’ and ‘diverse’. Through his essays he explains the sense of ‘chaos’ that is reflected through the social life in Mexico City. Likewise, anthropologists and sociologists explain the inequalities in geographic areas of the city (Nieto Calleja, 2000, Nieto Calleja & Nivón-Bolán, 1993); the inequalities that people experience by visiting cultural institutions (Rosas-Mantecón, 2007); the hierarchical relations among inhabitants of the city (Duhau & Giglia, 2008); and the inequalities after the 1980’s and the types of citizenship that coexist in Mexico City (Bayón, 2012).

²³ Romantic visions of fieldwork – including ethnographers who conduct research in a remote place - are highly criticised (Zaman, 2008, Clifford, 1997, Gupta & Ferrguson, 1997, Hannerz, 1996). Some of the criticisms offer that in postcolonial times, there were visions of a remote place where anthropologists would struggle with an unfamiliar culture. Although globalising processes are taking place among societies, people’s cultural practices are not homogeneous. Specific aspects can inform us how people’s practices can be heterogeneous in relation to the background of the ethnographer who conducts research in the place where he/she was born.

inhabitant of Atizapán, for we do not use the words *barrio* and *comunidad*. Partly, this is because the relationships with neighbourhoods are not close and we do not share social relations able to produce a sense of belonging and identity. Another issue unfamiliar to me is that people from other states of Mexico migrate to Mexico City and they carry out ceremonies they used to do in the places where they were born. I found out about this through two interviews with students that took place at their houses. Finally, my peers' vision about *the Orient* celebrates a sense of belonging and defense against stereotypes.

Whilst conducting fieldwork at FARO, I noticed how my peers knew each other, and in my experience, I did not notice any kind of tension or conflict among them. Our activities and those that the teachers organised reinforced our social relations. In a way, some people in the organisation challenged my position as ethnographer when I realised how some of our life stories and experiences as inhabitants of Mexico City were not entirely different. This experience echoes Narayan (1993), who suggests exploring multiple 'identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations' (Narayan, 1993, p. 672). Although ethnographers' gender, class, and education provides the keys to understanding whether they are familiar with or set apart from their subjects, these factors can 'outweigh the cultural identity we associate with insider or outsider.' She therefore propose we 'focus on the quality of relations' that ethnographers establish with subjects. This implies writing about people not as 'objects' but as 'subjects' with their own 'voices', 'views' and 'dilemmas.' (Narayan, 1993, p.673). In what follows, I will discuss my positionality in the fieldwork discussing my class, gender and my identity as student. The ways in which I was perceived affected the research in that some access was accepted and some dynamics were restricted for me.

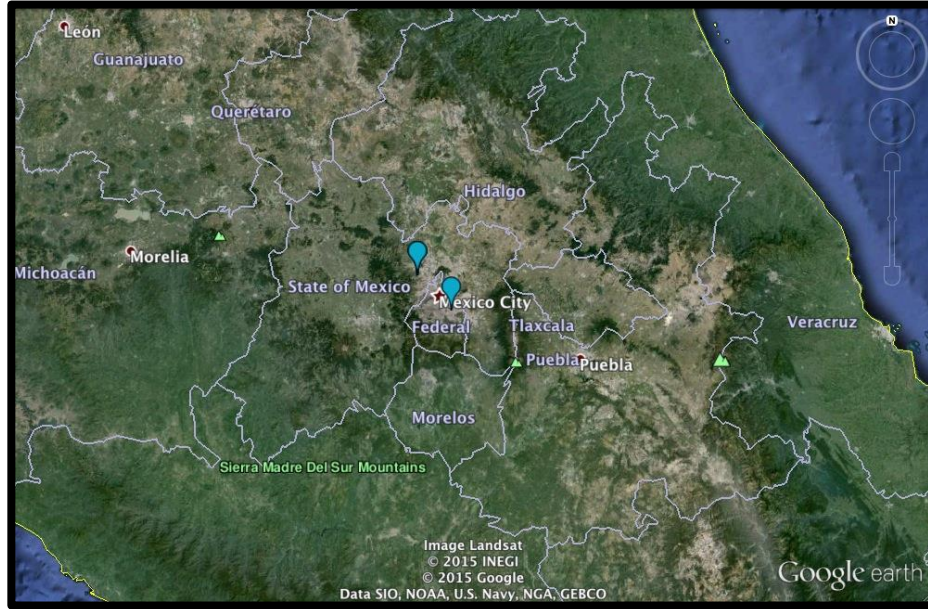


Figure 3 The State of Mexico and Distrito Federal. Source: Google Earth

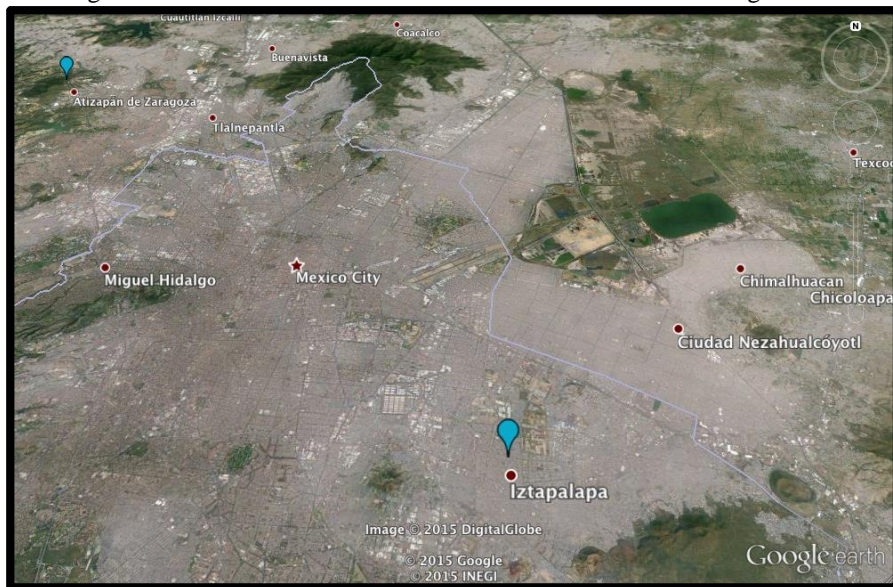


Figure 4 A partial view of the Metropolitan Area of Mexico City. Source: Google Earth.

2.5.1 Student

I negotiated my access at FARO by introducing myself as *estudiante de antropología* (an anthropology student) to people I came across. This had implications for the ways in which people at FARO perceived my presence and my participation in meetings with the staff. The workshop coordinator introduced me to the students and teachers as a student who would

conduct research at FARO for one year. My identity as a student was accepted because people registered in workshops are called *estudiantes del faro* (FARO students). Therefore, this produced some identification and empathy with my peers. However, my participation with staff members was not as easy to negotiate. Although I collaborated with them on specific tasks, when I asked whether they needed any help I was kindly told ‘no, thanks’ and this situation did not allow me to better investigate their activities and relationships with, say, the director. In the same way, when I asked the workshop coordinator whether I could sit in on meetings, she accepted my presence, although I perceived she was not totally convinced of the necessity of letting me participate. Being perceived less as researcher and more as a student also produced some exclusions. This is because FARO students were not expected to participate in administrative issues. Rather, it seems to me that staff members shared the idea they did tasks *para los chavos* (for the guys), a phrase that signifies care for students, rather than for people who were participating and could also take decisions along with staff members. By participating in the organisation as a student, this research raises reflections from the perspective of students highlighting part of their experiences, and as analysed here, the perceptions of staff members, policy makers whose position mirrors power relationships. My identity as student at FARO also brought about other implications concerning the university where I was studying for my PhD.

2.5.2 Middle-class student

During my fieldwork, the students and teachers usually asked me what the research was about and why I had decided to do research at FARO. Some asked me about the university I had come from, while others assumed I was a student from ENAH or UAM.²⁴ After explaining that I was studying at a university in England, a brief silence or more questions came up. As a consequence, I provided more information about myself and gradually explained to the teachers and students that the research was funded by the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACyT), otherwise, it would not have been possible for me to study abroad. By emphasising that I had received funding, I intended to communicate that I was a middle-class student who could never have paid for her studies abroad on her own. This enabled me to gain rapport with students I met because the majority of them were students from public universities or they had studied at a public university and paid a minimal fee. A sense of identity appeared in

²⁴ ENAH and UAM are Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia and Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, respectively. Both are public universities that offer academic programmes in Social Anthropology.

that my peers and I were both students who needed either funding or a cheap fee in order to be able to study. Unlike students and teachers, staff members did not ask as many questions about my presence or about the research. This is because they were used to seeing undergraduate and postgraduate students either conducting *servicio social* (social service) or postgraduate research.²⁵

My positionality as a middle-class student, however, did not entirely produce a sense of identification with administrative dynamics, such as the registration process. To register people who were joining the workshops for the first time was a slow and time-consuming process for approximately five people (with me included in the group) and two staff members. Equipped with basic resources such as pens, hundreds of application forms and staplers, the team struggled with the registration of about 800 people in just one day (the registration lasted seven days). From my experience, to collaborate in the registration process allowed me to recognise that my habitus was distinct to the *new students*' habitus. Whereas people made a long queue and had to stand for hours, waiting to be registered, I had no had to queue in the same way. My own experience was that I had registered for my own schools via the internet or a secretary was ready to receive my documents and fill in my information on a computer. If for any reason there was a technical problem with the computer, I received apologies and I was told to come the next day to continue with the registration. However, those who I registered seemed relaxed and in a good mood. By observing how a mundane activity such as the registration of people was carried out at FARO, I was able to see that behind my dissatisfaction, a set of cultural experiences from my background were being confronted. For the new 'students', they had naturalised some technical procedures such as having to wait for hours outside the organisation to be registered. I identify this behaviour as a silence in that those participating in a mundane activity naturalise processes that manifest social inequalities.

2.5.3 Woman

Once I began to participate in the workshops, I wanted the students to see me as someone who was friendly, open to listening to people and sympathetic. I gradually noticed that the women, mainly in their twenties and early thirties, dressed in trainers, jeans, t-shirts, and hoodies or sweaters, and I wanted to look like them to create 'empathy' (Vera-Sanso, 1993, p. 162). By

²⁵ The *servicio social* (social service) is a six-month training activity that every undergraduate student must carry out in Mexico to get his/her degree. This training is unpaid.

dressing more similarly to my female peers, my identity as a student was reinforced. I noticed that my female peers –and even the guys- approached me with confidence. I received greetings with a common kiss on my cheek; I was called ‘Ale’ instead of Alejandra; and I received invitations to join their own social networks. My interactions became easier to develop, and my research was negotiated with research participants without trouble. Interviews, informal conversations, working in teams were carried out with their consent. Regarding my interaction with my male peers, I had no difficulties in gathering information from them. It seems to me that part of the reason for not experiencing difficulties such as gender divisions or restrictions is because the workshops and the majority of activities in which I participated were ‘ambiguous contexts’ (Hargreaves 1994 in (Gill and Maclean, 2002), meaning that there were not gender divisions (i.e. specific activities only for men and women). My own experience was that, painting, drawing, writing, performance and graffiti were ambiguous contexts without any kind of gender division. I saw men and women working together, all involved in activities such as painting, drawing, and writing.

2.6 Ethical statement

Guided by the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth (ASA), I made clear the interest of my research to the Subdirector of FARO, staff members and the students I met during my fieldwork. When conducting interviews with students and staff members, I used a tape recorder and explained to them that the material recovered would be used only for academic purposes. In order to conceal the identities of students and some staff members, I have used pseudonyms. However, the identities of public figures are not concealed because their statements were taken from public documents and newspapers. Following this, I decided to use the name of the organisation, FARO de Oriente, because it is a public organisation and I found no reason to conceal the identity of this organisation.

This thesis tells the story of students I met when I joined to the workshops on offer at FARO. The kind of ‘anthropological knowledge’ (Fabian, [1983] 2014, p. viii) produced took place over a specific period of time and space: November 2011 to September 2012. This acknowledged the dynamic and changeable social processes and events at FARO, therefore, to write an ethnographic text in the present time would mean to solidify the practices that I observed for

about a year.²⁶ Similarly, by writing this ethnography in the present tense, I would produce an ethnographic text ‘timeless’ and ‘conventional.’ Drawing on Johannes Fabian ([1983] 2014), the writing of this thesis in the past tense emphasises that research participants and social processes are dynamic and uncertain. Furthermore, the writing of this text includes the use of *I* avoiding a ‘distance’ that objectifies and represents subjects in ethnographies. This echoes Rosaldo (1989) who argues that in postcolonial times, ethnography ‘competes with case studies that are embedded in local contexts, shaped by local interests and coloured by local perceptions’ (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 21;44). The social and political processes of Mexico City in the late 1990s are considered in this thesis, as well as the sociopolitical processes that took place when I conducted fieldwork at FARO.

The importance of introducing such a social and political context is twofold. Firstly, it explains the motives of policy makers in order to design an ambitious policy promoting ‘access’ to arts and culture, *formación* (make up) individuals through ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’. Secondly, the social and political context situates the structural conditions of the East of Mexico City. Some of these tensions concern lack of educational institutions –not only technical schools-, unemployment (mainly for people in their twenties and who have just finished their undergraduate degree), *feminicidios* (the murder of women in the State of Mexico, the Iztapalapa district, and states in the North of Mexico), a negative public image of ‘The Orient’ and its inhabitants. During my fieldwork I identified how such sociopolitical processes had effects on the social relations of my peers. For that reason, they are introduced through the chapters of this thesis (esp. Chapter 2, 5, and 7).

In this chapter, I have outlined the methodology and methods used in this ethnographic research. From this research, I came to learn that methodology is a continuous process which involves the construction of knowledge with research participants. It can be described as interactive, open, and a process. My informal conversations and interviews with research participants can be described as a reflective conversation with subjects, in which ethnographic knowledge was constructed through the flow of questions and experiences of both ethnographer and research

²⁶ Anthropological literatures that defend ‘the ethnographic present’ point out that it ‘preserves the reality of anthropological knowledge’, that it is an ‘implication of the shared time’ (Hastrup, 1990, p. 46;51); and it ‘enhances validity [rather than] reliability’ (Sanjek, 1991, p. 621). For De Pina-Cabral, when political changes appear during ethnographic research, ‘the conscious formulation of the existence of an ethnographic conjuncture should become accepted practice in anthropology’ (De Pina-Cabral, 2000, p. 347).

participants. To conduct ethnographic research in a public organisation can be described as a disordered work and with multiple possibilities to explore. This shows how the everyday life of an arts organisation is dynamic and diverse. For example, staff members' administrative activities and relations with external institutions; the choices of teachers to work at FARO and their social relations with students and staff members; and students' decisions to attend the activities at FARO are just some of the dynamics illustrating how research in public institutions can take multiple methodological pathways. This ethnographic research examines one part of the puzzle, focusing on the experience and practice of a group of students I met at FARO. The following empirical chapters demonstrate the processes by which 'arts education' and 'creativity' are experienced and reshaped through the everyday practice of students. These empirical chapters allow us to see the ambiguities, contradictions and silences involved in the policy becoming practice.

Chapter 3 Translating ‘arts education’: Words in texts and the practices of creativity

Museums, galleries or community arts organisations usually have a framework which guides their own actions. The framework describes the purposes and intentions of the organisation, and specific activities are implemented in accordance with that. However, organisations are not just made up of expectations, intentions and purposes for implementation, but of people’s practices and the more specific processes that take place every day in the life of an organisation. During my fieldwork at FARO, I could simultaneously observe technical ideas written in documents and people’s everyday activities at FARO. By exploring these activities in the organisation, I could understand how specific purposes and expectations written in documents, became translated into practice.

During my first visits to FARO, three stages were part of my ethnographic research. First, I reviewed documents highlighting the organisation’s goals, motives, target population and the relevance of *arts workshops* for its audience. Second, I had informal conversations and interviews with staff members and ex-policy makers who told me that the organisation was *un espacio para el arte y la cultura* (a space for arts and culture) designed for people who had ‘no access’ to ‘arts’ or to ‘culture’. Third, by participating in the workshops and various activities at FARO, I heard how students and teachers talked about *arte and creatividad* (art and creativity) to refer to their activities - such as the production of a painting - their participation in projects outside of the organisation, and their reflections about art. These ‘moments’ (Callon, 1986) in the ethnographic research were useful for understanding how certain purposes and expectations and everyday activities were being developed.

In this chapter I examine two questions: how is ‘arts education’ conceptualised in FARO documents? How do students *translate* ‘arts education’ into creative practice? In order to answer these questions, I examine specific documents interpreting the notion of arts education, and how social interactions let us see a kind of creativity less individual than social. The importance of examining words written in documents is that they constitute ‘artefacts of modern knowledge’ (Riles, 2006, p. 7). Drawing on anthropologist Annelise Riles, documents are important because they reflect people’s cultural values and knowledge. For Riles (2006, p. 6), documents are ‘ethnographic subjects’ because they let us see the way in which people interpret their own worlds or rather ‘knowledge practices’ (Holmes & Marcus, 2005, p. 243). During times when

the distance between ethnographer and research participant is reduced because both discuss theories, analyse social problems, or attend conferences, documents become ‘artefacts of modern knowledge’ in that they give an account of the ‘knowledge practices’ of people in particular contexts. Following this, my examination of FARO’s documents is useful for understanding how words and phrases decipher ‘arts education’. By studying the ideas of policy makers written in specific documents, I argue that documents are not neutral elements, but rather they are signification mechanisms which define certain entities, characterise individuals and establish modes of action. Similarly, the importance of examining technical ideas written in documents is that it fits with the goal of this thesis, concerning how a policy is reshaped through technical documents and practices of students. To describe the purposes of the organisation, its target population, and the urban area where it opened, is to introduce how the organisation creators interpret ‘arts education’ and how this knowledge comes to be reflected in documents of FARO. My analysis of words and phrases written in documents and specific practices of students is a reflection of how human activities and documents are interrelated. It is the first evidence of how the signification mechanisms are coexisting with particular kinds of practices concerning arts education and creativity. And for that reason, I suggest that the Left-wing arts policy is an ongoing process in which contradictions coexist.

The first section of this chapter analyses how arts education is defined through FARO’s goals, its target population and its assumptions of ‘culture’. We will see how such elements frame ‘arts education’ as an entity *outside of people*, and a kind of *cure* for its public. The second section introduces an initial snapshot of how a group of students (my peers) and a teacher developed an arts project in the organisation. By examining their participation in the project, I highlight how creativity emerges through social interaction. These interactions reveal some of the translations and challenges related to ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’. Finally, I discuss how words written in documents, along with specific activities, seem able to gradually produce creativity at FARO. In order to examine the concepts written in documents and students’ practices, I am guided by Actor-Network Theory and an assemblage perspective. I will argue in this chapter that Left-wing policy, concerning ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’, is produced through technical concepts written in the FARO documents and the social practices of students I met. In line with the goal of this thesis, which is to understand how policy, concerning arts education and creativity, becomes practice I highlight how despite certain difficulties, students experience their creativity. This chapter is the starting point because it is here that I introduce specific documents belonging to FARO and the initial activities I joined when conducting my fieldwork.

3.1 On translation and processes

Guided by the ANT and an assemblage perspective I examine how specific documents frame ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ and students’ creativity. ANT and an assemblage perspective is important because rather than taking for granted ‘structures’ such as ‘power’, ‘arts’ or ‘creativity’, this lens aims to ‘undermine structures’ and ‘[understand] processes and relationships’ (Marcus and Saka, 2006, p. 102). The ANT is related to the sociology of translation (Callon, 1986) because the latter examines how power is less a solid entity and more one of many processes that structure relationships²⁷. Regarding the notion of ‘translation’, Michel Callon (1986) problematises society as ‘uncertain’ and ‘disputable’ just like ‘nature’ (Callon, 1986, p.3). He shows how social life is not systemic but is more heterogeneous and uncertain, with people performing their lives in contradictory, ambivalent or ambiguous ways. Callon’s notion of translation concerns a repertoire of ‘moments’ which constitute ‘the different phases of a general process called translation, during which the identity of actors, the possibility of interaction and the margins of manoeuvre are negotiated and delimited’ (Callon, 1986, p. 6). Moreover, translation is about ‘displacements’ and ‘transformations’ (Callon, 1986, p. 18). To examine social life through the notion of translation is to explore ‘processes rather than results’ (Callon, 1986, p. 19). Finally, translation is ‘the mechanism by which the social and natural worlds progressively take form’ (Callon, 1986, p. 19).

The ANT and an assemblage perspective set out that ‘realities are not out there’. Instead, they are ‘produced’ via the practices and statements of those who participate (Law, 2004). Thus, words written in documents, and the production of objects made by specific subjects, as well as mundane letters, are part of a repertoire that progressively produces an entity. John Law (2004) highlights how, in the detailed and routinised activities performed in laboratory sciences, knowledge is less a construction than the effect or consequence of such activities. For Law (2004):

Realities are produced along with the statements that report them. The argument is that they are not necessarily independent, anterior, definite and singular. If they

²⁷ Bruno Latour Latour, B. (2005) associates the assemblage perspective with Actor-Network-Theory (ANT). This is because ANT gives attention to non-humans and regards them as actors which ‘trace associations’ that make up a particular entity. Following Latour, a study guided through the assemblage perspective ‘follows associations’ and rather than departing from fixed categories, seeks to unpack questions such as who participates in certain actions, how the participation takes place and why?

appear to be so (as they usually do) then this itself is an effect that has been produced in practice, a consequence of method (Law, 2004, p.38).

Studies of museums have considered the ANT and assemblage perspective as promoting an understanding of those who participate in the production of certain entities and how this participation takes place. Tony Bennett (2008) explains how museums and other types of institutions, namely *cultural*, are made up of ‘elements’ such as ‘objects, texts, skulls, archives, instruments, paintings’ (Bennett, 2008, p.6). The way in which people use such elements, say, to organise a collection or to produce an exhibition, produce an assemblage (Bennett, 2008, p. 6). This examination raises critiques of the idea of culture as something outside people’s experience. For that reason, Bennett says that institutions such as museums are ‘cultural assemblage [s]’, despite the fact that the work of institutions is to ‘make up’ an aura of ‘cultural status’. A cultural assemblage is not an entity *outside of* people’s experience, but exist in relation to it via the ordering of elements such as texts, people and things (Bennett, 2008). Furthermore, Bennett and Chris Healy (2009) explain:

[A cultural assemblage] explores how culture (of diverse kinds) is assembled by bringing together heterogeneous elements (artefacts, people, texts, architectures, archives etc) and organizing these into distinctively configured relations to one another. Collecting institutions, heritage sites, community arts projects are some examples of cultural assemblages (Bennett and Healy, 2009, p. 4).

These elements can be characterised as what Manuel De Landa (2006) calls ‘wholes whose properties emerge from the interaction between parts’ (De Landa, 2006, p. 5). A mural for example, includes the assemblages of various elements such as material objects (painting, wood, canvas); people’s ideas to decide what to paint on the canvas; technical issues to sort out; and the production of the painting. For De Landa (2006, p. 10) each of these elements are ‘wholes’ which can be analysed ‘into separate parts’ but when they interact there are ‘properties that emerge’ and produce assemblages. Sharon Macdonald (2009) explores how a ‘heritage’ is ‘reassembled’ and how it ‘acts as a mediator’ both of a city and its citizens. For Macdonald, an assemblage perspective on ‘heritage’ examines ‘processes and entanglements involved in their coming into being and continuation’ (Macdonald, 2009b, p. 118). This is a focus that avoids taking for granted fixed notions. Instead, the focus is on ‘tracing the courses of action, associations, practical and definitional procedures that are involved in particular cases’ (Macdonald, 2009, p. 28).

Following an ANT and assemblage perspective, I argue that ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ is produced through everyday practice; in particular, through students’ social interactions and their interactions with the material and the technical (e.g. documents and objects). The examination of, say, a speech in an event, words written in mundane letters and the production of visual works, let us see how ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ is processual and interrelated.

As examined in Chapter 1, the ‘cultural policy’ initiated by the Cárdenas government in 1997 addressed ‘arts education’ as informal education, mainly for people living in deprived areas of Mexico City. In the same way, ‘arts education’ was part of a political project aimed at ‘lifting up’ the Mexican population at the beginning of the 20th century and post the Mexican Revolution. FARO’s goals, its imagined audience, and the description of a geographic urban area, reproduce the ideas of Left-wing arts policy and the political project of arts education in Mexico. In order to unpack the argument of this chapter, I will examine how the organisation makers interpreted ‘arts education’.

3.2 Framing arts education: A ‘cure’ for individuals

Some of the reasons for arguing that documents of an organisation are important to examine is because written documents are not neutral. Instead, they are signification mechanisms which define certain entities, characterise individuals and suggest modes of action. Sharon Macdonald says that the motives and goals of an institution or a project are ‘frameworks’ that ‘try to direct flow and prevent overflow’ (Macdonald, 2002, p. 250). Macdonald explains that when a framework is explicit, there is less risk of misunderstandings and misinterpretations. This entails that motives and goals in projects or institutions establishes frameworks. In the case of my analysis of FARO’s documents, I suggest that an instrumental vision of ‘arts education’ is framed. In other words, ‘arts education’ seems to be a notion *outside of* people in order to ‘lift individuals’ *limitations*²⁸. Published in May 1999 in the compilation ‘*Faro de Oriente: proyectos, balances y tareas*’ (2006), the *Documento Marco* (FARO framing document) describes and explains the organisation’s aims, the local area in which it is located, the target

²⁸ Benjamín González, Argel Gómez-Concheiro and Gabriel Rodríguez-Álvarez produced five compilations about the impact of FARO through its services, activities and aims for local people: *Políticas Culturales en la Ciudad de México 1997-2005* (2006); *Utopias en las escuelas de arte* (2006); *El reverso de las ideas* (2006); *Manifiestos de las vanguardias artísticas* (2006); *Miradas a la Megalopolis* (2006). Added to that, in 2012, the Secretary for Culture published book about the organisation: *Fábrica de Artes y Oficios Faro de Oriente* (2012).

population and a particular notion of arts education. The *framing document* describes the local area as follows:

this project [FARO] will be a space for the young people's culture. [By creating FARO] an oasis will be created; a place for art and beauty within a city zone threatened by crime and violence; a cultural service for a large zone of housing development and precarious buildings. Very far from the biggest cultural centres located in the South and Centre of the city, a space will be made for young people's creative encounters and exchange of their experiences; for the exercise of tolerance and free time use with imagination and fun (ICCM, 1999, p. 13).

The emphasis on 'art' as something aesthetic and the description of the geographic area as difficult, frames a kind of 'hierarchy' (Millington, 2011a) in that policy makers create the idea of 'art' and 'culture' as instruments that reduce crime and violence in a specific geographic area. Similarly, words such as 'oasis' and 'beauty' reinforce a negative public image in Iztapalapa when they are intertwined with 'crime', 'violence' or the 'precarious'. This tells us how 'art' and 'culture' have gradually taken shape in the organisation, as a kind of instrument for tackling a set of social difficulties. An example of this is reflected in the ways in which FARO's framework characterises its audience. In FARO's documents, residents live in a state of 'under development' and they face 'unemployment', 'illegal jobs', 'malnutrition', 'illiteracy', 'dropping out', 'familiar disintegration and deprivation' and 'high social backwardness' (ICCM, 1999, pp. 14-16). These adjectives are reinforced in some statements published in a book on the organisation and in a newspaper. In the book, an ex-member of the organisation says that 'culture mends the social fabric'²⁹:

in the middle of barbarism, culture would be a thread for the social fabric and it can contribute to the making up of rules and high habits for coexistence' (Gonzalez, 2003, p. 47).

In the newspaper, another ex-member of the organisation highlights³⁰:

²⁹ The text in Spanish is as follows, 'con la firme intención que la cultura se convirtiera en el espacio de la negociación de la vida cotidiana y con la apuesta de que en medio de la barbarie la cultura sería un hilo conductor del tejido social y con ello contribuir a la construcción de reglas y hábitos de convergencia superiores' (González, 2003, p. 47).

³⁰ The text in Spanish is as follows, 'Por medio de la cultura se puede rehacer el tejido de la comunidad social, opinó el nuevo director, en entrevista telefónica con La Jornada. La cultura es aquella que ayuda a la comunidad a salir de la barbarie, dijo Estrada' Molina Ramirez, T. (12 de Marzo de 2007).

through the culture is possible to mend the social fabric of the social community. Culture helps the community to leave the barbarism (Molina Ramirez, 12 de Marzo de 2007).

The use of such words in these documents are important because they are mechanisms of signification by which Iztapalapa and its residents are characterised. These words can reinforce a negative public image (see Chapter 2 and 6) and ‘reify an identity’ among those living in Iztapalapa. According to Nancy Fraser (2000), a critique of the politics of recognition is that it tends to ‘reify identity’. This comes into being by ‘impose[ing] a simplified group-identity which denies the complexity of people’s lives, the multiplicity of their identifications and the cross-pulls of their various affiliations’ (Fraser, 2000, p. 112). Without the possibility of giving a more diverse image of Iztapalapa in which FARO is located and the residents that attend to FARO’s activities, the aforementioned documents obscure change and inflections which come into being through social processes. According to Callon, social life is about ‘displacements and transformations’ (Callon, 1986, p. 18). However, FARO’s framing document seems to solidify meanings. To characterise individuals with certain limitations seem to be necessary for policy makers in order to frame ‘arts education’ as if it was *a cure for* people. An example of this is reflected in the organisation’s goal and in the idea of ‘creativity’.

To generate a cultural offer in a zone of high deprivation within the city [and] to contribute to young people’s occupation through the creation of trades, so that they shape themselves in the field of arts creation, community and cultural services. The cultural centre will provide a more equitable distribution of symbolic and material patrimony based on young people’s preferences and artistic tastes (ICCM, 1999, p. 18).

The goal of the organisation indicates how FARO aims to ‘contribute’ to the lives of local people, finding possibilities for them in terms of employment and a space for developing their ‘artistic tastes’. Similarly, the notion of ‘creativity’ is described as a repertoire of skills that individuals should obtain. A document called *modelo pedagógico* (pedagogic model) says that ‘games’ and practical activities; ‘sensitivity’, ‘flexibility’, ‘originality’, ‘abstraction’ and ‘synthesis’ are the baseline for ‘develop[ing] the creative capacity of people’ (Gómez-Concheiro, 2006, p. 110). Similarly, the educational model says that ‘if’ FARO seeks to shape *alumnos creativos* (creative students), the organisation should implement:

interdisciplinary projects between 'arts' and 'crafts' workshops; to find national and international artists willing to teach and to develop a project with students (Subirats and Perucho, ([2001] 2006), p. 76).

In this text, an instrumental vision of arts education is constructed in that it tends to provide support to people and reinforce certain skills. That certain skills should be cultivated is problematic, however, in that 'institutionalised patterns' of cultural value may characterise individuals as 'inferior, excluded, wholly other, or simply invisible - in other words, as less than full partners in social interaction- (Fraser, 2000, p. 113). The text reflected by the framing document is one of the mechanisms through which specific interactions are being produced. For Fraser, 'the work of social institutions is to regulate interactions according to parity-impeding cultural norms' (Fraser, 2000, p.114). In the case of FARO's framework, I argue that the words and meanings 'regulate' certain 'interactions' in which individuals are characterised as vulnerable and consequently, the organisation seems to exist as a kind of benefactor for people who should be looked after. In this text 'arts education' is conceptualised as a kind of cure to ameliorate individuals' *limitations*. It is also conceptualised as a kind of distinction between those who *have culture* and those who *do not*. In practice, certain ideas about 'arts education' are reproduced whilst people's activities translate arts education into practice, that is, a kind of creativity manifested through social interactions. Before examining the framing document in practice, let me explain the reason for saying that 'arts education' and 'creativity' is constructed as a kind of distinction, that is, as something to achieve.

Drawing on Bennett (2007a) 'the work of institutions' is about the mechanisms by which an entity is constructed and 'differentiated' from 'the social'. This means that entities such as 'culture', 'creativity' or 'arts education' are entities that come into being via 'processes of accumulation and assemblage that give rise to distinctive forms of "culturalness" which serve as means for acting on and regulating the relationships between ways of life' (Bennett, 2007a, p.35). In this case, FARO's framing document is a mechanism of signification which constructs an entity 'differentiated from the social' (Bennett, 2007a). Each word, sentence and paragraph of this document are potential ideas that are part of a long train of elements which give meaning to an institutional notion of 'arts education'. The framing document of FARO seems to 'regulate relationships' in that characterises the Iztapalapa area and its residents as *inferior* and in this sense orients strategies for, say, teachers (Chapter 4) in terms of addressing their activities to students. In a way, the framing document of FARO reproduces the political project of arts education at the beginning of the 20th Century in Mexico (Chapter 1).

First, it does not differ from their ends. The framing document seems to be connected with an idea of progress and improvement for residents living in the East. The imagined audience is characterised by their ‘high social backwardness’ (ICCM, 1999, p. 16). Second, the framing document says that its audience ostensibly needs to be addressed through arts education as a way to transform certain *limitations*. Third, framed this way, ‘arts education’ appears as a kind of *cure* for those who need it in order to become “another person”. Whilst words in the framing document encode an idea of arts education *outside of* people, and also, characterise individuals as having *limitations*, I will explore how ‘arts education’ is translated in the organisation. How are these technical ideas of ‘arts education’ reproduced in the practice of FARO staff members? How do students and teachers of FARO activities *translate* ‘arts education’ into creativity? I will start by discussing a mundane letter written in 2011, showing how it reproduces the political notion of arts education (1997) and follow with a discussion about how specific activities of students I met lets us see creativity in practice. Guided by Callon’s notion of ‘translation’ (1986), which focuses on ‘the continuity of the displacements and transformations which occur [in particular cases]’ (Callon, 1986, p.18), I will look at different stages of enactment, from words on paper expressing FARO’s rationale to the translation of particular actions performed by students I met. Following Callon, I will explore how ‘arts education’ ‘progressively take[s] form’ (Callon, 1986, p.19) and is translated into creativity through the ordinary activities of students. This entails how students I met interact each other; how their tactics respond to technical and material difficulties; how they attribute meaning to creativity. These questions seek to introduce part of the processes through which students’ practices reshape ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’.

3.3 ‘Arts’ projects and ‘human transformation’

During fieldwork in 2012, I observed that staff members were organising *Exponencial*, an annual event where students and teachers developed a project for exhibition in the spaces of FARO. One week, the participants and teachers of each workshop were encouraged to join in and exhibit their work. I joined a workshop whose activities concerned the design and creation of drawings and paintings for display. Participants in that workshop were the facilitator, Alonso, my peers and I. Alonso was working on a project intended to reflect people’s experiences when they migrated to the US, either ‘legally’ or ‘illegally’, and the ways in which these migrants’ identities were affected in the process. Alonso explained to me that the project raised questions such as: ‘who is from here?’, ‘who is from there?’, ‘where is here?’, ‘where is there?’.

For that project, members of an arts organisation located in the US wrote a letter describing an episode in their lives. After they wrote the letter, the members of the organisation sent it to Alonso and he discussed the experiences of those members with my peers. The idea of this activity was to create empathy with the experiences of LatinAmerican people living in the US and to ask local participants to transform the written text into an ‘illustration’ - a visual representation that should reflect the ideas written in the letter. When I joined, Alonso said he was leading the group, and I received information about the written project, which included a letter he had sent from FARO, requesting collaboration with another organisation in the US. The letter, written in 2011, was signed by the Subdirector. The first paragraph defines the organisation as follows:³¹

The cultural centre Fábrica de Artes y Oficios (FARO) de Oriente, belongs to the Secretary for Culture of Mexico City. It is a model of cultural decentralisation located in *delegación Iztapalapa*, one of the most marginalised *delegaciones* in economic, political and social terms. This year, Faro de Oriente celebrates 11 years devoted to human transformation. This cultural model has brought about [human transformation] in the area through its educational offer, based in arts and crafts workshops within a non-scholar model and open to any age group. Adding to to that offer are the permanent presentation of festivals, concerts, theatre, cinema-club and various other activities that hopefully contribute to a human enrichment and a more complete and satisfactory existence. (9/08/2011).

The geographic area (described as ‘marginalised’) and the purposes of arts education seem to reinforce some of the ideas written in the *framing document* of 1999. In a text written in 2011, Iztapalapa is again described as ‘marginalised’ and the organisation emphasises its devotion to ‘human transformation’. In this respect, I suggest that the letter tends to solidify particular dynamics of Iztapalapa. My use of the term ‘solidify’ is that words enacted in bureaucratic documents tend to take for granted social dynamics and to describe them as timeless. In Riles’s (2006) examination of United Nation (UN) documents, she explores how ‘politics’ and ‘meanings’ are at stake when trying to understand specific terms, such as ‘gender’. She examines how politicians, activists and academics discuss a definition of gender, and how, after

³¹ The text in Spanish says ‘El centro cultural Fábrica de Artes y Oficios (FARO) de Oriente, depende de la Secretaría de Cultura de la Ciudad de México, es un modelo de descentralización cultural anclado en la delegación Iztapalapa, considerada una de las delegaciones más marginales en términos económicos, políticos y sociales. Este año el Faro de Oriente celebró 11 años dedicados a la transformación humana que este modelo cultural ha provocado en el entorno a través de su oferta educativa, basada en talleres de artes y oficios dentro de un modelo no escolarizado y abierto a cualquier grupo de edad. Además de la presentación permanente de festivales, conciertos, obras teatrales, cine-club y diversas actividades que esperamos contribuyan a un enriquecimiento humano y a una existencia más completa y satisfactoria’ (9/08/ 2011).

long sessions of discussions there is no agreement, and in the end the term thus becomes a 'settled text'. In the paragraph above, the idea of Iztapalapa and its residents, as well as the organisation 'devoted' to 'human transformation' seem to be a 'settled text' in that those who wrote the letter and signed it, seem to naturalise that, indeed, Iztapalapa is marginal and its residents "*need*" transformation. It is my claim that such words became 'a unit of settled text rather than a unit of temporal and analytical gridlock' (Riles, 2006, p. 82).

The second paragraph of the letter invites the US arts organisation to participate in Alonso's project. Addressed to the organisation's director, the letter highlights the benefits of the project such as the 'cultural exchange' it will engender, that is, between the 'community' of the Orient and the 'Latin community' in the US³².

Based on the goals above described, the cultural centre Faro de Oriente invites the cultural institution that you lead, so that the visual artist, Alonso, participates in a cultural exchange between the community of the Orient of Mexico City and the Latin community from the US (9 August 2011).

The way in which the letter characterises the population is ubiquitous and it also makes a distinction between an 'individual artist' and 'the community'. For Mario Biagioli, such distinctions are associated with 'a caesura between the work and the rest' (Biagioli, 2006, p. 135). Although Biagioli is examining the role of scientists' names in the constitution of scientific works by observing authorship and agency when making this comment, his arguments are important here because the use of the 'artist's' name and 'the community' makes a distinction between 'the creative contribution of the author' and participants' collaboration in the project (Biagioli, 2006, p. 135). Unlike the person responsible for the project, who is characterised as the 'visual artist', the 'community' is described as a homogeneous group devoted to execute specific tasks. This has some implications. Drawing on Bruner (1993), to represent a group of subjects as 'the community' is in a way, to deny in a collective work 'voices', 'names' and 'presence' (Bruner, 1993, p. 327). As I explain in the section below, the work of Laura, Guillermo, Miriam, Manuel entailed various social interactions and collaborations which gave rise to a repertoire of creative processes, and ultimately, the final

³² The text in Spanish says 'En base a estos objetivos el centro cultural Faro de Oriente extiende una cordial invitación a la institución cultural que usted tiene a bien dirigir, para que sea la contraparte del intercambio cultural que se propone en el proyecto XX, que presenta el artista visual Alonso, que tiene por objetivo provocar un intercambio de secretos entre comunidades del Oriente de la Ciudad de México y la comunidad Latina de EUA' (9/08/2011).

result were a number of visual objects, as part of the arts project. In this respect, by taking part in such processes, Laura, Guillermo, Miriam and Manuel were translating a previously planned project through their own perspective. However, the words written in the letter tend to give an identity to one 'artist' and 'the community'. This implies obscuring the processes and interactions in the development of the project. The third paragraph of the letter reinforces the idea of a 'community', explaining the planning of the project, which was divided into three phases.

First, participants of the 'American' community arts organisation are invited to send FARO their letters. In this phase, FARO students are encouraged to produce an illustration based on the content of the letter. Likewise, FARO students are invited to write their own letters, as a form of exchange. They will send them to people in the US so that they in turn can make illustrations based on those of the Mexican side. The second phase of the project concerns an 'artist's residence' in FARO; this is a temporary stay for a 'Latin artist' or 'American artist' so that he/she can carry out a project 'in benefit of the community' of FARO. Likewise, the letter requests the 'American' arts organisation's director that Alonso stays temporary in the US, to carry out the same project within the 'Latin community' that the former serves. The third phase concerns the exhibition of the letters and their corresponding 'illustrations' both in the US and Mexico. By examining the content of a letter that framed an arts project with one teacher and students, I would argue how common letters reinforce meanings and obscure the contributions of the students I met. For example, is an 'artist' the only individual who develops creative ideas? Are 'artists' those whose social interactions and processes materialise the initial ideas of 'the artist'? what counts as 'creative' in arts organisations such as FARO?

The lack of acknowledgment of people devalue their participation in 'artistic' projects. To distinguish 'the artist' and 'the rest' in a letter reinforces the notion of an artist individual whilst denying the 'voices' and 'presence' of other subjects. An 'artist individual' and the 'community' denote a distinction which blurs collaboration and the distribution of responsibilities. In neoliberal times, artists individuals and their production (as a final result) is naturalised. As Biagioli says, 'in [the] liberal economy[ies] (...) one becomes an author by creating something new, something that is not to be found in the public domain' (Biagioli, 2006, p. 142). Furthermore, the recognition of artists' work by institutions 'helps to confirm, and sustain, an artist's career and reputation' (Maya-Cherbo and Vogel, 2010). The letter examined above is a mechanism of signification that operates by reinforcing the idea of an individual artist and a

group of people who carry out tasks. However, my participation in the project allowed me to see the social interactions and processes of those who collaborated in the project. To highlight these elements is important for three reasons. Firstly, I present the ways in which creativity is produced and experienced through ordinary activities. Secondly, these elements are part of the ‘processes and entanglements’ (Macdonald, 2009b, p. 118) involved in the production creativity through everyday practice. Thirdly, by examining how my peers collaborated in the project, their collaboration can be seen to challenge the ways in which written documents, such as the letter examined above introduce their participation. Thus, let's examine below how students translate ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ into creative processes.

3.4 Creativity: on social interactions

The word *arte* (art) was commonly employed among FARO students, staff members and teachers. They used the word art when they reflected on their performances and produced visual objects; or when some staff members explained how FARO's events and workshops ‘contributed’ to people's ‘creativity’. By observing my peers' activities and listening to when and why they used the word ‘art’, it seemed to me that they were not only associating arts with creativity, but they were also reformulating ‘arts education’ into meanings attributed to their experience. I explain below how my peers experienced creativity through their social relations and interactions with materialities (mundane objects). Six students (myself included) participated in the project that Alonso had organised.

On a big table, Alonso placed a plastic bag containing envelopes. Inside were letters from members of the aforementioned arts organisation in the US. Alonso asked us to each pick a letter and read it in silence. Guillermo, Laura and Miriam took a letter and read it. The content of the letter was the baseline for making an illustration. Alonso then put paper, paintbrushes and paintings on the table. Along with students' pencils, painting and paintbrushes, these materials were used to produce the illustrations. Alonso asked Manuel and myself to pick a letter and read it in silence. He asked us not to share the letter, but only to think about how to represent its content graphically. However, Guillermo and Manuel talked about the content of their letters with their colleagues. By sharing the content of their letters, they received suggestions that they used for their own illustrations, such as the colours to combine and the images that represented the content of the letters. I noticed these kinds of interactions, both in this project and in other activities in which my peers participated (e.g. Chapter 6). Ligia Dabul and Bianca Pires would

call these ‘interactive experiences of creation’ (Dabul and Pires, 2008; Dabul, 2011). For Dabul and Pires (2008) ‘creative processes’ rather than being individualised take place in continuous interaction between people. For that reason, Dabul highlights how the examination of a ‘creative process’ gives account of ‘the social’ because the production of, say, a film or music suggests that diverse processes take place, one of them being the interaction of the producer with her/his colleagues.

To identify the ‘interactive experiences of creation’ (Dabul, 2011; Dabul and Pires, 2008) or the ‘social processes’ associated with creativity (Giuffre, 2009) is to understand that creativity is a ‘social fact’ (Dabul and Pires, 2008, p. 79). At FARO my peers’ social interactions let us see how creativity is less individual and more social. To observe how creativity comes into being via common activities raises questions about a fixed notion of ‘creativity’ as something to be learnt. By following the project that Alonso organised, I have identified how my peers’ interactions and their production of certain artifacts triggered processes of creativity. A good example of this was the production of *drafts*. Indeed, many of the students I met in the organisation initially made a *draft* before making their paintings, illustrations or graffiti for final display. They could create their own drafts either individually or with another person. My peers who participated in the project concerning migrants’ migration also created drafts.



Figure 5 Mario is making a draft before producing his own painting.

For example, in order to visually represent the content of a letter (i.e. a secondary school and some children), Laura pencilled in some lines on a sheet of paper. Soon after she had sketched her drawing, Laura used a small container to combine vinylic paint. She added a bit of water to the container and applied various washes. With a paintbrush, she combined the paint. Once she got the colour she liked, Laura applied it to her *draft*. In case she did not like the painting, Laura repeated the same procedure until the colour matched her ideas. When Laura was happy with the combination of colour and the design she had made, she was ready to draw her design. I saw Laura tracing lines on a piece of cardboard as this would help her to more accurately distribute her design. Carefully, she painted the design with the colours she had previously combined and gradually her illustration took shape. Manuel and Miriam also drew shapes to produce their draft. During a short collective conversation Manuel, Guillermo and Miriam concurred that the translation of a letter into a painting had not been easy because certain technical skills were necessary, such as, ‘to interpret the content of the letter and represent them through the graphic’ (Manuel); ‘to think about how to change a number of ideas written in a text into an illustration’ (Miriam). This explains why my peers produced drafts. A draft allows ‘preventions’ and ‘controls’ in the execution of a design and this is related to questions of the ‘location of creativity’ in the process of design (S. Mall, 2007, p. 66;74). Amar S. Mall (2007) argues how intentionality is located through processes and displacements which begin from the creation of a draft until the particular way in which a final object ‘manifest[s] itself’ (S. Mall, 2007). This implies that behind the production of a final object, there are processes ‘flexible’ and ‘open-ended’ (S. Mall, 2007, p. 75).

Although Alonso and Laura’s peers said that she had the *sensitivity* to easily translate the letter into a visual representation, I realised that it took time for Laura to produce her visual work. Because I observed how Laura, Guillermo, Miriam carefully created their illustrations, these processes of creation were contradictory to the way in which the framing document and the institutional letter described Laura, Guillermo, Miriam, Manuel and I. Whereas the framing document and the letter described FARO’s audience as a homogeneous group, my participant observation allowed me to see how the social relations of my peers challenged the meanings written in such documents. Here is where I think that Callon’s view on ‘translation’ fits with my examination in that we are seeing how the words written in the framing document, the common letter and productions of my peers ‘constitute the different phases of a general process (...) during which the identity of actors, the possibility of interaction and the margins of manoeuvre are negotiated and delimited’ (Callon, 1986, p. 6).

Similar to the experience of Laura, Guillermo and Miriam another student told me about the difficulty he had in producing a visual work in one go. For example, for Jaime painting was not easy because ‘the’ painting put the painter ‘in difficulties’. He said: ‘*la pintura suele ponerte en dificultades*’ (‘a painting usually puts you in difficulties’). You need to see how to sort it out’. One of my questions to Jaime was: has a painting life? For Jaime, a painting ‘tells you both the problems and how to sort them out’. He said that his ‘intuition tells him’ how to develop a drawing or a painting. ‘*El cuadro te lo dice*’ (the painting tells you). Similarly, for Omar, the development of a painting was a twofold process; letting the painting ‘express itself’, and, being guided by *your* own ideas. This is expressed in the following conversation between myself and Omar:

Alejandra: I have listened that Faro students say: ‘one should allow the painting to express itself’. When you paint, what happens? Do you let the painting express itself? Or do you start from a clear idea?

Omar: I think that are both [situations]. If you think, then nothing comes out. When someone gets the ideas from the heart, then [the painting] comes out straight away and appears as you wish. Is just that, to be guided by the paintbrush or the pencil. I do not know, I let the painting grow; to give it more life.

For Omar, a painting was a dialogue, it ‘tells you what it needs’ (i.e. in terms of use of colour, size and shape). In that sense, the ‘location of creativity’ (S. Mall, 2007) is observed between the intentions of those who start developing their ideas in a painting and the process of production itself. The materials employed ‘play an important role in shaping the outcome’ (Nakamura, 2007, p. 92). For example, the combination of colours and their application on a draft not only offers information about the ‘preventions’, but also the ‘variations, accommodations or resistances’ in people’s imagination (how they envisage their work) and how they sort out the difficulties that emerge when applying the materials and shaping the final work (Nakamura, 2007, p. 93). Thus when Jaime said that ‘a painting usually puts you in difficulties... you need to see how to sort them out’, this concerned a process by which Jaime’s hands and thoughts, as well as their interactions with the materials employed were in a kind of dialogue to create a particular work. This echoes Fuyubi Nakamura’s argument about how ‘[the creation of a work] is the outcome of an interplay between the ‘natural’ creativity of materials and the creative efforts of persons to resist, control, embrace or prompt it’ (Nakamura, 2007, p. 95).

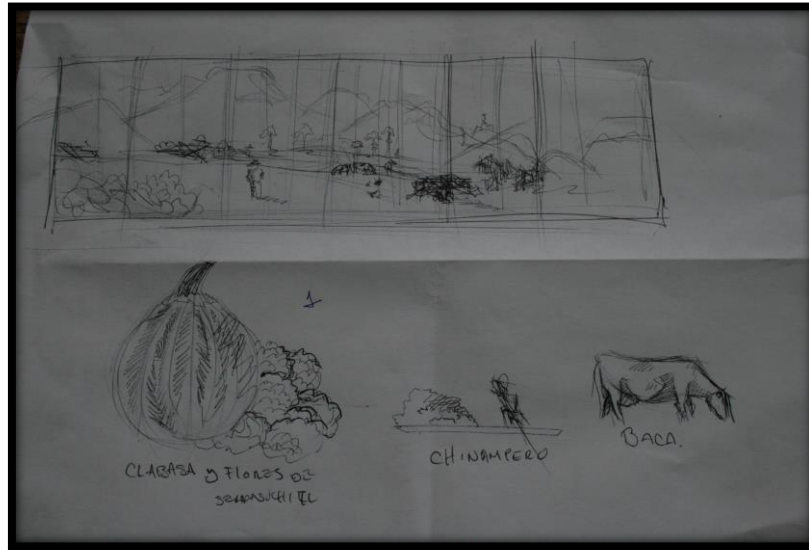


Figure 6 Jaime's draft shows how he envisioned a final version of a painting.

By observing my peers making their own illustrations, their interactions with the material triggered processes of creativity. By sharing their ideas, providing feedback to their peers and establishing an interactive process with materialities, Laura, Guillermo, Miriam and Manuel were translating 'arts education' into creative processes. From my experience, to translate the content of a letter into a set of visual images was a demanding process that implicated time and the reproduction of someone's else ideas in a visual work. However, an institutional document and one letter obscured these processes, and consequently, there is a distinction between an individual 'artist' and 'the community', executing technical tasks. That such documents circulated as part of the dynamics of the organisation reveals contradictions between my peers' everyday activities and the ways in which the documents of the organisation characterise them and assume their participation in specific projects. These are 'mechanisms by which the social world' and non-humans coexist and within which certain power relationships take place (Callon, 1986, p. 28).

On the one hand, there are words written in the framing document and a letter that traces an identity to the students as 'the community', on the other hand, the interactions of Laura, Guillermo, Miriam and Manuel challenge technical ideas reflected in these words. Furthermore, by participating with Laura, Guillermo and Manuel, I would argue that 'creativity' is not an entity *outside of* people's experience. Instead it is about students' social interactions with the material, their social relations and processes emerging through ordinary activities. As John Law

(Law, 2004, p. 38) says, ‘realities are not out there (...) they are produced’ continuously. This means that the processes identified above produce a kind of creativity that is intersubjective, social and manifested through social processes. Another way in which I identified how students I met experience their creativity is examined below. For participants, meanings such as ‘creativity’ and ‘improvisation’ were employed to sort out difficulties.

3.5 Creativity: sorting out problems

Laura, Miriam, Guillermo, Manuel and I made illustrations based on the content of letters received from our counterparts living in the US. We made approximately 20 *illustrations*. These visual works were exhibited at FARO’s closing event of 2012. However, before the exhibition I participated in a meeting where we discussed strategies for displaying the visual work in a less conventional way. Rather than putting the work on the wall, Alonso, Guillermo, Laura, Miriam and Manuel discussed strategies for exhibiting the illustrations in a more attractive way for viewers. One of the reasons for finding an attractive strategy was that the space to display them was quite small, and the works were meant to be exhibited along a corridor. My peers thought that people might not see the images very well, therefore, they wanted to find an alternative, one which was less conventional and more attractive for visitors.

I suggested that the illustrations could be hung from long threads coming down from the ceiling because I thought that would encourage people to experience a different kind of interaction, that is, they could touch and move the visual works rather than just look at them. The group was happy with that suggestion. Following this, Alonso said that the images had to be backed to avoid any damage. He suggested investing in cardboard to make layers. However, the group disagreed with his idea, saying that buying new cardboard would be ‘very expensive’. Instead, Manuel proposed bringing in cardboard boxes as this form of cardboard would be cheaper. The group accepted Manuel’s suggestion and he commented that ‘when there is no money, improvisation is our talent’. Following this, Miriam also said, ‘well, the less [resources] you have, the more creative you become’.



Figure 7 Laura's illustration ready to paste onto recycled cardboard.

For the students I met, to be 'creative' or to 'improvise' was about replacing an initial idea with an alternative which did not alter the initial idea too much. To improvise can be regarded as a kind of 'divergent thought' (Campbell, 2010) which is 'the process of always re-thinking any question and refusing to accept at face value whatever proposition has stimulated the question' (Campbell, 2010, p. 189). Furthermore, to 'improvise' or to 'be creative' is to provide an alternative, and to adapt to 'zones of indeterminacy' or to sort out circumstances (Rosaldo, 1993; Borofsky, 2001). The lack of economic resources is a mediation that modifies an initial plan. It can be described as a 'zone of indeterminacy' in that it challenges students to think about alternatives to deal with such difficulty.

Days before the exhibition, Guillermo and Manuel brought in some recycled cardboard while Alonso bought in new cardboard. Alonso and Laura put one of the illustrations over a piece of cardboard. They took measurements and then cut the cardboard accordingly. Once they had a model, other participants started to cut up more cardboard based on the original model. Laura, Miriam and Guillermo pasted the illustrations on the cardboard. Alonso and Manuel made a hole in the cardboard for passing a thread through. After a few hours making up layers of cardboard and pasting on the visual work, participants hung the visual objects from three long threads. Thus, any person who walked around the exhibition could see the visual works. They could touch them and they could read the letter that inspired the image next to it.

The exhibition also included Alonso's personal work. In the image below we can see on the right hand side the visual works hanging on threads and on the left Alonso's work. It could be

claimed that this spatial separation reinforces a symbolic distinction between the work of an ‘individual artist’ and work of ‘the community’. Similarly this is one of the processes reinforcing certain identities at FARO, such as ‘artists’ and ‘the community’ or ‘students’.

By participating in this project, I came to realise how my peers’ social relations and interactions with mundane objects encourage their creativity. Furthermore, for students I met on this project, to be creative or to improvise meant a way of sorting out specific difficulties. The lack of money and the precarious spaces that the organisation offers for people’s creativity are elements that intensify students’ creative processes. However, the staff members attributed meanings to creativity quite different when compared to my peers’ meanings and activities, matching creativity’ with a sense of ‘human transformation’. It seems to me that they were reproducing part of the rhetoric of the FARO documents. This tells us that the meanings attributed to creativity were ambiguous and, depended on the position of people in the organisation, different views on creativity emerged.

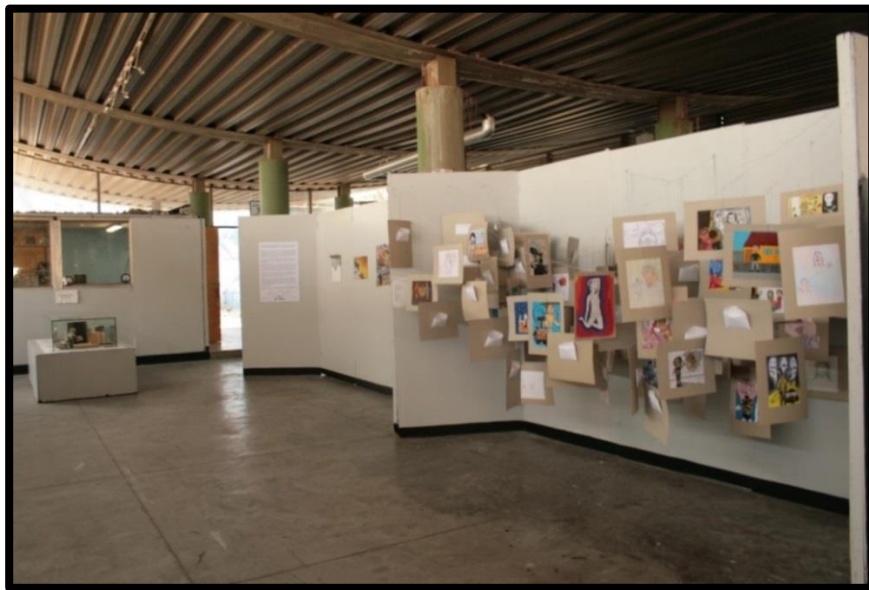


Figure 8 Exhibition of visual works at the final FARO event of the year.

Picture by Alonso, taken on Alejandra’s camera.

3.6 Creativity: Human transformation

Well this is a party day. An occasion to celebrate. This day is the party of creativity. Creative lives will always be those that are worth living. Creative lives are people

who transform themselves, those who transform objects and can signify their lives, their communities. I remember an episode about the cavern man and his weapon which killed animals for his survival. Erich Fromm said that a person happened to put an ornament in his weapon. Then, that object transcended its practicality and transcended beyond that person. Although the object was useless, it could give account of a time as well as a person's time. Then, I think that what we do is transcendent. The work that you do in the workshops and the possibilities to get along with other people and create objects, some of them beautiful other will continue frighten us [laughs from the public], is transcendent. Enjoy the exhibition. Thank you very much for coming with us in this day. (excerpt from the workshop coordinator before opening the event *Exponencial*, 1/12/2012).

The paragraph above reflects a brief speech that the workshop coordinator gave before the opening of the final FARO event of the year. Her words emphasised 'creativity' as the romantic idea of 'transformation'. Months later, I asked her why creativity was emphasised in the workshops' or in internal events, and she said that 'creativity is a possibility of human beings and a knowledge strategy' (Interview 9/07/2012). For her, creativity appeared as a 'way of life' in that 'creative people are not only those who create objects but also those who can reinvent new codes of conviviality' (9/07/2012).

This interpretation is similar to that given by the former workshop coordinator. She perceived that people who visited the organisation had no 'structure' in their life. For that reason, she said that people 'needed a center, a place where they feel there is a stability. A project should let people feel that they are progressing (...). You are teaching them and they are *reaprendiendo* to live' (Interview 19/03/2012). For the interviewee, *reaprender* (learn again) refers to the possibilities of modifying behaviour, and in a way becoming *another* person. And finally, for the former-former workshop coordinator, a 'creative person' would be one who plays a significant role in the place where she or he lives. As he says, 'the artist or artisan should be understood as a cultural agent in his/her community. As a creative person he/she should play an important role in the social fabric and he/she can rebuild with her work the conviviality spaces and community identity' (Gómez-Concheiro, 2006, p. 112). For two ex-workshop coordinators and the coordinator I met during the fieldwork, 'creativity' was interpreted as 'human transformation' and the idea of a 'creative individual' referred to those who could 'reinvent new codes of conviviality'. In a way, this interpretation of creativity characterises an 'extraordinary person' able to produce transformation or rather 'change' (Bruner, 1993, p. 323). However, Edward Bruner (1993) raises questions about the idea of creative individuals able to produce 'transformation' and 'transcendence'. (Bruner, 1993, p. 321). It can be argued that staff members assume a role of looking after those who attend the organisation, and that, creativity enable

individuals to transform their own spaces. Despite the minimal conditions at FARO to develop their creativity, we are seeing how students I met produce and experience their creativity. In this respect, the Left-wing arts policy is reshaped not only through the circulation of meanings written in documents, but also through the ways in which students produce and experience creativity, that is, through their social relations, interactions with materialities and strategies that seek to sort out difficulties.

Soon after the staff member's opening speech, another employee asked two children to cut a ribbon to allow visitors to enter the exhibition. Immediately, visitors applauded and walked through a corridor where photographs, paintings, drawings and sculptures were exhibited. These works belonged to the people who joined the workshops at the beginning or in the middle of 2012. Together with Alonso's own visual work, the work made by my peers was exhibited at the end of a corridor. Visitors walked through the corridor and observed the work and the letters. I asked one visitor his opinion of the exhibition. For him, the exhibition was 'rewarding because throughout time several materials and techniques are fitting together'. For another visitor, the objects exhibited were 'cross-disciplinary'. This echoes another visitor who said that the objects reflected 'time and effort of people'. I observed that the closing exhibition of 2012 was visited not only by students and people who regularly visited the organisation, but also by students' friends or people who were familiar with the activities at the organisation.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have addressed two questions: how is the concept of 'arts education' framed in an organisation's documents? How do participants *translate* the idea of arts education into creativity? In answering these questions, ANT and an assemblage perspective guided my analysis. This perspective has been useful for examining how 'arts education' and 'creativity' are gradually translated through the experience of students I met, and the ways in which some staff members understand 'creativity'.

A common letter written in 2011 seems to reproduce some of the ideas of 'arts education' written in the documents that framed the purposes of the organisation. Such documents characterize individuals as vulnerable and outside of 'culture'. In doing so, 'arts education' is referred as a body of cultural values, a kind of cure enabling individuals to become someone other. The importance of examining FARO documents is that they let us see how social actors

interpret 'culture', or rather, a set of purposes and strategies intending to orient people's arts education and creativity. I argue that documents are not neutral elements, but rather they are signification mechanisms which define certain entities, characterise individuals and establish modes of action. Yet Laura, Guillermo, Miriam and Manuel let us see that 'arts education' and 'creativity' on the ground becomes a social experience challenging the ideas written in bureaucratic documents. I came to learn how creativity on practice is about social interactions with the material, social relations, and in particular situations, strategies to sort out specific difficulties. Although their social relations and interactions with mundane objects let us see that their participation in the arts project is active and interactive, it seems to be that bureaucratic documents makes invisible such social dynamics, and students are referred as 'the community' and people that in a way needs to be guided. Their participation become invisible, and with this, there are distinctions between an individual 'artist' and a homogeneous community devoted to execute particular tasks. Written in documents, 'arts education' and 'creativity' at FARO are assembled as a kind of instrument, characterising the public as vulnerable and highlighting that it can 'help' to transcend people's limitations. However, these frameworks are translated in a lived experience which is social and dynamic. Left-wing arts policy becomes practice at FARO through the coexistence of technical notions about 'arts education' and 'creativity', and, the experience of students with materialities, their social relations and strategies to sort out difficulties. This chapter lets us see how the processes taking place through ordinary activities challenge a body of assumptions and purposes enacted in common documents.

Having provided a snapshot of my initial ethnographic experience at FARO, the remaining chapters of this thesis will examine creativity from the experience of students I met and the context where they produce their creativity. Given my observations of, and participation in, the organisation, I came to realise that the students and teachers I met used words such as 'arts' and 'creativity' to refer to their own practices. In the next chapter, I will introduce the physical space where the teachers, my peers and myself spent hours undertaking various activities, such as participating in workshops, painting and drawing, or working on a specific arts project.

Chapter 4 Architecture at FARO: Pacific stabilisations and cold contradictions

The FARO buildings were constructed in order to encourage collaborative projects among students and possibilities for developing their creativity. Of the buildings themselves, one is similar to a sailing vessel and so staff members call it *la nave* (the ship) or the main building. It was here that I observed staff members, teachers and students carrying out most of their activities. Indeed, students spent hours inside the main building working on their own projects, attending various workshops or having fun with their peers. Staff members worked in their own offices and some of them supported each other when the equipment in their offices did not work well. Those organising workshops spent their time talking with teachers, observing the course of the workshops or giving information to people interested in joining a workshop. Inside the main building, I observed that the facilities looked damaged and consequently, it seems to me that my peers experienced some difficulties in carrying out their activities.

In the mornings, when the main building was nearly empty, I observed that the walls had fractures, and overall, the furnishings such as the tables and chairs, as well as the the doors, looked neglected. However, it seems to me that in the evenings, many people - myself included - forgot about the damage inside the main building and kept going with our activities despite some material difficulties. For example, the sounds of musical instruments and machines in the main building were inaudible for my peers who were participating in the journalism workshop. The classrooms became small spaces when more than 20 people had registered. Some people sat on the floor and other people brought chairs from another classroom. For some staff members such as the workshop coordinator and her colleague, their experiences inside the main building can be described as difficult. Given that their office was located on the ground floor, their internet signal was weak. Consequently, they tried to sort out this lack by moving their computers and desks until they could reach it. The workshop coordinator's colleague, however, bought in his own antenna in order to obtain an internet signal. Finally, I perceived some concern from the workshop coordinator and her colleague because a crack below the main building was fracturing it. Indeed, inside the office of the workshop coordinator, I observed that some fractures were already visible. During my initial weeks in the field, I observed that all staff members were participating in a public safety course. They were learning techniques to organise people in case of an earthquake, and I would add, the risk of the building collapsing. By observing the physical condition of the main building, I wondered what had caused the physical

problems to the building and how people I met interacted with these difficulties, consequently stabilising their activities.

If we pay attention to FARO's educational perspective, the architecture of the main building and other areas were built to promote 'interdisciplinary' projects among the students. The architect and the founders of FARO (the organisation's creators) designed the physical spaces of the main building in order to encourage 'arts' and 'creativity' among people. Moreover, they also designed the building to encourage 'new' relationships between civil servants and other people who joining FARO. The architecture of buildings is not neutral, it can be argued that the architecture has a 'mediatory' role. This is because those who designed the architecture created physical spaces to encourage social relationships of subjects (e.g. civil servants and users), shape identities ('artists' and 'artisans') and organise the ordinary activities of those attending FARO. In this chapter, I seek to answer how is the architecture of the main FARO building 'attributed' with specific purposes and expectations? who has destabilised the initial expectations attributed to the FARO building architecture? What are the effects of this for the experience of students and teachers with the main FARO building?

I will argue that the everyday practices of students as they interact with the FARO building shows the difficulties and contradictions that arise. The political processes and practical decisions made by politicians and staff members affect the ways in which students experience 'arts education' and 'creativity' by interacting with the material (i.e. the architecture of the main FARO building). Students' everyday practice seems to adjust to the physical conditions that the building offers. Their practices can be described as peaceful, or rather, pacific stabilisations. The importance of exploring the experiences of teachers and students in the main building is twofold. Firstly, it is possible to observe that political decisions and ordinary administrative decisions show contradictions in relation to the initial expectations attributed to the architecture of the main building. Secondly, it is possible to claim that the kind of 'arts education' and 'creativity' produced through subjects' interactions with the material seems to be difficult and pacific.

This chapter is organised into three sections. The first part concentrates on the literature review of buildings and architecture. Particular attention is given to how the 'structure' of a building can organise people's routines, as well as ways in which people's 'agency' can rearrange the interior spaces of buildings. The second part examines how the FARO building architecture was

designed and the reasons of this. Then I explore how the building has been affected by political processes and agents and the effects of this for the experience of students and teachers whom I met. I describe how subjects interactions with materialities seem to be a difficult experience for the ordinary activities of students. This suggests that the ways in which the Left-wing policy becomes practice is traced by difficulties and contradictions. Given that this chapter explores the design of the FARO main building, as well as students' and teachers' experience in the building, I locate my analysis in literature that explains the experience of individuals in buildings.

4.1 Buildings and architecture - A literature review

In anthropological and sociological literature, research on subjects' interactions with buildings, houses, and historical sites have provided several approaches. For example, Bourdieu's examination of the 'Kabyle' house explains how gender is constructed through the internal space of this building and the symbolic interpretations of 'woman' and 'man' (Bourdieu, 1971). Foucault's examination of architecture points out how architecture is not neutral, rather, it is a mechanism to exercise surveillance and control over individuals (Foucault, [1977] 1991). An example of this is the analysis of Bentham's panopticon where Foucault explains the 'hierarchical observation' of its inmates.

Although earlier anthropological perspectives have discussed humans' relationships with buildings, particular aspects have been less explored. By the beginning of the 1990s, Lawrence-Zuñiga and Low (1990) pointed out that there was little literature available about 'social production theories' which pay attention to the social processes that give rise to buildings (Lawrence and Low, 1990, p. 492). These theories 'relate social structural patterns of power and space with the social actions of individuals' (Lawrence and Low, 1990, p. 482). Similarly, in his 'A Space for Place in Sociology', Gieryn (2000) highlights that sociological research regarding human relationships within places was not labelled as studies of the 'sociology of place'. Aside from arguing for such a 'sociology of place', Gieryn makes two points about place. Firstly, a place becomes 'space' when it is 'filled up by people, practices, objects and representations' (Gieryn, 2000, p. 465). Secondly, it is 'emplaced', meaning that place is about social life in particular settings, and the interactions that emerge between people and 'material stuff' (Gieryn, 2000, p. 467). For Gieryn, 'place is not merely a setting or backdrop, but an agentic player in the game - a force with detectable and independent effects on social life' (Gieryn, 2000, pp. 465-466). In another work, Gieryn (2002) highlights the role that physical spaces and machines play

in affecting the social life of individuals. He discusses how buildings can stabilise social practices, while simultaneously, subjects can reconfigure buildings. Drawing on Bourdieu and Giddens' discussion of 'structure' and 'agency', Gieryn says that neither theoretical frames are enough to explain 'what buildings do' in social life. He suggests the 'double reality of buildings' as 'structures structuring agency but never beyond the potential restructuring by human agents' (Gieryn, 2002, p. 41). In other words, for Gieryn, buildings can shape social action but humans simultaneously reshape a buildings' structure.³³ Through an empirical case study, of a biotechnological building, he develops three 'middle range concepts' for examining the design and purposes of the building, the users' experience and their interpretations of the building (Gieryn, 2002, p. 41).

'Heterogeneous design' is the 'planning of material things and the resolution of competing social interests' (Gieryn, 2002, pp. 41-42). A building is built based on physical materials, as well as, the needs and wishes of users. A building is also heterogeneous in that those who envision a building 'create human users and even an entire society among which the machine or building can thrive' (Gieryn, 2002, p. 42). In other words, architects pay attention to who the users will be and how they will use a building. When a building is opened and people use it, the equipment and spaces –'black boxing'– guide the users in their actions without them noticing.³⁴ Finally, 'interpretative flexibility' refers to the multiple interpretations of buildings, despite the possible meanings provided and intended by designers. 'Heterogeneous design', 'black boxing' and 'interpretative flexibility' are concepts for examining interactions between subjects and

³³Literatures examining how buildings alter and modify subjects' intentions and actions include the work of Yaneva and Guy (2008) and Yaneva (2008). Drawing on an Actor-Network-Theory perspective (ANT), they highlight three aspects regarding architecture and building: 'production', 'consumption' and 'change' in the life of buildings (Yaneva, 2008, Yaneva & Guy, 2008, p. 4). They propose further research to understand processes and moments through which buildings become less 'passive'. By following one case, the renovation of a 17th century building – i.e. through the planning, decision making and negotiations regarding materials, 'surprises' appearing when the building was being renovated and so on - Yaneva argues that the building itself plays a 'mediating role' which steers the renovation process (Yaneva, 2008, p. 10). As a consequence, she describes how the original architectural plans can be modified with negotiations appearing as part of the renovation process.

³⁴This echoes Miller's reflections on objects (Miller, 2005). Miller argues that 'objects' are not only artefacts; analysing the role they play in everyday life is important because they can easily become invisible despite their power: 'The less we are aware of them, the more powerfully they can determine our expectations by setting the scene and ensuring normative behaviour. They determine what takes place to the extent that we are unconscious of their capacity to do so' (Miller, D., 2005, p. 5). He calls the 'the humility of things' and claims the need to investigate the capacity of objects in order to shape human behaviour and identity. See also Miller (1998).

buildings. Rather than exploring a dichotomy like ‘structure’ and ‘agency’, Gieryn suggests simultaneously examining the capacity of buildings to shape social action and subjects’ capacity to reshape them.

Similarly, Sociologists Daryl Martin, Sarah Nettleton, Christina Buse, Lindsay Prior and Julia Twigg (Martin et al., 2015) highlight the social processes of health care buildings. Particular attention is given to their production - focusing on the designers’ plans and the construction of the building – as well as people’s experience of the building. They suggest examining ‘architectural practices as they occur’ (Martin et al., 2015, p. 10). Although the emphasis of Martin et al’s research is on health care buildings, their points are important for my examination of FARO buildings due to the focus the design, production and people’s experience. The work of both Gieryn and Martin et al is relevant to the discussion of how the architecture of buildings and the social life of individuals act concurrently. From their works we can learn how they simultaneously examine the purposes that designed the buildings and the experience of users.

Research on buildings and architecture, however, has not only considered *whether* buildings have agency or the impact of a building design on people’s everyday experience. In her ethnography of the Nazi Rally Grounds in Nuremberg, Sharon Macdonald examines ‘how’, ‘when’ and ‘why’ humans ‘attribute agency’ to the architecture of the Rally Grounds (Macdonald, 2009a, p. 26; Macdonald, 2006b; Macdonald, 2006a). Her work explores how the attributed agency ‘interacts’ with ‘material relativities’ - i.e. the physical features of the building, such as size, height, and weight - and ‘material suggestions’ - i.e. the interpretations to the Rally Grounds’ architecture based on material relativities.³⁵ Furthermore, Macdonald’s work is important because she argues to rethink of the ‘politics of attributions’ (humans’ responsibility) and the political intentions involved. By exploring the politics of attributions, Macdonald ‘take[s] a more enmeshed approach which includes attention to physical form and how buildings and spaces are attributed with certain qualities and the implications in practice that flow from this’ (Macdonald, 2009a, p. 27).

³⁵In his examination of how identities are constructed and maintained through architecture, Jones (2006, p. 551) explores *who* situates ‘dominant identity meanings’ in terms of the architecture of buildings. This includes examining meanings attached to architectural projects for they often communicate symbols and discourses regarding collective identities (Jones, 2006). The notion of ‘symbolic narrative associations’ explains the political discourses attached to buildings.

The literature cited above highlight the processes involved in the production of buildings –the design, the interactions and experience of subjects within the buildings, and the interpretations of buildings-. From Gieryn we learn that the dichotomy structure/agency might be explored simultaneously through examining the ‘moments’ that occur in the designing of buildings, the experience of people in the buildings and people’s interpretations of their activities in the buildings. He says that the analysis of buildings shall be considered ‘as structures structuring agency but never beyond the potential restructuring by human agents’ (Gieryn, 2002, p. 41). Martin et al., (2015) argue the need for examining two stages in the production of health care buildings: the plans involved in the creation of hospitals and the ways in which people use them. Macdonald is less interested in exploring whether a building ‘has agency’ and more interested in examining ‘how’, ‘when’ and ‘why’ agency is attributed to materialities (Macdonald, 2009 p.26). Her work focuses on human responsibility for attributing agency to buildings. This implies understanding how buildings do not ‘work in themselves’ (p.27) over people. Instead there are agents and processes that make complicated the interactions of subjects with buildings. This chapter explores these such agents and processes that are involved in the production of the FARO building. Although I explore ‘how’ and ‘why’ agency was attributed to the main building, I focus on understanding who has altered the initial expectations attributed to the main building and the effects of this for the experience of students and teachers. The importance of this examination is that I seek to answer not only how people use buildings, but also, how particular decisions affect the experience of those who interact with a building through their ordinary activities.

In what follows, I first explore the design of the main FARO building. Particular attention is given to the political processes and the reasons of policy makers for renovating an abandoned building located at the East of Mexico City.

4.2 Building renovation: The design and purposes involved

By the beginning of the 1990s, PRI, the hegemonic political party, ordered the construction of an administration building in *delegación* Iztapalapa. As the *delegación* has a population of nearly two million people, the local government decided to divide the building into two, resulting in the construction of an administration building. However, the plans to actually divide the *delegación* did not come to pass. In reality, the building and its surrounding grounds were abandoned and gradually became an informal waste ground. In 1997, when the Leftist

government come to power, the architect, Alberto Kalach and Eduardo Vázquez-Martín initiated plans to renovate the building and the surrounding grounds.

The idea of creating an organisation whose activities primarily revolved around the ‘arts’ did not seem satisfactory for many people who lived near or in the area. According to my informal conversations with staff members, I was told that ‘the neighbours’ preferred the creation of a ‘hospital’ rather than an arts organisation. However, the local government envisioned other plans. The opening of FARO reflected Cuauhtémoc Cárdena’s political initiatives for extending ‘arts’ and ‘cultural’ institutions in geographic areas of the city where the *oferta cultural* was minimal or nill.³⁶ Whereas in the West or South area of Mexico City a large *oferta cultural* is visible, other areas such as the North or the East have fewer ‘cultural’ and ‘arts’ institutions. To open an ‘arts’ organisation in an area considered ‘marginal’ by policy makers would show the Mexican inhabitants that the first Leftist government was implementing ‘changes’ in the city. In particular, that the government was encouraging ‘arts’ and ‘culture’ amongst those people characterised as being excluded. For the first director, Benjamin González, the opening of the Iztapalapa FARO was a bid to ‘change people’s lives in the community’ (Interview 4/05/2012).

The renovation of the main FARO building involved cleaning up the area where it was located, and building gardens, a parking lot, an auditorium and a library. The main building is 126.98 metres high and 15.25 metres wide. The materials used to renovate it included cement, steel, and cables. These were used to shape the main doors and the stairs that connect the floors inside the main building. Similarly, these materials were used to create an auditorium, a parking lot, and a bridge connecting the main building to the yards outside. Although these materials are common and ordinary for the renovation of a building, when the building and its surrounding area were ready to open, some ex-staff members interpreted it in a way that seemed to magnify the architecture of the building. For example, the first director of FARO called the main building a ‘ship’ with, next to it, a tower which is usually called a ‘lighthouse’ (González, 2003, p. 48). These interpretations are used to claim that FARO is a ‘cultural ship’ illuminated by a ‘lighthouse’ (González, 2003, p. 48). In some publications and articles on the internet, FARO is

³⁶ *Oferta cultural* (cultural offer) refers to the number of ‘arts’ and ‘cultural’ services and institutions distributed around Mexico City. In my informal conversations with staff members, they pointed out that the ‘Centre’ and South of Mexico City have large concentrations of museums, theatres, galleries, libraries and cinemas. However, areas such as the North and East of the City do not have the same ‘arts’ infrastructure.

spoken of as a 'light' whose 'lighthouse illuminates, guides and allows people to see a point of reference in the Orient of the City' (Vázquez-Martín 11 January 2011).

For Macdonald (2009b, p. 26), buildings and architecture, or rather, 'material culture' is about an examination of 'material relativities' - i.e. the physical materials to build buildings and the physical characteristics of them - and 'material suggestions' - i.e. the interpretations 'attributed' to the buildings in relation to their characteristics and the physical materials employed-. When interpretations attributed to FARO buildings do not correlate with the physical materials used to renovate the structure, then I suggest that such correlation can be described as indirect correlations. These indirect correlations tell us about the mismatch between the physical materialities and the interpretations attributed to FARO main building. Indeed, although the materials employed to renovate the main building do not correlate with the interpretations attributed to the building's architecture, it seems to me that the interpretations were useful for magnifying the importance of the arts organisation to Iztapalapa, and to let people know that the Left-wing government was able to make 'changes' in the city that can be described as 'beneficial' to the people.

I suggest that FARO's architecture is associated with the rhetoric of the Leftist government, in part because the attributed interpretations to the building are suggesting that the PRD government is making 'changes'. Although scholars argue that architecture is not just 'an expression of ideology'³⁷, the revovation of the building and the surrounding areas was carried out in practical ways that somehow *help* to reinforce the idea of 'change' propagated by the first Leftist government. These kind of instrumental functions were instigated to promote activities concerning arts and culture to a population described as being deprived of such activities. In this respect, I would suggest that the renovation of the building and the interpretations ascribed have carried some political weight (material, practical and symbolic) and were key to legitimising the idea of change by the PRD governments.

To examine FARO architecture is understanding the expectations attributed to the physical features of the building, the ways by which the architecture may reinforce political ideology, in

³⁷ These ideas are inspired by Jaskot and Doosry (in Macdonald 2009) who are critical to the idea that architecture is just the 'expression of ideology' (Macdonald, 2009b, p. 33). Instead, they also focus on the 'practical use' of the Rally Grounds and the weight of architecture as a 'symbolic carrier of the National Socialist system and its ideology' (Macdonald, 2009b, p. 33).

this case, the idea of ‘change’. Despite the interpretations to the main building –magnifying its importance in a disadvantaged area- the physical materials employed– which can be described as mundane materials- show indirect correlations between ‘material relativities’ and ‘material suggestions’. I explain below the ways in which the architect designed the building. Included in this examination is the name, FARO, the intentions for opening FARO and the imagined users.

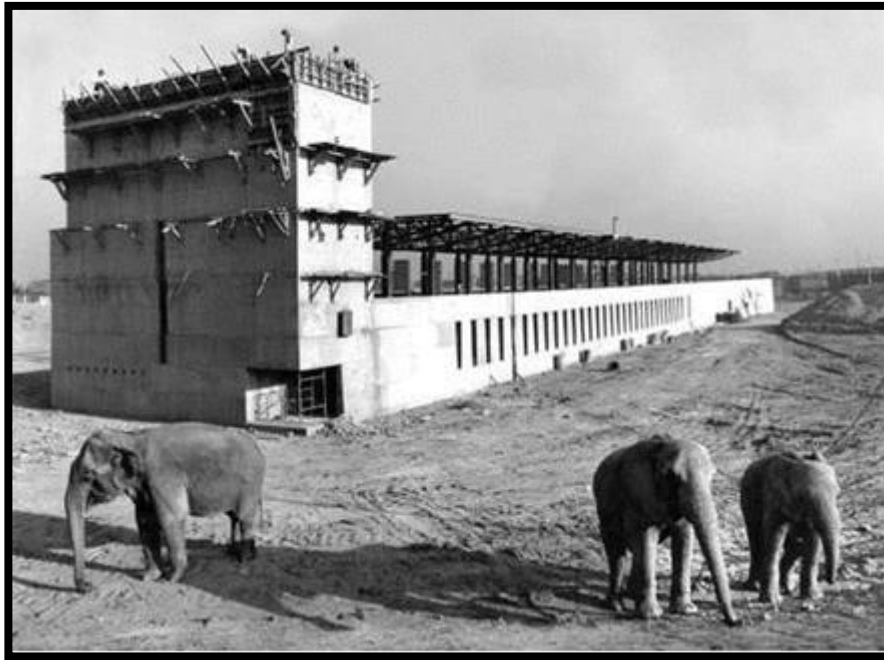


Figure 9 Cleaning and refurbishing the abandoned FARO building ³⁸

4.3 ‘Creating’ students and administrative staff

In 2000, the main building and the adjacent area were ready to start operating. The organisation’s creators, Eduardo Vázquez-Martin, Andrea González, Guillermo Perucho, Benjamín González and Agustín Estrada proposed to call the organisation *Foro de Arte Alternativo*, (Forum of Alternative Art) because this name responded to two interests. First, the organisation was conceived of as a space for the ‘arts representations’ of *tribus urbanas* (urban tribes)(Vázquez-Martin, 2011). Second, it was also conceived of as a space for encouraging *tribus urbanas* ‘tolerance’, ‘curiosity’, ‘dialogues’ and ‘experience’. However, the name changed to *Fábrica de Artes y Oficios* (Industry of Arts and Crafts) because, for Vázquez-

³⁸ The picture belongs to the FARO archive and I was told that the elephants were owned by a circus that stayed temporarily in the local area. It seems to be that the organisation’s creators and the architect allowed the elephants to walk around the main building. I took the picture from Alberto Kalach’s website <http://www.kalach.com/sitio/edificios03.html> [Accessed 20/08/2013]

Martin (2011), the organisation should provide people with the space to exercise their freedom of expression, whilst they also needed *formación* (shaping) in order to develop their own ‘languages’ beyond the languages of a particular identity group. Vázquez-Martin said that young people needed ‘knowledge’ and ‘skills’. For that reason, the organisation was subsequently called *Fábrica de Artes y Oficios* (Industry of Arts and Crafts), a space conceived of ‘work and creation’ (Vázquez-Martin, 2011). Along with Alberto Kalach, Vázquez-Martin and his colleagues reorganised the interior areas of the main building. Kalach called the organisation a centre that ‘produces art’ and a ‘space with industrial vocation’.

The architect and the organisation’s creators prioritised open spaces within FARO main building so that users developed interdisciplinary work. They expected that prioritising open spaces in the main building would engender specific functions, such as encouraging students to become ‘creative’ through collaborative working. Gieryn would say that ‘human agency is most obvious during the design of a place’ (Gieryn, 2002, p. 53). Likewise this is an example of how ‘agency’ is ‘attributed’ to physical spaces (Macdonald, 2009a) because a number of expectations and functions are attributed to certain physical spaces. For Kalach and the organisation’s creators, the design of the main building implied to imagine what kind of processes and social relations would be encouraged through the architectural design. They imagined ‘students’ attending various workshops, such as those registered for ‘arts’ and ‘crafts’, and working together to develop ‘artistic’ projects. It might be the case that they expected that these interactions would *shape* students into becoming ‘creative’. Gieryn reminds us that the design of a building is ‘heterogeneous’. He says that ‘designers who sketch out material artifacts also create human users and even an entire society among which the machine or building can thrive’ (Gieryn, 2002, p. 42).

The architecture inside the main building would not be neutral. As I have described above, the physical spaces were designed with specific expectations and functions in mind, such as creating a space for industrial vocation, organising social relations and creating users. I suggest that the FARO architecture has a mediatory role in that the physical spaces reflect the architect’s and organisation makers’ expectations. Whereas the ground floor and the first floor were areas designed for developing ‘arts’ projects and administrative activities, the second floor of the main building, a long corridor, was imagined as exhibiting visual works by students and ‘artists’.

Another expectation ‘attributed’ to the main building interior space is the distribution of administrative offices. Kalach, Vázquez-Martin and his colleagues intended to avoid the problems that they had observed in the administration of the former government: bureaucracy and the difficulty people experienced in speaking to civil servants (Allard, 2012, p. 73). Inspired by thoughts about changing these problems, Kalach’s architectural strategy consisted of having the building’s offices and desks located on the ground floor and the third floor, respectively. Offices on the ground floor were designed for lower and medium-level staff members. The offices had long windows to allow anyone to observe the activities of those staff members. Desks on the third floor were designed for the Sub-director and his colleagues. I would claim that the ways in which Kalach, Vázquez-Martin and his colleagues distributed offices and selected materials for each of them such as glass had the intention of encouraging work dynamics. Firstly, by designing workplaces for administrative staff, Kalach and associates expected that FARO administrative staff would make relationships with people that were less hierarchical and more *horizontal*. The possibility that people could speak with any of the staff members or observe the activities of FARO staff were part of Kalach’s expectations. Second, long windows replaced cement walls, and desks replaced offices with the intention of reducing a kind of an authoritative position from the Subdirector to students and visitors and to suggest *transparency*.³⁹

The distribution of offices and the use of glass instead of cement walls demonstrated staff members identities, such as staff members willingness to deal with people efficiently and to establish horizontal relationships with them. The importance of examining the architecture of FARO’s main building is that it tells us how Kalach and the organisation makers attributed expectations and functions to the main building architecture and the kind of identities they expected to shape through the architecture. In particular, ‘creative’ individuals (i.e ‘artsits’ and ‘artisans’) working collaboratively and administrative staff establishing efficient relationships with users. Somehow, the ways in which Kalach and his associates designed the interior of the main building embodied their expectations of the social relations and organisation among students, teachers and staff members.

³⁹ I was told that only hours before FARO opened that the building’s architecture disconcerted those that worked for the government; they claimed that the institution should not open because the main offices had not been finished. Employees that worked in other institutions expected to find offices to house all administrative staff, especially the Sub-director, whose workspace had no walls or doors, only three desks with computers, printers, internet connections and telephones.

According to Gieryn (2002, p. 60) a building ‘becomes social structure’ in that its design changes into something material, giving structure to the daily activities and routines of people. Although this idea is important for exploring the agency of a building, I am more interested in understanding how and why agency is attributed to the FARO main building. Likewise, I am interested in understanding how political processes and social actors (I will call them destabilising agents) have affected the initial expectations attributed to FARO’s architecture, and the effects of this on the experience of students in the building. These questions are important because it let us see the agents and processes involved in the design, implementation and experience of those using the FARO building. Likewise, this lets us see that buildings do not affect directly the experience of users, but rather, the decisions of social actors and the everyday interactions of subjects with buildings alter their own experience. Before examining these agents and processes, I will describe FARO de Oriente.

The surface area of the FARO complex is 25,000 m², with the buildings and areas distributed as follows: the main building and a garden that encircles it; a library; a tower; a small arena (a space for theatre activities and concerts); a ‘theatre’ for events (opened in 2010); and a building created mainly for ‘craft’ workshops. There is also a 9,000 m² terrace for concerts that is also used as a parking lot. During my fieldwork, I observed the structure of the main building as follows. The ground floor and first floor are connected by two narrow sets of stairs. When someone goes through the main entrance, to the right, they can see a small auditorium and reception area; and to the left are administrative offices, classrooms for workshops, an office and a storage room, as well as small gardens, toilets, and the computer club-house (a small place that offers computer activities for children and teenagers). There are also long walls designed for exhibiting students’ paintings, drawings or photographs. Additionally, there is a dance studio and a small laboratory for photographic uses.

Once a visitor walks up to the first floor, he/she can see a long corridor used by students who are registered to workshops offering painting, drawing, sewing, design and the production of glass. Anyone who enters can see sewing machines and machines that produce t-shirts with designs. Also, in a corner, colourful-cardboard sculptures made by the *cartonería* workshop are visible. A long corridor with walls is used to exhibit visual work. Administrative staff use this corridor to portray work by invited ‘artists’ – people who already have a successful career in work is related to, say, painting, photography, or sculpture. There are also two administrative desks, a local radio station and a soup kitchen located on the second floor.



Figure 10 A partial view of the FARO main building.



Figure 11 The first floor in the main building⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ A corridor for 'arts' and 'crafts' workshops is on the left hand side and to the right is the 'main gallery'.

Kalach, Vázquez-Martin and his colleagues have designed an arts organisation whose physical architecture is oriented towards promoting ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ and to avoid ‘bureaucracy’. Through romantic metaphors, the main building is interpreted as a *ship*, which is open to all those who wants to participate in ‘arts’ and ‘culture’ (Vazquez-Martin, 11 January 2011). Although the building was designed with these intentions in mind, diverse factors have affected the initial architectural expectations. Staff members’ managerial decisions, changes in the political administration of Mexico City and a reduced budget are some elements that I will call destabilising agents. The decisions taken by these destabilising agents have had effects for the experience of teachers and students that use the organisation. In this sense my aim is to understand how the decisions of particular agents have affected the physical condition of FARO’s main building and the ways in which teachers and students respond to it. My focus is on exploring ‘human responsibility’ (agency) rather than how the main building affects students and teachers. I introduce below three incidents in the time line of FARO which explain how the initial architectural expectations were affected, and by whom.

4.4 Destabilising agents: political changes and budget reduction

The expectations attributed to FARO main building architecture were affected and modified years after the opening of FARO in 2000. Whereas the organisation’s creators had addressed FARO activities as just for ‘young people’, people of different ages actually began to participate in the organisation (ICCM, 1999). Staff members planned new workshops and activities for this new and growing population. At some point, the main building was a reduced space for the people who participated in the workshops. Then staff members noticed that it was necessary to redistribute the workshops which had been based entirely in the main building. In 2005 the local government approved the opening of a 745 m² building in order to distribute the workshop population (Allard, 2012, p. 78). The opening of the second building would minimise accidents (there were machines and objects that could hurt children) and reduce the noise in the main building that was produced by the machines (Allard, 2012, p. 78). Although it seems that the new building ameliorated some difficulties and risks for students, its opening altered the initial expectations of the organisation’s creators. Workshops such as carpentry, soldering, iron sculpture and wood carving (Allard, 2012, p. 78) were to be held in the new building. This implied that the possibilities of collaborative projects between those registered in ‘arts’ and ‘crafts’ workshops would be reduced. Furthermore, that a new building had been opened for

distributing the participants attending 'craft' workshops, traced a symbolic hierarchy. The new building was interpreted as having particular attributes:

The challenge was to build a building following Alberto Kalach's design (i.e. the main building interior design). The strength of the main ship (the main building) charted the new project (...) a vertical wall simulates a connection with the main building, transforming the workshops ship in an anchor which is guided by the main ship [main building], following its navigation (Allard, 2012, p. 79)

The 'arts' and 'communication' workshops were established in the main building and several 'craft' workshops in a building that can be described as subordinated to the main building. This distribution of workshops, or rather, the social organisation of workshops at FARO would affect the dynamics of students. For example, 'craft' workshops were opened so that people could develop skills to produce objects with commercial purposes. Another intention was that people could open their own business (e.g. a carpentry) or that they could sort out their own 'domestic problems' (Muñoz, 2012, p.153) such as making repairs to their houses, or making a wardrobe. The initial expectation of 'artists' and 'artisans' carrying out collaborative activities and projects was shelved, in part because staff members' decisions involved different kinds of publics and the creation of a building designed only for activities with machines.

II

The political ambitions of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas led to his resignation as mayor of Mexico City in order for him to run in the presidential elections in 1999. Rosario Robles replaced him until Andrés Manuel López-Obrador was elected as the city mayor in 2000. Unlike Cárdenas, it seems that López-Obrador's political interests did not include supporting previously instigated arts projects and institutions concerning arts education. Although López-Obrador created a *Secretaria* (Minister) to attend to 'arts' and 'culture' activities, in 2000 he reduced the arts budget from 330 million pesos to 184 million pesos. This had a big effect on the FARO budget. During 2002 and 2003, the organisation received approximately 2 million 700 thousand pesos respectively (Mesinas, 19 June 2005). Given the reduced budget for programmes concerning arts education that Alejandro Aura had already planned - and some of them had already been implemented - he resigned, claiming that he could not administrate them with minimal funding (Grajeda and Martínez, 2001; Ravelo, 2001). The activities planned to be offered at FARO were consequently altered. Plans for new facilities, such as the opening of a cafeteria were shelved and the budget was used to pay the wages of teachers and administrative staff, as well as provide

basic services. In an attempt to obtain a better budget, Benjamin González, the first FARO director, emphasised that the organisation had a ‘positive impact’ on people, in particular, ‘the poor’ (Gonzalez, 2002, p. 41). Likewise, he criticised the fact that ‘culture’ was not a priority for local or federal government, stating that ‘governors do not want to understand that culture and education is a crucial instrument for economic development and also for the so-called society of consumption’ (González, 2003). People working in the areas of music, writing and *difusión cultural* (diffusion of culture) interrogated the impact of the new *Secretaria* and other people lamented that Aura’s ‘cultural’ programmes (intended for the wider public) had been removed soon after Enrique Semo started his administration as the new Secretary of Culture (Ceballos, 2005). They argued that López-Obrador ‘had turned his back to [mainly] young people that supported him through their votes’ (Universal, 3 May 2001). When López-Obrador ended his political administration at the beginning of 2005, the new mayor guaranteed a steady budget for FARO: while in 2005, it received 4 million, 800 thousand pesos (1 million from the federal government and the rest from the local government), in 2011 it received 5 million, 919 thousand pesos (Espinosa, 12/09/2014). Additionally, changes in the political administration of Mexico City altered previous projects that Cárdenas and Aura already had accepted. Despite the first director emphasising the ‘impact’ of FARO on the public, it can be claimed that the political ambition of Cárdenas and López-Obrador’s indifference to the FARO project were part of those political decisions that altered the purposes and expectations of the characters who designed the organisation.

During fieldwork, the Sub-director said that FARO’s budget had been maintained at the same level since 2005. In 2012, the organisation received 6 million pesos from the local government, though it seems that the institution currently needs at least 12 million pesos to function (Interview 1/10/2012). Following this, the Sub-director said that the budget is distributed according ‘to the needs and demands’ of each *coordinación*, (administrative office). In this sense, ‘the workshop areas receive more money from the budget because it provides more services [to the people]’ (Interview 1/10/2012). Given the reduction of the budget, I came to realise that the workshop coordinator carried out some practices to balance the reduction of the budget. She - and even her previous colleague - sought sponsorship either in the federal or private sector to carry out projects with teachers and students. They called this activity *gestión*. Another practice of the workshop coordinator was to receive equipment and materials, such as tables, computers, and board markers, so they were able to carry out their every day activities. They called this practice *donaciones* (donations).

III

During my fieldwork, I observed that the workshop coordinator looked concerned about students' dropping out. In response to this, and during the registration process, which took place following the summer of 2012, she asked teachers to give a brief presentation about their workshops so that people could get an idea about the content and activities involved. At the same time, she allowed people to register for two workshops to enhance their participation. Classrooms on the ground floor and the corridor on the main floor became small spaces due to the numbers involved. Although the decisions of staff members modify the spaces in FARO's main building - paradoxically to stabilise the activities of teachers and students - there are tensions occurring between these decisions and the experience of students and teachers carrying out their activities in the main building. Below, I introduce the effects of a number of decisions and political processes for the experience of the students and teachers I met. Included in this examination are the ways in which they respond to the damaged physical condition of the main building.

4.4.1 Noise: (In)audibility in the classroom

During fieldwork, I observed that the expectations attributed to the main building's architecture became practice in a distinct way. Students in the music workshop held rehearsals with their guitars, voices, or an old piano and were located in a classroom located on the ground floor. These kind of sounds, or rather, accidental noise, resulted in a difficult experience for teachers who were communicating their ideas orally. On Wednesday evenings, a teacher who I will call her Antonia, could not carry out her workshop properly because the music workshop was holding a music rehearsal next to her classroom at the same time. Although I observed that Antonia left the classroom and approached the workshop coordinator - I assume Antonia asked the workshop coordinator if she could move to another classroom - nothing could be done because the other classrooms were already busy. After some time I observed Antonia return to the classroom. In a kind of struggle with the sounds of the musical instruments, she spoke loudly in order to communicate her ideas to us. However, I perceived Antonia was quite irritated. She asked the group, 'how do we find injustices in a place whose population get used to [living in] painful circumstances?' (Fieldnote 26/01/2012).

It seems to me that she raised this question in relation to our pacific behaviour - the fact that we did not complain about the difficulties of participating in the workshop with the workshop coordinator, despite the noise in the other classroom. Antonia's question is relevant here not only for the criticism it makes towards the working conditions in the main building, but also for how students accepted the music rehearsals, or rather, the accidental noise that affected the dynamics in the workshop. Sanfelice Rahmeier (2012, p. 167) would say that we developed 'body routines' enabling us to stabilise to the sounds in the main building as we learnt to take the noise for granted. The development of a 'body routine' became a strategy for dealing with the accidental noise in the organisation, and ultimately, to stabilise it. Following Macdonald (2009a, p. 68) I use the concept of 'invisibility', or rather inaudibility, to consider the moments when accidental noise became audible, such as when Antonia reminded students and I to consider it, but became inaudible when we developed a body routine that stabilised it. The noise can be described as an example of the 'materialities' (Macdonald, 2009) that mediate the communication process between my peers and Antonia. This has consequences for their participation in 'arts education', affecting the reception process and limiting their participation. The experience of Antonia and students I met let us see how the the purposes and implements attributed to the building become practice, although not in the way it was originally intended. It also lets us see that administrative decisions produce contradictions.

The accidental noise affected my peers' practices in that a 'body routine' was developed to stabilise it. In the case of Antonia, it seems to me that she intended to adjust the building's facilities to her own interests. This can be reflected when she asked the workshop coordinator to move to another classroom or when she attempted to alert my peers to the physical conditions in which we were working. Although the workshop coordinator's decision has some weight for the experience of teachers and practices in the main building, political decisions taken before have altered the main building capacity and the everyday interactions of students with the building. Another case describing how the workshop coordinator's decision affected the experience of teachers and students in the main building can be seen in the corridor located on the first floor. By examining how the first floor corridor is used, I intend to highlight the negotiations and strategies used by teachers and students to stabilise their practices.

4.4.2 Accepting decisions: The lack of space

When the last period of workshops was initiated - by the end of summer – the students who had registered for the drawing workshop numbered more than 30. I observed that they intended to work in the corridor located on the first floor. Some of them worked standing up and other people worked sitting in chairs. However, the corridor became compacted because as well as the drawing students, other students, who were making cardboard sculptures, were using the same space. Noticing this, the workshop coordinator asked the drawing students and the teacher to move to another building, one used mainly for events, and to continue their activities there. Inside that building, I observed that students had chairs so they could sit around a model as they drew her, and the teacher spoke more quietly. Drawing activities in the theatre seemed to provide students with a place to work that can be described as comfortable, though there was some risk. If an event took place on the same day that the students were working, I assume that the workshop coordinator and the teacher would have had to find them another space to create. By accepting such a large number of people for each workshop, the interactions of the drawing students with the main building were affected. Unlike Antonia, who raised criticisms about the place where she was working, the drawing students and the drawing teacher were indifferent to the physical area. That their interactions with a damaged physical space had been naturalised is a good example of the silences and the manifestations of social inequalities.



Figure 12 Leaks in the main building



Figure 13 Work spaces for Drawing students.

4.4.3 *Visibility*

From my experience, I observed that administrative staff used the offices and desks as Kalach and the organisation's creators had intended. The staff members' offices were located on the ground floor. The Sub-director and her colleagues worked on desks located on the third floor. Staff members' offices had long windows, though in one case, some staff members had covered the windows with banners, blocking visibility for people. On the first floor, a long corridor was

used for workshop activities. Although in the mornings I could see people carrying out their activities in a spacious corridor, in the evenings the corridor became reduced space because a considerable number of people used it for doing their activities.

Although any person could see the Sub-director's desk, he and his colleagues could also observe teachers, staff members and students. Likewise, students and teachers working on the first floor could see the Sub-director and his colleagues, as well as administrative staff – working on the ground floor -. Although the administrative staff would say that the building's architecture did not produce a 'hierarchical observation', the ways in which the spaces were distributed reinforced it (Foucault, [1977] 1991, p. 170). For Foucault, hierarchical observation is an instrument to assure 'disciplinary power'. Architecture in institutions such as schools, hospitals, and prisons is made for observing, exercising control and modifying individuals' behaviour. For that reason, Foucault says that the distribution of, say, bedrooms for patients and classrooms for students, were designed to exercise observation, training and surveillance.

In the case of the main FARO building, some chairs and tables were distributed in corridors; administrative offices and classrooms had long windows. These are some examples of 'petty mechanisms' (Foucault, [1977] 1991, p. 173) that FARO architecture provided to its users. The architecture of FARO's main building reduced the possibility of people being able to work isolated in a quiet area and unobserved by administrative staff, or other students or teachers. While invisibility in the main building was vague, visibility from different angles seemed to provide staff members and teachers with many possibilities of observation. The distribution of administrative offices and windows that worked as walls were elements allowing employees to observe, for example, who was participating in the workshop and how they participated. It also allowed them to observe whether a user or student was consuming drugs. If a case like this should happen, a teacher or a guard would ask the user or student to leave the organisation.

The three cases above described seek to highlight some of the effects of staff members' and political decisions for the everyday experience of students and teachers in the FARO main building. These effects can be described as difficult experiences for those who interact everyday with the FARO main building. In response, students seem to adapt to the circumstances of neglected facilities. To put buckets under leaks or to move to another dryer area, to become indifferent to noise or to move to another area with less noise, are ordinary practices reflecting pacific stabilisations and cold materialities. Furthermore, students' practices let us see

contradictions in relation to an ambitious architectural project, promoting interdisciplinary work of 'arts education' and 'creativity'.

I suggest that the cases examined above are examples that show how a number of agents and political processes have affected the physical condition of the main building. Agents and political processes have had effects on the experience of students and teachers, rather than the building itself. By examining these destabilising agents, I have come to learn that understanding the direct experience of subjects with the material is merely examining the tip of an iceberg. However, an examination of the agents, processes and the experience of subjects with the material leads our attention to the intersections of the material, the political and the everyday experience of subjects in buildings. This analysis is an 'enmeshed approach' (Macdonald, 2009 p.27) which seeks to unpack the complicated intersections of agents, processes, non-human elements and the effects of such intersections for the experience of students and teachers.

To periodically restore the main FARO building - and even its surrounding areas - is to reveal the potential of the local government to keep an organisation more or less functional for the activities that the teachers and students carry out. However, it might be the case for both keeping the building in semi-repair and simultaneously building two other buildings, one in 2005 and the second in 2011, reveals 'oscillations' (Macdonald, 2009, p. 84-85) from the various PRD governments. For Macdonald, 'political oscillation is familiar in systems in which there is a constant swing between different political parties being in power, each seeking to revoke or redress the policies put into place by the others' (Macdonald, 2009, p. 84-85). Although I sympathise with this view of oscillation, I would suggest that the physical condition of FARO's main building demonstrates political indifferences. Political indifferences can be manifested based on two conditions: governments' ability to restore or modify a place, and people who naturalise circumstances which produce tension or difficulties in their everyday activities.

In the case of FARO, an oscillation can be perceived through the distinct political administrations of the Leftist government that held power from 1997 to 2012 and the changes in terms of their funding for the organisation⁴¹. The effects of such an oscillation can be observed

⁴¹It could be claimed that the State and the local government have supported the participation of cultural industries. In doing so, activities such as 'entertainment, spectacle, and heritage' (Rosas-Mantecon, 2008, p. 64, Jimenez, Lucia, 2006) have been prioritised. Activities that do not belong to that field, such as education, seem to be perceived by the State and the local government as examples of 'spending, rather than investment' (Rosas-Mantecon, 2008, Jimenez, Lucia, 2006).

in how students and teachers use the main building, which is an experience that can be described as difficult, and one that manifests contradictions and inequalities. Leaks and fractures in the walls of the building are not only issues of time and weather, but symptoms of political and managerial decisions, as well as the ways in which subjects naturalise materialities that seem to produce difficulties for their everyday experience. To examine the role of humans and how their actions have affected the main building is to understand the ‘politics of attributions’ (Macdonald, 2009), or rather, the distribution of responsibilities at different levels: managerial decisions to organise the everyday activities at FARO, political decisions that affect the physical condition, and subjects that naturalise their interactions with the material.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored three questions: how is the architecture of the main FARO building ‘attributed’ with specific purposes and expectations? who has destabilised the initial expectations attributed to the FARO building architecture? What are the effects of this for the experience of students and teachers with the main FARO building? Guided by ANT and an assemblage perspective, my examination has highlighted the agents and processes that have altered the FARO main building and the effects of such alterations for the experience of students’ interactions with the building. This approach has been useful for understanding not only how and why agency is ‘attributed’ (Macdonald, 2009) but also how particular agents and processes (destabilising agents) affect the initial attributions to particular materialities (in this case FARO building) and the effects for the users (in this case students and teachers).

I have highlighted that the architecture of FARO building is not neutral but there is a mediatory role. This is because those who designed the building architecture created spaces to encourage social relationships of subjects (e.g. civil servants and users), shape identities (‘artists’ and ‘artisans’) and organise the ordinary activities of subjects. Open spaces inside the main building, the materials employed for designing the administrative offices (i.e. long glasses replacing cement walls) and their distribution (i.e. in the ground floor and the third floor) are part of the processes for encouraging particular kinds of social relationships, identities and organisation of ordinary activities. By focusing on how and why subjects ‘attribute agency’ to building architecture, it is possible to observe the social actors and the processes involved in the creation and maintenance of buildings.

Furthermore, this chapter lets us see that the experience of students and teachers using the main building can be described as difficult and contradictory. Firstly, their ordinary activities shows that the inaudibility, the movements from one space to another for doing their activities, the difficulty to work quietly in an isolated space can be described as difficult experiences for their activities concerning 'arts education' and 'creativity'. Secondly, these difficult experiences seem to show contradictions in relation to the romantic purposes and expectations attributed to the FARO architecture.' 'Arts education' and 'creativity' produced through the interactions of subjects with the material let us see pacific stabilisations and contradictions. In this respect, political processes and managerial decisions can be described as destabilising agents affecting students' and teachers' experience.

From this chapter, I have shown that the Left-wing policy is reshaped not only through the practices of students interacting with the material, but also through the decisions and actions of politicians and staff members which affect the ways in which the case study is reshaped. Such decisions show contradictions and ambiguities in relation to the purposes and expectations of 'arts education' and 'creativity'. 'Political oscillations' alter the course of actions previously implemented such as the ways in which a public building is understood to function for the public. Although there is an ideology of promoting 'arts education' and 'creativity', the everyday practice of students and teachers in the physical spaces seem to be peaceful.

Whilst this chapter has examined the physical place where my peers carried out their activities, the next chapter focuses on the activities between teachers and my peers in the workshops. Workshops can be described as 'environments' through which teachers presented to my peers and I modes of creativity. How does a workshop start? Who are the teachers that carry out activities and projects with students relating to arts, creativity, politics, arts movements, and the sociopolitical situation in Mexico? Do they *mediate* practices related to arts education?

Chapter 5 Behind face-to-face dialogues: Teachers as mediating ‘arts education’

One Monday morning in 2012, I saw a long queue waiting outside FARO. Children with their mothers, people in their twenties and their fifties, holding photocopies of their personal documents. I went inside and noticed that one staff member was putting stamps on a large number of forms. Another staff member, the workshop coordinator, had put a long table outside her office on which she had put staplers, pens and the forms that her colleague was passing to her. I asked her whether she needed any help and she asked me to help her to register the people who wanted to join the workshops. I supported her in this task and that day we registered approximately 800 people. Giving out forms to the new students and writing their details in spreadsheets and notebooks, meant that this was a long and slow activity. The registration process lasted a week. When this process had ended, more than 1,000 people had registered for approximately 40 workshops. Workshops are some of the most important activities at FARO, not only in terms of the number of people who join, but also due to the social relations that are built between teachers and students. Dialogues among students and teachers about ‘art’ and ‘creativity’, teachers’ collaborative activities with students and ‘artistic’ projects are some of the dynamics I observed during my participation in six of these workshops.

While in Chapter 3 I examined some of the documents that describe the purposes of the organisation and the practices of students I met in the design workshop, this chapter expands my research and explores the educational project of FARO. In particular, I discuss how teachers I met present ‘arts education’ to the students in the workshops they organise. In line with the central topic of this research, how the Left-wing arts policy becomes practice, I examine in this chapter the role of teachers as ‘mediators’ (Macdonald, 2009). Through their practices and dialogues with students, teachers present a version of arts education and creativity. The importance of examining their activities with students is that this can tell us how far the political assumptions of ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ are presented to the public. I will explain how three teachers, Christian, Antonia and Ignacio, interpret ‘arts education’ and the extent to which their versions of ‘arts education’ is shaped by particular mediations.

In this chapter, I explore three questions: How is ‘arts education’ encoded in the document entitled *modelo pedagógico*? How are teachers’ meanings and practices mediated by the students and the work conditions at FARO? What kind of ‘preferred readings’ are teachers

encoding in the workshops that they organise? In line with the goal of this thesis concerning how the Left-wing arts policy becomes practice, I will argue that the arts policy becomes practice through the ways in which teachers present a version of ‘arts education’ to students. Teachers are agents within a network of practices, processes and meanings that mediate their activities. As Mieke Bal (1996) argues, museum guides’ activities are ‘tiny’ in connection with ‘a long chain of events’ (Bal, 1996, p. 16). To examine the process of mediation through the work of teachers, is to understand how other entities mediate their activities and the kind of creativity produced through their ordinary activities. In order to answer these questions, the first section of this chapter reviews the literature on ‘mediation’. Then, I examine how the document *modelo pedagógico* (the pedagogic model) gives sense to ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’, and finally the third section, examines how teachers encode ‘preferred readings’ (Macdonald, 2009a) of ‘arts education’.

The pedagogic model sets out the purposes of ‘arts education’ and the strategies that teachers can implement in their workshops. As part of these purposes, teaching-learning is seen as a process centred on students. It is expected that teachers address their efforts to focusing on students’ needs and interests. Games and collaborative activities are some strategies that can trigger people’s ‘creativity’. The pedagogic model sets out that ‘creative individuals’ are ‘agents’ who can ‘transform’ their sociocultural context. In line with the ANT and assemblage perspective, the pedagogic model can be described as a ‘technical device’ that gives ‘meaning to action’ (Callon, 2005, p. 4). This means that it can guide the activities of staff members and teachers in order to endow people with particular attributes. However, in this chapter, I will show that teachers do not reproduce the purposes and strategies of ‘arts education’ straightaway. Instead, there are other mediations involved and these mediations produce a version of ‘arts education’ quite different from the purposes established in the pedagogic model. The work conditions of the teachers at FARO, the students’ personal experiences and the teachers’ previous knowledge are some interrelated mediations that shaped the meanings and practices of Christian, Antonia and Ignacio.

5.1 Behind face-to-face interaction: the process of mediation

From my experience, the teachers at FARO held conversations, exercises and projects with my peers and I. Some conversations were intended to generate ideas about ‘art’ and ‘social transformation’. For example, Christian said that ‘art is like an engine for social transformation’,

and suggested that every individual is an artist in that they can transform themselves and their environment. This vision had consequences for the idea of artists as being 'gifted' or 'geniuses'. He criticised the social conventions of 'artists', which emphasised that they are talented individuals. His point of view about 'art' and the possibilities of people to 'transform' themselves seemed to be democratic and inclusive. Similarly, Christian said that our ideas were an 'unending' process. He warned us not to be a 'slave' to a particular idea. Instead, he said our ideas should grow, or rather, they should ripen and this ripening could be reflected in, say, the execution of a performance or the creation of an object. When I listened to Christian's way of interpreting 'arts', I wondered how he had come to such an interpretation. And, who participates in Christian's meaning of 'art'? These questions can be explained through the notion of 'mediation'.

Early theories on communication studied the process of communication between audiences and the media as a linear model, that is, in the form of producer-message-receiver. Audiences were characterised as 'passive' in such a process. Stuart Hall's (1980) 'encoding/decoding' model explains the interactions involved in the process of communication. For Hall, messages are produced in relation to institutional structures, such as producers' assumptions regarding audiences, institutional frameworks and media agendas. The production of messages encapsulates ('encode') institutional structures ('mediations'). In the production of messages, a 'preferred reading' prevails in that they have an 'institutional, political, ideological order and become institutionalized' (Hall, 1980, p. 134). Although Hall recognises that audiences are 'active' in their processes of reception, the ways the messages 'encode' a 'preferred reading' traces limits so that audiences decode with 'some degree of reciprocity' (Hall, 1980, p. 136) and the communication process becomes quite effective. Hall says that the process of encoding/decoding has three variables. First, individuals might accept the messages produced. Second, individuals can *negotiate* with the 'dominant definitions' produced in messages. This implies that they might be critical about the messages produced. Third, individuals might be indifferent to the messages (*oppositional*). Based on these hypothetical responses to the 'preferred readings', Hall challenges a process of linear communication in which audiences are 'passive' and unproblematically decode what the media says.

Anthropology has also examined the processes of communication of media and audiences. The focus of anthropological studies is on exploring people's practices and processes (Askew, 2002). In other words, rather than examining the 'effects' of media on people's everyday lives,

anthropologists focus on how specific variables, or rather, mediations, encode meanings for preferred readings. From an anthropological perspective, to examine the process of communication, or rather 'mediation', implies understanding *who* is behind the circulation of meanings. As Kelly Askew argues '[mediation allows us] to peel back the epidermal layer of mass mediation to expose the agents, aesthetics, politics and economics behind the technologies' (Askew, 2002, p. 2). By examining how specific mediations participate in the production of meanings, the process of mediation becomes complicated. For Paul Du Gay, meanings are produced 'at several different sites and circulated through several different processes and practices' (du Gay, 1997, p. 10). For du Gay, meanings are produced from different sources and set in a 'model of a dialogue'. This means that communication is more of a dialogue and less a linear 'transmission' model. These processes are identified as part of the 'messy world of human actions, working relationships and cultural meanings that exist' within organisations on a day-to-day basis (Negus, 1997, p. 94).

Ethnographic research in museums and historical sites has explored the process of mediation. These ethnographies focus on how visitors to museums 'continuously and routinely interact to produce, exchange and consume messages' (Handler and Gable, 1997, p. 9). Rather than examining how visitors interpret museum messages after their visits, Handler and Gable analyse the social production of meanings inside museums. Similarly, Macdonald (2002) examines the production of a temporary exhibition in a museum of science, paying particular attention to the producers and what is involved in the production of a temporary exhibition. This includes understanding the negotiations involved in the process of production. In a more recent work, an ethnographic research into a historical site, Macdonald (2009a) examines how tour guides communicate 'the history' of the Nazi Rally Grounds to visitors. She highlights how tour guides encode a 'preferred reading' and the extent to which their preferred reading is shaped by the organisation they work for and the 'script', a text that describes recommendations for the tour guides for giving their tours. By examining the role of tour guides as 'cultural mediators' (Macdonald, 2009a; Macdonald, 2006), she highlights the negotiations and contestations of tour guides in order to tell the story of the Nazi Rally Grounds.

The importance of these ethnographies is that they highlight the agents and processes that shape particular meanings and the negotiations involved. Among other aims, it can be claimed that the ethnographies above seek to answer the question, 'what happens inside museums?' (Handler and Gable, 1997). I take up this question in my examination of FARO, in particular, the process of

mediation of three teachers I met. Drawing on Macdonald (2009a; Macdonald, 2006), I will examine how various mediations are correlated. This affects how teachers encode a preferred reading of ‘arts’ and ‘creativity’ and also affects the process of students’ reception. I suggest that those mediations are:

A pedagogic model (*mediator text*) - A document describing how to implement ‘arts education’ in FARO;

Work conditions in FARO (*institutional mediation*) - Teachers’ flexible contracts and extra jobs;

Students (*mediators*) - Students’ personal experiences.

I suggest that mediation in FARO is an ongoing process in which mediations such as a mediator text, work conditions and the students have effects on the ways in which the teachers encode a preferred reading of ‘arts education’. In line with the argument of this thesis, the Left-wing arts policy is reshaped through the ways in which particular mediations encourage a ‘preferred reading’ of arts education. The role of teachers is key for understanding how they encourage meanings and practices concerning arts education and creativity and the reasons of that. The relevance of my participant observation is that it allows for an awareness of how particular documents, the work conditions of teachers and students’ personal experiences are mediating the ways in which teachers present a version of ‘arts education’ to students. The examination of a document, namely *modelo pedagógico*, is important because it frames some of the purposes and strategies of ‘arts education’. Below, I introduce how Guillermo Perucho (an ex-staff member), Sonia Subirats (an educator) and Argel Gómez-Concheiro (an ex-staff member) implemented ‘arts education’ at FARO.

5.2 A mediator text: the modelo pedagógico

The pedagogic model describes strategies for implementing ‘arts education’ and expectations of how individuals, namely teachers, should *work with* other individuals, namely students. Written in 2001 and reformulated in 2005, Guillermo Perucho and Sonia Subirats characterise the imagined audience as inhabitants ‘excluded from cultural and economic opportunities’ (Perucho and Subirats, 2001, p. 65). This characterisation frames the type of education offered in the workshops at FARO. Perucho and Subirats say the activities in the organisation ‘encourage non-

scholar training models' so that individuals 'shape themselves' in the field of 'creation and cultural services' (Perucho & Subirats, 2001, p.66). Education is understood as 'a process that 'encourage people's creativity, spontaneity and activity' (Perucho & Subirats, 2001, p.72). Based on this vision, they say that the educational strategy of FARO is focused on 'students'. Rather than a linear model that imparts transmission-knowledge to individuals, Perucho and Subirats suggest that FARO's teaching-learning process should promote dialogues and 'discussions' among teachers and students (Perucho & Subirats, 2001, p.75). They say that 'teachers can learn from students, therefore, this might imply that the relationships of students-teachers is horizontal' (Perucho & Subirats, 2001, p.73). According to the pedagogic model, it is expected that teachers encourage students' work and individual development skills in connection with the wider dimensions of social life, such as 'economy', 'culture', 'politics' and 'humanism' (Perucho & Subirats, 2001, p.69).

Although the pedagogic model does not specify how teachers should manage their activities with students, some strategies are highlighted. For example, interdisciplinary work during workshops, projects with 'artists' and 'arts' residencies are all expected to be implemented (Perucho & Subirats, 2001, p.76). These strategies are expected to 'help students to be creative' (Perucho & Subirats, 2001, p.76). By 'interdisciplinary work', Perucho and Subirats mean that they expect FARO students (e.g. those registered on 'arts' and 'crafts' workshops) to share their knowledge and techniques for the creation of 'artistic' works, expecting that this sharing of knowledge and techniques would encourage people's 'creativity'.⁴² The vision of shaping a creative individual seems to be reinforced by conventional visions associated with 'creativity' and 'arts'. Soon after the organisation had opened, Argel Gómez-Concheiro, who worked as the *workshop coordinator* in 2000, reinforced a type of 'arts education' for shaping 'creative individuals'.

For Gómez-Concheiro, (Gomez Concheiro, 2006, p. 89) 'aesthetic education' is not just the learning of techniques, but an integral education in which a 'creative person' constitutes a 'cultural agent' whose role in his/her local community is significant for 'restoring' the 'social fabric' and 'community identity' (Gomez Concheiro, 2006, p. 109). For him, educational activities at FARO should encourage 'creativity [associated with] sensitivity, flexibility and

⁴²As examined in Chapter 4, the architecture of FARO's main building was designed to encourage collaborative work among students, and with this, their 'creativity'.

originality' (Gomez Concheiro, 2006, p. 110). In order to encourage these qualities in students, he suggested that those responsible for leading the workshops should allow students to find their own 'solutions'. Thus, 'games' and 'recreational activities' are highlighted as some of the strategies that teachers can implement in their workshops. For Gómez-Concheiro, 'games' encourage [people's] 'creativity'.

I suggest that some of the reasons for Gómez-Concheiro incorporating new elements within the educational perspective was his 'positioning' (Macdonald, 2009a) within FARO and his previous knowledge. He had studied Plastic Arts and was the second workshop coordinator. In line with my examination of mediation, 'positioning' refers to the *place* that individuals take within an organisation. For Macdonald (Macdonald, 2009a), to understand the 'positioning' of tour guides is 'crucial' because they highlight 'the account that [tour guides] attempt to encode' (Macdonald, 2009a, p. 148) to the visitors. In the case of Gómez-Concheiro, Subirats and Perucho, their positioning in the organisation (staff members at medium command level), along with their previous knowledge, allowed them to delineate a perspective of 'arts education' that intended to shape 'creative individuals' in 'restoring' the places where they were born. This perspective involved the implementation of some strategies that teachers should consider in order to 'help students to be creative' and to become 'cultural agent[s]' (p.76). The view of 'arts education' and 'creativity' described in the pedagogic model encourages an idealised vision of 'creative individuals'. The methodology and the strategies in the model are oriented to shape 'creative' people able to restore the 'social fabric' and to transform their 'communities'. These ideas suggest that a kind of responsibility is imposed on individuals – and their 'creative' ideas - to make changes in their 'communities', or rather, in social life. By highlighting that people's 'creativity' can restore the 'social fabric', there is a view centered on individuals and their capacities to change structural conditions. This raises two questions. Firstly, about the purposes of 'arts education' and 'creativity' in public policy that emphasise them as mechanisms promoting participation and democracy among those living in disadvantaged situations. Secondly, about the responsibilities of the State in tackling social inequalities. As Bishop (2012, p. 14) argues, 'participation in society is merely participation in the task of being individually responsible for what, in the past, was the collective concern of the State'.

The ideas contained in the pedagogic model concerning 'arts education' and 'creativity' seem to be strategies in order to inculcate in people the skills and values to cope with structural issues

and to orient practices associated with consumption. The pedagogic model is important because it gives meaning to ‘arts education’ and orients the activities of staff members and teachers.

In his chapter, ‘Organising conduct, making up people’, Paul du Gay (2008) argues how non-human entities are ‘agencies’ suggesting that individuals ‘conduct themselves’ (du Gay, 2008, p. 34) to construct a kind of identity, such as a ‘shopper’. He argues that ‘agency’ is not human-centered, rather it is ‘distributed’ and ‘plural’ upon specific ‘sociotechnical arrangements’ such as devices, documents, and objects. This argument is inspired by Michel Callon. For Callon, ‘agencies’ are not only localised in ‘human bodies’, but also ‘made up of various prostheses, tools, technical devices and other equipment’ (Callon in du Gay, 2008, p.32). Following this, the *pedagogic model* can be understood as a ‘technical device’ that gives ‘meaning to action’ (Callon, 2005, p.4). This means that it can guide the activities of staff members and teachers in order to endow people with particular attributes. However, in this chapter, I will show that there are other mediations involved, such as the social relations of students and teachers, and that these mediations produce a version of creativity close to the lived experience of students. The work conditions of the teachers at FARO, the students’ personal experiences and the teachers’ previous knowledge are some interrelated mediations that shaped the meanings and practices of Christian, Antonia and Ignacio. I will understand the *pedagogic model* as a kind of document that can be described as a mediator text.

Two points reinforce my understanding of the pedagogic model as a *mediator text*. Firstly, it suggests how teachers manage their activities with students, and in a way, how to guide the ‘conduct’ of students in ‘becoming creative’. By setting out some strategies that teachers can implement in their activities, the pedagogic model seems to mediate the social relationship between teachers and students. An example of this is the idea of a student-centred approach. Teachers are expected to generate ‘discussions’ with students as part of a ‘learning-process’, rather than to ‘transmit’ knowledge to them. This is connected to my second point, that the pedagogic model is a mediator text because a kind of ‘agency is attributed’ by staff members and teachers. This means that by considering and implementing the strategies of the pedagogic model, staff members’ and teachers’ practices are ‘attributing agency’ to the pedagogic model (Macdonald, 2009a). For example, the workshop coordinator I met in 2012 reproduced some elements of the pedagogic model. In an interview with her, she explained to me that she expected teachers to carry out dialogues and ‘games’ because they trigger ‘learning’ processes. Similarly, I observed that in meetings and talks with the teachers, she asked them to write a *plan*

de trabajo (planning activity), a text containing information about the aims of the workshop and student activities. When they received the planning activity, the workshop coordinator would provide feedback for teachers' activities with students, and were aware of the kinds of activities that the teachers would develop with students throughout the workshop. Furthermore, I came to realise that two purposes were involved. The workshop coordinator seriously requested the planning activity because she was concerned about students' dropping out, and also because, it seems to me, she was concerned about the performance of teachers in the workshops. An examination of the planning activity would allow her to make sure that teachers were doing activities with students, and her feedback would orient teachers' activities in accordance to the strategies of the pedagogic model. The performance of teachers in the workshops is an element that indicates how they present 'arts education' to students. I suggest that such performance is mediated by the work conditions of the teachers at FARO.

5.3 Work conditions of teachers

Early in my fieldwork (November 2011), I observed a teacher talking with the workshop coordinator about students dropping out. The workshop coordinator looked concerned because some students were only partially attending workshops and other students had abandoned them. By the beginning of 2012, the workshop coordinator and her assistant held a meeting with the teachers. She complained about teachers' absences and that they did not give her the planning activities. Thus, she was strongly encouraging teachers to hand in their *plan de trabajo* (planning activity) so that she could check how the workshops could be developed and give feedback to teachers regarding their activities. Additionally, in the meeting she also told teachers that if they had three consecutive absences, then they would be dismissed (Fieldnote 6/12/2011). From my experience, I observed that a few weeks after this meeting, the workshop coordinator and her colleague walked through the classrooms observing our activities with the teacher. This behaviour could mean that they wanted to confirm that the teachers were working with my peers. Teachers such as Christian, Antonia and Ignacio sometimes arrived minutes after the expected time or did not turn up to run the workshops. This situation affected the teacher-student dynamic.

The fact that Christian and Antonia came late to the workshops or that we were told about their absence minutes before the workshop started⁴³ had a number of consequences for the communication process of students, in particular, the reception process. For example, in Christian's workshop, we had to wait for more than 40 minutes to start the activities. One student told me that he felt a bit frustrated because the teacher did not come, indeed that he felt it was a waste of time (Fieldnote 24/02/2012). Similarly, I saw my peer Yolanda get quite anxious because Christian had not arrived at the workshop and she had to go to her job (she worked in the customer-services section of a bank). As a consequence, she did not attend the workshop in its entirety and her participation was limited. From my experience, my peers and I used to wait for Antonia for about half an hour. While waiting for her, we used to sit in front of the classroom until she came. If the workshop coordinator told us that Antonia would not come, I observed that some of my peers, such as Francisco and Elizabeth, stayed longer, while others decided to go back home. I suggest that the fact of attending the workshop quite late or receiving the news that the workshop would be cancelled (either in advance or minutes before it should have started) obstructed the communication process of some students, and therefore, their participation in the workshops.

The work conditions in the organisation affected the dynamics between the teachers I met and the students. Christian, Antonia and Ignacio had no permanent employment contract at FARO, and instead had to renew their contract every three months. They worked according to people's demand. In other words, if a large number of people registered on one workshop, the workshop coordinator organised more work-hours for that teacher. This meant that teachers would teach more hours, and earn more money to cover their personal expenses, including health insurance. The jobs and wages of teachers were thus flexible. Given that the work of teachers at FARO did not seem to offer any economic stability, this meant that most of them also had another job. For example, Christian worked in various places: at another arts organisation, in a choreography centre, and on personal projects with a company that produces soda. I felt a sense of irony when he told me that he also had his own work. As he said, '*también tengo mi chamba para vivir porque de ninguna de esas cosas vivo*' (I also have my work to live because I do not live off the other jobs) (Interview 20/02/2012). Ignacio taught art in various schools. He also had his own workshop for people to study engraving and had spent time developing 'artistic' projects with

⁴³ Although Christian and Antonia stayed longer in order to cover their hours, some students could not continue in these workshops as they had other activities planned.

rural communities (Interview 21/03/2012). He said the main reason for him to work in other areas was ‘to get a stable economic situation’. Antonia worked on an editorial project with an electronic devices company and for a radio station. She emphasised that what she earned in those projects allowed her to cover her expenses.

I argue that the teachers were in a kind of ambivalent ‘positioning’ within FARO. In my interviews with them, they said they were interested in working with students (i.e. to hold conversations about art, journalism, and performance; and to lead exercises involving writing, painting or performance activities)⁴⁴. However, in practice, they arrived late for their workshops or just they did not come. I suggest that the work conditions in the organisation were mediations that affected the performance, or rather, the course of actions taken by teachers with students. A flexible contract, wages that were paid late, and extra jobs: all these were mediations suggesting that the teachers may have prioritised other activities over FARO, and were therefore not entirely willing (or able) to fulfill the staff members’ expectations. I would say that in practice, the work conditions of Antonia, Christian and Ignacio became visible through the performance of their job with my peers. As a consequence, the circulation of meanings and practices were not fully experienced by all my peers. In addition, I noticed that other kinds of mediations shaped the ways in which Antonia, Ignacio and Christian encoded a preferred reading of ‘arts education’. Students’ personal experiences were those mediations and they are examined below.

5.4 Students as mediators

During and after the workshops, I observed that the relationships that Antonia, Ignacio and Christian had with my peers were quite close. These kind of relationships ‘shaped interpersonal networks’ (De Landa, 2006, p. 56). For De Landa, ‘interpersonal networks’ are ‘social entities’ measured by ‘stability’. Stability refers to the non-aggressive or destabilising attitudes that may produce ‘psychological tension’ among those who make up the interpersonal networks. For De Landa, both characteristics ‘may endow a community with a high degree of solidarity’ which can be reflected through ‘altruism, calculations of reciprocity and feelings of togetherness’ (De

⁴⁴ During my interviews with Christian, Ignacio and Antonia, they emphasised a kind of ‘commitment’ both to ‘themselves’ and their students. Antonia worked at FARO because she liked to teach. Christian worked there because of the ‘willingness of people’ to ‘transform themselves’ (Interview 20/02/2012). Ignacio chose to work there because of his ‘commitment’ and the convivial experiences with ‘students’ (Interview 21/03/2012). Both Ignacio and Antonia had been working at FARO for about seven years, whilst Christian had been working there for eight.

Landa, 2006, p. 57). The collaboration of teachers with students and a kind of therapeutic support were some of the interactions that I observed during and after the workshops. These had consequences for the kind of preferred readings that the teachers encoded to 'arts education'.

I came to realise that, in some cases, the students' personal experiences could be described as difficult. Four of them had said that their drug consumption had become an 'addiction', and they wanted to stop or they already had stopped consuming drugs. Another peer told me that she had been raped by a relative, and another one said that someone in his childhood had led him into prostitution. By interviewing these peers and participating with them in the workshops, I identified from their responses that their activities at FARO such as painting, writing or dancing produced a sense of relief, and that their convivial experience with peers and teachers reinforced their sense of belonging to the organisation (Chapter 7). Christian, Antonia and Ignacio were attentive to these kind of experiences. For example, Ignacio said that since he has identified students with 'bipolarity' and 'disability', his activities have become more 'palliative', and he expected that because of this, they felt 'useful' and less 'defenceless' (Interview 21/03/2012). He further said that he intended to 'reinforce the emotional side' of students because this would provide them with a 'better experience' in their everyday lives. Ignacio said that he approached each student in order to share with them not just 'knowledge', 'theory' and 'techniques' but also to address their 'psychological needs' (Interview 21/03/2012).

I also observed that Antonia used to give advice to my peers when they approached her, before and after the workshop she ran. For example, to Elizabeth, who had worked as a seller in a shopping mall for about eight years, her income supporting the everyday expenses of her family. At this point, she was unsure whether she should leave her job, although she wanted to, and study for an undergraduate degree. Along with two other students, I saw Antonia supporting Elizabeth as she took the decision to study for an undergraduate degree. I listened to how Antonia highlighted the 'benefits' of studying at a university. Antonia also approached other peers and I observed that she gave a kind of emotional support to them. I noticed that before or after the workshop, it was easy for her to approach my peers and talk with them. During the workshop, Antonia encouraged us to be 'self-confident' in order to tell our stories and to make decisions. She often used the phrase *no se saboteen* (do not self-sabotage) when she noticed that some students were unsure about their personal decisions. During my participation in Antonia's workshop, it seemed to me that her activities and talks had two purposes. Firstly, to raise critical reflections about the sociopolitical context in Mexico and in our 'communities'. Secondly, to

make sure that they were confident enough about their ideas and interests to put them into practice.

Although the personal experiences and motives of some students have mediated how teachers encode a reading of 'arts education', their experiences and motives are not homogeneous⁴⁵. Students such as Alberto, Francisco, Fernando, Esteban and Miriam come to FARO in order to 'learn' about 'arts and performance' and 'journalism' or to 'reinforce' their previous knowledge. Their personal experience and motives are very different from the experiences of my peers described above. This implies that they might not feel engaged with the kind of preferred readings that the teachers encode in the workshops, such as, for example, more emphasis on the therapeutical than on reinforcing students' previous knowledge, and therefore drop out of the workshop. Students not attending workshops can be understood as an 'oppositional' behaviour (Hall, 1980), meaning that there is minimal or no reciprocity between the meanings and practices that teachers encourage in the workshops and the motives of students, in particular, those whose reasons for coming are not related to extrication from a particular emotion.

In line with my examination of 'mediation', I argue that Christian, Ignacio and Antonia negotiate the assumptions and expectations of the pedagogic model. Their interactions with my peers reveals a student-centred teaching-learning process, with some strategies from the pedagogic model are implemented in practice. However, it does not seem to me that they are interested in, say, making 'creative' individuals so that they could 'restore' their communities. Instead, it seems to me they have encouraged a reading that can be described as therapeutic and intending to give aid and support to students, though they do not necessarily request it. The position of teachers at FARO can be described as intermediate. On the one hand, they deal with the institutional dynamics (e.g. being on hand to plan activities, participate in meetings with the workshop coordinator and understand the purposes and strategies of the pedagogic model). On the other hand, their social relations with students produce two readings of 'arts education'. These readings are examined below.

⁴⁵ Indeed, Gómez-Concheiro said that the workshops and the atmosphere at FARO should allow the students to feel 'free'. As that he assumed that the students' personal context would be traced by situations of 'pain', the organisation should therefore provide an atmosphere where they could extricate themselves from experiences that can be described as 'hard'.

5.5 Preferred readings: therapy and participation

In my examination of teachers as ‘mediators’ at FARO, I suggest that Christian, Ignacio and Antonia encode a ‘therapeutic’ and ‘participative’ reading in the workshops that they run. Such readings are the outcome of various mediations. Firstly, the strategies of the pedagogic model that is intended to guide Christian, Antonia and Ignacio’s activities with their students. Secondly, students’ personal experiences mediate the ways in which they present a version of ‘arts education’. Thirdly, the work conditions of Christian, Antonia and Ignacio affect their activities with students. These mediations are important because they allow us to understand how the Left-wing arts policy is reconfigured, in part because the aforementioned mediations have a role in how ‘arts education’ is encouraged and presented to the students I met. The preferred readings I introduce below can be described as the outcome of various processes that are ‘interrelated’ (Macdonald, 2006 p.24). Examining how teachers accentuate particular readings of ‘arts education’ allows us to understand the ways in which participatory arts is being produced and the implications of this.

5.5.1 Therapy

In both the arts and performance workshop and the painting workshop, I came to realise how Christian and Ignacio’s activities intended to work on the emotional side of students I met. In one example, Christian invited them to think about art and performance as means to extricate personal emotions. He also invited us to participate in activities (‘actions’) through which they were asked to think about their personal difficulties and decisions, and to find ways to deal with their emotions.

During my fieldwork Christian said that ‘contemporary art’ is about ‘personal transformation’ and he emphasised that our personal ‘emotions’ can be extricated through ‘actions’. For example, seated below a tree and in a circle, Christian asked us to think about the most important decisions in our life, our personal contradictions or fears. My peers shared their personal difficulties, such as ‘problems’ with their parents, drugs consumption, and in one case, the difficulties a student had in being accepted by his family as homosexual. Christian also participated in the actions that he encouraged us to undertake. For example, he shared with us that his life felt ‘comfortable’ in the sense that he had already achieved some goals in his life (he is a man in his forties, with a stable family and personal projects achieved). As a consequence, he shared with us that it was sometimes difficult for him to find any motivation for continuing in

his career (Fieldnote, 20/01/2012). Christian's lack of motivation was an issue that he intended to address through an 'action'. Standing in the middle of a circle, Christian started to do movements with his body for a couple of minutes. He explained then that the kind of movements he did with his body intended to extricate some of his personal tension. In the same way, he said that the movements or rather the 'action' ended when he 'felt' it was necessary to stop. That Christian shared these personal experiences with my peers and reinforced the view of 'art and performance' as associated with a sense of therapy. His own participation communicated to students that art and performance is an instrument to overcome individual emotions. Those who then did their own 'actions' also did body movements and stopped when they 'felt' it was time to finish. Soon after doing their actions, they smiled, and sometimes I saw them raising their hands, smiling and hugging each other. I suggest that these kinds of behaviours indicated a sense of relief among my peers (myself included given that I would hug them too), and therefore, the reception process matched with a view on arts and performance as producing therapy and self-relief.

Another action intended to produce a convivial experience and support among the members of the workshop were the collective activities. For example, Christian asked my peers and I to say a number, and then we walked around in a circle. As soon as a student said a number, the person with that number fell down on their back and the rest of the group had to run immediately to hold him/her. The final part of this activity was to keep together as much as we could. We had to move slowly, trying to keep our eyes closed and feeling the other person with our bodies. If someone was going to fall down, everybody, including Christian, should be ready to hold him/her. After about 10 minutes of doing this activity, Christian asked my peers and I to sit on the grass in a big circle. He asked, how are you? Usually some of them said they were fine, and others kept silent, reflecting about what they had been doing. One of the thoughts that Christian shared with us was that he regarded 'art' not only as an 'expression': instead, he said that 'art' was a way to 'experiment and overcome our own dilemmas'. For Christian, 'creativity and art meant to change and transform ourselves'. Through these examples, I suggest that a view on arts education is associated with a sense of therapy and relief. Part of the reasons for encouraging 'arts education' in a therapeutic way is because of the personal experiences of students, and the strategies of the pedagogic model. Thus, the meanings and activities of Christian's actions with students are an outcome of such interrelation. The painting workshop seem to be similar in this to the art and performance workshop.

Ignacio said his workshop was ‘therapeutic’ because it ‘reinforces the emotional side of the people’ (21/03/2014). Because some FARO students are living with a ‘mental disability’ or ‘bipolarity’, he assumed that ‘painting’ became something ‘palliative’ for them. He highlighted that his activities with ‘the students’ require knowing people’s ‘needs and capacities in order to adjust’ his work to his students. In practice, I observed students sitting around big tables, painting lines and shapes. They worked individually and in silence, though when they broke the silence, they talked about the progress of their work and received feedback from their peers. The activity of drawing and painting did not allow me to observe how it became ‘therapeutic’ for them, in part because I only observed my peers working in silence, focused on their work. However, in my informal conversations and interviews with them, I came to realise that their painting activities produced a sense of therapy. An example of this is Dario, who emphasised the sense of therapy while painting. For Dario, his paintings were ‘therapeutic’:

I feel relief when I paint. It comes as something I needed to take out. The point is to take out many issues that I have. I wanted to change them into another thing. I think that therapy-art is good because it allows you to know yourself’ (15/05/2012).

Ignacio would approach my peers and I and he gave personal feedback on our paintings. He told us how to combine colours, and how to use space in our paintings. However, although he approached my peers, I came to realise that some of them supported each other, not only in the technical tasks but emotionally too. As Lourdes said:

I think [the workshop] has helped me to mature. The feedback with my peers has helped me. Here many people of different ages that come to the workshop. There is a lady in her fifties. She is very open and talks to you if she notices that you are sad. I feel this workshop has helped me to mature. It gives me experience and knowledge. Sometimes when I have a problem, you do not feel confident to tell your parents (Interview 8/05/2012).

The examples above suggest that the experience of Dario and Lourdes in the painting workshop is associated with a sense of therapy and wellbeing. Given the kind of participation of my peers in the painting workshop, the reception process can be described as social and dynamic. The interpretations of Dario and Lourdes about their activities are correlated with the preferred reading that Ignacio encodes in the workshop. They are ‘decoding’ the messages and activities in relation to the reading that Ignacio prioritises: that is to say, a reading in which painting is about therapy and relief. Students I met at the painting workshop seem to engage in arts education initially for the sense of therapy that painting provides for them. This engagement is then reinforced through the ways in which Ignacio allowed my peers to participate at the

workshop, by letting students join the workshop at any time and to allow the students to do any kind of visual activity. These kinds of practices seem to reinforce the idea that painting is personal, free and therapeutic. However, this has implications for those whose motives for participating in the workshop are not necessarily therapeutic. Guided by my examination of ‘mediation’, this means that there is no symmetry between their motives and the preferred reading that Ignacio encourages at the painting workshop. Furthermore, that some students’ motives and expectations are different shows that their participation in arts education is dynamic and diverse. My participation in another workshop allowed me to understand another reading in which ‘arts education’ is presented to students I met. I suggest that such a reading can be described as ‘participation’ because of the ways in which Antonia and one peer addressed the workshop.

5.5.2 Participation

In the journalism workshop, Antonia encouraged my peers and I to reflect and to write critically about the social, cultural and political issues in the places where my peers and I were born and in Mexico more widely. Unlike the workshops described above, Antonia encouraged a reading of ‘arts education’ in two ways. Firstly, the writing activities were intended to generate a critique of the stereotypes imposed on the communities where my peers were born. Secondly, motivated by Francisco, Antonia supported us to participate in the political life of Mexico in 2012, by joining up with a university movement.

Inside a small classroom, Antonia told us how information is a ‘weapon’ because it allows individuals to be ‘more critical about our reality’ (26th January 2012). In doing so, she asked us about the news that day, as well as the news and difficulties we faced in our own neighbourhoods. I listened to my peers saying that ‘lack of drinkable water’, ‘violence’, ‘insecurity’ and ‘*feminicidios*’ (femicides) were some of the problems they faced in the State of Mexico⁴⁶. However, they also talked about specific ‘festivals’, ‘the relationships with their neighbours’ and the affection they felt for living in Mexico City, in particular the East. For them, the ‘institutional media’ did not cover that kind of news. Some students highlighted that the ‘media and society did not realise that people from the Orient work hard too’ and that the

⁴⁶ The number of femicides (the murder of women) has risen significantly in the State of Mexico. There is no particular explanation about the systemic violence against women. Both Ciudad Juárez and the State of Mexico are the places with a large number of murder of women. On the 15th of April 2015, The Guardian published a news report about the violence against women in the State of Mexico. See: Lakhani (2015a; 2015b).

'media should say something new about the Orient'. As a consequence, they said that the media contributed to the creation of negative stereotypes about the East. By raising these reflections, Antonia encouraged my peers and I to think of 'journalism' as a mechanism by which they could 'make visible a community' in all its dimensions, that is, exploring people's social and political problems and their motivations for struggle (27/03/2012), and the circumstances in which individuals had migrated from the places they were born and the difficulties they faced when they settled in Mexico City. Antonia explained that writing allowed individuals to empower themselves, and in particular, community journalism could be an instrument to represent in a different way a perspective of 'the Orient' of Mexico City. In this respect, students and I were asked to write about the stories of our relatives. We were asked to speak louder about our writings and this opened up discussions and participation among all the students. Group discussions provided feedback, and in this respect, more ideas were added to the writings of each of my peers.

Aside from this collective activity, Antonia (and somehow Francisco) motivated the group to participate critically in the political life of Mexico City through involvement with a university movement, called *YoSoy132* (I am 132). The importance of their participation in the university movement is that it allows us to see how the motivations tempered by Francisco and Antonia encoded a preferred reading of 'arts education' as 'participation' and a critical reflection of political life in Mexico in 2012.

Months before the elections to choose the mayor of Mexico City and the National president (i.e. in July 2012), upper-class students from a private university made clear their rejection of media bias and the ways in which the biggest media enterprises in Mexico imposed a public image of the presidential candidate, Enrique Peña Nieto, representing the PRI, in the media. The presidential candidate visited the private university to promote his political campaign among the upper-class students. However, the students criticised Peña-Nieto about the high levels of violence against women and repressive actions, social problematics that took place when he had governed the State of Mexico. The university students were not satisfied with the statements that Peña-Nieto gave to justify his actions when he was governing the State of Mexico. Since it was obvious that Peña-Nieto could not continue to promote his political campaign, he left the university, having received criticisms and slogans. The main entrance of the private university was blocked by students. Peña-Nieto's security team protected him inside a toilet until they made sure it was safe for him to leave the university.

This event was widely publicised across the internet, although the media neutralised the events. Television presenters interviewed politicians who sympathised with the PRI and the political candidate. They said that those who participated in the events were troublemakers rather than students. Soon after the politicians' statements, 131 students from the private university produced a video showing their university cards and their undergraduate degrees to make clear that they were students. Furthermore, they said they were not members of a political party, and I would add, they were just beginning their participation as critical citizens. The circulation of the video via social networks motivated other universities –both private and public – to organise a university movement, called *YoSoy132*. Thus students from various public and private universities, ran meetings on their university campuses to define the nature of their participation. They protested about the bias of two Mexican media corporations; they declared the movement as '*antipartidista*' (non-partisan); and they demanded democratic elections and access to information for citizens. The university students organised protests on the main avenues and streets of the city. This motivated students from other universities across the country to join the movement. In the same way, Mexican people living outside the country organised meetings and adopted the identity *YoSoy132*. The movement led to the presidential candidates holding debates which were broadcast on popular television channels, and during the elections, they observed the voting.

Students, such as Francisco and Rene wanted to join in the *YoSoy132* (I am 132) movement. I accompanied Francisco to a public university where some of the meetings of the *YoSoy132* were being held. He approached an improvised reception to ask for information about how to join the university movement. A woman who looked about 22 years old asked Francisco his name, the 'school' or 'university' he came from and the names of his colleagues who had accompanied him. However, Francisco was not a university student, therefore, he decided not to register with the movement. He then decided to return to FARO and ask his peers if they wanted to join. It seems to me that if his peers wanted to join to the movement, they could register as FARO students, a kind of identity that would enable them to join the *YoSoy132*. Francisco asked Rene, Elizabeth, Rosa and other students if they wanted to join the university movement. They accepted, and Antonia supported them by helping them to organise their demands. Francisco and the other students suggested highlighting 'the problems' of the East. They intended to make banners with messages that included:

[the creation of] cultural, sports and ludic public spaces; rejection of the stigmas of the Orient. The image of a violent and poor place is related to prejudices and lack of

knowledge about the Orient, though there are problems, the neighbourhood is culture too. [We demand] highschoools and universities; [we demand that the government] sorts out the problem of floods and lack of drinkable water [in our neighbourhoods], creates bike lanes and improves the public transport.

Francisco and the other students suggested adding ‘to improve the work conditions for young people’ as they have low wages and temporary jobs. However, the participation of my peers in the movement produced tensions for some staff members in FARO. The Subdirector claimed that my peers could not hold their meetings inside the organisation because FARO was a governmental institution. On one occasion my peers were asked to organise their meeting outside FARO. So, standing outside the organisation, Francisco, Antonia, and the other students discussed the position of the Subdirector. Antonia was not happy that she and my peers were discussing their participation in the university movement outside FARO. Antonia asked my peers to move inside the building, and I perceived a sense of annoyance in her words:

If students from other universities and schools organise [their meetings and participation] in the facilities [of their universities and schools] why not here? (...) We should state our position towards FARO, we are going to get in (Fieldnote 6 June 2012).

While some students agreed with Antonia about moving back inside FARO, other students looked hesitant because they felt that they would be disobeying the director’s decision. A few minutes later, the Subdirector was walking towards my peers and I. He seemed tense as his hands shook and his breathing was agitated. He told us that the reason he could not allow us to have such meetings inside FARO is that ‘we are a government space and right now there is a period of *veda electoral* for all governmental spaces within the city’. *Veda electoral* (electoral closed season) refers to the prohibition of any kind of ‘proselitysm either in favour or against any political party or candidate’. The director said that because the university movement had declared ‘against a candidate’ (I assume he was referring to Peña-Nieto), the meetings within the organisation would mean ‘an electoral offence, even if FARO [that is, its staff members] had not organised [meetings], but students from civil society’. Additionally, he was concerned about possible misinterpretations. He said that ‘someone’ could claim that FARO (an organisation opened by the political party PRD) was therefore supporting the university movement whose protests were based on opposition to Enrique Peña-Nieto, the candidate representing the interests of PRI. He asked students not to organise any kind of banners and meetings inside FARO before the elections. Soon after the elections, to be held on the 1st of July, we would be

allowed to organise meetings. Having said that, the Subdirector re-entered FARO while Antonia, my peers and other people stayed outside.

Antonia looked annoyed. She said that the organisation should treat its students like any other university or school. They should be supported with physical spaces for organising their meetings. My peers supported Antonia and proclaimed themselves as 'FARO students'. However, other people (e.g. visitors and students from other workshops) told my peers that they should have requested the permission of staff members before organising the meetings. They reminded my peers that FARO is an 'institutional public space'. However, Antonia and my peers did not reply to these comments. Instead, they went back inside FARO and ended up producing a mini video in order to set out their position in response to the negative public image of the East.⁴⁷ Phrases such as 'I am not delinquent, I am Faro de Oriente' or 'In Iztapalapa we do not bomb with weapons but with art' criticised stereotypes of the East of Mexico City.

Additionally they made banners in FARO's yard, and then, some days later, inside the main FARO building. However, the security guards prevented students from going into the main building, as they were following the Subdirector's decision. Along with Ignacio, Antonia called the Subdirector to let him know that she and the students would make banners inside FARO. With a sense of anger, she said 'I am a journalist and teach journalism, I cannot be evasive with my students about what is happening in Mexico' (Fieldnote 8/06/2012). As a consequence, Antonia, Francisco and my peers made banners in order to participate in the protests taking place in the 'centre' of Mexico City. With the aid of painting students such as Jaime, Regina, Juan and Omar, the journalism students carried on making banners. The statements said: 'Yo soy 132 Faro de Oriente', 'creative struggle, art is justice' or 'no more 922' (a reference to the number of homicides of women in the municipalities that belong to the State of Mexico and the East of Mexico City). Some days later, Antonia, my peers, and other students from private and public universities participated in a protest along the main avenues of Mexico City. This protest was held a month before the presidential elections. Although Antonia and my peers continued their activities in the workshop, I noticed that they did not participate in any more protests. One of the reasons for not participating in another protest may have been that my peers' demands

⁴⁷ The video was uploaded on 'YouTube' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37z5jNSPTP0> [Accessed on 26/06/2015]

were different from the demands of the university movement, as well as the tensions produced between Antonia, my peers and the Subdirector.

The participation of Antonia and my peers in the movement revealed tensions in relation to the kind of arts education that FARO encourages. In my examination of mediation in FARO, it seems that there are wider mediations (i.e. the political position of FARO) that limit the possibilities for the students who want to participate critically in the political life of the city and the country. This opens up questions for the kind of arts education and creativity that organisations such as FARO intend to implement in practice among those who attend the organisation's activities. Whilst it seems to be that a kind of therapeutic arts education is encouraged, practices of arts education which promote critical participation among students are initially restricted and must be negotiated. It seems to me that contradictions are manifested in the difference between romantic ideas of arts education in which freedom and a space for young people is encouraged, and the reality in practice, where ordinary activities concerning critical participation in the political life of the country are initially restricted.



Figure 14 Francisco and Elena making banners before their participation in the protest.



Figure 15 'Lucha creativa, el arte es justicia' Omar paints some banners.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the role of *teachers* as mediators of 'arts education' at FARO. Three questions have guided this chapter: how is 'arts education' encoded in a document called *modelo pedagógico*? How are teachers' meanings and practices mediated by the students and the work conditions at FARO? What kind of 'preferred readings' are teachers encoding in the workshops they organise?

In answering those questions, I have examined the document called *modelo pedagógico*, which can be described as a mediator text. The way in which the workshop coordinator uses this document tells us that 'agency' is 'attributed', and consequently, the social relations between the workshop coordinator and the teachers are being mediated. The *modelo pedagógico* is a repertoire of cultural meanings that understand 'arts education' and 'creativity' in an idealised vision to make up 'creative individuals', that is, a vision in which subjects are described as 'cultural agents' (Gomez-Concheiro p.109) able to create change and to restore the 'social fabric'.

The work conditions of teachers and the students' personal experiences are mediating the ways in which Antonia, Christian and Ignacio encode meaning to 'arts education'. The work conditions of teachers affects the communication process of students, in particular the reception process. Students' reasons for attending the workshops and their experience, have an effect on the type of cultural meanings and dynamics that teachers focus on in 'arts education'. Thus teachers and students incorporate meanings and practices to 'arts' and 'creativity'. These processes reshape the case study.

Whilst Christian and Ignacio present a version of arts education as 'therapy', Antonia offers a version of arts education as 'participation'. These versions of arts education have consequences for the ways in which the students I met understand their activities: in other words, what the activities such as painting, writing and performance mean for them. As I will examine in Chapter 7, the students I met associate their activities with 'relief', 'therapy' and 'expression'. These interpretations tell us how the communication process and the social interactions between teachers and students highlights an exchange of cultural meanings and practices that intensify 'arts education' in particular ways. In line with the goal of this thesis, investigating how the Left-wing arts education policy becomes practice, Antonia, Ignacio and Christian present a version of 'arts education' that can be described as 'therapy' and 'participation'. Their 'positioning' at FARO is intermediate for two reasons. Firstly, they negotiate with the strategies written in the *modelo pedagógico*, the work conditions of the organisation and the 'positioning' of FARO. Secondly, their social relations with students influence the kind of arts education they present.

Having explored the role of teachers as mediators in three workshops, in the next chapter I aim to explore an arts project that generated a lot of expectations for the workshop coordinator and her colleague, some of my peers and I. This arts project was the production of a mural, which was a collaborative work with the National History Museum. Particular attention is given to the collaborative work of my peers when they produced the mural and the political processes that mediated the production of the visual work.

Chapter 6 Collaborative creativity: The East of Mexico City reflected in a mural

FARO staff members and external institutions carried out a number of projects intending to promote arts education and creativity amongst visitors and students. In March 2012, the National History Museum (NHM) initiated one of these projects with FARO, and entitled it *Un Faro en el Castillo* (A Lighthouse in the Castle). This was intended to extend the museum's educational services to the East of the city and to create a new type of public audience. Museum staff members contacted FARO staff members and invited them to join the project. After agreeing to participate, FARO staff members were invited to various workshops, including painting, journalism, clothes design, and carpentry, to start the project. Given that the project involved extending the educational services of the museum, staff members organised activities in the NHM for *students* and *teachers*, consisting of talks and guided tours of specific galleries in the museum. The activities sought to encourage students and teachers to produce ideas for visual objects, which would remain as part of the museum's collection (Fieldnote 2/03/2012). As the museum specialises in exhibiting and preserving *a* Mexican national history and *a* national identity, I would argue the importance of the objects reflecting pre-colonial history, 'identity' and overall, an image speaking the language of the museum.

The students and teachers made three objects: historical stained glass, clothes and a mural. However, the final image of the East was quite distinct compared to staff members' expectations. The image not only included traditional features but also other elements that challenged the museum's interpretation of the East. I could observe this by following the production of the mural. Unlike the other objects, my choice of visual work is because I was interested in examining the process of production of the mural. By observing these processes, I have focused on the kind of creativity manifested through the practices of students, as well as, the negotiations and tensions in the production of the mural. Another reason for selecting the mural is that the NHM were exhibiting murals that represented a version of the Mexican Revolution and the Independence of Mexico. These images reflect part of the ensuing class struggles (e.g. *campesino* and *obrero* movements), as well as the social destabilisations that occurred following the Mexican Revolution and Mexican Independence. Through them, painters and politicians intended to reconcile the social conflicts that were rife in Mexico, and instead encode a homogeneous national history and identity. The murals impart great strength because visually they provide 'knowledge about a [Mexican] history' (Garcia-Canclini, [1989] 2004, p.

151). Although García-Canclini provides an insightful reading of Mexican murals, I seek to understand how the mural was produced, the intentions of museum staff and students in making this visual work and the ways in which the process of production was challenged and the reasons of this.⁴⁸

As part of my analysis of how policy concerning arts education and creativity becomes practice, in this chapter, I examine the production of the mural. Three questions guide this chapter: How did museum staff members encode an image of the East to students? What kind of processes and negotiations came into play in the production of this image of the East? What kind of creativity is reflected in this visual work? By examining these questions, I focus on the processes, challenges and exclusions by which students made the mural.

I will argue that creativity is about processes concerning collaboration and accommodations. These processes gradually grew to encode a particular image of the East that entered negotiation with a fixed image of the museum. Creative processes are manifested through the lived experiences of subjects and their negotiations with the view of the East that museum staff members encourage. By following the production of the mural, I identified two notions of creativity: the suitable and fixed image of the museum and the processual image that students gradually created. I would argue that these notions of creativity worked simultaneously and that they are reflected in the visual work.

The first section of this chapter introduces the intentions and expectations that museum staff had for the mural. I describe how a history of Mexico City was introduced to my peers and the reasons for this. The production of the mural is explored in the second section. Here, I examine the ways in which my peers and I worked, and how their ideas and accommodations gradually produced their own interpretations of the East⁴⁹. In this respect, rather than producing an image

⁴⁸ Whereas museum staff members suggested that students should make a mural - indeed, they provided a budget for the production of all objects - in practice, the students actually made a *biombo* (folding screen). Carpentry students, who also visited the museum and saw historical *biombos* in the galleries, designed and made this structure. Along with painting students, it was their decision to create a folding screen; this was because the production of a folding screen would allow painting students more space for painting, and transporting it to the museum would be easier. During the production of the visual work, students (myself included) used to call the work either a *mural* or a *biombo*.

⁴⁹ I collaborated with students and teachers, taking photographs of them making the visual object. As evidence of the students' participation in the project, the photographs were shared with them via an e-mail account which they could all access. Along with students and teachers, I participated in the activities for

that speaks the language of the museum, two final images were reflected in the visual work, which I call the romantic and the critical. The third section examines how the visual work did not seem to match the expectations of the staff members, while the processes concerning creativity seem to be unsuitable for the museum.

6.1 A ‘forward’ reading of creativity: Collaborative processes

Anthropological literatures on creativity point out how creativity is related to social experiences and processes rather than being merely a ‘product’ or the result of ‘gifted individuals’. John Liep (2001) explores creativity, considering ‘how it works’ (Liep, 2001, p. 1) and the extent to which creativity can ‘change’ people’s lives. He understands creativity as an ‘activity that produces something new through the recombination and transformation of existing cultural practices or forms’ (Liep, 2001, p. 2). By recognising that existing structures are either ‘recombined’ or ‘transformed’, Liep explores how creativity ‘works’ (Liep, 2001, p. 2). This implies understanding the processes through which individuals’ ideas are able to break with conventions and thus produce something different or ‘new’. Although Liep pays attention to the processes that transform ‘cultural forms’, his idea that creativity is related to something ‘new’ does become problematic. Partly, this is because creativity as ‘innovation’ is far from observing how certain processes are interwoven and can raise questions regarding the notion of ‘innovation’. Indeed, to read creativity as innovation is to reinforce ‘the dominance of a world view in which the ‘individual’ reigns supreme’ (Macdonald and Hirsch, 2007, p. 87).

Other understandings of creativity, however, pay attention to processes and to examining the social and cultural aspects involved.⁵⁰ Tim Ingold and Elizabeth Hallam (Ingold and Hallam, 2007) understand creativity as ‘improvisation’ rather than ‘innovation’. For them, casting creativity as ‘innovation’ is to make a ‘backward’ reading that characterises creativity by way of its ‘products’ or ‘results’ (Ingold and Hallam, 2007, pp. 2-3). By contrast, creativity as ‘improvisation’ is ‘generative’, ‘relational’, ‘temporal’ and ‘the way we work’ (Ingold and Hallam, 2007, p. 1). This characterisation looks at creativity through its ‘processes’. It is a ‘forward’ reading that focuses on the ‘movements’ that shape improvisation. Following the

them planned by museum staff members. Soon after these visits, the students and the teachers prepared their work at FARO.

⁵⁰ For anthropological concepts of creativity see Liep (2001), Löfgren (2001) Giuffre (2009).

orientation of creativity as 'improvisation', James Oliver (2009) also raises questions of the idea of creativity as innovation. In this respect, whereas Ingold and Hallam say that innovation is 'symptomatic of modernity' (Ingold and Hallam, 2007, p. 3), Oliver says that innovation implies the 'individualisation of society' (Oliver, 2009, p. 320) or the idea of gifted individuals. Rather, he suggests understanding creativity as 'openness' because this implies:

To question the very demand for a fixed definition or outcome, product or proof. It is to shift the emphasis from innovation to improvisation, and to incorporate the social, cultural and embodied context (Oliver, 2009, p. 320).

For Oliver, creativity as 'openness' is 'more participant centered and self-reflexive in a dialogic sense - as pre-eminently subjective, relational, situational and temporal' (Oliver, 2009, p. 320). Creativity as 'improvisation', 'openness' is to understand the subjective side of creativity. These perspectives let us see how individuals carry out processes which are open, and how they produce subjective experiences. A sociocultural reading of creativity concerns how social relations and specific processes question political concepts of creativity which highlight the idea of innovation or creative individuals. Following Ingold, a forward reading of creativity allows exploration of the practices and processes that emerge through social relations. In this chapter, I will highlight the processes through which students whom I met produced the mural. This case is a good example for understanding how the lived experience of subjects in the East, their social relations and the collaborative processes have been crucial to encouraging their creative processes.

Collaboration and accommodations are two kinds of creative processes. My use of the term 'collaboration' is dependent on a continuous flow of thoughts and dialogues that are socially shared. It is a process that grows through social meanings and unfinished ideas. The lack of formal planning for producing the mural implies that my peers were able to develop the image of the East progressively. As some images were distributed in other areas of the mural, and other were literally deleted, these processes are what I call accommodations. This term concerns the challenges and resolutions that gradually manifest in the production of the visual work. Further, it is a kind of cognitive dialogue with the visual work - which challenges problems concerning techniques and ideas for its producers. By noticing these processes and observing how my peers interacted and discussed their ideas, the production of the mural provides a 'forward' reading of creativity in that it explains how the sharing of life experiences and thoughts gradually combined to tell us how creativity is a social practice. A 'forward' reading of creativity allowed

me to observe creative processes concerning collaboration and accommodation and how students who I met sorted out the visual images of the work.

The discussion above fits with the methodological orientation of this thesis. As I explored specific practices and processes that reshape an arts policy, my participant observation allowed me to understand creativity ‘by way of its processes’ (Ingold, 2007). To examine *how, why, by whom* was the mural produced, and in what ways the mural production was challenged sustains the arguments of this thesis, creativity being about social practice and processes. The production of the visual work is a good case for observing the negotiations with a fixed image of ‘the East’, or rather, a ‘backward reading’ (Ingold, 2007) of creativity and the possibilities of people carrying out artistic projects across institutional contexts.

Approximately 15 participants worked on the production of the mural.⁵¹ When they finished, it seemed to me that two final images represented the East of Mexico City, conveying the romantic and the critical. The first emphasised nature and specific festivals, not only because it was ‘representative of the East’ but also because it was an idealised image which was intended to defend the East of Mexico City against negative conventions. The second highlighted existing social inequalities, both in the East and in Mexico City. In doing so, it seemed to me that the students provided a sociocultural reading of Mexico City which raised the possibility of critical reflection.

6.2 The museum project context

The aims of the *Un Faro en el Castillo* (A Lighthouse in the Castle) project were twofold. Firstly, museum staff intended to attract visitors who lived in the East of Mexico City, to tackle the low numbers of people from that area visiting the museum. The museum wanted to ‘extend the educational activities’ in that area to create a type of public audience. Because FARO attracts people not only from Iztapalpa but also from other municipalities of the State of Mexico, the organisation was the starting point for extending the educational services to FARO visitors and students: that is, children, young people and those over 50 years of age. Secondly, museum

⁵¹ At the beginning of the project, more than 50 people visited the museum, however, the number of people reduced over time. This is because some people were not interested in participating in the project after visiting the museum; others decided to do their *own* paintings at FARO; and those participating in a workshop decided not to join the project.

staff members intended to raise reflections and experiences with students as this ‘reinforced their identity as Mexicans’ intending that ‘their identity would be reflected’ by their participation in the museum project (Fieldnote 2/03/2012).

In order to implement the aims above, the museum staff also started to run activities such as talks, guided tours and activities in teams in order to produce reflections about *a* history and *a* culture of Mexico which later would be reflected in three visual objects. The activities intended to ‘keep’ and ‘preserve’ part of the memory of the East by encouraging students to think about their life experiences and ‘the traditions’ of the ‘Orient’ (Fieldnote 2/03/2012). Partly, this is because the NHM specialises in Mexican history, memory and in reflecting a ‘national identity’.⁵² Alongside the National Museum of Anthropology, the NHM aims to preserve the national heritage of Mexico. Rooted in *a* history and *a* culture of Mexico, following colonisation, the NHM seems to *teatralizar el poder* (dramatise the power) (García-Canclini, [1989] 2004, p. 151). According to García-Canclini, what the State conceives as ‘heritage’ constitutes a *fuera política* (political force) in so far as the heritage is propagated as something with specific ‘origin’ and that belongs to the people. For García-Canclini, ‘Mexican heritage refers to a fixed repertoire of traditions and condensed in objects. [Mexican heritage] needs a setting that protects it, and cabinets for exhibition’ (García-Canclini, [1989] 2004, p. 158). The production of the mural would serve to ‘condense’ a repertoire of social dynamics, and in a way make people aware of a *patrimonio nacional* (national heritage) based on reconciliations with post-colonial history of the country. The idea of a ‘national heritage’ and ‘national identity’ as unproblematic and homogeneous for Mexican people was subsequently shared with students. Museum staff suggested that landscapes, festivals, traditions, the time before and after Spanish colonisation, were elements in order to visually represent them in the mural (explained

⁵² The National History Museum is located at the top of a hill, namely *Cerro de Chapultepec* (Chapultepec hill) in the west of Mexico City. Before the twentieth century, the building was a castle and the official residence of Spanish viceroys, the emperors Maximiliano and Charlotte de Habsburgo. However, after the struggles for independence, the Mexican empire was defeated in 1867 by Mexicans in alliance with the US. For some years, the building was unhabited until it became an astronomical observatory. In 1883 it became a military college and later on, the residence of Mexican presidents; this followed the Mexican Revolution of 1910. However, in 1939, the president, Lázaro Cárdenas, ordered the creation of the *Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia* (National Institute of Anthropology and History). As part of the rules of the institute, Chapultepec castle became part of Mexican *patrimonio nacional* (national heritage) and a museum in 1944. It includes a collection of paintings, clothes, sculpture, furniture, and historical archives from the sixteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century (http://www.mnh.inah.gob.mx/historia/hist_historicos.html). Even currently, Mexicans usually refer to the museum as *Castillo de Chapultepec* (Chapultepec castle).

elsewhere). I would argue that the representation of specific elements solidifies a fixed image of the East, while at the same time, offering little space for ‘temporal change and stratification’ (Filippucci, 2004, p. 79). In other words, the emphasis on representing landscapes, traditions and a specific history localises a space and reinforces the idea of a nation state, ‘a product of history that encompasses local diversity rooted in geography and nature, a composite of localities reciprocally defined as ‘smaller’ units nesting within a larger whole’ (Filippucci, 2004, p. 79).

As museum staff highlighted during the activities to think about *our* lives and neighbourhoods in ‘the Orient’, acts to reinforce the idea of an ‘Orient’ with its own characteristics, somewhere different to other areas of the city. Similarly, to identify landscapes, traditions and a history as common elements of individuals implies *neutralizar la inestabilidad de lo social* (to neutralise the instability of the social) (García-Canclini, [1989] 2004, p. 158). For García-Canclini, to ‘neutralise the instability of the social’ is a kind of strategy whereby ‘hegemonic groups’ tend to homogenise cultural elements isolated from ‘the social and the economic’ (García-Canclini, [1989] 2004, p. 159). The mural project came up within a context seeking to make visible elements that could reinforce a kind of homogeneous ‘identity’ in the East of Mexico City. By tracing tradition, the mural project would likely ‘neutralise’ part of the ‘social instabilities’ of Mexico City, producing an institutional and therefore ‘suitable’ image of the East.

6.3 A suitable image of the East

As I explained in Chapter Two, the East of Mexico City has long been characterised by a negative image. Those living in other areas may perceive the East as distant, different or dangerous. Museum staff members did not appear indifferent to such conventions. In an interview with a staff member, I was told that the museum specialised in ‘local identity’ and ‘historical memory’. She considered that as the population had increased in the East, some elements might ‘identify’ them. For her the East was ‘another city [that is] attached to Distrito Federal. [It] is made up by one proportion of Distrito Federal and municipalities of the State of Mexico’ (Interview 5/09/2012). Following this, I asked:

Alejandra: By ‘attached’ do you mean the East?

Staff member: Yes, it is huge. *El Oriente* (the Orient) has its own needs as important as DF needs (Interview 5/09/2012).

The interpretation of the East as ‘attached’ to the Distrito Federal implies that it is an exterior entity or Other characterised by social inequalities. Although staff members emphasised that ‘the museum’ was ‘the house of every Mexican’, those claims were odd when it was explained to students and teachers how the media propagated the ‘bad things’ that happened in the ‘Orient’, such as high levels of delinquency, extreme poverty and the ‘sense of disgrace’ that people experienced there (Fieldnote 2/03/2012). It seems that museum staffs’ *habitus* moved them to make judgements about the East as a entity different to the place where they lived. As a consequence, a ‘hierarchical’ position, stretching from museum staff to teachers, came into play. According to Gareth Millington (2011b, pp. 148-149):

hierarchies develop within relegated spaces since there is a need to symbolically dominate ‘the other’; and [hierarchies develop] as a result of the fragmentation of spaces and identities in combination with the heightened awareness of difference that spatial fragmentation engenders.

The emphasis on the ‘Orient’ as unpleasant and characterised by its ‘own’ problems, seem to reinforce the East and its residents as a ‘relegated’ space. In this respect, a dominant relation is thus produced between those who ‘conceive’ of a space with certain characteristics and those who ‘live’ the space every day, with their lived experiences challenging social conventions (Merrifield, 2000, p. 174). In the case of the mural project, there is a contradiction. On the one hand, personal perspectives about a geographic area reinforce a negative image of the East, while on the other hand, an institutional project with people living in the East of Mexico City tries to encode a suitable image. This contradiction reveals part of the conflict between two fields: ‘the representations of space’ (conceived space) and ‘the representational spaces’ (lived spaces) (Lefebvre, 1974)⁵³. The production of the mural implied a production of a space, the East, through which certain expectations were raised, such as, the idea of the East as an unproblematic space rooted in traditions, nature and history prior to Spanish colonisation. As the project manager said:

⁵³ In *The Production of Space* (1974) Henri Lefebvre explains that a social space is a product and produced by societies. Such social space shall be examined at three levels: the spatial practices (perceived space); the representations of space (conceived space) and the representational spaces (lived spaces) (Hiernaux-Nicolas, 2004). The spatial practices (perceived space) concern individuals’ perception about their everyday life (Lefebvre, 1974, pp. 38-39). They allow that individuals structure their everyday reality (Merrifield, 2000, p. 175). The representations of space (conceived space) are the dominant spaces through which scientists, planners and urbanists attribute ideologies and knowledge. A space is conceived on the basis of such ideologies and *knowledge*. Representational spaces (lived spaces) are the symbols and images that individuals use to represent how they live a space. It is the represented experience of everyday life (Lefebvre, 1974, p. 39).

I want for people who come to the museum to see the [students'] works and to say: 'hey look at all that the Orient zone makes; not only killings happen there'. There are good things. We already know the bad issues. Instead, what about the good you want to tell us [the museum], what about their traditions and clothes. What do you want to say? This [the museum] is the forum. (Interview 5/09/2012)

In this paragraph, specific elements are described and qualified as 'the good' in the 'Orient'. This implies that the arts project intended to build up a cultural repertoire more suitable to be a legitimate form of 'identity' and far from the social and cultural aspects of the East. García-Canclini says that 'dominant groups shape tradition by defining the goods that are superior and deserve to be preserved' (García-Canclini, [1989] 2004, p. 182) in, say, museums. My use of the term suitable is about a repertoire of social relations, a history, and symbolic elements that become ordered and try to encode an 'identity'. Following Ingold, I would argue that the most suitable image of the museum is 'backward', in that a set of specific elements are organised and expected to be visually represented. Condensed in a painting, the 'identity' of the East would be solidified and turned into a suitable image open to the observation of national and international tourists.

Students' life experience and their reflections of living in the East, however, were diverse. Because of this some students agreed with the interpretation pursued by the museum, whilst others suggested that other images should also be represented, such as those that raised questions about the social inequalities in Mexico City. Although I did not observe debates by students, relating to the kind of visual representation that should prevail, I would argue that the representation of social inequalities in the mural brought about some dilemmas for museum staff. These dilemmas were related to the inclusions and exclusions of certain topics in an artistic project. In this respect, the mural project offers questions about the role of museums in terms of promoting participation for example, the possibilities of people developing their own ideas freely⁵⁴.

⁵⁴ Literature concerning the role of 'museums as agents of social change' highlights that in a globalising context, the continuous rise of social movements, migration and heterogeneous identities, museums should not only be cultural institutions which focus on collections, exhibitions and the preservation of objects; rather, they should have a more inclusive and participatory role in social and cultural life (Janes & Sandell, 2007, Sandell, 2007, 2003, 2002). Museums can contribute to social change by extending their educational functions, allowing the public to participate in their exhibitions, and above all, establishing a horizontal relationship with visitors or rather, 'audiences' (Janes & Sandell, 2007, Marstine, 2006, Hooper-Greenhill, 2000).

6.4 Suggestions and exclusions

Staff members encouraged students (myself included) to ‘express’ what we ‘believed it was important to know about the East’. Rather than ‘telling’ us ‘what to do’, the activities in the museum would be therefore prove useful in constructing what students wanted to leave at the museum (Fieldnote 2/03/2012). However, during the talks, museum staff encouraged us to think about stories of our neighbourhoods and ‘communities’; ‘about our situation’ and ‘how we recognise ourselves in the world’ (Fieldnote 9/03/2011). Partly this is because the production of the visual objects needed to reflect elements concerning traditions in the East. Although various discussions were raised to, so to speak, encourage us to think about ourselves and the places where we lived, in practice this initiative was quite contradictory. For example, museum staff explained to us a historical comparison between *Chapultepec* and the ‘Orient zone’ prior to colonisation; the ways in which ‘artists’ and ‘artisans’ were trained in schools of arts and crafts during the colonial period; art and everyday life in the 19th Century; and how the Mexican muralist movement contributed the unification of the ‘pre-hispanic’ and the ‘Spanish’, as well as, to reconcile the social conflicts in the country after the Mexican Revolution. ‘Language’, ‘music’, ‘dress’, ‘food’ were elements that museum staff mentioned as the ‘characteristics’ that ‘make’ a Mexican when he/she lives abroad. Another activity in the museum was to answer specific questions. These questions invited us to think about the similarities between the ‘Orient zone’ and everyday life in Post-colonial times or we were asked to think about the kind of ‘traditions’ in the East that could be presented in an ‘exhibition’ (Fieldnote 9/03/2011).

The discussion of these topics seems to me a kind of *index* that museum staff suggested for producing the mural. This *index* indicate some of the possibilities and margins in order to produce an idealised vision of the East, or rather, to develop and enhance a kind of collaborative creativity. Based on a history and certain traditions, the index reflects the expectations of museum staff in order to produce their vision of the East. When students’ raised thoughts about social inequalities in the East, certain tensions were produced. For example, when talking about ‘art’ and the ‘everyday life’ of Mexico, a staff member asked the audience what they would like to photograph in the ‘Orient’ in order to reflect ‘contrasts’. A student answered:

I would photograph the jails of Santa Martha and the title of the photograph would be The Jails of the Orient. I think that is a social contrast because jails are built in the zones marginalised of the city. That is a contrast of the city (Taperecorder 30/03/2012).

The staff member did not support the student's comment and kept listening to other responses. By observing this kind of behaviour, I approached him soon after the talk and asked about his expectations of the mural. He said:

My interest and the museum's interest is to open a space so that people from overseas can look at the wonderful things that people are doing from the East of Mexico City. We are respectful of students' creative process, although if they want to paint a gun it has to be justified very well. [I expect to see in the painting] something that makes me aware that users are proud of their identity. I would like to find aspects expressing something like 'I am from Iztapalapa and proud of being here' (Interview 30/03/2012).

That only some choices had to be justified and not others is evidence of a set of expectations being naturalised – not requiring justification – whereas others required a type of special treatment and articulation in words to permit their inclusion. These kind of expectations suggest that a suitable image of the East was previously planned. Nevertheless, some participants did not agree with that. For example, students from the arts and performance workshop said it was 'pointless' to represent something about his 'community'. Another person asked whether it was important 'to represent' people from the 'Orient' (Fieldnote 9/03/2011). As part of these reflections, the students and Christian decided to stop participating in the project. Ultimately, the teacher suggested that if they wanted to keep participating, they should do 'something interesting for them rather than for a museum' (Fieldnote 9/03/2011).

This case tells us about certain tensions in the production of the mural. That some people were critical of the museum project and that they perceived the mural was a visual work *for* the museum rather than a visual work of them, tell us part of the tensions. A project that appears to promote inclusion and participation, however, it is perceived opposite to such qualities. Furthermore, this case tells us how specific structures and people's positions were developed simultaneously. In other words, although students' ideas were somewhat channeled to fit with a set of institutional expectations, the fact that some people did not participate in the project explains a resistance to an arts project whose expectations concerned inclusion and participation. Other students, however, decided to stay with the project. For example, Jaime told me he wanted to participate because he expected to receive a document backing up his participation. For him, to participate in the project was perceived as an 'opportunity' that would give him 'experience' and opportunities to work in the future (Fieldnote 8/08/2012). By asking him what he meant by experience, Jaime told me it was about learning about the production of a mural, and, the process of organisation with his peers. He said he needed to learn how to 'sort out' (Fieldnote

8/08/2012) the visual work along with his peers. Because the mural was a collective work, he recognised that his ideas were part of other ideas that would gradually give shape to an image of Mexico City, in particular, the East. For Sandra, the ‘project’ was ‘interesting’ in that the mural would be exhibited at the *Castillo de Chapultepec*. Unlike Jaime, Sandra said that her participation was ‘satisfactory’ and she did not expect to receive a certificate because she painted as part of her ‘leisure activities’. In this respect, she perceived Jaime and other students as ‘young’ and with particular future expectations, such as to become painters (Fieldnote 8/08/2012).

During the production of the mural, approximately three more students said they expected to receive a certificate which provided evidence of their participation. Partly this was because their interests were related to starting a career in the ‘visual arts’ (Chapter 7). For Omar, his participation in the project was undertaken so as to gain experience. Rather than expecting a certificate, Omar just expected that people would recognise ‘the quality of the ‘work’ such as the combination of colours, shades and volume (Interview 11/08/2012). The expectations of some students became interwoven during the mural’s production. For some of them, to participate in the project was a kind of opportunity through which they would gain experience by putting into practice specific skills and working in a big team. To expect a certificate, to expect recognition from the ‘good quality’ of the mural, or to expect nothing in particular, were the repertoires through which the people whom I met negotiated their participation in the project.

Another way in which my peers negotiated their participation can be identified in their reasons for presenting some images and avoiding others. These reasons are important because they tell us how the visual work encoded a kind of defence and critical reflection of the East of Mexico City. By exploring their intentions and the processes through which the mural was produced, I intend to provide a ‘forward’ reading of creativity (Ingold, 2007), identifying the extent to which specific institutional expectations and intentions were intersected and reshaped.

6.4.1 *A romantic creativity*

The production of the mural involved meetings with teachers, as well as painting and journalism students, who discussed what, if any, was ‘the identity of the Orient’. An initial solution was to identify common aspects representing the ‘Orient’. For Sandra and Ricardo, ‘representative’ meant situations that only happened in the East and made it distinct from other areas of the city.

From my experience, I did not notice any long debates or tension among my peers as they decided how to paint something 'representative'. They agreed that by painting landscapes, local events, and people working, they could characterise some of the social dynamics in Mexico City, in particular, the places where they lived.

Furthermore, for Sandra, Ricardo and the workshop coordinator's assistant, the visual representation of such elements allowed them to challenge a negative public image of the East and its inhabitants. They agreed to emphasise the area's 'cultural life', specific traditions and nature. For example, Ricardo, who had lived in the East of Mexico City for over 40 years, painted landscapes and nature. For him, this was significant because he and his wife regularly went for walks along the sides of a volcano. Additionally, some hills reminded him of the place where he was born, a village in Oaxaca, a southern Mexican state. Sandra and one FARO staff member, agreed to paint specific hills because they constituted part of the natural landscape of 'the Orient' as they called it. For example, I was told that they used to visit either the volcanoes or a hill called *Cerro de la Estrella* (Star Hill) as leisure activities. Similarly, ceremonies such as the *ceremonia del Fuego Nuevo* (New Fire ceremony) and the *representación de la Semana Santa* (Easter performance) were considered for inclusion in the mural. While the content of the mural already included local landscapes and ceremonies, students intended that part of the 'urban context' should also be mirrored. Sandra's personal photographs were significant in visually representing this. By sharing her photographs with her peers, it was decided that people working, main avenues and transport, would match with an understanding of an urban context. It seems to me that the selection of those images implied a description of the East, not only as a solidified place of tradition and nature, but also a space within which social dynamics and lived experiences coexisted alongside a harmonic vision of the East.

Part of the reason for painting nature, ceremonies and a urban context was that some students intended to challenge the stereotypes that shaped a negative image of the East. It seems to me they intended to paint the aforementioned elements to reduce the symbolic aggression that they had experienced. For Millington and Garbin, dwellers living in spaces relegated seek to 'extricate themselves from what they recognise[d] as the unfair and illegitimate symbolic violence imposed upon them' (Millington and Garbin, 2011, p. 170). Another reason for giving weight to the elements described above is that they are part of their life experience. Unlike the museum staff's expectations as to fixed categories of tradition and nature, my peers were representing a 'sense of localness' which described '[an] ongoing history, that contains moments

of integrity and prosperity alongside moments of fragmentation and loss' (Filippucci, 2004, p. 82).

Rather than reproducing specific expectations, students' intentions for painting nature and traditions were distinct. Unlike the museum staff, who tried to solidify a suitable 'identity' of the East, Ricardo, Sandra and the workshop coordinator's assistant intended to provide a visual representation based on a defence and a 'sense of localness'. The visual representation of certain cultural elements was able to challenge common sense ideas describing the East of the City as 'different'. Similarly, by visually describing nature and tradition, Ricardo, Sandra, Jaime, Dario were also describing some of their social relations which are constitutive for the production of their own space, usually referred to as 'the Orient'. As their intentions were distinct in comparison to the museum staff, we can see how this reflects some of the negotiations needed in order to produce the visual work. My use of the term 'romantic creativity' refers to the ways in which my peers interwove their thoughts in order to produce an image able to negotiate with certain social conventions, such as the museum categories of 'nature', 'history' and 'tradition' (timeless and fixed). Thus 'romantic creativity' is not just an idealised image of the East, but rather a repertoire of individual life experiences and social relations that construct a space in a harmonical way. In line with the aims of my thesis, the Left-wing arts policy is reshaped through the social relations and diverse life experiences of students living in the East. Their lived experiences let us see that the East is a space of complexities; a space that is difficult to adjust into a cultural product available for exhibition.

At this point, although one side of the mural was nearly completed, the other side needed to be planned. The students held discussions for planning the other images that would make a *composición* (composition). For Bergson (quoted in Ingold, 2007 p. 47), creativity is located in 'processes' and 'progress'. Bergson explains that, whereas a 'puzzle' is an image 'already given' (Ingold, 2007, p. 47), the production of a painting is about:

The progress of a thought which is changing in the degree and measure that it is taking form. It is a vital process, something like the ripening of an idea (Bergson, 1911, pp. 359-360 in Ingold, 2007, p. 47).

The students' ideas ripened when they held conversations about how to sort out the size of the images, the colours to use, and a question that they continuously reflected on: how to visually represent 'the Orient'. This tells us how the mural production was not a fixed image (a puzzle),

but rather a kind of social dialogue in which different thoughts and personal experiences were socialised and shared collaboratively. Unlike Robin Mayes (2010) who understands creativity as a ‘collaborative process arising from combinations of facts and relationships’ (Mayes, 2010, p. 19), I understand collaboration as part of a continuous flow of dialogues and experiences socially shared. It is a process that grows through social meanings and unfinished ‘movements’ (Ingold, 2007, p. 48). Creativity is about processes concerning collaborations. The fact that there was no formal planning allowed students to enhance and discuss their thoughts, this allows for thinking about creativity that is collaborative and produced ‘in the making’ (Oliver, 2009, p. 320). For example, although Ricardo wanted to keep painting natural landscapes, other students, such as Dario, Lourdes, Regina were more interested in painting the urban context. This case tells us how their collaboration carried a kind of weight, necessary in order to negotiate the image of the East.

For Giuffre (Giuffre, 2009, p. 10) ‘social interactions themselves are constitutive of creativity and without certain social relationships, creative ideas would not be produced’. Ricardo’s ideas were negotiated according to collaborations concerning *what* to include and the reasons for such inclusion in the visual work. That some negotiations and agreements emerged during the production of the mural tells us how collaborative processes gradually emerged. Critical reflections about what to include were part of the collaboration process, implying other ways of understanding a specific object of knowledge. By examining the production of the mural, that is, offering a ‘forward’ reading (Ingold and Hallam, 2007, p. 3), I could observe ‘other ways of doing and knowing’ (Oliver, 2009, p. 325). This allows me to claim that the kind of creativity that manifested through the production of the mural was not related to, say, innovation or the idea of gifted individuals. Instead, it became manifest through the collaboration of my peers who enhanced a continuous flow of thoughts. In line with the aims of this thesis, concerning how a policy is reshaped through its encounter with people, processes concerning collaboration and accomodation raise questions regarding ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’. The participation of other people in the mural increased reflections about the social and cultural context of the East. Journalism participants enhanced these reflections by talking about relatives who had migrated either to Mexico City or the US. They claimed that the East was an area of continuous migration, and as a consequence, they suggested that the mural should reflect such dynamics, rather than just show an idealised vision of the East.

6.4.2 Rethinking the representation of the East

In order to reflect on issues such as migration in Mexico City, the journalism students decided to share part of their life stories with students who were studying painting. That was the case of Francisco, who wrote a text and openly shared with their peers why his relatives had moved to Mexico City. These stories highlighted experiences of people who worked hard for a better quality of life, through employment and organisation with their neighbours. Alongside the talks, the journalism students allowed some of their personal photographs to hang in an improvised wire hanger for a couple of days. The idea was that the painting students would take up these ideas in order to keep generating the mural. Although they did not paint images reflecting on migration, this activity did motivate two issues. Firstly, Sandra brought in photographs which were useful in raising ideas about how to represent some life experiences related to the East of Mexico City. Second, it seems to me that the painting students increased their thoughts by reflecting not only about the places where they lived, but also about the social dynamics that questioned the romantic image of the East. The latter was somewhat reinforced via the reflections of the painting teacher. He encouraged my peers and I to think about their/our personal 'history' and at the same time the '*elementos cotidianos*' (everyday elements) that brought about 'discrimination', 'stratification' and the 'abuse of power' (informal conversation 2/03/2012).

In doing this, it seemed to me that he intended to communicate how 'art' is not just about aesthetic ideas describing tradition, but also, about raising concerns and awareness. By setting out social inequalities, the mural would thus not merely describe aesthetic issues, but rather it would allow people to 'tell stories' (Crehan, 2011, p. 119) based on their lived experiences. Conversations with the students I met sometimes before and during the painting sessions were relevant because we raised more thoughts about the social and cultural dynamics of Mexico City. The version that I call 'critical' instigated reflections about not just local social inequalities, but those concerning Mexico City as a whole.



Figure 16 Sandra, Jaime and Ricardo painting a side of the mural.⁵⁵



Figure 17 Jaime explains to me the combination of colours for painting the grey bull.

Photograph: Sandra Ortega.

⁵⁵ The images represent a man whose crown and clothes are reminiscent of pre-Hispanic times, women dancing and a religious temple connoting the colonial period in Mexico. The *Cerro de la Estrella* represents part of nature.

6.4.3 *A critical creativity*

The processes through which my peers painted the mural were unstructured and based on their everyday experience living in the East. Whereas some of them used photographs and images from history books, other people gradually came to paint their personal experiences. For example, I listened to students' conversations as they criticised the public buses and the subway. Dario highlighted the inefficiency, and some experiences they had faced such as thefts and assaults on buses or at some bus stops. A long bridge that crosses one of the main avenues in Iztapalapa was painted in the mural because it reminded them of the long commutes that Easterners (and they themselves) carried out everyday when they went to work and to places of study. Similarly, other students talked about some junk food kiosks underneath the bridges. After talking about the risks of getting a stomach infection from eating in those places, Dario painted a kiosk whose logo was the image of a parasite. Ironically, they made jokes about those places and painted them because kiosks are part of the urban context of Mexico City. Similarly, some small graffiti was painted on the mural. This is because Omar said that graffiti appeared on the walls and streets of Iztapalapa 'and the city', therefore, graffiti was part of the urban context of Mexico City as a whole. In the same way, he painted graffiti on the mural because he said he was a *grafitero* (graffiti guy), therefore, an image representing him would describe part of the dynamics of the urban context in Mexico City.

From my experience, my peers and I talked about their/our jobs or studies, TV programmes and films, as well as personal episodes while painting the mural. I would suggest that these talks were significant in that certain meanings and experiences were shared and the visual work gradually matured. For example, because they came to FARO frequently, they depicted the main entrance of the organisation on the mural. In doing so, it seems to me they were just reflecting about their everyday lives and the places that were meaningful to them. Partly, this accounts for the negotiations they made with the museum's suggestions (i.e. they encouraged us to think about 'ourselves' and 'our everyday lives'). Some criticisms of the painting students towards the idealised vision of the East pointed out that it only reflected 'a happy perspective' of Iztapalapa. For Juan, the mural needed to represent what he called 'the social stagnation in the East'. In answer to my question concerning what the mural meant for him, Juan said:

I see this work as a kind of social criticism. If you see the mural, you will realise how one side represents the happy issues of Iztapalapa. But, the right side is about portraying the lifestyle, the day-to-day. The other day we talked about films such as *Nosotros los pobres* (We are the poor people) and a film of Luis Buñuel. Both are

hard films in the sense that children are involved in delinquency. This is something that has not changed, then, to take a [visual] work like this is to show the social stagnation in Iztapalapa and other areas of the city. Despite the false idea of modernity, traditions are created and reproduced. However, poverty is blocked up (Interview 8/09/2012).

Juan, Dario, Jaime, Omar, Mario painted impoverished areas, including one of the biggest public dumps in the city and the local activities around it, such as people selecting and collecting objects they could reuse. When I asked them why they painted houses partially built, the public dump, or images reflecting violence, I was told that '[those issues] were part of the Orient' (Fieldnote 8/09/2012) and therefore, these areas should be included in the visual work.

When my fieldwork ended, at the end of September, I could not continue to follow how my peers were painting a critical vision of the East. However, as I kept in contact with some of them, via a social network, I was able to ask why they had decided to paint images reflecting poverty and violence. Jaime replied to my question:

The topics related to violence were painted because they are part of society, not only of the East zone but the country. I remember when I went to the museum and participated in the guided tours, I saw a painting entitled something like *Asalto a una Diligencia* (Robbery of a Stagecoach) and this painting motivated me to depict social problems. Although traditions and places are part of a place, social problems belong to it as well. Despite people's disagreement, in the end, they realised it was inevitable to paint social problems. By painting them, the mural held a different perspective: less formal and less *fresa* (posh) (message via e-mail 5/04/2013).

To say that violence is 'part of society' and prevails 'in the country' reduces commonly held ideas that the East of the city is the only place where violence and social problems happen. It seems to me that this is another way in which the interviewee 'extricated' himself from specific types of 'symbolic violence' (Millington and Garbin, 2011, p. 170). Furthermore, Jaime's explanation also tells us how students' thoughts were more controversial and less oriented to reproducing the images considered 'suitable' by the museum. Drawing on Ingold, a 'forward' reading of creativity gradually emerged, from a fixed vision (the suitable image) to a more appropriated creativity manifesting processes of collaboration.

The production of the mural involved editing work with some images being deleted and others rearranged. This was the case for Dario and Omar who told me that other students 'had deleted their images' and this situation irritated them. Omar had painted a small castle, however, 'other guys' deleted it. With a sense of irritation, he said 'they were not respecting the work of people'

(Interview 26/06/2012). Dario had painted 'the subway' using the colour white, however, 'someone' painted over it in orange. For him, this was incorrect because the subway in Iztapalapa is white rather than orange. Similarly, he said he had painted 'small images', however, they were also deleted (Interview 26/June/2012). Keith Sawyer (2000) argues that the 'improvisational process of creativity – the real, lived experience of the artist, interacting and improvising in his studio' challenges the social conventions of artists, which posit them as executing their ideas spontaneously and 'never edit[ing] their work' (Sawyer, 2000, p. 150). By observing that some images were deleted and others distributed to other sections of the mural, these movements can be defined as accommodations. My use of the term refers to the problems and resolutions that gradually emerged in the production of the visual work. It can be understood as a kind of cognitive dialogue between the visual work - which sets out problems concerning technique and ideas - and the way in which the producers find strategies to sort those problems out.

By asking Dario whether 'their ideas had flowed with some freedom', I was told some of them 'remained' doing the work; others' ideas were 'sacrificed' and still others were 'modified'. He further told me that he intended to work in a way so that everybody 'agreed with the work'. Despite the differences, he noticed that the mural was 'complementary' (Interview 26/06/2012). That some images had been deleted or modified tell us how, in a collective piece, there is no individual author, but simultaneous authors collaborating and trying to accommodate their ideas in accordance to their criteria.



Figure 18 Sandra is painting initial images of the mural.



Figure 19 Initial drawings representing deprived areas in Mexico City.



Figure 20 Images of social inequalities and crime on the second face of the mural.

Photograph: Sandra Ortega

6.5 Unsuitable creativity: the mural in the museum

The exhibition of the mural in the museum and its acceptance as part of the permanent collection changed quite drastically. From my understanding, and I would say the understanding of various students too, the mural was expected to be exhibited in the museum. However, for about six months, it remained in a small building located at the foot of Chapultepec hill. After it was exhibited, FARO staff members took the mural to the organisation and they exhibited it in various *casas de la cultura* (small cultural centres) located in the East before returning it to FARO. Additionally, students were to receive a *certificado*, a document acknowledging that they had participated in the project, *Un Faro en el Castillo* (a Lighthouse in the Castle). Although they eventually received this, it took approximately one whole year for them to get this. Through emails with Dario, I knew that FARO staff members had been asked for this document, but the students were told that the ‘museum did not have yet the certificates’. For them, the certificate was important because it provided evidence of their participation. For Juan and Jaime, I was told that a certificate would allow them to augment their CVs, which they believed would give them better opportunities for participating in further projects.

There are two possible reasons why the mural was not accepted as part of the museum collection. Firstly, as the photographs in this chapter show, the visual work on the East rarely coincided with the museum's expectations. Whereas museum staff members expected an unproblematic vision, students produced a painting that not only represented tradition, but also included some of the social inequalities and violence prevalent in the East, and in Mexico as a whole. The suitable vision of the East was reshaped via a collective work that reflected specific processes and some of the social relations and lived experience between people living geographically in the East of Mexico City. I would suggest that such processes and social relations became unsuitable for the kind of expectations that had originally given rise to the museum project. A romantic and critical image of the East is the result of individual and social experiences, as well as creative processes concerning collaboration and accommodation. In this respect, museum staff members rejected not a visual product, but a repertoire of processes based on a collective work, collaboration and accommodation, and, a sociocultural reading of Mexico City, rather than just 'the Orient'. In other words, the mural offers reflections about the sense of belonging, as well as contradictions about a space that is individually experienced and socially constructed. I would suggest that the mural tells us how certain social relations and dynamics are shared. A 'forward' reading of creativity emerged by following the ways in which students who I met shared some of their life experiences and reflections upon 'the Orient'. To follow the production of the visual work implied focusing on a perspective of creativity emphasising processes and sociality over final products, and the idea of gifted individuals. The processes that I call 'collaboration' and 'accommodation' seek to enhance understandings of creativity by foregrounding processes and social relations. The importance of this is that these processes let us see how creativity is produced and experienced through the everyday practice of subjects. By examining the production of the mural, I was able to observe that the lived experience of one space –i.e. the Orient-, the social relations, the exchange of messages of students encourage processes of creativity.

Another reason for not accepting the mural as part of the collection could be the organisation of the images and the narrative. Although my peers produced the mural in accordance with certain directions, for staff members the images could have been inarticulate and less aesthetic than they had imagined. Additionally, as the images represented part of the everyday experiences of the participants, museum staff could have considered them as 'mundane' and not reflecting the categories of 'identity' they were looking for, that is, 'the' history, festivals and landscapes that could homogenise a local identity.



Figure 21 The urban context of the East of Mexico City.



Figure 22 A romantic version of the East rooted in history and nature.

Photographs: Antonio Trejo

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined three questions: How did museum staff members encode an image of the East to students? What kind of processes and negotiations came into play in the production of the mural? What kind of creativity is reflected in this visual work? By setting up these questions, I have examined some of the processes and exclusions through which my peers developed their vision about ‘the Orient’ area and Mexico City. Particular attention was given to the process of the mural’s production. In this respect, collaborations and accommodations emerged when my peers visually represented their interpretation of Mexico City. These processes tell us how people’s ideas are not finished and closed. Instead, these processes can be characterised as ‘open’ (Oliver, 2009) in that they could keep evolving. The final product, that is, the visual work itself seems to me the solidification of students’ processes concerning collaborations and accommodations. Because their ideas represent their experience as inhabitants of Mexico City, processes concerning creativity are unlimited and open.

By following the production of the visual object, I identified two notions of creativity: the *suitable* image of the museum and the processual image made by the students. I could identify this because my observations and participation allowed me to examine not only discourses but also the specific behaviours and activities of those people who were involved in the museum project. My participant observation in the mural was not just a method, but an experience that allowed me to understand how collaboration and accommodation are creative processes and the reasons for this. Likewise, my participant observation allows the understanding of social relations that let us see how creativity comes into being. I suggest that participant observation is a mode through which we can come to know and to understand how creativity is produced and experienced through the everyday, who produces it and why.

Whilst an ‘artistic’ project intends to suggest that certain elements should be solidified in a visual object, because they are ‘representative’ of a geographic area, such intentions can become problematic in that social life is heterogeneous and creative processes concerning collaboration entail multiple ‘movements’ (Ingold, 2007) and ‘other ways of doing and knowing’ (Oliver, 2009, p. 325). Therefore, an attempt to encapsulate nature, tradition, and history is ‘a backward’ reading of creativity, quite isolated from the contradictions and complexity of social life. Arts education in institutional settings is fixed and structured, but creativity in practice is far from that. Creativity is social practice that comes into being through the lived experience of subjects,

their social relations, the ways in which they collaborate and the strategies involved to get agreements. The mural case reveals some of the continuous processes, concerning collaboration and accommodation. These processes let us see how creativity –examined through the everyday- is social and complex. In the same way, the production of the mural lets us see how students I met are active subjects.

While this chapter has focused on the processes through which a visual work was produced, the following chapter examines the participation of the students I met during my fieldwork. I explore their motives for joining the organisation, their life expectations and the reasons for doing the activities they did when I met them. This is important because I intend to raise some issues about *who were* the students I met and visited with for nearly a year, and the extent to which their participation in FARO has been able to challenge the purposes of the organisation.

Chapter 7 Active participants: Motivations, interpretations of arts and convivial experience

The afternoons and evening workshops spent with my peers at FARO represented more than merely some ephemeral participation. While painting, or before the beginning of each workshop, they asked me about life in Manchester, and they talked to me about their favourite albums and musicians. For Dario, Lou Reed and *The Velvet Underground* were one of his favourites bands, and in some of his paintings he represented covers of albums, musicians and painters that were significant to him. Along with other peers, we had informal chats devoted to films, from the Mexican golden age of cinema, Hollywood films, to *cine de arte* (art cinema).⁵⁶ Occasionally, the conversations I had with the community journalism students were about novels and writers they liked or disliked. For Francisco, the content of *1984* explained the sociopolitical situation in Mexico, characterised by media bias and alliances between political parties and media companies. Thus, this sharing time with my peers was not only devoted to producing objects, it was also a time when I got to know more about each of them, as we discussed our personal lives and topics such as the political and social situation in the country or what motivated each person to produce a specific artistic object or activity.

At FARO, I noticed that at some events such as the organisation's anniversary, students, staff members and some teachers participated as if they were a kind of community. The students' participation in such events was useful to staff members as it helped them to shape a public image of FARO. Articles in newspapers and books about the organisation emphasised the participation of the students and the people who visited FARO. The content of such publications highlighted two kinds of audience. On the one hand, images of people who looked to be in their twenties and whose shared an aesthetic (tattoos, clothes, earrings, hair-styles). Usually they appeared to be participating in concerts or other kinds of public festivals organised by staff members. On the other hand, one could also see photographs of people who looked in their twenties and fifties. Alongside the photographs, one could see a short biography, explaining some of their reasons for joining FARO and the impact that their participation had on their lives and careers. Usually the biographies explained how people managed, say, to gain admission to an art school after participating in FARO activities for a couple of years, or how they coped with

⁵⁶ Some people in Mexico use this typology to refer to the films whose topics, directors and actors are not part of the Hollywood establishment. Additionally, these films are exhibited in small cinemas or university spaces.

some personal difficulties by socialising with their peers and participating in a workshop (e.g. painting, sculpture or dancing).

The publication of students' photographs and biographies seemed to emphasise how the organisation has had a 'positive impact' on people's lives. However, it could be argued that the visual resources exemplified a combination of 'spectacle' and 'surveillance' (Harvey, 1996, p. 141). This is because the ways in which the FARO authorities thought about the organisation 'reinterpreted' students' practices to shape a public image of the organisation that can be described as friendly. However, beyond a more superficial understanding of the students through their photographs and biographies, my participation in the fieldwork allowed me to get to know the students from another perspective. The students I met had specific reasons for joining FARO and their social interactions and generally convivial experience seem to be fundamental for understanding other ways of engaging in arts education, and in understanding creative processes, as I will show in this chapter.

In Chapter 3, I discussed how arts education in the organisation is an instrument to 'lift' specific populations, because the government has rationalised that their personal limitations should be improved. In Chapter 5, I examined the role of teachers as mediators and how their practices encourage specific readings of arts education. In this chapter, I examine the reasons students have for joining FARO, their experiences of participating there and their own interpretations of their activities. I will argue that their previous knowledge and reasons for coming to FARO and social interactions with teachers and their peers reinforce their interpretations about creativity. These elements show how their practices concerning arts education and creativity are social and active.

Based on 30 semi-structured interviews, I examine my peers' motives and interpretations of their own activities, be it performance, painting or journalism. Some of their responses are contextualised via my observations and participation with them in the workshops. This is because their participation in FARO is not only about what they say in the context of an interview, but also about what they do, or do not do, in their everyday activities. This echoes Miller's 'commitments', highlighting that ethnographers may 'evaluate people in terms of what they actually do, i.e. as material agents working with a material world, and not merely of what they say they do' (Miller, 1997 pp. 16-17). Additionally, I incorporate a separate section in which I introduce the life stories of Francisco and Jaime. Particular attention is given to their

reasons for coming to FARO and the individual circumstances that motivated them to join the organisation.

7.1 Students: ‘active’ participants

My interest in exploring my peers’ reasons for coming to FARO and their experiences, as well as their interpretations of their activities as ‘art’, is because we can understand *how* and *why* they are ‘active’. It can be claimed that the students’ interpretations of painting, performance and journalism were mediated through their interactions with their peers and teachers, as well as their reasons for coming to FARO. My interest in studying students’ motives and personal backgrounds is inspired by John Falk’s (2009) research on visitors and museums. From an educational perspective, Falk aims at understanding the ‘experience’ of visitors in museums, taking into account the deeper aspects that stimulate them to visit museums and other institutions (e.g. botanical gardens and aquariums). As visits to museums are short and constitute a small experience in people’s lives, for Falk, understanding the experience of visitors in museums entails placing that experience in relation to the visitors’ personal contexts. Falk argues that the visitor experience is about ‘the unique and ephemeral moment when the museum and the visitor become one and the same’ (Falk, 2009, p.35). This entails that museums and visitors should not be thought of as ‘fixed entities’. Instead, Falk argues that museums need to be thought of as ‘intellectual resources’ through which visitors ‘use’ and provide ‘meanings’ to museums through their individual experience and ‘identity-related needs’ (Falk, 2009, p.37). This implies a definition of visitors as ‘unique’ individuals whose experiences are multiple.

I agree with Falk’s idea of studying the contextual dimensions that frame visitors’ visits to museums, or in my case, to arts organisations. Because my peers bring their own personal backgrounds to FARO, in part this has shaped the ways in which they engage (or not) with the activities held at FARO. However, unlike Falk’s understanding of visitors’ experiences in museums, characterised as ‘unique’, I came to realise during fieldwork that students’ understandings of their activities were socially shared, and their practices with teachers in the workshops encouraged therapeutic and participative readings of creativity. My peers and I participated in a communication process in which our interpretations revealed a process that can be described as ‘active’. Anthropological literature detailing people’s participation in museums has explored the ways in which visitors ‘recode’ and ‘decode’ a museum exhibition (Macdonald 2002 p. 219). In her ethnographic research in a science museum in London, Sharon Macdonald

discusses how and why visitors are active during their visit to a museum exhibition. Based on a number of interviews and direct observation, Macdonald argues that visitors are 'active' for two reasons. Firstly, their interpretations tell us how they engage with the museum exhibition. Visitor interpretations are 'part of a repertoire of prevalent interpretations' (Macdonald, 2002 p.220), meaning that visitors' interpretations reveal the various ways in which they engage with a museum exhibition. Secondly, visitors are 'active' because the exhibition itself subtly demands visitors to be continuously interacting, through moving constantly among exhibits and touching exhibits, and consequently, visitors appropriate the exhibition as part of their repertoire of 'leisure' and 'consumption' (Macdonald, 2002 p. 239). For Macdonald, this kind of appropriation has risks. One is that visitors may not 'raise critical or political questions', and, therefore do not become 'active citizens', which is part of the avowed purpose of the public understanding of science (Macdonald, 2002 p. 240).

Whilst Macdonald describes how people recode and decode a specific exhibition, and therefore, the ways in which visitors are 'active', other ethnographic research has paid attention to the processes of 'seeing' and 'sensing', in this case in the galleries of a Danish museum (Daugbjerg, 2014, p. 47). Mads Daugbjerg's focus on the visitor experience generates questions about the modern ideas of rationality and objectivism propagated through museums. By conducting observations through small video cameras (*video specs*) and interviews with visitors, Daugbjerg explores how visitors engage with exhibitions, highlighting different modes of people's experience. He argues that 'emotion', 'immersion' and 'sensation' are attributes that emerge when people visit exhibitions, and therefore such attributes let us see other ways in which visitors are active.

The importance of these studies is that both ethnographies account for *how* people are 'active' when they visit museum exhibitions, though Macdonald explains the implications of exhibitions that demand much more visitor activity. The implication is that visitors perceive 'science' in museums as an instance of 'leisure' and 'consumption', therefore they do not offer critical points of view about science. Macdonald focuses on visitors' interpretations and their experience of participating in museum exhibitions. Visitors' 'prevalent interpretations' (Macdonald, 2002) and processes of 'seeing' and 'sensing' are modes through which visitors experience their visits to museum galleries (Daugbjerg, 2014). Inspired by these ethnographies, I examine not only how students are 'active' by attending the activities at FARO, but also why they are active and who encourages such activity. In order to answer these questions, I explore

the students' reasons for coming to FARO, their convivial experience of participating at the organisation and how they interpret 'arts education' and 'creativity'. I suggest that such elements let us see how and why they are active participants. I introduce two student life stories in order to broadly examine how and why they participate at the organisation, and ultimately, how the policy is challenged by exploring students' motives for coming to FARO.

7.2 Conversations with students: semi-structured interviews

My interest in conducting the 30 semi-structured interviews on which this chapter is based has been to explore whether the ways in which students 'frame' their participation at FARO let us see variations compared to the frameworks concerning 'arts education' examined in Chapters 3 and 5. In other words, I intend to examine *how* and *why* students I met interpret their artistic activity, and whether their interpretations are different from the political assumptions about 'arts education' and 'creativity' that abound. By examining students' reasons for, interpretations, and experiences of participating at FARO, I seek to highlight how the policy is reshaped through the ways by which students interpret arts education and creativity.

My reason for calling the semi-structured interview a 'conversation' is that, from my experience, my relationships with the students I met was friendly and the interview was therefore more of a conversation. Another reason for calling the interview as conversation is that ethnographic knowledge was constructed through the flow of questions and experiences of both, ethnographer and research participants. Thus, interviews were not a method to collect data, but a conversation of two subjects in which ethnographic knowledge was constructed. The interviews were taped and took place mainly in the yards surrounding the organisation building. As part of the interview dialogue, I raised questions about:

- Motivations – the interest here was to find out participants' reasons for coming to the organisation;
- Arts – the interest here lay in exploring how students interpret their activities, such as painting, music and writing.

Furthermore, I also asked whether they had relatives with a background in the arts. If the answer was affirmative, I asked if the experience of his/her relative impacted on their interest in painting, playing an instrument, writing and so on. Likewise, I also asked students about their

place of residence, age, occupation, educational level and parents' occupation. This information is included in the Biographical Index. At the end of each section a box appears providing the life story of one of my peers, describing what it means for them to participate at FARO. Direct observations written up as fieldnotes and informal chats complement the material gathered in the interviews so as to contextualise their responses.

7.3 Motivations: Why did you come to FARO?

In response to the question 'Why did you come to FARO?' I identified four main reasons: education, personal identity, therapy and a sense of belonging. This typology was identified based on the number of repetitions, or rather, 'prevalent interpretations' (Macdonald, 2002) of each of the interviewees. Their reasons for coming to the organisation shows 'activity' in that their intentions frame their experience at FARO. By examining their responses, I identified some variations. Whilst those in their 30s and above come to FARO in search of another identity, students in their twenties made it clear that they came to FARO in order to reinforce their previous educational knowledge. Other students, however, said they came to FARO because they liked to come to a place where they could reduce their stress levels, and because they felt it was good to belong to a group.

7.3.1 Education

Various students came to FARO for educational purposes. They came because they intended to 'complement', to 'reinforce', and 'to put into practice' their previous knowledge. Here, I introduce three main examples:

[I want to] develop practical skills that are not totally put into practice at university. At university we learn only theory but here is more practice. (Roberto, Community Journalism workshop).

I already learned a bit of graphic design, but I had so many classes and my knowledge is basic, then, I came with the teacher to reinforce my knowledge (Miriam, Graphic Design workshop).

I had already taken a graphic expression course in another school which was about painting and sculpture. Then, I decided to come to FARO to see if I could complement what I had already learned in the previous school (Juan, Painting workshop).

For Roberto, Miriam and Juan, participating at FARO meant reinforcing and complementing their previous knowledge. Their participation at the organisation seemed to be a stage in the course of their educational experience. Their previous knowledge challenges the idea that the imagined public of FARO are “illiterate” (Chapter 3). Therefore, they participate in ‘arts education’ not as an ultimate goal or a way for ‘transforming’ themselves. Instead, their participation is part of their educational experience. This mode of participation in ‘arts education’ seems to be symptomatic of the structural inequalities in the East of the city, where there are few universities compared to other areas of the city (Chapter 2). Their participation at FARO means reinforcing their previous knowledge in response to the structural inequalities in Mexico City. Other interviewees said they came ‘to learn more about arts’, and that they came to learn so they could put into practice their own projects. For example:

[I came here] because there are issues at the *colonia* (neighbourhood). [I] do not like some actions of specific political groups. I needed a tool in order to make documentaries about my municipality and its socio-political situation (Francisco, Community Journalism workshop).

When I met Francisco, I noticed that he and his family were interested in the political elections of the municipality where they live. Francisco’s mother and siblings were affiliated to a left-wing party. In particular, his mother was concerned about increasing violence and drug trafficking, both in the country and the area where she lives. For that reason, she considered it important to join a political organisation, to read newspapers and to spread information via social networks. For Francisco, his participation in the journalism workshop was associated with audiovisual learning to point out acts of corruption, mainly during political elections. His initial interest was reinforced when he participated in the journalism workshop and Antonia encouraged a reading associated with ‘participation’. Similar to Francisco’s reasons for coming at FARO, Rene said he came to the organisation because he was interested in developing a project with his friends:

[because I want to] strengthen a project in my neighbourhood with my mates. That is my life project and I want to find out that I can learn here (Rene, Community Journalism workshop).

Both Francisco and Rene participated in the journalism workshop, and Francisco in particular was active, organising some meetings with his peers about joining the university movement, *Yosoy 132*. These meetings consisted of deciding on the kind of demands they would raise by joining the movement, such as combating the high levels of violence against women and the

'stigmas' or stereotypes characterising the East and its inhabitants, and labelling it as a vulnerable space. Along with my peers, Francisco and Rene said *El barrio también es cultura* (The barrio is culture too) or *No soy delincuente, soy Faro de Oriente* (I am not delinquent, I [am] Faro de Oriente) to criticise the negative public image of the 'Orient'. Aside from their participation in the university movement, I also saw Francisco and Rene participating in writing activities with the rest of students. Francisco, Angel, Ines and I used to talk and write about their neighbourhoods. I came to realise how my peers augmented the conversations by asking questions or highlighting points they had in common. For example, with a sense of affection, Rene said that in his municipality there were lakes that people visited for fishing. However, he said that due to the growing population, the lakes had become polluted to the point that they are now just dark water. After sharing with us a part of his life experience in his municipality, other students questioned Rene about the economic activities in the place where he lived. These kind of interventions were useful to feed Rene's ideas and writing about his municipality. Similarly, when another student shared with us her personal experience of living in her neighbourhood, she was asked questions and given comments either from Antonia or my peers. Many of the comments and reflections intended to raise criticisms about the social conventions of the East of Mexico City.

My peers shared the stories of their relatives, highlighting the difficulties they faced living in areas of the East and how they managed. Such difficulties are related to the lack of pavements, running water and schools. Francisco shared with us that his grandparents organised activities within their neighbourhood. At Francisco's grandparents' house, classes were held for children to compensate for the lack of primary schools. Usually, the children were taught by some neighbours who were primary school teacher. Francisco's grandparents and their neighbours built a church for the religious activities of the neighbourhood. As I listened to stories similar to Francisco's –highlighting the organisation of neighbours to compensate for the lack of infrastructure, as well as the various jobs of their parents and grandparents - it seems to me that many of the activities in the journalism workshop intended to dignify the stories of people who had settled in such municipalities, such as Nezahualcoyotl or Valle de Chalco.

To write about our neighbourhoods and to receive comments and questions from peers was a convivial and collective experience. Their questions and comments triggered the writing of Francisco and Rene. It can be argued that when we reflected on and wrote about our neighbourhoods, criticising the negative public image of the East, processes of creativity

emerged because the collaboration of my peers contributed to the growth of our own ideas. Their ideas were continually shared, and in this social process, a kind of ‘relational’ creativity developed, in part because a ‘field of relationships’ was situated around a particular activity (Ingold, 2007). Whilst students such as Francisco, Rene and Miriam came to FARO for educational purposes, other people came to FARO for different reasons, such as what I came to call their ‘personal identity’.

7.3.2 *Personal identity*

I am learning to play instruments because it is always good to know bits of everything, so that [people] do not tell you ‘this guy is an ignorant and does not know anything’ (Manuel, Graphic Design workshop).

Manuel’s participation at FARO was associated with an educational purpose and to get through a kind of personal limitation that he describes as ‘ignorance’. From my experience, I saw Manuel joining various workshops throughout the year. For example, he wanted to learn how to make acoustic instruments, how to use graphic design software and how to write poetry. It can be claimed that age and ethnicity are two variables that distinguish the ways in which Roberto, Sofia, Juan, Rene, and Francisco (all in their twenties) and Manuel (a man in his seventies) were able to participate at FARO. From my personal conversations with Manuel, I found he grew up in Oaxaca, a state in the South of the country. Because of the lack of employment in Oaxaca, he moved to Mexico City when he was 13 years old, having finished his primary school studies. When he arrived in Mexico City, his relatives helped him find a job. Initially, he worked with his aunt as a sales person, but over the years he had other jobs, such as a servant in a wealthy house, a sales person in a different business, and as a labourer in various industries. He pointed out that in those jobs he experienced labour exploitation (i.e. working extra hours, receiving low wages, being dismissed without a salary). His experiences in these jobs were difficult ones, and later on, his children motivated him to get an education. I was told he had joined various courses and workshops (especially ‘electricity’ courses), enabling him to gain the skills and knowledge to claim better wages and to be able to defend his line of work. This is one of the reasons that explains his interest in gaining skills and increasing his own knowledge when I met him at FARO. During the interview, Manuel said *‘siempre he estado en busca de alguna preparación’* (I have always been looking for training). In this sense, his participation at FARO can be associated with a sense of release (from the exploitation he experienced) and the shaping of a personal identity. When Manuel and I participated in the graphic design workshop, I saw him learning how to use graphic design software for making drawings and retouching photographs.

Months later, I saw Manuel learning how to make musical instruments, and to write *Nahuatl* poetry. It seems to me that the way in which he participated in the organisation was through the shaping of a personal identity, showing himself and others that he can no longer be stigmatised as a 'limited' person. Two other interviewees, above the age of 30, also came to FARO in search of another sort of identity.

For Guillermo, a man who looked to be in his forties, the reason for attending workshops at FARO was related to painting and overcoming an addiction:

My [motivation] was to leave behind an addiction. I had an addiction to drugs and I started to go through. I [came to FARO] for painting and [doing] graffiti. I do not want to lose it. [Painting and graffiti] is like an overcoming. (Guillermo, Graphic Design workshop)

And for Sandra, who appeared to be in her mid-forties, the reason for coming to FARO was related to the possibilities of self-expression through painting:

Because I needed, I mean, I feel that I wanted to express something and to show myself that I could do something else; something else for me, to show what I bring (Sandra, Painting workshop).

Through these excerpts, it can be argued that age plays a role in the ways in which my peers framed their participation at FARO. Whilst those in their twenties were participating at FARO for more formal educational purposes, Manuel, Sandra and Guillermo had different reasons for joining FARO. Their interests and participation intended to cover a limitation, to get over an 'addiction', and to show the possibilities for self-expression. Although these motives appear to be separate, I suggest that the three cases are motivated by an interest in constructing another personal identity. For example, when I met Sandra she came to FARO for painting classes. She said that she had more free time because her daughters had grown up and did not depend on her anymore. In addition, during my interview with her, she told me that she would have liked to study an area related to the 'arts', but her family could not afford to pay for her studies. She decided to study public accountancy instead, in part because she thought she would get a job easily and could help to support the expenses of her family. When I met her at the painting workshop, Sandra was about to retire from her job. It could be claimed that being a professional and a mother and wife, she wanted to participate in an activity she had not undertaken before and to prove to herself that it was possible to construct a new identity for herself. When we participated in the mural project (Chapter 6), Sandra participated from the beginning to the end.

In order to get some inspiration for making a visual representation of Mexico City, she brought in a selection of personal photographs. During the long hours painting the mural, she discussed with Jaime and Dario the images to consider in the visual work.

7.3.3 Therapy

During my informal conversations and interviews with my peers, I was told that they came to FARO because the workshops they had joined - in particular, painting and performance - and their developing social relations with their peers has been useful in reducing their own 'stress'. This motive is connected to their activities at FARO. As I will show in the next section, for many of my peers their activities concerning painting and performance allowed them to release their emotions, be it stress or depression. I discovered that the activities they participated in concerning writing, painting and performance were motivated by personal difficulties, such as stress levels, 'problems' with their relatives and personal challenges (e.g. passing resit exams). For example:

Because, well, here is a space where I can develop the leisure of doing what I like the most, for example, painting. I like very much to come to de-stress myself for a while. To paint is my escape or my second choice (Estela, Painting workshop).

I started to come to FARO in 2002 and I loved the idea of taking workshops. Well, in my case, I need art, otherwise I become mad with the everyday routine. I need art to clear my mind up. I knew that in FARO there were workshops and I came (Camila, Art and Performance workshop).

Me animé [I felt excited for coming to FARO] because I like very much to come. I paint, I do not feel on stress, I meet people and I am in my environment with painters (Omar, Painting workshop).

I came to FARO because I wanted a place where I could feel relaxed and fine (Dario, Painting workshop).

In these cases, they engage in arts education in order to find release from their personal difficulties. However, this mode of engagement does not mean that FARO provides an individualised way to overcome their personal emotions. Instead, the interviewees highlight FARO as a 'space' where they can practice the activity they enjoy the most, and a place where they can meet people and where their identities are reinforced. Again, the way in which they frame their visits to FARO is associated with how they interpret their activities and their experience when visiting the organisation. Below, I introduce part of the experience of Camila

and Miguel, who were attending a performance workshop. This case exemplify how they engage in arts education and the kind of convivial experience that emerges.

I met Camila at the performance workshop when my peers and I were discussing making the ‘most difficult’ decision in our lives. Seated in a yard next to the FARO main building, Camila joined the group after greeting Christian - she had already participated in the workshop a year ago. After listening to various students’ decisions, Camila shared with us some of her current difficulties. She had studied for a degree in Chemistry and got a diploma, however, she was unemployed. Camila said that she had held temporary jobs related to theatre and cinema, though she had been travelling to other cities to work in such jobs and for that reason, she did not have a permanent house to stay in. Living with her friends was an option she had decided to take in order to work on such projects. Because of the lack of opportunities in her field, and therefore an inability to settle in a specific place, Camila said that she felt dissatisfied.

Christian asked other students to share her/his personal decision; when everybody had participated, my peers and I were told to carry out an action reflecting the kind of emotions that our decisions had produced. Having said this, Miguel held out a jar of paint and a piece of wood. Miguel asked us to put our fingers in the jar and to paint over the wood. After everybody had participated, he put his hand into the bottle and traced his hand around the centre of the wood. He then said ‘I decide to live in my present time’. After this action, I kept silent while Camila and other peers applauded Miguel.

When the performance workshop ended, I approached Camila and asked if I could interview her. With sadness in her voice, Camila said that even with an academic title it is really hard to find a job: consequently, she says she has had to ‘reinvent herself’. This means finding other options of employment and constructing another professional identity. After several years trying to get a job in her area without success, she commented ‘*No soy el título, no sé para quien soy una química*’ (I am not the academic title, I do not know for whom I am a chemist). When I asked her why she had come to FARO, she said that she enjoys the *camaradería* (friendships) there and the convivial relationship among the group. For her, no matter that ‘everybody’ is a different age, she feels like she belongs to a ‘tribe’ or rather a group of people where the social relations are close and seem to produce identification. For her the ‘arts’ and ‘painting’ mean ‘to be free, invent, and get rid of things that I dislike. Equally, when I make a painting and it takes me one or two hours I [feel I have] spent free time [for my own]’ (Interview 14/05/2012). I saw

Camila participating at the performance workshop on various occasions until she no longer came. For Camila and other peers at the performance and painting workshop, I came to realise that their responses corresponded to the idea that their activities produced a sense of ‘therapy’ and *desestrés* (reduction of stress) in the face of unemployment, temporary jobs that do not provide opportunities for growth, and lack of universities. Camila’s experiences in the workshop and the ways she interpreted her activities indicates that her participation in ‘arts education’ is a sense of freedom in order to minimise the weight of unemployment and lack of spaces for developing in her professional area. In other words, the ways in which she participates in arts education is a symptom of the inequalities in Mexico.

7.3.4 A sense of belonging

Unlike those aged over 30, the students in their twenties said that the sense of belonging, acceptance and atmosphere with their peers were some of the reasons for visiting FARO. From the various responses, I identified a distinction between the space they created at FARO and other spaces they belonged to, such as their homes or ‘the outside world’. For example:

Here [at FARO], I find people who I can share some things with: music, art, painting. Then, I find comprehension. Here they congregate and I like that. (Mateo, Art and Performance workshop).

Here [at FARO] people do not judge you for your knowledge or the clothes you wear, that is *chingón*. Additionally, I think that in a way the workshops help you for your life. With the trade workshops, for example, you can get a job or you can make projects for an exhibition. (Miguel, Art and Performance workshop)

I decided to come here because of the interaction with people. [I came here] to make friends, to belong to an environment in which I can talk and express [myself] (Jaime, Painting workshop)

I came because I like art and music very much. Many people here play something. Sometimes we cannot say something and we say it with music. I find acceptance, we are all equal, with the same ideas. Although [FARO] is not a formal institution, we all complete the workshop and we come on time (Gisela, Art and Performance).

The responses above tell us that values and practices such as ‘acceptance’, ‘comprehension’, ‘belonging’ and ‘equality’ are experienced by my peers. The importance of these practices is that they tell us that they do not engage in arts education to transcend their “limitations” (Chapter 3). Instead, such practices tell us that they produce modes of engagement based on their own values and practices. A good example of this can be seen in some of the episodes that occur

before or during the workshops. From my experience, I noticed how the students I met socialised and in a way reinforced the convivial experience and processes concerning creativity. Below, I introduce two examples:

On one evening, Francisco and a new student, who I will call Marcos, were seated around a table talking about literature. The discussion was about how the novel *1984* reflected the political context of Mexico: in particular, the way in which Mexican media companies and the state were controlling the information through media communications. Elizabeth joined the conversation and asked about the content of *1984*. Francisco explained what the novel was about and made a connection between the content and the current situation in the country. It seems to me that Elizabeth had not read *1984* because she was writing the title and author in her notebook. Throughout the conversation, I came to realise that my peers enjoyed exchanging points of view about the films they have seen and the novels they have read. Some of them highlighted other titles such as *A Happy World*, *Animal Farm* or *El Quijote*. I noticed that there was no arguments among them or criticisms disapproving of each others' points of view. Instead, the conversation flowed. I asked Marcos whether *Animal Farm* was a good novel to read. Marcos recommended the novel and he further explained the themes of the book to me and why he had enjoyed reading it (Fieldnote 11/06/2012). The ways in which students (myself included) interacted with each other lets us see arts education as a process of social exchange (Bishop, 2012 p. 260). From my experience, Francisco expanded my knowledge in the field of literature. Similarly, Jaime's advice was not only useful for my own activities, but for other peers who approached him to improve their works. An example of this is reflected below.

At the painting workshop, Jaime was giving advice to Lourdes and I about improving our paintings. More specifically, Jaime explained the rules of composition to us, showing us how to distribute the images proportionately. He explained step by step the rule of thirds and emphasised the importance of mathematics for keeping a focus on the canvas, and ultimately, for painting. From my experience, this teaching was useful for applying to my own drawings and photographs. Similarly, I saw how occasionally Regina approached Jaime asking him whether her images (in particular, mountains) are in perspective. Jaime explained to Regina that the mountains needed more of a dark colour to produce a longer distance, but also told her that her work was going well. Jaime's explanations and advice were part of the social interactions that intensified not only their creative processes, but also a sense of conviviality among those who participated in the workshops. Indeed, Jaime said that the social relations he had with his

peers were important for his own work. Because of his difficulty in expressing his ideas on canvas, he talked with his peers and this helped him to ‘develop his arguments’ and to put these in his images (Fieldnote 10/08/2012). These kind of experiences let us see how the social relationships are pivotal for the kind of ‘relational art’ (Bourriaud, 1998) being produced among my peers. For Nicolas Bourriaud, art is a space that ‘produces a specific sociability’ (Bourriaud, 1998, p.161). This means that the social interactions and convivial experience of subjects is the space for the production of a kind of creativity, less individual than social. In this respect, it can be claimed that the convivial experience of my peers can be described as relational, because their experience and their interpretations let us see how their social relationships enhance their practices concerning creativity. In this respect, the process of production about their visual works, writing and performance are traced by their interactions and convivial experience. The Left-wing arts policy becomes practice through the social interactions of my peers, a kind of experience in which ‘art’ is relational.

The importance for examining the reasons students gave for attending workshops at FARO is that they tell us how they frame their experience at the organisation. The responses of the interviewees indicate that different motives are involved when they come to the organisation. I identified that those in their twenties come to FARO for educational purposes, a sense of convivial experience when they interact with their peers, as well as a sense of belonging. These motives are different from those of the students in their thirties and above (5 interviewees were 30 +), whose reasons for coming to FARO are correlated with shaping another sort of identity. This tells us how their life course is different compared to those in their twenties. Whilst those in their twenties are dealing with unemployment and a lack of universities, those aged 30 or above seem to be interested in shaping another identity. If age indeed is a variable, then it could be claimed that the life courses of my peers influence the way in which they experience and interpret arts education and creativity.

The experience of those in their twenties in arts education can be described as a compensation for the lack of education and employment, rather than a kind of participation encouraging arts education as a mechanism for consumption and “helping” people to transcend their limitations. Below, I introduce how Francisco’s reasons for coming to FARO can be identified as shaped by a desire to have critical participation in relation to practices of corruption in his municipality. Then, I go on to examine how they interpret their activities.

I met Francisco at the community Journalism workshop. After finishing his undergraduate degree at a public university, his interests were related to the socio-political life of Mexico and especially his municipality in the State of Mexico. Francisco told me that the purchase of votes (i.e. when people from a political party give money or groceries in exchange for an individual vote) had been part of the corruption that occurred in the area where he lives. His dissatisfaction motivated him to document such activities as well as to investigate ‘why do people do that?’ For this reason, he decided to attend the community journalism workshop in order to develop the skills necessary to write peoples’ stories or to produce a documentary about this topic (the purchase of votes in his area). He said that during his university studies, the social and political context of Mexico was part of academic discussions. For that reason, he is interested in exploring the political context in his municipality. Francisco thinks that his participation in the community journalism workshop will give him the skills needed to approach his neighbours and write an article. One of his personal projects is to write a book about what he calls the Orient, a reflection about its inhabitants and everyday life, highlighting the ‘passivity’ of the people in political matters. Francisco lives with his mother and two siblings who study Electronic Engineering and Biochemistry at a public university in the South of the City. Given that he has not yet found a job in his professional area, he works in a bakery from seven in the morning to midday and carries out soldering services. This allows him to cover his living expenses and contribute to the family budget. In the evenings he attends the community journalism workshop. One of his biggest goals is to finish his undergraduate thesis (to date he has now achieved this) and to keep on studying economics and psychology.

7.4 The ‘Arts’

In order to explore how the students I met interpret their activities at FARO, I asked them why they paint, participate in performance activities, and write. In line with the argument of this chapter, I suggest that the students I met interpret their activities for three reasons: their motives for coming to FARO, their previous knowledge, and their social interactions with teachers and students. My peers interpret their activities as an ‘artistic’ activity that gives him some benefits. This suggests that the reception process is social and active in that certain interpretations are ‘prevalent’. From the students’ responses I identified that the activities they undertake are correlated with a sense of ‘therapy’ and ‘expression’, ‘personal lifestyle’ and a form of ‘social critique’.

7.4.1 *Therapy and ‘Expression’*

The painting students and some students from the performance workshop undertake their chosen activities because they gain a sense of ‘therapy’ and relaxation from it. Taking again the cases of Estela, Camila, Miguel, Dario and Mario, I present what this means for them in terms of their painting and performance practices:

I like very much to see the result that you get. [Painting] is effort, you devote a lot of time, it is patience. [Painting] is to focus on what I am doing, it is to think about what I am doing rather than thinking of other things, such as problems. It is a good relaxing method (Estela, Painting workshop).

What I do is therapeutic. I believe in painting-therapy. It is not my intention to do it. I feel very alleviated when I paint; it comes as something that I needed to take out either consciously or unconsciously. I believe in art-therapy. I think it is a way to take out many things. I think it is good to know more about yourself (...) there are things that only you understand (Dario, Painting workshop).

Why do I like to paint? Partly because you express what you feel, but also it is a way to release, to feel less stress. [Painting] is a time for relaxation. Personally, when I paint I feel very relaxed. It makes me feel free of all my concerns. School, work, everything (Mario, Painting workshop).

[Painting] helps you with many things. It is like therapy, [it helps you to] *desahogarte* (vent) and it is a distraction. (Miguel, Art and Performance workshop).

Similar to the responses above, Camila and Miguel told me that in moments of ‘crisis’ or when they experience ‘many ideas in mind’ they painted until they felt relaxed. For both of them, painting is a ‘dialogue’ for understanding their own emotions and ‘ideas’. One of the reasons why the interviewees interpret their activity as ‘therapy’ can be seen through their participation at the performance workshop where the teacher has encouraged the preferred reading as therapeutic (Chapter 5). Christian says that ‘art’ enables individuals to gain self-knowledge and explore individual emotions. He suggests that ‘art is not only expression, but to experiment and go through our own dilemmas. Contemporary art is useful for our self-knowledge. We need to find ourselves’ (Fieldnotes 30/January/2012). Whilst the majority of the attendees at the painting and performance workshops have interpreted their activity as therapeutic, for those at the journalism workshop, writing means ‘expression’, ‘research’ and the possibility to talk to people and to write up their stories. For example:

I like reading and writing very much. Writing allows me to express my ideas, and at the journalism workshop, I like to listen people's stories to write them [in an article]. (Ines, Journalism workshop).

[Because writing] is expression and I like to talk with people (Alberto, Journalism workshop)

I like to write and to be in contact with the society (Rene, Journalism workshop)

These interpretations are regularly reinforced by Antonia. From my experience, it was Antonia who encouraged my peers and I to read the newspapers, to discuss the 'news of the day', to write about our own 'communities' (i.e. to write about social problems and social practices that we could highlight as significant),⁵⁷ and to reflect about the political environment of the country (Chapter 5). As the journalism workshop emphasised a critical perspective, not only relating to the socio-political problems in the East of the city but also in the country more generally, variations were observed in the workshops. Unlike those at the painting and performance workshops, students at the journalism workshop interpreted their activities of writing and reading as 'expression', but also as an exercise in research and societal observation. Another reason given for participating in the journalism workshop (there were eight students) was that their previous knowledge also shaped how they interpret their activity. All of them had finished high school and they were interested in studying Communication and Media Studies, one of them had finished his university studies, and another student was studying Communications. The interpretations of my peers are different, and this might be because their reasons for coming to FARO shape their experience. Added to that, the ways in which the teachers encourage particular readings at the workshops also intensify the students' interpretations.

7.4.2 *Personal Lifestyle*

Unlike the cases mentioned above, Esteban, Irving and Omar paint because it is 'part of their lives', or rather, their personal lifestyle:

My brother, he never initiated me in the art directly, but with his way of life, with the environment he did... he made me aware of an alternative, namely art. I instinctively followed that path. The life of art is a personal life. (Esteban, Art and Performance workshop).

⁵⁷ Aside from reading the news, other exercises included participating in a radio programme and developing a magazine project.

I do not know. I think it is because [painting] is part of me. I paint because I like to do it very much. For me it is very attractive to create images, give life to shapes, create structures and *problemas plásticos* (plastic problems). (Irving, Painting workshop)

Painting is part of me [because] If I do not paint, I do not feel fine. It is like a way of life for me: painting and graffiti. I do it with my heart, the painting. (Omar, Painting workshop).

Esteban, Irving and Omar interpret their activities like that because their previous knowledge and familial background had already shaped such understandings. When I met Esteban, I was told about his relatives who had devoted their careers to the arts. Irving had already finished a degree in the ‘arts’, and Omar had been a graffiti artist for a number of years. When I first met him, he was working in a workshop that produced publicity banners. Although Omar had no relatives and had not studied the ‘arts’, his view on ‘painting’ and ‘graffiti’ as being ‘part of his life’ had been reinforced by the two years he had spent participating in FARO, where he met people who reinforced his identity as a painter. Finally, the participation of Irving in the workshops reinforced his vision of himself as an ‘artist’. This could be seen when occasionally I saw how Jaime spoke with Irving about his paintings to receive feedback, and some of my peers referred to Irving as someone whose knowledge about painting was solid, and therefore they approached him to ask for advice.

7.4.3 Social Critique

As part of my concern as to whether students might provide other interpretations of the ‘arts’, that is, something more self-therapeutic than social self-therapeutical, I came to realise that Juan paints not only because of his personal emotions, but also to offer criticisms about the political and social situation in Mexico. In the same way, Rafael challenges social conventions through his paintings. For example:

I think there is something else than individuality, that is, to emphasise the social crisis we are living in. Then, my works... although I paint for myself (depression, anger), I also do it to see if other people grasp the idea... that they see that we are living wrongly, and, that we are going to leave an unsustainable country for the future generations. (Juan, Painting workshop).

When commenting on his most recent painting, a portrait of a naked Jesus touching his penis, Rafael says:

It always seemed to me that [Jesus] was a personality so asexual, as if he had never had sexual life. [Painters] paint [Jesus] not only as a saint, but also as an unreal person, really absurd. I wanted to illustrate the image of a handsome man playing with his penis because it was away of saying, perhaps he could be seated as a saint, but why not? He also had sexuality (Rafael, Painting workshop).

I suggest that the reasons for both interpretations are related to the students' educational background. When I met 29 year old Juan, I was told he was studying 'Plastic Arts' at a public university, while Rafael, 33 years old, had studied Philosophy and Religion, also at a public university. He said that some of his reasons for painting religious themes had been his childhood experiences and a religious familial environment. Rafael and Juan's previous knowledge provided them with an understanding of painting as a form of critique and way of positioning their own concerns.

The importance of examining the interviews with students whom I met is twofold. Firstly, I could understand how they verbalise their experience, that is, the act of painting, performing or writing. Secondly, because of my shared experiences with them at FARO, it was possible to put their responses within a context, or rather, within the processes where social relations took place through the everyday. Through their interpretations they verbalise their experience. In addition, the experience of students with their peers and the teacher reinforced their own interpretations about their activities. While painting, I saw them fully focused on their own works, and when some of them took a break, such breaks were useful for talking about their paintings and receiving advice about how to improve them. I saw how some of them approached either Irving or Jaime to receive feedback from them. Through these processes and situations, my peers received more ideas about enhancing their works: therefore, their creativity was less individual than social. And the participation of my peers in 'arts education' was through a kind of convivial experience where social relations, collaboration and certain values were reproduced.

The various interpretations of the students about their activities indicate how they are different in relation to the 'arts education' and 'creativity' that the documents of the organisation encourage. Students' interpretations are correlated with a sense of 'therapy', 'expression' and 'personal lifestyle', and only two interviewees emphasised a 'social critique'. It might be the case that educational background has influenced how Rafael and Juan interpret and put into practice their chosen activities. In both cases, they were already studying at a university, and it might be that their view on painting has been shaped by a more critical perspective about the

arts. The box below explains Jaime's reasons for painting and his experience at the workshops with his peers.

On a Saturday afternoon, Jaime is painting a landscape on a long piece of fabric. Using brown and black paint, he delineates mountains and the shapes of small trees. I help Jaime to paint the images, and after an hour, we agree that it is time for a break. During the break, Jaime says that in his childhood he lived behind a penitentiary for 13 years and he describes that around his neighbourhood there was 'much delinquency and many children were kidnapped' (fieldnotes, 18/08/2012). His mother did not let him go out when he was a child. Being the youngest of the family and spending much of his time alone at home was not an experience he enjoyed. 'I lived enclosed, [as if I were] in an egg most of my time' (fieldnotes, 18/08/2012). As a consequence, some of his siblings taught him to draw and paint as a kind of distraction for spending so much time at his house. Jaime says that his family has supported his interest in painting. One of his brothers took him to museums and his mother paid a man to give him painting lessons at his house. He describes his painting experience less as something enjoyable and more as 'necessary to express myself'. Painting for him is a 'need'. 'When I feel anxiety or depression, painting is the only way to express such feelings' (interview 14/02/2012). Furthermore, Jaime says that painting allows him to 'learn from other people' and to get 'feedback' about his paintings (interview 14/02/2012). He goes on to say that he likes to show people how to use oil pastels and to give advice to his peers. For Jaime, some of his ambitions include improving his painting techniques and becoming a renowned painter. To achieve that, he says it is necessary to understand people's emotions, such as their fears and joys. On a visit to a museum that we took together he said that he liked to visit museums because he was inspired by looking at the works on display. Given that he has a learning disability, Jaime decided to stop his formal education and instead started to paint and to write poetry. He has visited FARO for three years and has had some exhibitions with the organisation and at some other arts organisations.

The students' interpretations of painting, writing and performance are diverse. I suggest that this is because their reasons for coming to the organisation, their experiences of participating with their peers and teachers, are reinforcing their own views on 'arts education' and 'creativity'. These elements shall be considered as mediations, reinforcing their own views on what they call 'arts'. For those at the painting and performance workshop, a view of therapy and personal lifestyle prevails. For those attending writing activities, they interpret writing as 'expression'. And only two highlight painting with a social critique. Their interpretations let us see that they

are active participants because the way in which they interpret their artistic activity is associated with their personal motives, previous knowledge and social experience at the organisation.

7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined students' reasons for joining FARO, their experiences of participating there and their own interpretations of their activities. The importance of examining these is that it lets us see how their own views on 'arts education' and 'creativity' are being reinforced through their social relations and reasons for joining the organisation. The students I met interpret their activities as 'therapy' and 'expression', 'personal lifestyle', and 'social critique'. These interpretations tell us that the students I met are active in a reception process that is social and dynamic. The reception process in arts organisation is social and dynamic, in that the everyday activities encourage social relations and ordinary processes that can be described as social, open and dynamic. Therefore, their participation at the organisation can be described as active and social.

Teachers and students have a mediatory role for the ways in which they interpret their activities. For example, I have shown in this chapter how those at the painting and performance workshop interpret their activities as 'therapy' and a sense of well being, in accordance to the ways in which the teachers encourage such reading. While in Chapter 3 I examined how the documents of the organisation characterised the imagined public at FARO, and in Chapter 5 I explored how the teachers I met encouraged a particular reading of arts education, this chapter has expanded my examination about the intentions involved for students coming to FARO, as well as how they interpret their artistic activity. In this chapter, I suggest that the policy is reshaped through the social relations of students, their convivial experience, and their views of arts education and creativity. Students' interpretations of arts and creativity, their reasons for coming to FARO and their collaborative experiences are elements that challenge the assumptions of the policy, which were examined mainly in Chapters 2 and 3. Furthermore, this chapter has brought together both the responses of students in interviews and notes taken while I conducted fieldwork. The importance of this is that it is possible to contextualise their responses, or rather, to put their responses within the everyday interactions that I observed in the field. I hope this interrelation of responses and observations can be useful for understanding fully how and why the students that I met attend the organisation.

Chapter 8 Conclusions: Reshaping Policy

The broad goal of this research has been to understand the processes through which policy becomes practice. It has sought to answer the question: how is policy reshaped through its encounters with the people, architecture, documents and specific realisations in arts projects? In order to answer this question, I have examined the everyday practices of a number of people who visit FARO. Particular attention has been given to the social relations, interactions and practices through which they (re)appropriate, or rather, reshape the views and implementations of policy makers concerning ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’. Furthermore, I have analysed the purposes, expectations and strategies for implementing ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’.

This research has paid attention to the everyday practice of subjects at FARO. The importance of exploring everyday practice is that it allows us to see the ambiguities, silences and contradictions in relation to the implementation and strategies of the policy concerning arts education and creativity. My focus on everyday practice has allowed me to see that those who visit the arts organisation are not passively reproducing the strategies through which ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ have been implemented. Instead, subjects’ everyday practice makes visible how agency is manifested. Students’ interactions with the material and the technical, their social relations and their circulation of meanings are some of the practices through which they (re)appropriate or reshape policy concerning ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’. My use of the term ‘reshape’ is to focus on the moments in which subjects’ actions incorporate their own meanings (*see for example* Chapter 6 and 7), values (Chapter 2 and 6) and uses (Chapter 4) to social and political conventions (of ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’), producing a kind of creativity that is subjective, collective and situational.

This concluding chapter is a reflection about the findings of this research, the analytical perspective adopted and the implications of the study case. The first section discusses the kinds of creativity that I identified during my fieldwork with the students at FARO. The second section is a reflection about ANT and an assemblage perspective and how this analytical perspective shaped my view and helped me to construct my argument on policy. The third section introduces the implications of the study case and suggestions derived from my experience at FARO that might be considered by staff members, teachers and policy makers.

8.1 Creative processes

During my research with students at FARO, I observed that their social relations, their social interactions with the material, and their circulation of meanings were some processes through which they were experiencing creativity, or what I would describe as ‘creative processes’. My use of the term ‘creative processes’ implies a view of creativity less fixed and ordered (such as political discourses have emphasised), but instead open to the other ways in which subjects experience ‘creativity’ in their lives. From my experience, creative processes can be described as subjective, collective and situational. They are subjective, in the sense that subjects’ ordinary experiences involved an exchange of ideas, thoughts and actions. Collective, in the sense that their social relations and interactions involved processes of collaboration and accommodation. Finally, situational, in the sense that there are social processes which encourage a response from individuals. The ways in which students *sorted out a painting* (see for example Chapter 3 and 6), how students replace ‘expensive’ materials (Chapter 3), or the strategies for making a visual work (Chapter 6) are cases that exemplify a response to ‘situations’ concerning difficulties and challenges, and at the same time, are part of the processes through which ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ were being reshaped.

My view of creative processes is similar to that of Rosaldo (1993), who argues that ‘improvisation’ is a ‘human capacity’ that arises in response to circumstances characterised by ‘indeterminancy’, ‘variability’ and ‘unpredictability’. However, I suggest that situations or circumstances are not a kind of abstract entity affecting the everyday life of subjects. I see situations instead as social relations of subjects interwoven in a temporal dimension with effects for other subjects. Creative processes are a response to the effects of such interactions. Such a response does not necessarily mean a resistance, but negotiation, collaboration or accommodation. All these processes are embedded in the everyday lives of individuals. This view does not envisage a hierarchy of power or domination over individuals. Instead, the social relations of subjects constitute a network (a structural framework) within which power relations are taking place. This view directs attention to the concept of ‘openness’ which is a ‘provocation’ to ‘suspend’ (Oliver, 2009 p. 325) sociopolitical structures and see the moments and spaces in which such structures are being reshaped by subjects through the subjective, the collective and situational.

By identifying how creative processes are embedded in the everyday life of individuals, and highlighting their subjective, situational and collective aspects, this view challenges other views on creativity. These include understanding creativity as something that people should ‘learn’ and ‘develop’ through cultural policy and arts programmes (Shore and Wright 1997; Bennett, 1998a, p. 91; Lewis and Miller, 2003; Jiménez, 2009), or as a kind of value that individuals should pursue in order to succeed in knowledge-based economies (Ingold and Hallam, 2007 p. 2); a ‘moral imperative’ (Osborne, 2003, p. 508), a kind of ‘innovation’ that benefits economic growth for the markets, urban development and social inclusion (Schulz and Okano, 2012; Tummers, 2012). This research makes visible how subjects’ practices, processes and meanings concerning ‘arts’ and ‘creativity’ are diverse and how they reshape abstract entities of ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ into something close to their everyday experience. This is important because it shows how the ‘everyday’ may ‘resist’, ‘criticise’ or ‘transform’ (Pérez-Mora, 2012 p.359) the sociopolitical processes that intend to act on individuals in particular ways, such as shaping moral values. Thus, the major finding of this research demonstrates that ‘creativity’ or rather creative processes are embedded in the everyday of individuals and challenge political views on ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’, which are intended to shape citizens through values and morals. This ethnographic research raises questions about policy as a repertoire of cultural strategies which intend to act on individuals. I clarify this argument in the section below.

8.2 Policy: living being

ANT and an assemblage perspective have formed the framework for examining how policy has become practice. I have taken ANT and an assemblage perspective as an analytical lens because this research has focused on the ordinary, the social relations of subjects, their interactions with the material and their circulation of meanings.

An assemblage perspective avoids taking big categories for granted (e.g. ‘policy’, ‘arts education’, ‘creativity’) and examines how such a category is assembled through the course of actions of individuals. Taking this analytical perspective in the context of my research, I have identified the agents, non-humans and processes that (re)shape ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ in the everyday life of an arts organisation. ANT and an assemblage perspective pay attention to the interactions of subjects with non-humans, implying that social life is ‘heterogeneous’. For Macdonald (2009), the emphasis on the ‘heterogeneous’ refers to other kinds of associated elements which ‘play a role in the construction of an entity, such as humans’ interactions with

the material or technical' (Macdonald, 2009b, p. 119). Aside from the social relations of subjects, non-humans, such as the material and the technical, are elements that interact in the everyday life of individuals. As Grau et al (2010) argue 'non-human elements, through which we interact and exchange properties, have a key role in defining and maintaining our societies and social relationships' (2010, p. 63). By examining policy through ANT and an assemblage perspective, I have come to learn, and to argue, that the social relations of subjects, their interactions with non-humans, the circulation of meanings and the tactics with which subjects respond to difficulties or challenges are key for understanding how policy is reshaped through everyday practice in an arts organisation.

This research has sought to unpack how policy concerning arts education and creativity has become practice. My use of the term 'become' emphasises the processes through which political discourse (i.e. the political purposes, expectations and strategies of policy makers) is reshaped and becomes everyday practice in a spatial and temporal dimension. 'Become' is a term within assemblage perspective that emphasises 'develop-ment' or 'becoming' (Marcus and Saka, 2006 p. 102). This term has shaped my analytical approach, allowing me to suspend 'policy', or rather a structure, in order to examine the entanglements and processes that produce policy through the social relations, interactions and meanings of individuals.

The importance of exploring processes is twofold. Firstly, it allows us to understand how a number of agents, non-humans and processes are 'interrelated' (Morgan, 2011). Secondly, it allows us to understand how the social relations of some agents may have effects for other agents, and the ways, in which agents respond to ordinary problematics in the everyday life of FARO. Exploring social processes demonstrates that policy is not the reproduction of political purposes, expectations and strategies by a number of "passive" individuals. Instead, individuals' social relations, interactions and meanings makes visible how they are active and able to reshape policy. To explore processes taking place in the everyday of an arts organisation allows us to see that policy is unstable and is continuously reshaping.

Through this research, I argue that 'policy' is not only a body of purposes, expectations and strategies ready for implementation in the life of subjects (a kind of administrative view organised by policy makers). Instead, it is unfinished, processual and in continuous *reformulación* (reshaping). This is because the practices of subjects (e.g. staff members, teachers and students) are dynamic, uncertain and contradictory. Policy is not elaborated for only one or

two agents, but instead the ‘destiny [of the policy] is in hands of other people’ (Grau et al, 2010 p.75). This implies that it is ‘translated’ (Callon, 1986) through ‘moments’ in which ‘the identity of actors, the possibility of interaction and the margins of manoeuvre are negotiated and delimited’ (Callon, 1986 p. 6). The analysis of policy through the everyday makes clear the diverse subjects that establish social relations, practices and interactions. It also allows us to see who challenges the course of actions of subjects, how such challenges are manifested and the effects of this on the ordinary actions of other subjects. As my focus in this research has been on the practices of subjects, policy can be described as a ‘living being’, since agents (policy makers) organise and implement a body of purposes, expectations and strategies (material and educational) concerning ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’. However, the lived experiences, social relations and interactions of other agents are continually producing and reshaping policy by incorporating their meanings, values and uses into the strategies and implements of ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’.

The social relations of policy makers and staff members, who organise and implement ‘policy’, make the contradictions and ambiguities visible. For example, I was able to see the contradictions that arise by examining the gradual decline in financial support to the organisation and the effects of this on teachers’ and students’ everyday activities. Other contradictions were made visible by examining the purposes of the organisation (Chapter 2 and 3) and the tensions produced when students decided to join a university social movement (Chapter 5). I was able to see ambiguities by examining the initial strategies for the implementation of ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ (Chapter 4, 5 and 6) and the multiple ways in which staff members, teachers and students gave meaning to and practiced ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ (Chapter 5, 6 and 7). Contradictions and ambiguities have been identified in relation to the everyday experience of those who implement ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ and the consequent effects for those who attend the organisation. In this sense one finding of this research is that the study case is traced by contradictions and ambiguities. I suggest that these elements are part of the entanglements and processes that assemble and maintain the policy concerning arts education and creativity.

I hope that this research can be useful for understanding the entanglements and processes involved when ‘policy’ concerning ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ becomes practice. Furthermore, I hope that it contributes to understanding that the social relations, interactions and practices of subjects are relevant for examining how policy is reshaped and maintained on the

ground, that is, through the everyday experience of subjects in organisations that implement strategies of public policy.

8.3 Moments of Hope

As I am inhabitant of the State of Mexico (I feel identified with students who live in the peripheral areas of Mexico City), this research is not just ‘about a group of people’ (Macdonald, 2009 p.22) but reflects my experience as someone attending the state-organised ‘arts’ and ‘culture’ activities implemented in a peripheral area of Mexico City. From my experience, participating at FARO in the workshops and events on offer, interviewing and talking with students, teachers, staff members and policy makers, I will present the implications of the study case and suggestions about the ways in which policy and FARO could work.

The chapters of this thesis have shown tensions between what is said in words, which seems to me an idealised political view of ‘arts’, ‘culture’ and ‘creativity’, and the practice; the everyday experience of those attending FARO with its damaged facilities, ambitious ‘artistic’ projects, and ordinary experiences with political activities. Cracks and leaks in the main building have affected the activities of students and teachers. Contradictions have become visible between staff members who seem to support the ‘cultural expressions’ of those who attend FARO, however in practice, those same staff members partially limit the participation of students who had decided to join a university movement. Another contradiction was visible between museum staff members who supported ‘the creativity’ of students who were to visually reenact ‘the Orient’; however in practice, students had to justify their ideas especially if such ideas were related to representing issues concerning violence in the East. These are some examples that reflect the contradictions and tensions that affect the everyday experience of students and some of the teachers at the organisation. Such tensions seem to me to be the outcome of a policy concerning ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’, which, in the way it is written, can be described as ambitious and romantic; however in practice, it seems to be uncertain as to the ends that it intends to pursue. By examining policy through the ordinary activities of students, I have made visible the contradictions and ambiguities of those who implemented ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ at the organisation.

Chapters 1 to 5 have examined the documents of the organisation (*documento marco and modelo pedagógico*) and texts describing policy makers’ views about ‘culture’, ‘arts education’

and ‘creativity’. This analysis has highlighted that the words in documents are not neutral, but they can be considered as ‘ethnographic subjects’ because they reflect how people interpret their own worlds (Holmes and Marcus, 2005 p. 243). These chapters have argued that documents are signification mechanisms which define entities, characterise individuals and establish modes of action. It seems to me that the documents of FARO documents and policy texts of policy have characterised the potential public of FARO as an homogeneous group which is vulnerable and limited. Along with other kind of texts such as newspapers, documents of the organisation and policy texts are ‘guilty agents’ (Millington, 2011) because they reinforce a negative homogeneous or stereotyped view of the East of Mexico City and its inhabitants.

One implication of these guilty agents is that people must carry out deliberate actions to detach from the symbolic aggression of FARO documents and policy texts. Another implication is that staff members and teachers naturalise such visions and they perceive those who attend FARO as people who need to be ‘lifted’ (Coffey, 2012). One suggestion might be to rethink, or to characterise the potential public in another way. People who attend the workshops on offer have diverse motivations for attending. To pay attention to their motives and the kind of creative experiences they develop with their peers can inform staff members and policy makers about how to describe and to establish relationships the FARO public. This suggestion is linked to the purposes and strategies of ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’.

I argue that ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ have been described in documents with a romantic view in order to ‘lift’ “the young”, “the poor”, and “the illiterate”. One implication is that policy makers, staff members and teachers perceive those who attend FARO as people that need to be supported through ‘arts education’, and consequently, they develop everyday strategies to “help” them, for example by designing workshops in a therapeutic way. Although I sympathise with this, other alternatives could be usefully explored, for two reasons. Firstly, some people seek to reinforce their previous academic knowledge through participation at FARO, while others are inclined to participate in the political life of Mexico City and the country. This means that the intentions and aims of those who attend FARO are multiple, and for that reason, ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ could explore alternatives. Secondly, giving weight to ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ in a therapeutic way can limit other experiences and reflections about arts and creativity. Expanding knowledge and practices of ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ would add more reflections and experiences about arts and creativity among those attending the organisation.

The suggestion raised by this research is that staff members and teachers should define the purposes and strategies of ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ through paying attention to the diverse experiences of those who attend FARO. New seminars, workshops and events could be useful to let attendees know issues about, say, intellectual authorship; why and how ‘art’ is also a critical positioning about the world we live in; or the development of ‘artistic’ projects so that they can obtain funding from state-organised institutions. To sum up, my point is to address reflections and experiences of arts education and creativity in a more critical way rather than emphasising only the therapeutical aspects.

Indeed, I argue that attendees are already experiencing arts and creativity in a critical way, though these experiences should be further encouraged. The participation of some students in the university movement *Yosoy132* (i.e. organising meetings, creating banners and a video) reflected part of their experience concerning ‘arts’ and ‘creativity’, that allows for setting out a critical position about the political and social life of the country. The critical side of the mural case⁵⁸, pointing out how ‘violence’ and ‘social problems’ are not concentrated only in the East, but are prevalent across the entire country, is an example that shows how attendees experience ‘arts education’ and creativity in a critical and participative manner. It also reflects that subjects are incorporating experiences and meanings of ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ which challenge a therapeutical view. Furthermore, students’ alternative motives for attending the organisation and the ways in which they use the organisation are key to understanding the kind of arts education and creativity that they underwent in a public space such as FARO.

⁵⁸ Aside from my ethnographic research at the organisation, I accompanied Francisco to one of the meetings of the *Yosoy132* movement, and there I met the arts collective *Artistas Aliados*, comprised of middle-class arts students in Mexico City. In an interview with a member of the collective, a woman who looked in her early twenties and whom I will call Brenda, shared with me her vision about creativity. Criticising social conventions about ‘art’ and ‘creativity’ (i.e. ‘entertainment’, ‘decoration’ and ‘manual tasks’), Brenda told me that ‘art’ and ‘creativity’ should be given a different reading, that is, a reading oriented to organisation, participation and action. For her, ‘art’ and ‘creativity’ should be oriented to destabilising the aforementioned conventions, and in a way, to empowering individuals. Together with her peers, she proposed an educational reform promoting arts for those living in a disadvantaged situation. Through education in arts, she envisioned the formation of a ‘sensitive human. [Someone] who is sensitive, thinks, observes and criticises’ (Interview 18/05/2012). For her, to shape individuals in that way would allow for the ‘construction of the country, but in a different way.’ Reflecting about ‘globalisation’ and the political context in Mexico City in 2012, Brenda told me that ‘art should persist in times of injustice and indifference’ (Interview 18/10/2012).

My point is that reflections between civil society and those who conceptualise and organise ‘arts’ and ‘culture’ in Mexico City should be encouraged, and the outcome of such reflections should be put into practice.

The making up of cultural policy from the understandings of policy makers, architects, urbanists, academics, and business people limit the possibilities for designing and implementing ‘cultural policy’, if civil society’s everyday experience in public spaces is not taken into account. This ethnographic research provides material for understanding how and why those living in the East use a public organisation and reshape policy. Civil society could participate in designing and implementing cultural policy, by designing the kind of public space they envision alongside those who take decisions and implement ‘policy’; by suggesting the kind of ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ that should be implemented in arts organisations; and whether they agree –or disagree- with the strategies and implementations of cultural policy on offer, the reasons for this and their suggestions. The participation of civil society in making up cultural policy would allow horizontal processes with policy makers. It would also reflect how civil society is taking responsibility and decisions for the kind of ‘culture’ that is organised and administered in the public space.

8.4 Time to leave FARO

This thesis has examined the agents, processes and complexities through which a public policy (Left-wing policy) becomes practice in a community arts organisation (FARO). It has accounted for the political purposes, strategies and implementation of the policy, as well as the everyday practices of those attending FARO. In doing so, I hope that this ethnographic research has helped to develop an understanding of the processes and complexities involved when ‘policy’ becomes practice, and that we can understand policy less as something fixed and ordered, but rather as something more unfinished and a social process continuously being reshaped.

Throughout my research, I have not abandoned the social and political context involved in the creation, implementation and practice of the case study. To account for the sociopolitical processes is important because this research has shown *how and why* ‘arts education’ and ‘creativity’ is implemented, the effects of this for those who attend the organisation and how they respond to situations concerning difficulties and challenges. ANT and an assemblage perspective has been useful for understanding the interactions of subjects with non-humans and

the relevance of such interactions for the construction of an entity. My research has paid attention to the ordinary and the processes that gradually shape an entity.

As I conclude this thesis, Dario and Elizabeth no longer participate as frequently as they did when I was in the field. Dario is working in the *centro* (centre) of Mexico City and spends much of his time there, however, he continues to visit the organisation. Elizabeth is still studying for her undergraduate degree in a university located in the South of the city. The last time I saw her, in December 2013, she said that her studies were demanding and she could not attend FARO as often as she used to. Many staff members whom I met continue to work in the organisation. They may now be thinking about and planning new projects, opening new workshops and organising other activities.

FARO has celebrated its 15th anniversary. Through observing news reports, it appears that the new students and visitors enjoyed a large number of events to celebrate FARO's anniversary. It would seem that the issue concerning students' dropping out has been addressed, in part because people continue to visit the organisation and to attend the services on offer. However, those who decide to join the organisation will continue to deal with the dynamics examined in this ethnography. They will have to use the buildings at the organisation (some of which are designed to encourage 'creativity'); they will deal with the ways in which staff members and teachers present a version of 'arts education' and 'creativity'; they will participate in ambitious arts projects and ultimately, they will continue to experience and reshape 'arts education' and 'creativity' through their everyday practice. These dynamics are part of the implements of policy that allow us to see the ways in which people experience and reshape 'arts education' and 'creativity', through everyday practice.

The Left-wing policy is the experience of those who attend FARO and the complexities that emerge through the everyday. This ethnographic research has made visible how the experience of the public can be characterised by enjoyment, tensions and challenges, and the diverse reasons why the public challenge the political expectations of those who implemented the policy. The convivial experience among students and teachers at FARO, the possibilities for generating further readings concerning 'arts education' and 'creativity', and the creative processes experienced through the everyday, are processes being manifested within the everyday in FARO. This implies a need to look at creativity, or rather creative processes, through the everyday practice of individuals, manifested in situations concerning difficulties and challenges.

Although this research comes to an end, there is a need for more ethnographic research in community arts organisations, on political agendas, the intervention of external institutions, and the everyday experience of staff members implementing ‘arts’ and ‘creativity’ for the public.

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Biographical Profiles

The list below provides biographical information about the teachers and students who I met during fieldwork 2011-12. All names are pseudonyms to conceal their identity.

Painting workshop

Dario

28 years old. He was delivery man when I met him. He completed high school and then he studied Communication for a year at a public university. His mother and his aunt had taught him to paint. His aunt had studied painting at university. Dario's paintings have been exhibited in public libraries and small galleries. He was living with his mother, sister and grandmother.

Lourdes

21 years old. She finished high school and then studied History at the university until her third year. When I met her, she was studying hard to be accepted into an arts school. She wanted to study Arts History. She was living with her parents and her brother.

Jaime

26 years old. He finished secondary school. He has painted since he was a child and when he left school, he started to paint full time. His father works in a 'cultural' institution. His siblings also used to draw and to paint. Jaime's paintings have been exhibited in local museums and a *casa de cultura*.

Regina

19 years old. She finished high school and she was studying the second year of Publicity in a public university. She was living with her parents. His father is salesman in a public market, and her mother is a secretary.

Elena

19 Years old. She finished high school. When I met her, she was studying Psychology in a public university. She was living with her mother, her two sisters, and her two little nephews.

Irving

28 years old. He finished high school and had a Bachelor of Arts degree. When I met him, he was working in a *casa de cultura* near FARO. His father composes music from the place he was born, the state of Guerrero. He was living with his parents and his two brothers. Irving's paintings have been exhibited in cultural centres and *casas de cultura*.

Juan

29 years old. He finished high school. When I met him, he was about to finish his undergraduate degree in Visual Arts. His mother had passed away and his father lived with a new family. He was living with his sister and his brother. His brother teaches in a primary school, and his sister studied clothes design. He was also working to help support his family.

Sandra

In her late forties. She finished high school and studied public accountancy at a public university. When I met her, she was about to retire from her job. She has two daughters and she was living with her husband.

Estela

In her twenties. She finished high school and studied at a public university. When I met her, she had a part-time job in a cinema. She was living with her grandmother, mother and brother. Her parents designed jewels and sold them in a small shop.

Mario

2? When I met him, he was about to finish high school, and was working in a public market. He wanted to study for a bachelor's degree related to drawing and painting at university.

Omar

22 years old. He had finished high school. When I met him, he was working in a publicity workshop. He was living with his mother and his brother. His mother works as dance teacher and his brother works at a fun fair. He was also working to help support his family.

Manuel

70 years old. He studied to primary school level. When I met him, he was participating in three workshops. He has two sons. He sold magazines in a kiosk.

Ricardo

In his seventies. He worked in an airbush workshop. He was living with his wife, his daughter and his grandchildren. Along with his wife, he retouched people's photographs via computer software.

Community journalism workshop

Ines

20 years old. She finished high school. When I met her, she was working as a secretarial assistant at a public institution and she was studying to enter university. She was living with her mother, father, cousin and her mother's parents. Her mother is a dressmaker and her dad helps her mother.

Alberto

18 Years old. He finished high school. When I met him, he was going to study Communication at a public university. He lived with his mother, father and youngest brother. His mother works in a public hospital. His father works in an aluminium factory.

Julieta

23 years old. She finished high school and studied Law at a public university for a year. When I met her, she had a part-time job in a radio station. Her mother had passed away. Her father works as construction worker. She was living with her partner when I met her.

Francisco

27 years old. He finished high school and had concluded his undergraduate studies in Philosophy at a public university. When I met him, he had a part-time job in a bakery and he was writing his undergraduate thesis. He was living with his mother, sister and brother. His mother is nurse, his father repairs electronic devices and his siblings are university students.

Fernando

20 Years old. He finished high school. When I met him, he was studying for a Bachelors degree in Communication at a public university. He had a job in a public market at the weekends. He was living with his brother.

Rosa

19 years old. She had finished high school. When I met her, she was studying to enrol in a public university. She was living with her parents and her sister when I met her.

Elizabeth

28 years old. She finished high school. When I met her, she had a full time job in a shopping mall. A few weeks before the end of my fieldwork she enrolled in university and resigned from her job. At the weekends, she was working in a public office to pay her bills. She was living with her parents, her youngest brother and her eldest sister. Her mother and her father work in a public market. Both sell clothes.

Rene

26 years old. He had studied at secondary school level. When I met him, he was a salesman in a public market. He was living with his eldest sister, his uncle and his grandfather. He has a son.

Art and performance workshop

Camila

30 years old. She finished high school and has a degree in Biology from a public university. When I met her, she had a temporary job in a theatre. She lived with her mother and sister. Her father had passed away.

Esteban

In his twenties. He finished high school. When I met him, he was about to begin studying Arts at a public university. His brother is a visual 'artist' and his uncle is painter. His grandfather was an actor in cinema.

Gisela

18 years old. She had finished high school and she was working in a grocery shop. She lived with her mother and her sister. Her mother worked in a store. Her father had passed away.

Israel

18 years old. He had finished secondary school. When I met him, he was preparing for his final high school exams. He was living with his mother, sister, brother in law and his mother's parents. His mother is a teacher. His father had passed away.

Mateo

29 years old. He had finished secondary school. He was preparing for his final high school exams and he wanted to study Philosophy. He was living with his mother. His mother is a cook and she works in a company and his father is unemployed.

Miguel

24 years old. He had finished high school. He was living with his sister. His mother works in a factory and his father is a taxi driver. He worked as a taxi driver during the weekends.

Yolanda

20 years old. She had finished high school and she was studying to enrol in university. When I met her, she had a part-time job in a bank. She was living with her grandmother and her sisters.

Sergio

27 Years old. He studied secondary school. When I met him, he was studying at high school. He was living with his mother and his two brothers. One brother works in urban cleaning services, and the other works in a public market selling clothes.

Tomas

18 years old. He finished secondary school. When I met him, he was also participating in the dance workshop. He was living with his mother.

Matias

25 years old. He finished high school. When I met him, he was unemployed. He was living with his mother.

Graphic Design workshop

Guillermo

In his mid forties. He studied to secondary school level. When I met him, he had a part-time job selling magazines in a kiosk.

Laura

In her twenties. When I met her, she lived with her parents and she had difficulties in learning.

Miriam

In her mid-twenties. She studied graphic design and she lived with her parents. She came to FARO because she wanted to ‘reinforce’ her previous knowledge of graphic design.

Teachers

Alonso

28 years old. He graduated from the National School of Plastic Arts. When I met him, he was running the graphic design workshop. He has worked in various projects as a freelance designer.

Christian

40 years old. He studied Plastic Arts and he graduated from the School of Arts and Sculpture. When I met him, he was about to start teaching the workshop ‘art and performance’. Alongside his job at FARO, he was working in another arts organisation and he produced music for publicity purposes.

Antonia

She studied Media and Communications and had graduated from a public university. When I met her, she was about to start teaching the workshop ‘community journalism’. Alongside her job at FARO, I was told she worked on personal projects and as journalist.

Ignacio

He studied Plastic Arts and had graduated from the School of Arts and Sculpture. When I met him, he was running the ‘painting’ workshop and the project with the National History Museum.

Luis

Luis did an arts residency at FARO. He stayed at FARO for about a month in order to teach the production of objects based on recycled plastic. Soon after he left the organisation, another teacher, Ernesto, took over the workshop.

Ernesto

Ernesto studied Plastic Arts. When I met him (approximately in mid-May), he was in charge of the workshop that Luis had started.

Pablo

Pablo did an arts residency at FARO. He stayed at FARO for about a month in order to teach techniques of graffiti.