

La Familia Michoacana's discourse and quest to power



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List of acronyms

CNDH	Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos	National Commission for Human Rights
CONEVAL	Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social	National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development
DFD	Dirección Federal de Seguridad	Federal Department for Security
DTO	Organización de narcotráfico	Drug trafficking organization
INEGI	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía	National Institute for Statistic and Geogrpahy
ITAM	Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México	Autonomous Institute of Technology Mexico
ISN	International Relations and Security Network	
NAFTA	Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte	North American Free Trade Agreement
PAN	Partido de Acción Nacional	National Action Party
PGR	Procuraduría General de La República	Attorney General of the Republic of Mexico
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional	Institutional Revolutionary Party
UNDP	Programe de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo	United Nations Development Programme
WOLA	Washington Office on Latin America	

Map of Mexico and the drug cartels



Source: Stratfor

Map of Michoacán



Source: Explorando Mexico

Introduction

The violence in Mexico

Violence in Mexico is taking on a new extreme and is making headline news all over the world because of the number of drug related deaths and gruesome tactics used by drug cartels. The number of drug related deaths attributed to disputes between different drug trafficking organizations for important trafficking routes were registered at 20,000 from 2001 to 2009 (Astorga and Shirk 2010:4). But alone in 2010, 15,000 deaths were registered totaling at 35,000 deaths since 2006. For this reason, drug trafficking organizations pose a serious threat to the power of the Mexican state in many parts. These figures lead to questions such as: What is going on in Mexico? Why is there so much drug related violence?

Evidently, drug trafficking organizations have become a major threat to the Mexican state because of the power they have obtained. Mexican drug trafficking organizations challenge the power of the Mexican state in order to establish their own control over territories that constitute key trafficking routes for illicit drugs. This is supported by an article published in 2008, in which the head of Mexico's intelligence service, Guillermo Valdez told the Financial Times and was later quoted in BBC News that drug cartels had "become the principle threat because they are trying to take over the power of the state"¹. He continues by stating that "The gangs, (...) had grown wealthy from lucrative drug trade and had recruited members of police forces, the judiciary and government organizations in order to protect their business" (Ibid: 2008). In this way drug trafficking organizations exert power over a population and over state institutions, in order to obtain leverage as oppose to other drug cartels and the state so that their

¹ See article "Mexican cartels threaten state" (BBC News 2008).

operations occur without any complications. The next question which is asked is what has the State done to address this violence?

Faced with the question of how to address drug related violence and how to bring about security to the country once more, the Mexican State has taken several measures towards ensuring security including: the implementation of the Merida Initiative and the 'Public Security' policy; the deployment of military troops in key cities; and institutional reforms in the judiciary and law enforcement sectors (Astorga and Shirk 2010:5). One of the strategies used was the deployment of troops to the most violent areas in order to regain control over the drug infested states, municipalities and state forces and to decrease the numbers of deaths in the country. The first state where the deployment of troops was implemented was Michoacán. This strategy has allowed the Mexican State to capture important drug lords in the past months however; the problem still remains as daily news continue to report an increasing death toll, violence and even the displacement of people. In recent months mass graves containing the remains of 279 (Reuters 2011)² were found in the state of Tamaulipas in the city of San Fernando which are attributed to one of the deadliest drug syndicates in Mexico, Los Zetas. Ciudad Juarez has been named the murder capital of the world, with 1,037 deaths registered in only the first six months of 2011 (Manning 2011)³. And in Michoacán, the stronghold of La Familia Michoacana it has been reported that fighting resulted in the displacement of 25,000 (BBC 2011).⁴

What at first glance may seem to be an armed conflict like many others around the world, Mexico's drug trafficking problem is much more complex and is rather like no other around the world, in fact it is very difficult to classify and categorize this conflict. This is made clear in a

² See article "Body count from Mexican mass graves nears 300". (Reuters 2011).

³ See article "Ciudad Juarez Murder Rate, Tipping Over 1,000 in 2011, Show Signs of Abating". (Latino Fox News 2011)

⁴ See article: "Mexico gang violence displaces thousands in Michoacán". (BBC 2011).

comment by U.S. Foreign Secretary Hillary Clinton at the Council for Foreign Relations in September 2010, which created alarm and disapproval by Mexican officials when she was quoted as saying that Mexico is “looking more and more like Colombia looked 20 years ago” and “Drug cartels (...) ‘are showing more and more indices of insurgencies’” (BBC 2010)⁵. A immediate response and clarification of the situation in Mexico by Alejandro Poire, the spokesman for Calderon’s government, assured that “the only aspect that the Mexican and Colombian conflicts share is their root cause - a high demand for drugs in the US” and “denied that the presence of drug cartels was tantamount to an insurgency, insisting that ‘all the efforts of the Mexican state were going into fighting criminals’” (Poire in Ibid 2010). From this clarification, it is made clear that the Mexican state does not classify this as an internal conflict and nor does it fit the category of an ethnic conflict.

Clearly, there is a lack of a clear classification or categorization of this particular conflict since not even classic data bases classify this as an armed conflict. This aspect is precisely what makes it difficult to understand and to study the situation in Mexico. But what then can this conflict be categorized as? How is it possible to ‘name’ and ‘study’ this violence? Although the violence in Mexico is complex, it is worth analyzing and trying to find a name for it because it is obvious that non-state actors are contesting the power of the state and are weakening it through strategies and tactics which ensure the maximization of their profits. The examination of the complex dynamics of interaction involving the state, the drug trafficking organizations and the population are crucial to understanding the power play that is taking place in the territories in Mexico. This study is relevant because only then can a more encompassing policy be created that can work

⁵ See article “Clinton says Mexico drug crime like an insurgency” (BBC News 2010).

towards ending the violence and bringing to justice the high number of cases where impunity reigns and which has cost the lives of 35,000 people.

Studies and an academic gap

Due to the magnitude of the violence present in Mexico, there are many newspaper articles and analysis written about Mexico. A number of studies have sought to answer the question as to why violence has escalated and reached an unprecedented high in the past years. These studies have linked the escalation of violence to state power and policy, a topic addressed vastly by leading academics and experts such as Freeman (2005), Astorga and Shirk (2010)⁶, Grayson (2010, 2011) Sullivan (2010) and Bailey and Taylor (2009). They attribute the violence to the collapse of the PRI's power structure based on clientelist relations and a change in policy in 2000 that resulted in a strain in relations between the government and drug trafficking organizations. However, from a previous review of the literature, an apparent void in research consisted in a lack of analysis concerning the discursive strategies used by drug trafficking organizations to contest the power of the state. Mainly for this reason, it is important to contribute to the discussion of the role of the drug cartels in the society and the response of both the state and the society. In order to conduct such an analysis an emphasis will be placed Ferguson and Gupta's concepts of state spatiality and transnational governmentality. The analysis of the spatial dimensions which the drug trafficking organizations seek to fill is vital for the understanding of the contesting of power in the Mexican state's war against drugs. Therefore the framework of state spatiality is complemented by discourse analysis since discursive strategies are imperative to drug cartels because in this way they establish verticality and encompassment and secure a parallel authority to the state.

⁶ Luis Astorga is one of the leading experts in Mexico concerning security and drug trafficking.

The structure of the paper

The question leading my research is how La Familia contests the power of the state and establishes spatiality through discourse. In this paper I propose an experimental research to study the complex dynamics in Mexico involving the three actors through the lens of power relations, discourse theory and state spatiality. This case study will focus on the state of Michoacán and the drug cartel known as La Familia.

To analyze this question the paper is divided into four chapters. The first chapter examines the concepts of state spatiality and transnational governmentality by Ferguson and Gupta and integrates it to discourse analysis. Ferguson and Gupta's core argument is that the state is imagined and establishes verticality and encompassment through the implementation of rules and routines dictated from above (verticality) and enforced on the same level of society (encompassment). This is done through discursive strategies such as narratives, performances and inscriptions. It becomes clear how these two theories are integrated in order to be applied to the three levels: drug trafficking organizations, the state and the population. The second chapter examines whether La Familia Michoacana challenges state spatiality and establishes its own verticality and encompassment, through discursive strategies such as narco-propaganda, ideology and the provision of basic services. This consists in first a form analysis, second a function analysis that addresses the question what does La Familia's discourse do? And third, a structural analysis addresses the question of why a discourse resonates or not. The answer to this question is complemented by the economic, political and contexts present in Mexico. The third chapter examines the response of the Mexican state to challenges of spatiality. This section specifically addresses the discursive strategies used by the state to respond to threats posed by drug

trafficking organizations in the past and currently. For this reason, it looks at how the PRI established and maintained spatiality and compares it to the strategy implemented by Calderon since 2006. In this way, this paper seeks to understand the reasons for the escalation of violence from a perspective focusing on the state. Chapter four examines the three possible responses of the society towards drug trafficking organizations and the state's discourse and strategy. The responses range from support, to submission, silence and inaction and to mobilization and non-violent protests. Finally, conclusions will be drawn regarding La Familia's contesting of power to establish its own spatiality and recommendations will be provided for the creation of an integrated policy taking into account the society.

Methodology

The data collection technique used for this paper was mainly in-depth research of literature regarding Mexico such as policy papers and academic journals. These articles came from academic journals and databases. I was also able to use local, national and international media articles and government official documents such as press releases, speeches and official documents which I was able to analyze in its original language, due to my fluency in Spanish which also allowed me to do all the translations in this paper. The original quotes in Spanish have been placed as footnotes for further reference. I conducted a few interviews with Mexican experts, academics and journalists via e-mail or Skype, however, these interviews are not the main sources used for my analysis. In addition, I used internet sites such as YouTube or LexisNexis to find and review interviews conducted by other people regarding La Familia Michoacán, from which I was able to obtain usable testimonies which have been incorporated into my thesis. These interviews were conducted by known journalists who focuses mainly on

the issue of security in Mexico; therefore the interviews obtained were mainly of the most sought out experts on the topics. Apart from YouTube, I also used social media networks such as Twitter, Facebook, and El Blog del Narco to follow news updates regarding current issues in Mexico. Twitter was particularly important, because it allowed me to follow the most up to date news on the mass demonstrations that occurred during the research of this thesis.

The constraints and limitations that this research project faced was that I was unable to do field research and for this reason, I limited my research to secondary sources such as literature that included policy papers, academic articles published in journals written by academics and experts on Mexico's security problem, and newspaper articles. The limited interviews was also due to the fact that I did not do field research in Mexico. People who were willing to grant interviews had limited time to do so, and time differences proved to be a difficulty. Also, I had limited contacts in Mexico and the ones that I contacted for interviews provided me with some information and later ceased to respond their e-mails or telephones mainly because they were too busy. Although I insisted, there is only so much that one can do when conducting interviews from abroad. Another restraint was that due to fear people were not very willing to answer the questions of a complete stranger through the internet. However, the people that I was able to contact and interview provided me with good insights which I was later able to confirm with the literature sources that I came to collect.

Chapter One

State spatiality and discourse: an approach to analyze La Familia

The naming and studying of the violence in Mexico is difficult because there is no clear classification for this type of conflict resulting from drug related violence. For this reason, I argue for an experimental study of this power play based on the ideas of state spatiality and transnational governmentality by Ferguson and Gupta, in particular by studying the discursive strategies and practices deployed by La Familia Michoacana, the case-study of this paper. The integration of state spatiality combined with discourse analysis provide an adequate analytical framework to examine the performances, inscriptions and narratives as well as the provision of services used by La Familia to contest state spatiality. This framework is also ample enough to study the discursive strategies used by the Mexican State and the population in response to the challenges by said cartel. First it is crucial to understand the concepts of state spatialization, transnational governmentality and discourse analysis in order to apply it to the violence in Mexico, thus serving as a foundation for the upcoming chapters.

Ferguson and Gupta's 'state spatiality'

In their article "Spatializing States: Towards an Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality", Ferguson and Gupta argue for an anthropology of the state through which the state should be taken for what it is: "powerful sites of symbolic and cultural production that are themselves always culturally represented and understood in particular ways"(2002:981). For this reason, the authors argue that 'the state' should not be taken for granted but should rather be taken as 'out there' (Ibid). Consequently, states should be studied as a political imagined construction which uses discourse to establish itself as 'above' and 'around' (Ibid: 982). Ferguson and Gupta use the

term 'state spatiality' to explain how the state constructs the two basic images of 'verticality' (above) and 'encompassment' (around) (Ibid:982).

These two images refer to the two levels that symbolize how the state builds its power based on "efforts to manipulate and plan" the society "from above", while at the same time the state is located at a lower level in "even widening series of circles that begins with the family and local community and ends with the system of nation-states" (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:982). The first image "verticality" creates the sense that the state is situated above the citizen through whom policies are developed and implemented in a "top down" direction (Ibid). The second image "encompassment" gives the sense that the state everywhere or all around its citizens and as a result the state is involved in all their activities and way of life (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:982). When combining these two images, the state is seen as an entity that reaches down into the community while at the same time is present in all the society's activities and thus manipulates, plans and controls the society (Ibid:983). Essentially, this explanation of the two images in itself describes the relation that the state has with society as something that has been constructed or imagined (Ibid:983). This very aspect regarding the "social and imaginative processes through which state verticality is made effective and authoritative" is the main point of the idea proposed by Ferguson and Gupta (Ibid:983). Furthermore, these authors argue the very concept of the images of state vertical encompassment is important because it plays a role in routine and practices of the state (Ibid:983).

These "spatial orders" as Ferguson and Gupta name them are manifested through "discursive representations of the state, but also implicit, unmarked signifying practices" which in turn can "alter how bodies are oriented, how lives are lived, and how subjects are formed" (Ibid:984). One concrete example which illustrates this concept is state regulation or surveillance at a border

(Ibid:984) or even a surprise inspection at a local children's center controlled and supervised by the state (Ibid:985-987). This construction of an image of the state essentially determines how it is imagined and how through some basic properties states are able "to secure their legitimacy, to naturalize their authority, and to represent themselves as superior to, and encompassing of, other institutions and centers of power" (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:982). In essence, this is how power is understood.

Transnational Governmentality

As a complementing part of their idea of state spatialization, Ferguson and Gupta examine what they term as transnational governmentality. Transnational governmentality refers to how state spatialization or state power can be contested by local actors who want to establish verticality and encompassment in their own ways (Ibid:988). The idea of transnational governmentality stems from Foucault's concept of governmentality because it "draws attention to all the processes by which the conduct of a population is governed: by institutions and agencies, including the state; by discourses, norms and identities; and by self-regulation, techniques for the disciplining and care of the self" (Ibid:989). Ferguson and Gupta's well founded analysis seeks to extend Foucault's theory to include transnational alliances; where the focus is placed mainly on the civil society and non-governmental organizations (Ibid:990), whilst at the same time mentioning 'sub national' or resurging civil society (Ibid:993).

Ferguson and Gupta's work only briefly touches upon guerrilla insurrections as challengers of the state, and it mentions Bayart et al.'s work the 'criminalization of the state' (2002:994). The criminalization of the state describes the challengers of a state as being "highly organized transnational forms of criminality that so often exist in such a symbiotic partnership with the

state”⁷ (Currey 2002), instead of the more common challengers which consist of international or non-governmental organizations (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:994). In particular, Bayart et al. argue that the ‘criminalization of the state’ can be witnessed mostly in African countries (2002:994). However, if the argument highlighted by Currey is taken into consideration, I would dare to add that it could also be present in Mexico and more specifically during the rule of the PRI. In their work, Ferguson and Gupta provide an explanation as to the existence of political entities and organizations that constitute transnational governmentality. These entities organize a range of activities such as building schools and clinics “where states have failed to do so” (Bornstein 2001 in Ferguson and Gupta 2002:994). In effect, it is argued that “This apparatus does not replace the older system of nation-states (which is- let us be clear- not about to disappear) but overlays and coexists with it” (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:994).

Discourse analysis

Framing: Definition and Concepts

The image of state spatiality and governmental transnational governmentality only becomes visible through discursive strategies such as performances, inscriptions and narratives. In this way, discourse becomes intertwined with the idea of state spatiality.

Discourse analysis is based on the principles of framing. In order for discursive structures to be formed and reproduce, frames must be present. According to Benford and Snow, frames consist of schemata of interpretation which allow for the construction of meaning (2000:614). Jabri argues that framing occurs when ‘an actor’s judgment of issues in conflict as well as his/her perceptions of the enemy’s motives and capabilities are influenced by a set of pre-existing

⁷ Bayart et al., “suggests that the state itself is becoming a vehicle for organized criminal activity” (James Currey Publishers, 1999 Abstract).

formats and prejudices' (1996:66). Particularly interesting for understanding the discursive strategies used by drug cartels in Mexico could be concepts such as: counter-framing; the prognostic dimension which focus on refutations of the logic or effective solutions; and motivational, boundary and adversarial framing⁸ (Benford and Snow 2000:617-623). The processes through which frames are developed include: the discursive process, which are speech and acts that consist in frame articulation and frame amplification; the strategic process which use frames to obtain a specific goal; and the contested process which deal with counter-framing and framing contests (Ibid:623-625). In essence Goffman states that "frames help to render events and occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organize experience and guide action" (Ibid:614). These frames are articulated through discursive processes which can be classified as talk, conversations or speech acts (Ibid:623).

Discourse Analysis: Definition and Concepts

What is discourse?

The concise explanation of frames helps to answer the question, what is discourse? Discourse is ultimately the use of words and images that make sense of the world around us (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002:61). Jorgensen and Phillips' definition of discourse states that "Discourse encompasses not only written and spoken language but also visual images" (2002:61). These authors go on to describe the discursive practice, which provides a solid basis for understanding discourse analysis:

⁸ Boundary framing and adversarial framing as stated in Benford and Snow's work is related to what Jabri denotes as a "us and them" divide and the war mood through which there is a structural dualism (Jabri 1996:108) through which the self is seen as courageous and civil while the other is seen as 'barbaric and diabolical'"(Ibid:108).

Discursive practices- through which texts are *produced* (created) and *consumed* (received and interpreted) – are viewed as an important form of social practice which contributes to the *constitution* of the social world including social identities and social relations. It is partly through discursive practices in everyday life (processes of text production and consumption) that social and cultural reproduction and change take place. It follows that some societal phenomena are not of a linguistic-discursive character” (2002:61)

Fairclough provides another definition in what he calls the “Three Dimensional Model” (1993). Discourse is referred by Fairclough in three different ways: first, discourse “refers to *language use as social practices*”; second, “discourse is understood as the *kind of language used within a specific field*, such as political or scientific discourse”; and third discourse is referred to as “*a way of speaking which gives meaning to experiences from a particular perspective*” (Fairclough 1993:138 in Jorgensen and Phillips 2002:67). These definitions of discourse and in specific the third concept provided by Fairclough is important to keep in mind because together they create the essence of discourse analysis.

In addition, discourse can come in the form of “structures, strategies or other properties of text, talk, verbal interaction or communicative events” which draw upon frames (van Dijk 1993:250). Here the link between frames and discourse becomes apparent because it is precisely the articulation of frames that create discourse which consequently can lead to action. According to some academics, discourse is action! (Demmers, forthcoming, chapter 6). And so, it is essentially frames, labels and the use of language which can lead to a sort of action. In addition, in order for discourse to spur action, it has to be two things. First, it has to be politically functional

(Demmers 2010)⁹, which means that it can be used by politicians in a profitable way so that their message can come across and move masses. Second, discourse can be socially meaningful, which means that people use discourse to make sense of their complex lives and realities (Ibid).

What are the potential effects of discourse?

Precisely this aspect of discourse as action is what leads to the question, what are the potential effects of discourse? Since discourse can lead to action, discourse becomes an important aspect of power mainly because the person or groups that control the discourse are the ones who give meaning to events that are occurring around them. As a result, discourse plays a crucial role for the legitimization of actions within a society. Exactly this point is argued by van Dijk and Demmers. Van Dijk argues that, discourse analysis takes one step further from framing to a systematic analysis of causes, conditions and consequences of the issues at hand in order to provide a deeper understanding of the role of discourse and the link to dominance structures (1993:253). Furthermore, van Dijk's work emphasizes the importance of the relationship between discourse, power and access to communication sources in order to have access to the minds of the population (Ibid:254-255). Ultimately, the use of discourse can lead to the control of cognition, and thus consensus, acceptance or legitimacy of the discourse (Ibid: 254-255).¹⁰ In addition, Demmers points out that discourse can be named the 'politics of portrayal' since it fulfills two purposes (forthcoming, chapter 6). The first is recruitment which is based on the "us versus them" divide and the second is to legitimize violence (Ibid).

What is discourse analysis?

⁹ Demmers, J. Sheets Lecture of Analysis: Discourse Analysis, Handout on Discourse analysis. 200600334 Analysis of Conflict. Utrecht University, unpublished.

¹⁰ Paul Bass's work on discourse of violence raises an interesting point regarding power and dominance. He states that because he states that actors seek to dominate the discourse because the victor in the struggle for discourse will ultimately have the power over resources and policy (1996:2-5).

What van Dijk and Demmers describe in the previous passage is what has become in recent years a particularly important analytical framework in the analysis of conflict, namely discourse analysis. Jabri argues that discourse analysis is an approach which makes use of language and interpretative schemes to reproduce discursive structures which give meaning and can provide legitimacy (1996:94). Therefore, the aim of discourse analysis is the identification of “structures, strategies or other properties of text, talk, verbal interaction or communicative events” which help to determine how these modes affect power relations (van Dijk 1993: 250). In essence, discourse analysis is an approach through which violence and conflict can be analyzed.

When considering the traditional frameworks available for the analysis of conflict, discourse analysis takes a step forward from agency and structure based theories and combines it with discourse. Agency theory of conflict “locates the causes of conflict at the level of individual or collective agency” which means that conflict can be caused by the social identity of a person (Demmers 2010). The core of this conflict theory is the individual or a collective agency. Structure theory of conflict “locates the cause of the conflict in the organization of society” (Ibid). The core of this theory is social structures which consist of rules that enable and constrain us in life (Ibid). Social structures exist in a duality because we make them and we are made by them (Ibid). In this way, social structures which can be created by individuals are ‘materialized’ in discourses and institutions (Ibid). In consequence, in order to reiterate what was mentioned before, the discourse analysis approach to conflict takes a step forward from the other theories of conflict and places a greater emphasis in the construction of words and images. The discursive approach analyzes the role that agency and structure play on life and how the images and words formed can lead to actions such as dehumanization, which can ultimately lead to violence and conflict.

In order to establish the link between discourse and violence, a brief examination of the definition of violence is necessary. Schröder and Schmidt quote David Riches' work which defines violence as "the assertion of power or (...) an act of physical hurt deemed legitimate by the performer and by some witnesses" (Riches 1986:8 in Schröder and Schmidt 2001:3). As a result, the link between discourse and violence becomes evident in that they both share intricate relations with power and legitimacy and because discourse can incite to violence and can at the same time legitimize it. Violence and discourse also share another link which Schröder and Schmidt term as "performative quality", which is that both violence and discourse are socially meaningful (Schröder and Schmidt 2001:5). This relation between discourse and violence is exactly what discourse analysis attempts to understand in the field of conflict studies. Said analysis can be done in a variety of ways, however the most important for this case study are those employed by Schröder and Schmidt.

Schröder and Schmidt's idea of violent imaginary provides an important insight into the very relation between discourse and violence. Two important premises regarding violence and war are emphasized in Schröder and Schmidt's work. The first premise is that "violence needs to be imagined in order to be carried out" (2001:9). The second premise builds on the first and maintains that "wars are fought from memory and they are often fought over memory, over the power to establish one group's view of the past as the legitimate one" (Ibid:9). An interpretation of these ideas can lead to classifying violent imaginaries as a process through which violence or war, as Schroeder and Schmidt describe it, are "framed in a code of legitimation that declares the assertion of interests to be related to moral imperatives" (Ibid:9). Once again it is important to identify the link between framing, discourse and violence. Schröder and Schmidt's work on discourse and violence provides a useful insight on violent imaginaries and specifically

narratives, performances and inscriptions, which all consist of representative strategies that are highly manipulated and depend widely on the social context that they are implemented in (2001:9). In discourse analysis the starting point are narratives.

Narratives are used to “keep the memory of former conflicts and past violence alive in stories, either by glorifying one’s own groups achievements and benefits (cf. Meeker 1979; Rosaldo 1980) or by the perceived injustices, losses or suffering incurred by one’s own group” (Schröder and Schmidt 2001:10).

Performances are “performative representations of violent confrontations are public rituals in which antagonistic relationships are staged and prototypical images of violence enacted” (Schröder and Schmidt 2001:10).

Inscriptions are the texts of violent imaginaries through which “images displayed on banners or murals (cf. Jarman 1997; Peteet 1996)” (Schröder and Schmidt 2001:10). Here the use of the banners, murals and the media is crucial (Ibid: 10).

These three representations are worth analyzing because they explain a wide range of strategies which are used in violent settings. Most importantly, these three violent imaginaries can be identified in the case of Mexico and so they are important reference points which will be referred back to when analyzing the discursive strategies utilized by La Familia as well as by the Mexican State. The other essential aspects which have been mentioned before and which should be kept in mind for the analysis in the upcoming sections is the role of power, dominance and legitimation. These elements are a crucial part of the drug trafficking problem that Mexico faces when analyzing the contesting of power between La Familia and the State. Therefore, for this to be a complete analysis it is important to link power to violent imaginaries and attempt to identify

discursive strategies used by drug trafficking organizations, the State and the society . In the next section there will be an attempt to merge and synthesize the ideas of state spatiality and transnational governmentality with discourse. This is necessary because it will provide an adequate framework which can be used in the case study of Mexico and the drug related violence. This framework will be useful to examine how La Familia uses discursive strategies to contest the power and how the State and the Mexican society respond to this challenge.

Merging state spatiality, transnational governmentality and discourse analysis

Now that the fundamental concepts and ideas of state spatiality, transnational governmentality and discourse analysis have been provided, it is important to link these concepts to the case study of Mexico. For this I argue for an expansion of Ferguson and Gupta's framework in order to link it to the discursive approach. The reason for this expansion is that Ferguson and Gupta's framework does not place an emphasis on actors of transnational governmentality that are not politically oriented such as is the case with transnational criminal organizations. According to some academics, drug trafficking organizations do not have political aspirations but are rather driven by the maximizations of profits. Using this primary assumptions, this work seeks to examine how these *other* 'entities' can also form a part of the transnational apparatus of 'governmentality' which are situated in a coexistence horizontal level that challenge the state from below (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:994).

As mentioned before, Ferguson and Gupta classify contemporary challengers to state spatiality as non state actors that consist mainly in civil society organizations or actors with political aspirations. The former refers to international or non-governmental organizations, whereas the latter refers to guerillas or insurgencies. However, said authors do not mention other non state

actor such as, criminal organizations who also contest the state's power but whose main objectives is the maximization of profit and not necessarily political power or the replacement of the government. As a result, this analysis moves away from the traditional civil society organizations or political entities such as guerrillas or insurgencies who contest the state's power and attempts to understand how other organizations such as criminal organizations also contest the state's power. Therefore, this analysis expands the application of state spatiality to examine non state actors who do not actively pursue a political agenda or motives, but who nonetheless make use of discursive strategies and the provision of services to challenge the state's authority.

The link between state spatiality and discourse becomes evident in Mexico in the revision of literature regarding drug trafficking, where concrete examples illustrate the strategies used by drug cartels to justify their use of violence in an attempt to obtain certain degree of authority and power. Although these strategies did not necessarily obtain affinity or support from the population, the use of use of narratives, inscription and performances¹¹ are essential since these constitute the discursive strategies which are evidently used by drug trafficking organizations to ensure some sort of authority. Discourse analysis aims at identifying these "structures, strategies or other properties of text, talk, verbal interaction or communicative events" in Michoacán in order to determine how these modes affect power relations. Therefore, the strategies used by drug trafficking organizations to contest the state's spatiality are of upmost interest to this analysis. In addition, it is essential to examine how drug cartels are able to create a sort of "criminal spatialization" instead of "state spatialization" through discursive strategies in order to change the daily rituals and routines of the society. Through the changing of everyday practices, the establishment of verticality and encompassment is confirmed as people begin to follow the

¹¹ Schröder and Schmidt term these three strategies as being a part of their violent imaginary idea.

new rules in a society without questioning them mainly due to fear. This is evident in places such as the state of Michoacán where images, inscriptions and performances are present in everyday events and situations and should be analyzed. For this, Schröder and Schmidt's text enriches the analysis bringing together the two analytical frameworks.

Applying the analytical framework on three different levels: drug cartels, state and society

This analytical framework will first examine how Mexican drug trafficking organizations use discursive strategies to establish their power and authority as a 'parallel power'¹² to the state and how they justify their use of violence and their presence. The contesting of state power by drug trafficking organizations is done through discourse and the provision of services which usually pertain to the state. The use of discourse allows drug cartels to create norms, self-regulating mechanisms (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:989) and to charge protection fees. The self-regulating mechanisms include censorship and self-censorship of the media in the north and other drug infested towns in Mexico. State functions, such as the provision of security and employment are also overtaken by drug trafficking organizations. As a result, the Mexican population in some cities and towns find that they are in fact helpless and cannot do anything about changes which become part of their everyday routine and which are imposed on them by this so called "new power". The reason for inaction is due mainly to fear for their life which is a very likely outcome if they decide to act against these drug trafficking organizations.

¹² The term "parallel power" is used in some articles on regarding Mexico's drug trafficking problem. For example it was mentioned in Grayson, when he referred to a statement made by a former PAN politician (2010:124) and by Logan in an article entitled "Mexico's Parallel Power" (July 2006). This term must be used with precaution since this could imply that drug trafficking organizations are looking to obtain political power, when in fact they are making use of corrupt and weak institutions and their officials and make it work to their advantage.

Complementing the analysis of the discursive strategies used by drug trafficking organizations to establish verticality and encompassment are the responses of the Mexican State and the society with regard to the strategies used by the drug trafficking organizations to control a specific area. On a state level, the development of verticality and encompassment by drug cartels has implications for the strategy implemented by the state in different parts of the country. For this reason, it is important to understand how state spatiality was established by the Mexican State in the past. An examination of the policies and practices applied during the rule of the PRI is important because it provides an important insight as to why there is radical change in policy and an increase and escalation of violence in recent years. After this foundation has been laid, an examination of the discursive strategies and strategies by the current administration to deconstruct the discourse of the drug trafficking organizations will be conducted. In this section, it is imperative to combine the concepts of state spatiality and discursive strategies to better understand the goal of state policy in addressing the drug trafficking problem. A critical analysis of the State's discourse and strategy should be carried out in order to determine what have been the actual successes and consequences of the State policy and what this has meant for its population.

Finally, the society's response to the discourse of drug trafficking organizations and the State will be analyzed using the state spatiality and discursive strategies framework. Although, it has been argued countless times by the current Mexican State that its policy aims at the re-establishment of public security, it can be argued it has not been successful and that the society's needs have not been met. The society has not been considered a focal point for the envisioning and implementation of a State policy, but has rather slipped into the background. For this reason, a systematic analysis of the discursive strategies used by drug trafficking organizations to

contest state power will provide an insight as to the role that society should play in order for it to come to the forefront of the problem, since the society is the one who is receiving the messages from drug trafficking organizations and who has been responding to this. Finally, I argue that the mobilization of people through non-violent demonstrations can be considered an expression of transnational governmentality. The reason for this is that society and civil society organizations begin to challenge the state and its policies due to the escalation of violence which have been caused by drug trafficking organizations and have been justified with discursive strategies such as narratives, inscriptions and performances, but have also been caused by the State.

Chapter 2

Sincerely, La Familia: La Familia's discourse and strategies to contest State spatiality

There have been many ways in which the power of the state has been contested by drug cartels in Mexico; the most noticeable one has been through the use of violence that entails deadly attacks on rival cartels, state and law enforcement officials and the society as a whole. However, a hidden strategy, not thoroughly analyzed, has to do with the discursive strategies that drug cartels use as they seek “to shape perception and intimidate adversaries” which translates into a contest of power as to who determines the rules of the game (Sullivan 2010). Durango’s PAN President has stated, “that a form of ‘parallel state’ existed in which criminals carried out the traditional government functions such as collecting taxes (in the form of extortion) and providing security (in return for payments)” in some parts of the country (Grayson 2010:124). In 2010, John P. Sullivan described the situation as follows: “Mexico is in the midst of a significant conflict between drug cartels and the state. This war for control of illicit economic space (transnational drug trafficking and the criminal economy) is also a battle for legitimacy, turf and power” (2010). One of these drug cartels is La Familia Michoacana.

La Familia Michoacana became publically known in 2006 in the state of Michoacán. Some analysts have identified the early formation of La Familia in the 1980’s as a vigilant group with emphasis on “help and protection to the poor” (Logan and Sullivan 2009).¹³ According to Finnegan, an investigator and journalists, La Familia can be classified as unique because “they kind of present themselves as an insurgency and a kind of self-defense organization in

¹³ Padgett confirms the formation of La Familia as an “anticrime vigilant group” and adds “its early leaders soon got sucked into drug trafficking” (2010). Professor Samuel Gonzalez Ruiz describes the social structure of La Familia as: The group is believed to have originated in the 1980s as a loose self-protecting coalition between marijuana and opium farmers in the state of Michoacán. By the 1900s the farmers, who had formed an alliance with the neighboring Gulf cartel, were running a profitable smuggling business (Gibbs 2009).

Michoacán rather than simply another criminal enterprise” (2010). In 2006, La Familia’s leaders wanted to drive the cartel Los Valencias out of Michoacán and as a result broke ties with their former allies including Los Zetas (Ibid: 198), with the main objective to take sole control of the “plazas” in Michoacán, an important drug trafficking route. With the years La Familia underwent a transformation from vigilant group into “Mexico’s most unique criminal organization, one that has proven its power and influence at least within Michoacán and the neighboring states of Guerrero, Mexico and Jalisco” (Logan and Sullivan 2009).¹⁴

I contend that La Familia Michoacana¹⁵ provides a specific case study where the concepts of Ferguson and Gupta regarding “state spatiality” and “transnational governmentality” can be analyzed more in-depth. La Familia¹⁶ contests the power of the state through discursive strategies such as: narco-propaganda; ideology; and the provision of basic services such as security. Narratives, inscriptions and performances help to create an “us versus them” divide and the political, economic and cultural contexts allow the discourse to resonate or not.

La Familia’s use of discursive strategies to contest State spatiality

La Familia’s narco-propaganda

The uniqueness of La Familia relates not only to its origins and evolution but also to the strategies it used, a “combination of paramilitary and psychological tactics” (Logan and Sullivan 2009). The psychological tactics were diffused through discursive strategies, coined as “narco-

¹⁴ This point is also affirmed by Finnegan, when he says that “they control most of Michoacán now and they are taking over more territory with time in Mexico”.

¹⁵ After the death of Moreno Gonzalez, a new group emerged to replace La Familia. The new group goes by the name of “Los Caballeros Templarios” (Longhi-Bracaglia 2011).

¹⁶ La Familia or “The Michoacán Family” in Spanish emerged as a vigilant group against the oppressive rule of Los Zetas, who ruled Tierra Caliente (Finnegan 2010:6) as well as all other outsiders and criminals in Michoacán.

propaganda by Campbell (2011) and Sullivan (2010)¹⁷, enabling it to create and maintain an atmosphere of fear among the population which was caused by impunity¹⁸ and that has translated into silence and inaction. As time progressed, it gained more influence and was able to manipulate perceptions of the people in Michoacán. With the name, “The Michoacán Family” it established encompassment through imagery, as the name in Spanish automatically allows it to embed itself in the society as an entity that should not be feared because it looks out for the well being and the protection of the society. This encompassment is therefore founded on “*puro michoacano* self-defense rhetoric”, as pointed out by Finnegan (Ibid).

Narco-propaganda includes: narco-messages, narco-banners, written statements, flyers and killings. The “informational means” of narco-propaganda also include: “*narcobloqueos* (narcoblocades), *manifestaciones* (orchestrated demonstrations) and *narcocorridos* (or folk songs extolling cartel virtues)” (Sullivan 2010). These discursive strategies, at the disposal of La Familia, have been utilized greatly for the diffusion of their ‘divine justice’ discourse, to interact with their so called social base and maintain its support (Flores in Logan and Sullivan 2009) and to challenge the state and established its parallel authority over the population in what can be identified as a replication of the state’s spatiality.

La Familia’s first public appearance on September 6, 2006, marked the initial attempt to establish verticality and encompassment in Michoacán. This can be illustrated by one particular

¹⁷ The concept narco-propaganda has been used by some academics who study the drug violence in Mexico. Logan, Sullivan and Howard Campbell from the University of El Paso Texas, who was to publish an article regarding narco-propaganda.

¹⁸ Impunity in Mexico is caused mainly a weak justice system which fails to bring to justice perpetrators of crimes, but it also has to do with corrupt law enforcement officials who are infiltrated by drug trafficking organizations.

performance that brought with it a strong message for Michoacán's population, which has been engrained in their memory (Grayson 2011:197) and has resulted in a narrative. According to Grayson and Gibbs (2009) as well as and other sources, six severed heads were rolled onto the dance floor of a club in Uruapan with the *narco-message* that said:

La Familia doesn't kill for money; it doesn't kill women; it doesn't kill innocent people; only those who deserve to die. Everyone should know... this is divine justice" (2011:197).

The previous example uses discursive strategies to diffuse their message. Both the bodies and narco-message left on the victims, known as "corpse messaging" (Finnegan 2010)¹⁹, carried with them a strong message and justified the act as being divine justice. As mentioned before, narratives are used to keep the memory of former conflicts and past violence alive. The narrative, in this case, is formed surrounding the performances of the killings and the inscriptions of the narco-messages.

In this act, the performance essentially consists in a ritual that represents violence and confrontation and introduces the strategy that would be used from that moment on to settle disputes. This performance also ensures that an image is engrained in the population's memory as to what will happen to someone who brings disorder and insecurity to Michoacán. Executions, such as the decapitations, gradually became a method widely used to scare and send intimidating messages to the population. Grayson argues that although this killing was "used for completely

¹⁹ According to Finnegan, corpse messaging consists of "Usually it involves a mutilated body—or a pile of bodies, or just a head—and a handwritten sign. 'Talked too much.' 'So that they learn to respect.' 'You get what you deserve.'" (2010).

propagandistic purposes, [it] was also designed to strike fear into the hearts of the community” (2010:36). Logan and Sullivan confirm these points by stating that:

La Familia uses beheading as ‘messages’ demonstrating their potency. Brutality is the tangible demonstration of their willingness to fight outsiders. The handwritten messages that accompany the severed heads and corpses are meant to intimidate their foes (rival cartels and the police), terrorize the population by demonstrating their power and ability to operate with impunity inhibit retaliation, and demonstrate the weakness of the government and their adversaries (2009).

The inscription, or text, serves as a warning to people who commit crimes in Michoacán. In the above mentioned case, the text makes reference to traitors of the community. According to sources, the victims of the Uruapan incident had taken part in the rape and assassination of a waitress who was involved with one of the members of La Familia, or so the narrative goes. The narco-message reflects the message that a crime in Michoacán will be punished in this way. However, Grayson also argued that narco-messages are used as narco-propaganda campaign not only to intimidate foes and terrorize the population but also to “inhibit action by the government” (2010:200). In this case, the narco-message served three purposes: first, to intimidate foes, second, to terrorize the population and third, to confirm the government’s inability to provide security, a service that La Familia gladly took over in what they call divine justice, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

All three discursive strategies, images, performances and text, combine to create one narrative that gives violence a performative quality. The performances and inscriptions used in this example became the preferred strategy for La Familia to establish verticality through

performances and rituals, which allows it to position itself above the population as the provider of security and justice. This performance also establishes encompassment in the sense that La Familia makes it clear through text that they will be watching the society's every move and that criminal acts, apart from theirs, would not be tolerated. One concrete example of encompassment is clearly represented in narco-messages left on another victim's body: This happens when you think or imagine that my eyes cannot see you and soon you will be here, greetings from La Familia. Bye" (Suverza December 2011).²⁰ In essence, La Familia's violence ultimately allows it to undermine the power of the state and in its place establish its own power in Michoacán.

Flyers and statements

After its widely publicized appearance, La Familia used a variety of other strategies to diffuse their discourse such as the distribution of flyers containing their mission, objectives and services offered (Suverza 2006). That same year, they purchased a section in two local newspapers: *El Sol de Morelia* and *La Voz de Michoacán* (Grayson 2011:200), to inform the society of their presence and goals (Suverza 2006:1):

Eradicate from the state of Michoacán kidnapping, extortion in person and by telephone, paid assassination, express kidnapping, tractor-trailer and auto theft, home robberies done by people like those mentioned, who have made the state of Michoacán an unsafe place. Our sole motive is that we love our state and are no longer willing to see our people's dignity trampled on (Juan Carlos Garcia Cornejo in Grayson 2011:212).

The publications also conveyed and justify the methods to be used to ensure security:

²⁰ Quote in Spanish: "El Poder de la Familia Michoacana": "Así sucede cuando piensas o imaginas que mis ojos no te pueden mirar y que pronto estarás aquí, La Familia te saluda. Bye, chatos" Suverza (2010).

Objective: To maintain the universal values of the people, to which they have full right. Unfortunately, in order to eradicate the ills we have mentioned, we have had to resort to robust strategies, as we have seen that this is the only way to bring order to the state. We will not allow it to get out of control again (Juan Carlos Garcia Cornejo in Grayson 2011:212).

In addition, La Familia used interviews to diffuse further its messages as shown in the exclusive interview of a Mexican journalist to its leader²¹. During the interview, Moreno Gonzalez reiterated the message printed previously on flyers and the newspapers. He also emphasized that La Familia was not and should not be considered a threat to society since they were looking to decrease the violence in the state (2006:11). The interview concluded with the message: “La Familia does not want to kill” (Suverza 2006:12).

In most of their statements, La Familia emphasizes and makes it their main objective to *bring order state*, even if this requires drastic measures (Suverza 2006:4). The constant repetition of the words and phrases such as: “La Familia does not want to kill”, “only those who deserve to die” will die and “divine justice”, as well as the constant repetition of performances such as killings and corpse-messaging, lead to the frequent reminder of its message and the justification of their action through the use of discursive strategies.

The core message of La Familia’s discourse is what is referred to as ‘divine justice’²², which is the most visible imaginary used to establish verticality. It can be compared to the France’s Louise XIV, “divine right of kings”, or in Christianity to “divine mercy” or the “divine will of

²¹ Alejandro Suverza maintained a telephone interview with Nazario Moreno Gonzalez, La Familia’s leader.

²² The term “divine justice” is used by Samuel Logan and John P Sullivan in an article which they conjointly wrote for ISN Security Watch.

God”. In both cases, power comes from above. La Familia adopts this type of imagery to place itself above the population of Michoacán. The divine justice justifies its acts no matter how gruesome or violent and thus controls the use of violence in order to obtain justice and security. In essence, the strategies used by La Familia to implement divine justice can be interpreted as a way to establish transnational governmentality and to challenge the power of the state, as a non-state actor.

La Familia also establishes encompassment within the territory of the state of Michoacán. La Familia looks to place itself around the population and establish encompassment through the ‘narrative reconstruction of reality’ (Sayyid and Zac 1998:261 in Demmers, forthcoming, chapter 6). The re-construction of reality is also done through discursive strategies mentioned previously, which are constant reminders that La Familia is everywhere and that they are watching everyone’s every move. Through the narrative reconstruction of reality in Michoacán, La Familia provides an explanation as to what is actually happening and in this way manipulates the perceptions of the population by placing itself on the same level as the society, thus ensuring encompassment in order to impose their will on people.

Digital technology: the use of social networks, e-mails and communiqués

The use of digital media has become a popular means of communication among drug trafficking organizations to address the population and effectively transmit their message (Sullivan 2010). Grayson affirms that La Familia “disseminates news of its ghastly deeds nationally through conventional media as well as by Internet videos and carefully placed narco-banners” (2011:200). The social networks used include: YouTube, Twitter and Facebook, e-mail, blogs and SMS. The sending of communiqués via e-mail to the population informs when operations

will take place or are used to clarify who might be responsible for certain attack.²³ However, the strategies that entail digital technology must be regarded critically, since it is difficult to determine who is behind the computer screen (Campbell 2011). Social networking is now being used by both the government and drug cartels, however there are blurred boundaries as to the people who providing real information and those who are merely fooling around (Ibid).

One particular example of La Familia's use of the digital media was in a grenade attack in Morelia's Independence Day celebrations in September 15, 2008. Grayson's account of this event illustrates how La Familia used e-mail and SMS to spread the message to the population that they were not the responsible for the attack and placing the blame on Los Zetas (2010:44). The message, which is reproduced in Grayson's account stated:

The suffering of the Michoacán people grips us. No more crimes against innocent people. The Zetas will pay for their acts of terrorism. Sincerely, F.M." (Elizabeth Pimentel in Grayson 2010:44).

The Media's Role

Another form narco-propaganda is diffused is through the media. While some people argue that the media has also played an important role in the drug cartel's contestation of power in Mexico, others argue that it is important that the Mexican public known what is happening. The role of

²³ Author's interview 22 March 2011 with Javier Valdez, a Mexican journalist and author of three books on drug trafficking in Mexico mentioned that there was a change of practices among Mexico. This is also affirmed by Finnegan's article "Silver or Lead" where a teacher said: "Everybody has to vary their routines, all the time," he said. I found it hard to picture how a schoolteacher could significantly vary his or her daily routine. "You just have to," he insisted. "They're watching." (Finnegan 2010).

the media in the war against drugs is an issue which is been debated in Mexico and which proves to be much more complex than at first glance.

According to O'Connor, "Cartel control is growing across Mexico, and the press is often one of the cartel's first targets. Their objective is to keep the public ignorant of their actions" (O'Connor in Sullivan 2010) and in this way, the "control over the interpretation of violence" (Brass 1996) is vital for the drug cartels' contesting of state power. Journalists in Mexico have been targeted greatly, 70 journalists have been murdered and 22 have disappeared since 2000 (CNDH: 2011).²⁴ Furthermore, "The attacks against the press, journalists and communicators not only harm the integrity and life of those who suffer the attacks, but also, it indirectly harms the society by attacking its right to information" (Ibid: 2011).²⁵ Human Rights Watch reports that journalists have resorted to self-censorship²⁶ (2011). This sort of thing is common in Mexico because journalists are fearful for their lives, since drug cartels started to terrorize them using a "levantón".²⁷ A levantón is when a journalist is picked up, forced into a car and is driven around town and is instructed whilst being beaten about the *correct* procedure of covering a story (Freeman 2006:7). This exemplifies the small margin which journalists have to maneuver in.²⁸

²⁴ Quote in Spanish: "Del 2000 a la fecha, suman 70 los periodistas que han sido asesinados y 13 desaparecidos. Además se han registrado 22 atentados a instalaciones de medios".

²⁵ Quote in Spanish: "Los agravios en contra de medios de comunicación, periodistas y comunicadores no sólo dañan la integridad y vida de quienes los sufren, sino también, de manera indirecta, lesionan a la sociedad, al vulnerar su derecho a la información".

²⁶ Human Rights Watch reports that "In spite of the increasing attacks, authorities have failed to adequately investigate and prosecute perpetrators or to protect journalists who face serious risk, generating a climate of impunity and self-censorship" (Human Rights Watch: 2011).

²⁷ "Levantón" is a term used by Lauren Freeman in her report for WOLA in 2006.

²⁸ Diego Osorno provides an insight of how journalists usually write their story the first time with all the details and then rewrite it a second time complying with the censorship stemming from organized crime (Osorno in Gil 2010). Javier Valdez confirms that "as a reporter you are always thinking about the narco and whether he is going to like your story or be upset and take it against you (Valdez in Gil 2010). Editor Martha Lopez describes how newspapers run press releases for a certain cartel instead of reporting on the actual crimes, corruption or organized crime (O'Connor 2010).

The media has also served as a vehicle for mass communications to be used by drug cartels to transmit their message to the entire population. According to Logan and Sullivan, La Familia “manages a public relations department, and it bathes in the rhetoric and culture of religious mysticism- an effective for displacing individualism with loyalty for the organizations” (2009). Gomez Martinez, known as La Tuta, ran La Familia’s public relations department and was its spokesperson (Ibid). La Tuta made an important radio appearance in July 2009, by calling into the television program known as *Voz y Solution*²⁹ and expressing La Familia’s admiration for President Calderon’s work (Grayson 2010:28). He also made strong accusations against Calderon’s Public Security Secretary Garcia (Ibid:28). La Tuta, warned the government that Garcia Luna had alliances with Los Zetas and Beltrán Leyvas and that La Familia was protecting the society against those *outsiders* (Ibid:28).

It is evident that digital technology and the media have been used in various ways by La Familia to construct a more positive image and to diffuse their message. A direct access to mass communication has proven to be of great importance to control the interpretation of violence and influence the perception of the population. In this way, encompassment is established because the population perceives that La Familia controls all of the sectors of the population. Thus, La Familia had a direct access to the controlling of the information provided, the flow of narco-propaganda and in this way can change and control the routines and practices of the society. These are all ways that La Familia displays its authority as opposed to the state, since it can control the perceptions as well as actions of the population.

²⁹ Marcos Knapps runs the television program known as *Voz y Solución*.

Divine Justice: La Familia's Ideology

First, it is important to differentiate between ideology and discourse. Purvis and Hunt's article maintains that "ideology (...) implies the existence of some link between 'interests' and 'forms of consciousnesses'" (1993:476). Discourse "focuses attention on the terms of engagement within social relations by insisting that all social relations are lived and comprehended by their participants in terms of specific linguistic or semiotic vehicles that organize their thinking, understanding and experiencing" (Ibid). Both discourse and ideology, "figure in accounts of the general field of social action mediated through communicative practices" however the main difference is that discourse focuses on "internal aspects" while ideology focus on "external aspects" of social action (Ibid). In this way, ideology and discourse are different concepts, which should not be used interchangeably as Purvis and Hunt argue (Ibid).³⁰

Once the distinction has been made, it is essential to realize that La Familia is unique mainly because of its ideology and according to Buscaglia³¹, to its religious dimension (2009). La Familia makes use of discursive strategies to articulate its ideology based on religion (Ibid:2009). It "spreads messages that might seem to come from a pacific or even biblical predicator"³² (Ibid:2009) and uses religious imagery borrowed from Eldredge's evangelical school of thought (Logan and Sullivan 2009).³³

³⁰ See Purvis and Hunt's article "Discourse, ideology, discourse ideology, discourse ideology" (1993).

³¹ Expert on National Security Issues and Academic at the ITAM.

³² Quote in Spanish: "cuando escuchas o lees sus mensajes. Esta organización lanzan mensajes que parecerían venir de un predicador pacifico, casi bíblico".

³³ According to Logan and Sullivan there are direct and indirect ties to the New Jerusalem movement and Eldredge's Wild at Heart book. John Eldredge is the founder of the Ransomed Heart Ministries in Colorado Springs. This Ministry is based on the saying: "be all that you can be" (Grayson 2010: 37,38,40). Grayson, affirms the same idea, however, in his research he got statements from the leaders of these religious trends assuring that no link could be made between them and La Familia drug cartel.

La Familia's ideology has generally been referred as being a "pseudo-Christian ideology" (Ruiz:2010) or a pseudo-religious cult (Ibid:2009). Nazario Moreno Gonzalez³⁴ used Christian principles, values and symbols to make its organization and its discourse stronger within the society of Michoacán. He appealed to the religious component of the Mexican population by incorporating a religious element into La Familia's ideology thus creating a solid social base, which he could rely on.

As mentioned previously, Eldredge's ideas can be perceived in Moreno Gonzalez's statements and wording (Grayson 2010:40 and Logan and Sullivan 2009), as well as in the book *Pensamientos de la Familia*, a sort of bible his followers read (Grayson 2010:40; Finnegan 2010; Padgett 2010; Suverza 2010). The Familia's manifesto begins with the following reflection:

I asked God for strength and he gave me difficulties to make me strong,

I asked for wisdom, and he gave me problems to resolve,

I asked for prosperity and gave me a brain and muscles to work,

I asked for courage and gave me obstacles to overcome,

I received nothing of what I asked for, but I received everything I needed.³⁵

The principles and values of "rehabilitation, empowerment, self-renewal" -concepts borrowed from Eldredge- were use to indoctrinate their followers (Grayson 2010: 37, 38, 40). "Words such as humility, service, wisdom, brotherhood, courage and God appear frequently in the Bible of La

³⁴ Nazario Moreno Gonzalez, also known as "El Más Loco" (The Craziest One) was La Familia's main leader.

³⁵ Quote in Spanish: Le pedí a dios fuerzas y me dio dificultades para hacerme fuerte, Pedí sabiduría, y me dio problemas para resolver, Pedí prosperidad y me dio cerebro y músculos para trabajar, Pedí valor y me dio obstáculos que superar, Yo no recibí nada de lo que pedí pero he recibido todo lo que necesitaba. (Pensamientos de la Familia)

Familia” (Nájar 2010).³⁶ Among the members the use of alcohol, drugs and tobacco were forbidden and respect for women was a principle ingrained into them (Ibid: 37). The indoctrination takes “six to eight week [in] intensive educational programs” where a process of brainwashing takes place. The people recruited are drug addicts, alcoholics, glue-sniffers, juvenile delinquents, who are put through this rigorous educational program, which La Familia claims to be life changing (Ibid: 37). The result of this indoctrination was the creation of “1,500 minions” who would “hold prayer meetings before going to work³⁷” (Padgett 2010).

The message of the ideology revolves around the idea of “divine justice”, which plays on the image that it is the protector and provider of justice in Michoacán. It emphasizes their standing up for the community “that feels abandoned and powerless”³⁸ and in this way filling in for an “ineffective government” (Logan and Sullivan 2009). In other words, La Familia uses ideology to place itself, once more, above the community and at the same level as the state by providing a service traditionally pertaining to the government and justifying it in a discursive manner. Logan and Sullivan write, “By embracing the ethos, language and imagery of a religious divinely sanctioned group, they ensure group cohesion and cultural autonomy, and reinforce political and social control” (2009). According to Astorga, “La Familia ‘believed too much in its own myth,’ which also led it to believe it could not only pay off or intimidate government and business — it thought it could actually be Mexico's government and business, or at least Michoacán's” (in Padgett 2010); therefore, challenging the state’s power through the use of images and performances.

³⁶ Quote in Spanish: “Palabras como humildad, servicio, sabiduría, hermandad, valor y Dios aparecen con frecuencia en La Biblia de La Familia” (Nájar 2010).

³⁷ Work in this case means going to kill, kidnap or extort. The use of the word “work” could be compared similar to the word “work” used during the Rwandan genocide, through which Hutu propaganda classified mass killings as work.

³⁸ Emphasizing the repeated repression of Mexican people by the authoritarian government during the PRI.

The provision security: protection quotas by La Familia

As seen already, a reoccurring theme in La Familia's discourse is the provision of security through strategies for the resolution of disputes³⁹ and for protecting women against abuses and crime (Buscaglia 2009).⁴⁰ La Familia also claims to protect other sectors of the society and they make this known through their divine justice discourse, which is part of their narco-messages. In this way they establish encompassment in Michoacán.

However, there is another side to the provision of security and protection that La Familia advocates. In Michoacán a range of illegal activities such as counterfeiting, extortion and money laundering (Finnegan in Henig 2010) are closely related to what La Familia calls as the provision of security through "protection quotas" (Grayson 2011). Finnegan says that in many cases people resort to La Familia to solve their problems instead of going to the police or to the government⁴¹ (Henig 2010). For the services provided to solve a problem and to guarantee security, La Familia charges "protection quotas", that are imposed due to La Familia's encompassment and that there is limited control by the police to address these situations. These quotas are charged to business owners and street vendors as protection against being beaten, hurt or even killed (El Universal 2009)⁴². Although, the term used by La Familia to describe this sort of activity is called protection, it is clear they are acts of extortion.

³⁹ For concrete stories regarding the provision of security see Finnegan's article "Silver or Lead", where the case of a land dispute is detailed. La Familia steps in and hears both sides of the story before taking a final decision as to whom that land belongs to (2010).

⁴⁰ One particular story was told by a woman Finnegan interviewed in Tierra Caliente, she said that knew somebody in La Familia who she could call if she had a problem. "If I have a problem, somebody threatening me, somebody trying to steal my car, I just call, and they send a police officer, a woman. The police work for them" (2010).

⁴¹ Finnegan argues that there is a disenchantment of the government and the police (2010), so in that case they will directly go to La Familia or remain silent.

⁴² The article from El Universal is called: Paga o muere: tradición de "La Familia".

The establishment of encompassment is revealed in an article in El Universal, where it reports that several business owners had filed complaints against extortions with the local police (Ibid 2009).⁴³ The case of local business owner, Delgado Loza demonstrates how La Familia operates and how it creates encompassment and thus legitimizes its power. After Delgado Loza had filed a complaint members of La Familia visited his shop and threatened him (Ibid:2009). In addition, they demanded that he paid a higher protection fee or he would be killed (Ibid:2009). In this case, the police was able to arrest the criminals and when asked about the extortion, their response was “We come in peaceful manner. We are neither kidnappers nor gangsters. We came to restore order and help those whom you cannot” (El Universal in Grayson 2011:207). This particular case illustrates additionally the extent of how the discourse and ideology professed by the higher ranks of La Familia are enforced in the lower ranks of the cartel.

The function of La Familia’s discourse

After providing concrete examples of discursive strategies used by La Familia to contest the power of the State, the next question is what do these discourses do? For this, it is necessary to conduct a function analysis. La Familia emphasizes two reoccurring themes in this section bearing in mind the strategies used. The first is the control over the interpretation of power and violence proposed by Brass (1996) and creation of an “us versus them” divide, proposed by Jabri (1996) and Bathia (2005).

Control over the interpretation of power and violence

To gain the control over the interpretation of power, La Familia seeks to control the media in order to create an “us and them divide” among the population, serving to contest the power of the

⁴³ The PGR holds a file on the complaints filed against the so called protection quotas. This file was cited in the El Universal article: PGR/SIEDO/UEIDCS/239/2008.

state and the government's authority. La Familia manipulates the perceptions of the society and establishes its own discourse, authority and rules over a specific territory. The prospective of the discursive approach through narratives, inscriptions and performances are also crucial factors aimed at controlling the interpretation of power. Through attempts to re-establish order and security in Michoacán, La Familia indirectly puts into question the government's authority and its provision of security and in this way attempts to fill in an existent vacuum of power.

The Familia also uses discursive strategies to establish verticality and encompassment through a creation of images, narratives and inscriptions, which serves to inscribe in the population's memory a clear image of what would happen if someone committed a crime or violent act. For this reason, the control over the interpretation of power and violence was crucial to "keep the memory of former conflicts and past violence alive in stories, either by glorifying one's own groups achievements and benefits (cf. Meeker 1979; Rosaldo 1980) or by the perceived injustices, losses or suffering incurred by one's own group" (Schröder and Schmidt 2001:10). In this case, the means used to obtain security and justice would justify the end, a peaceful Michoacán, according to La Familia. The violent imaginaries embodied in narco-propaganda and ideology was a serious attempt to challenge the state not only in a violent way but also by striking the hearts and minds of the people in Michoacán.

Us versus Them Divide

With the control over the interpretation of power and violence La Familia created an "us versus them divide". The "us versus them" divide⁴⁴ is based on what Jabri describes as the "self" being courageous while the "other" is portrayed as diabolic and barbaric (1996:108). In this sense, La Familia paints a positive image about itself because it looks to protect Michoacán against the

⁴⁴ Refer to chapter 1, footnote 3 for an explanation of the 'us versus them' divide provided by Jabri (1996:108).

image of the “outsider” consisting of rival cartels (Los Zetas and Los Valencia) and law enforcement or government officials, who are depicted negatively. To this respect, Flores Perez, a security expert in Mexico, argues that:

La Familia’s public condemnations of certain ills have helped it gain ground through what is effectively ‘psychological warfare,’ and win social legitimacy in a state plague by violence. (...) It’s a strategy to win over the goodwill of the people in areas in which it operates. At least some Michoacanos have bought into La Familia’s message that the troublemakers, the killers and the bad guys are outsiders- not locals or heaven forbid, La Familia itself (Flores Perez in Grayson 2011:201).

The construction of an image dividing the “us” and “them” are embraced by some towns and imposed onto others, since the affinity with La Familia and the establishment of the “us” group varies from town to town. In Tierra Caliente, La Familia enjoys support from the population, thus resulting in a strong social base (Finnegan 2010). Here, La Familia was perceived as heroic and the army and the government as the occupier (Ibid). However in Zitacuaro, La Familia was seen as the other or the occupier and the army is seen as the “good guy” (Ibid).

In the cases that the discursive strategies are not able to establish support for the “us” group, La Familia practices “silver or lead”⁴⁵, which means they offer officials and police a bribe or a bullet (Ibid). Whatever the town in Michoacán, La Familia makes it clear to all sectors of society that “individuals and groups refusing to participate in the war effort are treacherous to their community and therefore deserving of censure, punishment or even banishment” (Jabri

⁴⁵ Finnegan refers La Familia giving local officials a choice, “silver or lead” or in other words, take the bribe or a bullet (Finnegan 2010). The concept of silver or lead or bribe or bullet is illustrated in a “60 Minute” report which aired on July 17, 2011.

1996:108). As illustrated by the concept of silver or lead, La Familia coerced the population and did not doubt in killing traitors and using them as example for the population. In this way, La Familia established spatiality as it expected journalist, politicians, law enforcement officers to do as it is told and made it clear to the population that they were in control.

Finally, it is important to clarify one point that Flores Perez mentions, that is that “at least some Michoacanos have bought into La Familia’s message”.⁴⁶ This point is important to emphasize because many people are aware that La Familia is a criminal organization and that their means and strategies are inhumane. Thus, the use of discursive methods does not necessarily offer La Familia legitimacy in the eyes of the population; however it does impose fear and inaction, a common response during several years which will be discussed in chapter four.

The reasons why La Familia’s discourse resonates or does not

The last question is why do certain discourses resonate? What are the larger conditions and contexts that make people responsive or resistance to La Familia’s discourse and practices? For this, I propose to examine economic, political and cultural contexts in order to determine whether the discourse legitimizes the use of violence and power.

Economic context

Michoacán is a state where there are high indicators of unemployment and a large gap of inequality. Statistical data from Coneval placed Michoacán in 2005 among the states with the highest level of alimentary poverty (UNDP 2007:84) and with 54.5% people living with patrimonial poverty (Ibid 2007:84). Also in 2005, “more than 50% of the population in 17

⁴⁶ Finnegan narrates several stories of people he interviewed Michoacán who support the narrative of La Familia. For further information see the article “Silver of Lead” published in The New Yorker (2010).

municipalities of the state had alimentary poverty” (Ibid 2007:84). The same was affirmed in an analysis in 2005 that indicated an increase of the population living below the poverty line, registered at 32.05% living under the poverty line (Lenin, Hernandez and Chavez: 66-67). Comparing the data from the 2005 with the UNDP report 2010, Michoacán is still among the states with the highest rate of inequality (López 2010). According to the INEGI, marginalization in Michoacán is significant with almost one million people, from the nearly four million people in Michoacán, living in extreme poverty. Unemployment in Michoacán in 2010 was registered at 3.7%, which is the equivalent to 62,000 people (Gil 2010). The unemployment for the first trimester of 2011 in Michoacán was 3.10% (Rubi 2011), which shows a slight improvement from the previous year, however the UNDP report concludes that there is still much to be done terms of economics, since growth “is each time more unequal in terms of the remuneration” (López 2010).

According to Gonzalez Ruiz, the high indicators of unemployment and inequality in Michoacán make it “the perfect territory in which groups like La Familia can flourish” (Gibbs 2009). An explainable need for basic services from the government is required by the most marginalized people. When the government was unable to provide these basic services due to a thinning of the government and vacuums of power, non-state actors such as La Familia filled in and replaced the state in the provision of these services (Buscaglia 2009).⁴⁷ As a result, La Familia embedded itself in Michoacán’s economy, representing a substantial portion of local economy (Felbab-Brown (2009:14). This is affirmed by Gonzalez Ruiz who said that 85% of legitimate businesses

⁴⁷ Also affirmed by Finnegan’s article “Silver or Lead” (2010).

in Michoacán were linked to La Familia (Gibbs 2000).⁴⁸ As a result their discourse resonated easily among the most marginalized. Several of the services undertaken by La Familia included: concession of credits for businesses, the provision of infrastructure for dewatering and canal irrigation, schools, churches and medical services (Ibid:2009), thus generating “social loyalty through the provision of social infrastructure” from the most marginalized people who allow these charities to shape their perceptions and mind (Ibid:2009). The provision of services was made possible only with high resources and profits obtained from the lucrative trade (Grayson 2009). In other words, these actions as well as the failure and disillusionment that people had of their government were determining factors for the creating of the “us versus them” divide and ultimately the contest for spatiality.

Political context

The economic context has very close ties with the political aspect in determining whether La Familia’s discourse resonated or not. As, will be examined in more detail in the following chapter, the PRI held a tight grip on Mexico with an authoritarian regime from 1929 to 2000 (Volger 2007). The PRI was able to stay in power during 70 years because of clientelism⁴⁹ and the establishment of a pyramid structure through which vertical ties from the presidency made their way down and rely solely on patron-client networks. This system guaranteed the control of the entire Mexican society and the stability of Mexico (Demmers 1998:11-12; Astorga and Shirk 2010). The weakening of the PRI regime was triggered by the 1982 economic crisis. After the

⁴⁸ This is substantiated by Buscalgia, who reported in 2009, that “on a national level more than 72% of all legal economic sectors, of its GDP in Mexico has been infiltrated by criminal groups” (2009). Buscalgia also argues that all the members of La Familia are owners of hotels, restaurants and other important businesses (Ibid:2009) and by Finnegan’s article “Silver or Lead” in which he stated that “in Michoacán a recent estimate found eighty-five per cent of legitimate businesses involved in some way with La Familia (2010).

⁴⁹ According to Barchet- Márquez (1992, 93-94) in Demmers (1998:11) “clientelism can be understood as the structuring of political power through networks of information relations that link individuals of unequal power in relationships of exchange.”

implementation of economic and political reforms, political instability and a growing demand for democracy started to become more prominent (Storrs 2006:3). In 1997, the PRI lost major legislative elections, which ultimately led to the PRI's collapse in 2000 (Ibid:5).

Fox's election in 2000 also led to the collapse of the clientelism system. According to Grayson, "the debilitation of the PRI shattered the networks that, while infused with corruption, enforced 'rules of the game' that constrained violence, curbed impunity, provided services to the faithful, and invested the masses with a tenuous link to decision makers" (2010:10). What came to replace the traditional authoritarian state, according to Shelley, was the authoritarianism of organized crime (1999). Shelley argues that organized crime thrives in the in societies that are experiencing transitional democracy and that have an absence of centralized control (1999:32). Organized crime fills power vacuums left by a collapsed state or weak institutions (Ibid). The institutions, which are still in place, are "weakened and subject to manipulation by individual interests. In this way, organized crime uses bribes and coercion to corrupt the already weakened legal institutions (Shelley 1999:43). The reason for this weakening of the state, according to Shelley, is to pursue their interests which are illicit profits (1999:32). Consequently, it can be argued that Mexico has lived a long history of repression; as the repression imposed by a traditional authoritarian state is now replaced by the repression of the criminal organizations, as Shelley argues (Ibid). This is evident in Shelley's account of the control over varies sectors of society, such as the control of the media, the infiltration and control of state institutions and law enforcement (Ibid: 43,44) and the control of ideology and so on (Ibid: 38).⁵⁰

⁵⁰ See Louise Shelley's article "Transnational Organized Crime: The New Authoritarianism" for a more detailed account of repression by organized crime groups and the establishment of the new form of repression and authoritarianism.

In said context, La Familia's discourse resonated among the inhabitants of Michoacán, because of the history of repression as well as the power vacuums, which were created with the weakening of the state. Pacheco argues that La Familia, like other drug cartels, have managed to strategically position themselves in parts where the Mexican government has been absent for many years (2009:1035). La Familia seized this opportunity and provided the most marginalized people with "schools, drainage projects, even churches" (Gibbs, 2009; Buscaglia 2009; and Finnegan 2010)⁵¹ and thus took on the role of the state. In analysis by other academics, it has been argued that La Familia was skillful at solidification of a power base which was based on "grassroots support and selective and symbolic use of extreme violence and charity", which it blends "seamlessly with extortion, protection and 'street taxes'" (Logan and Sullivan 2009). Intertwined in this were discursive strategies through which interpretations and justifications were constantly articulated to and among the society in order to try to change and mold their way of thinking regarding La Familia's role in Michoacán.

The link between politics and economics becomes clear because La Familia used economic power to obtain political power (Gibbs 2009)⁵². Grayson argues that "abundant resources have enabled La Familia to establish what the late historian Crane Brinton described as 'dual sovereignty' [...] this means that parallel to the elected government stands a narco-administration that generates employment, keeps order, performs civic function and collects taxes," (Grayson in Logan and Sullivan 2009). Grayson describes the dual sovereignty as a parallel power. La Familia came to assume the role, tasks and functions traditionally pertaining to the state, and by

⁵² The Mexican government "says it has evidence that La Familia has been using its economic power to buy political power" (Gibbs 2009), thus providing an ideal scenario for more corruption and for the perpetration of violence in the state and in Mexico.

doing so, formed part of what was identified by Ferguson and Gupta as transnational governmentality, for two reasons: by taking on the role of the provider of services, it places itself at the same level as the Mexican state, in a position of verticality, and thus challenging the state's role and power as it established itself as a dominant authority figure in the political sphere; and it takes place in encompassment, as it identifies with the people, proving that the government's abandonment will be replaced by La Familia.

Cultural context

The cultural context in Mexico also relates to why certain discourses resonate or are resisted. Again, past political history has repertoires which allude to conditions of repression. Iconic characters such as Pancho Villa mark the cultural context of Mexico in the sense that he is a strong traditional figure, a bandit and revolutionary (Katz 1998:2), who “skillfully evad[ed] the Poffiriato's oppressive rurals” and later raided Columbo in the United States (Cummins 2008). Many Mexicans saw this as retaliation for American oppression (Ibid 2008). The people's attachment to traditional figures, which defend them from repressive forces or the state, provides a plausible explanation as to why La Familia's discourse would resonate in Michoacán.

La Familia strategically manipulates social and public perceptions through discursive strategies which enable them to be disguised as “social bandits” or the defenders of the poor and defenseless (Logan and Sullivan 2009). In this way, La Familia challenges the power of the state. Logan and Sullivan even make the analogy of La Familia taking on the role of “Pancho Villa”, for their “honorable deeds” (Logan and Sullivan 2009), or making allusions to the image of “Robin Hood” (Finnegan 2010). Consequently, the discourses, which are based on establishing La Familia as a vertically and encompassing authority figure that provides protection and

economic assistances to the population are made stronger by this image of a heroic icon, which allows this discourse to resonate.

Conclusion

This chapter makes it clear how La Familia establishes spatiality through a variety of discursive strategies such as narco-propaganda, ideology and the provision of services which contests the power of the state. Through narratives, performances and inscriptions, it is able to construct images based on “divine justice” and in this way ensures verticality and encompassment. In this sense, La Familia establishes that it is the authority above the society but also that it is present everywhere. La Familia also replaces the state to a certain extent by providing services such as security to the population. The function of the discourse is to control the interpretation of violence, something that La Familia uses towards its advantage in order to create its own discourse based on the “us versus them” divide. This divide classifies the State and rival cartels as outsiders through which the discourse of La Familia is justified. The reason why this discourse resonates has to do with political, economic and contexts that strengthen La Familia’s discourse. The following chapter examines the State’s response to the discourse and strategies used by drug trafficking organizations such as La Familia.

Chapter Three

The State discourse and strategy's: responding to the narco threat

In the past, the PRI maintained a policy of co-existence with drug cartels due to a system based on corporatism, clientelism and caciques which brought political stability. This solid political structure was the state's main tactic through which state spatiality was established and maintained. Strategies used included accords and pacts between the government and the drug cartels which meant high indices of corruption; but low levels of violence. In this way the state maintained a certain status quo characterized for its containment of violence. The situation drastically changed with the PAN's takeover of power by Fox in 2000 and Calderon in 2006. The transfer of power from the PRI to the PAN is crucial to understand why there has been an escalation of violence over the past years and to comprehend the strategies used by Calderon to re-establish state spatiality.

In this chapter I examine how the Mexican state establishes and maintains spatiality as a response to La Familia's discourse and strategies used to challenge to state power. I begin by addressing how the PRI established state spatiality through a clientelist system and co-existence policy with drug trafficking organizations. Then, I examine the transition from the PRI to the PAN's leadership and the change in anti-drug policies. Later, Calderon's discourse and strategy is analyzed and applied to a national level in order to move to the local level, through which the specific case of Michoacán is analyzed. Finally, Michoacán is used to understand how the state attempts to regain spatiality as it seeks to deconstruct La Familia's discourse. The state establishes verticality and encompassment through the provision of security, an anti-corruption operative and response to narco-propaganda.

The PRI's discourse and state spatiality

The Institutional Revolutionary Party, known as the PRI, was in power in Mexico for nearly 70 years. Its ability to stay in power for such a long time consisted in a power structure which dominated every aspect of society. Astorga and Shirk argued that:

Mexico's power structure was extremely centralized and hierarchical, which had important implications for the locus and effects of official corruption. With a complete lock on control of the Mexican state, the PRI held a monopoly on legitimate use of force, territorial control, and the power to grant impunity to organized crime. Of course, while the PRI regime was not tolerant of criminal activity in general, such activities were more likely to be tolerated or even protected when they promised a substantial payoff to corrupt government officials (2010: 5).

Furthermore, during the time of the PRI, drug trafficking organizations "went virtually unchallenged by the state, operated in relative harmony and grew extremely powerful" (Ibid:5). The reason for this is that the PRI maintained a "highly centralized power structure that was not only permissive, but protective of organized criminal activities" (Ibid:5). The understanding of the PRI's power structure is essential to understanding why drug trafficking organizations went unchallenged and why the state was able to maintain stability and spatiality during so long.

The PRI's power structure: corporatism, clientelism and caciques

The PRI's authoritarian regime depended on a power structure based on corporatism, clientelism and caciques which maintained political stability in Mexico. The PRI managed to stay in power for so long because its system was based on two political structures that made it able to control all the aspects of society (Demmers 1998:10). The first political system consisted in corporatist

mechanisms which incorporated “strategic groups into the state apparatus” (Ibid). This included working, peasant and popular sector of Mexico that “secured the downward transmission of centralized power controlled by the president and his political offices” (Ibid:7). In this way, corporatism was the “organizing structure of authoritarianism” (Ibid:11). The second political structure was “at the local level a network of patron/client relationships manipulated by *caciques* (local ‘bosses’) [which] coexisted with the new system” (Ibid:7). Clientelism structured “political power through networks of informal relations that link individuals of unequal power in relationships of exchange” (Brachet- Márquez 1992, 93-94 in Demmers 1998:11-12). The clientelist structure is explained as a pyramid with a top down chain of command originating at the top with the presidency making its way down to entail “the official party, the core of the state apparatus, and the mass organizations” (1998:12). In the case of Mexico, the patron is the president and the clients are the *caciques*, which were locally based groups that maintained control over the constituents for decades (Ibid:12). Favors coming from the top of the pyramid structure “are dispensed directly and indirectly to those below through complex patron-client networks that link the top of the social structure to the base” (Ibid:12). The system was based on reciprocity, an aspect which allowed the PRI to represent the interests of all sectors of society (Ibid:9) and created a centralized and rational system that controlled every aspect of Mexico (Ibid:14).

Drug traffickers were part of the clientelist system since they were one of the many *caciques* (local bosses) that existed. The clientelist system and the co-existence policy (Bailey and Taylor 2009) were the main strategies used by the Mexican state to establish state spatiality and in this way contain violence. State spatiality was obtained through an order based on informal and formal pacts and accords between the government and the drug cartels which were based on

reciprocity on both parts (Serrano 2007:265). The core task of the government was “to effectively and pacifically organize the market, in return for ‘taxes’ extracted from criminal activity” (Ibid:265-266). As a result of these agreements, criminals were able to use a variety of methods to transport their illicit substances and make sure that their products made it to their destination without a problem (Ibid:265). Serrano argues that “these mechanisms allowed the central authorities to contain and regulate the market and impede the consolidation of the drug traffickers as an autonomous power” (2007:266).⁵³ In a comparison between the situation in Colombia and Mexico, Serrano argues the implementation of rules and regulations in Mexico did not allow the entry of criminals into the political sphere, contained the violence, and curbed the selling and consumption of drugs within the Mexican state (2007: 266). However, this power structure did bring high indices of corruption among government officials, in return for the containment of violence. As a result, what took place during the 20th century in Mexico is what Brands calls a system of ‘narco-corruption’ which ensured that stability was guaranteed to the drug trade in Mexico (2009:6).

Narco-corruption in turn meant a high toll for law enforcement and legal institutions as they were immensely weakened and the rule of law became very limited (Shelley 1999: 44). This is most noticeable in Mexico’s law enforcement system, which can be observed to have high levels of impunity. Law enforcers are known for cooperating with drug traffickers which means that investigations regarding narcotics are usually not followed through, raids do not happen when they were suppose to and many times drug traffickers are released due to the help of corrupted

⁵³ Quote in Spanish: “(...) estos mecanismos permitió a las autoridades centrales contener y regular el mercado e impedir la consolidación de los narcotraficantes como un poder autónomo.” (Serrano 265-266).

officials (Shelley 1999: 44). Legal investigations show that in some cases drug czars⁵⁴ and their followers were the ones in charge of raids which many times were directed only against rival cartels (Shelley 1999: 44). All of these aspects demonstrate weaknesses and limitations in Mexican rule of law and institutions. But most importantly these aspects demonstrate the way power was organized in a clientelist system and all encompassing cooptive structures which included the narcos. From this frame, the state's discourse was shaped and executed in policies regarding drug trafficking.

Although the power structure permitted a co-existence policy between the Mexican state and drug trafficking organizations, the official state discourse pronounced to the international community said otherwise. Andreas' analysis of the situation Mexico at the end of the 90s comes to the conclusion that there was a change in discourse and policy regarding anti-narcotics efforts in Mexico. Mexico's 1982 economic crisis led to political and neoliberal economic reforms (Storrs 2006:3), "which marked a shift to a free market economy in Mexico" (Demmers 1998:17). According to Andreas, economic integration was accompanied by great pressure from the United States to "at least maintain the appearance of containing the illicit business"⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Shelley mentions that the drug czar who was in charge of raids and mainly executed raids against his rival competitors was General Gutierrez Rebolla (Shelley 1999: 44).

⁵⁵ Although there was an evident change in discourse, it should be emphasized that the Mexican state merely only made an effort to at least maintain the appearance of containing the illicit business (Andreas 1999:136). This, as stated before, was done through a change of discourse, as well as the creation of institutions that would implement policies. However, despite the change in rhetoric and discourse, the strategy claimed to be used to achieve the containment of the illicit business remained merely in words and theory and was hardly put into practice. In fact, Astorga and Shirk argued that during the rule of President Miguel de la Madrid in the 1980s, "Mexican DTOs developed especially close ties to the DFS⁵⁵(...). Complicity between the DFS and Mexican DTOs ensure that organized criminal activity was extensively protected and well regulated" (2010:6). There exists a possibility that the regulation of criminal activity in Mexico was also known by United States authorities. Serrano argues that, "Although this solution did not always please Washington, it is certain that the practices, accords and components of regulation were possibly of its knowledge. There are reports that can prove this which were sent from the Embassy of the United States to Washington regarding supposed links between drug traffickers and the recently created DFS" (2007: 267).

(1999:135). This pressure would lead to a change in discourse by the Mexican government implemented by three presidents in Mexico (Ibid:135).

In 1982, President Miguel de la Madrid attempted to stabilize the economy by implementing a policy of structural adjustment⁵⁶ (Demmers 1998:17). With these economic reforms came political reforms which lead De la Madrid to frame drug trafficking as *national security threat* (Andreas 1999:135). In 1994, Salinas de Gortari expanded the neoliberal economic reforms and modernization which lead to the signing of the NAFTA⁵⁷ (Demmers 1998:20). Politically, Salinas de Gortari continued with De la Madrid's framing of drug trafficking as a national security threat and reinforced the change of discourse regarding drugs because: first, there was a recognition of the negative effects that drugs were having on the Mexican population's health; second, the negative effects of drugs on Mexico's national security; and third the need to impulse on a regional level the idea that the community had to stand together on the issue of drugs (Andreas 1999:135). Later, Zedillos declared drug trafficking as Mexico's number one threat (1999:135). Andreas' interpretation of this change in discourse is that "Given that the language of national security is rare in Mexican political discourse; these pronouncements mark a major departure from the past" (1999:135). The change in discourse meant an increase in resources for anti-drug enforcement, including an increase of the anti-drug oriented budget, the use of the military for the antidrug operations, the development of an intelligence agency, and a special unit for drug control in the Attorney General's office and the contracting of new personnel for the army and the judicial police (Andreas 1999:135-136). In addition, the anti-drug discourse fit in

⁵⁶ The policy of structural adjustment consisted in the liberalization Mexico's economy. The implementation of austerity measures aimed at reducing budget deficit and stabilizing the exchange rate (Weiss 1996,59-64 in Demmers 1998, 17).

⁵⁷ NAFTA was signed by Canada, the United States in Mexico and came into effect on 1 January 1994, under Salinas de Gortari's presidency.

nicely with the international discourse that sought to intensify government initiatives around the world in the fight against crime (Andreas 1999:136).⁵⁸

Analysis

The power structure and discursive strategies used by the PRI helped the state construct an image of it being an “all powerful state” in control of everything. The PRI’s “monopoly on legitimate use of force, territorial control, and the power to grant impunity to organized crime” (Astorga and Shirk 2010:5) constructed the image of the state as the “patron” in the patron/client relationship. In this way, the PRI establishes verticality by places itself on the top the power structure (imaged as a pyramid) and above all sectors of the state. As the “patron”, the PRI regulated every aspect of society from above as it enforced the rules of the game. The rules of the game were established and honored through pacts and agreements based on favors and reciprocity which helped the PRI maintain an upper hand over the business in the illicit world. The result was that violence was contained, drug related casualties were low and the state benefited from the activities occurring within its territory. In a larger scale the result was that the PRI established state spatiality. Drug traffickers, on the other hand, represented the “client” in the relationship with the state, because they were part of the caciques. In this way, drug traffickers became deeply embedded in society but also within the power structure created by the PRI government. The drug trafficking organizations are being regulated by the norms imposed by the state, through which it established encompassment. This ensured that the status quo was maintained and “the efforts by states to establish their superior spatial claims to authority did not go uncontested” (Ferguson and Gupta 2002: 988).

⁵⁸ Global anti-drug initiatives fell under the “United Nations Decade Against Unlawful Drug Consumption” motto (Andreas 1999:136).

Fox and Calderon anti-drug policy: confrontation

Fox's response to drug trafficking

The strategies used by the Mexican state to establish and maintain state spatiality changed significantly with the PAN's takeover of power in 2000. The economic reforms created political instability and the mounting of demands for democracy (Storrs:4)⁵⁹ which ultimately resulted in the collapse of the PRI and became crystallized with the election of PAN's Vicente Fox in 2000 (Storrs:5). The collapse of the PRI saw with it the disintegration of power structure based on clientelism⁶⁰ which meant the initial weakening of the state.⁶¹ The weakening of the state combined with a shift in policy, from a policy of co-existence to a policy of confrontation which entailed disruption and elimination, altered the status quo of the Mexican state creating a "disequilibrium between state and organized crime in Mexico" (Bailey and Taylor 2009:18-19). The debilitation of the state became very noticeable as violence began to escalate (Grayson 2011: 51) since "the Mexican drug trade without a central governing authority, and comparative stability soon gave way to the Hobbesian struggle for control of the *plazas*" (Kurtz-Phelan in Brands 2009:6). According to Astorga, the cartels were now forced 'to resolve disputes themselves, and drug traffickers don't do this by having meetings'" (Astorg in Brands 2009:6 and Kurtz-Phelan 2009).

⁵⁹ This point is also made and described in more detail by Volger (2006:176) who cites Mol (1981:112).

⁶⁰ Clientelism is described by Volger (2006) as being a "situation of mutual dependence between two actors (individuals or groups), who dispose of unequal resources, used to the benefit of both parties (Ziemer 2001: 233 in Volger 2006:168).

⁶¹ Demmers writes that the economic crisis and the neo-liberal reforms, among other things, "made the PRI lose ground as a legitimator of the regime' (Dresser 1994); (...) and led to 'the decline of corporatism as a system of support' (Whitehead 1994)" (1998:31).

Fox's implementation of a range of policies including the promotion of transparency, good governance and a stronger stance against the organized crimes (Astorga and Shirk 2010:11) sought to re-establish spatiality lost by the collapse of the PRI. However, Fox's efforts deemed ineffective and only caused more turmoil and an increase in violence as the leaders of drug cartels began to resort to different and more violent strategies. The reason was that Fox's strategy consisted mainly in arresting and killing mayor capos and members of drug trafficking organizations (Meyer 2007:6). According to Grayson, "While effective at raining the number of individuals arrested and drug shipments confiscated, this policy fell far short from the government's objectives of defeating the cartels" (Grayson 2011:51). The escalation of drug related violence can be attributed to several factors, such as: the fragmentation of the drug cartels, high levels of competition for drug markets and the privatization of the illicit drug market in Mexico (Serrano 2007:273). The instability in the drug business caused conflicts of interest between the government and the drug cartels on one level⁶²; a conflict of interest between rival cartels on another level and finally vacuums of power within the cartels themselves as power struggles emerged re-establish leadership.

Calderon's strategy and discourse: a look at the national level

In 2006, Felipe Calderon became the President of Mexico basing his electoral campaign in the creation of employment, the reduction of poverty and the fight against crime (Grayson 2011: 97). According to Bailey and Taylor, "during his 2006 presidential campaign, National Action Party (PAN) candidate Felipe Calderon took a harder line on public security, placing it at the top of his policy agenda" (2009:20). Once in power, he declared the war against drug trafficking

⁶² According to Bailey and Taylor, "by the end of the Fox administration, gang violence had escalated and the criminal groups were more openly defying the government (2009:20). In addition, power vacuums and an unstable status quo created smaller and more violent factions (Ibid).

organizations and “engage[d] in a very direct confrontational strategy” which Logan argues carried a strong security message (2010). Calderon’s strategy consisted in “the implementation of this anti-narcotics policy has been done through the deployment of 35,000 Mexican soldiers to the most violent places in Mexico” (Meiners and Burton 2009). With this policy, the new government sought to recover territory in which drug cartels had installed themselves (Serrano 2007:273) and controlled. As was the case with Fox, this policy received resistance from the drug cartels from day one because it openly defied the pursuit of their illicit activities and the maximization of profit. The result was the further escalation of violence as the following homicide figures show: 2,231 in 2006, 2,794 in 2007, 5,207 in 2008 and 3,628 in 2009 (Reforma in Grayson 2011:97). In 2010 alone there were 15,723 drug related deaths (El Mundo 2011)⁶³ approximately amounting to a total of 35,000 homicides since 2006.⁶⁴

Calderon’s confrontational policy, aimed at regaining power over lost territories, can be observed in his speeches. These speeches provide concrete examples of the government’s framing and discourse, which frames delinquents and criminals as the state’s main enemy (Calderon 2010). This framing and discourse does two things, first it identifies the ‘victims of injustice’⁶⁵ as being innocent Mexican civilians who are being affected by delinquents functioning outside the margin

⁶³ Quote in Spanish: “The statistical data offered by the technical secretary of Public Security, Alejandro Poire, during the session of the Dialogues for the Security (...)” (Article from El Mundo “México: 15.273 muertes por el ‘narco’ en 2010”).

⁶⁴ Grayson cites one of Mexico’s leading newspapers, Reforma, to demonstrate the number of deaths since Calderon’s election. According to Grayson, the number of deaths due to narco-violence increased drastically to figures such as 2,231 in 2006, 2,794 in 2007, 5,207 in 2008 and 3,628 in 2009 (Reforma in Grayson 2011:97).

⁶⁵ Injustice frames are mentioned by Benford and Snow through within the framework of diagnostic framing. This type of framing includes the identification of victims and the amplification of their state as victims (2000:615).

of the law. Second, it draws boundaries and adversaries frames⁶⁶ which lead to the ‘us/them’ divide⁶⁷ between state forces and drug cartels, attributing the good and positive traits to the former and negative traits to the latter. From this framing Calderon is able to devise and articulate a strategy emphasizing “Public Security”, not national security⁶⁸ (Heimes 2010). The idea of Public Security is explained by Calderon:

The fight is, therefore, for public security. I am stressing this because there is a widespread perception that the government's goal is to ‘combat drug trafficking’. Usually the references to the action of the government are labeled or referred to simply as a ‘war against the narco’, or ‘the fight anti-narco’. This, however, is not so. Our core aim is to secure public citizens, and not only or primarily to combat drug trafficking. We are fighting organized crime with determination, because it is our constitutional and ethical duty, because it is the federal government's obligation to do so, but also and mainly because organized crime has altered significantly, the peace of the people (Calderon 2010: I).⁶⁹

⁶⁶ According to Benford and Snow “Boundary framing and adversarial framing [...] [are] related attributional processes that seek to delineate the boundaries between ‘good’ and ‘evil’ and construct movement protagonists and antagonists” (2000:616).

⁶⁷ Jabri uses the term ‘us/them divide’ to describe the war mood which results in a structural dualism where the self is seen as courageous and civil while the other is seen as ‘barbaric and diabolical’ (1996:108).

⁶⁸ The distinction between public security and national security is emphasized and made clear not only in Calderon’s speeches but also through his international representations as was the case in an interview with a diplomat from Mexico. Public security makes stresses that the problem in Mexico has to do with criminal activities instead of an insurgent threat which would classify a into a national security issue.

⁶⁹ Quote in Spanish: “La lucha es, pues, por la Seguridad Pública. Enfatizo lo anterior porque existe una percepción generalizada de que el objetivo del gobierno es “combatir el narcotráfico”. Usualmente las referencias a la acción del gobierno se etiquetan o refieren simplemente como una “guerra contra el narco” o “la lucha anti narco”. Esto, sin embargo, no es así. Nuestro objetivo medular es lograr la seguridad pública de los ciudadanos, y no única ni principalmente combatir al narcotráfico. Combatimos con determinación al crimen organizado, porque es nuestra obligación constitucional y ética, porque es obligación del gobierno federal hacerlo, pero también y fundamentalmente porque el crimen organizado ha alterado, de manera significativa, la paz de los ciudadanos.” (Calderón 2010).

Calderon identifies the major cause of drug trafficking and the escalation of violence in Mexico through the following statement:

Organized crime needed to control and ‘mark’ territory, and for this it had to make itself be felt and feared not only by other criminal groups, but also by the authorities and citizens. Thus, it went from being low-profile in the past, in which theoretically ‘it did not get involved with anyone’, to a violent, intrusive and challenging profile. Rather than hiding from the authority, the criminals began to opening look for it to dominate it, through co-optation or intimidation: the so-called rule of ‘silver or lead’ (Calderon 2010: II).⁷⁰

State discourse attributes the escalation of violence to drug trafficking organizations mainly due to the alteration of the modus operandi used when searching for new markets. This resulted in the charging of territorial quotas or protection quotas⁷¹ to citizens and licit businesses (Calderon 2010:II). The domination of territory called for the perpetuation of different crimes including extortion, kidnappings, torturing, killings and messages sowed terror and fear among the society (Calderon 2010:II). In addition, the state’s discourse argues that “More than a ‘war of the government against drug trafficking’, the most deadly war that exists is that of fighting that occurs among criminals themselves” (Calderon 2010:III). To illustrate this point Calderon affirms that “Around 90% of these cases of murder involves people most likely linked to

⁷⁰ Quote in Spanish: “El crimen organizado necesitaba controlar y “marcar” el territorio, y para ello tenía que hacerse sentir y temer no sólo por otros grupos criminales, sino también por las autoridades y los ciudadanos. Así, pasó del bajo perfil que utilizó en el pasado, en el que teóricamente “no se metía con nadie”, a un perfil violento, intrusivo y desafiante. En lugar de esconderse de la autoridad, los criminales comenzaron a buscarla abiertamente para dominarla, a través de la cooptación o la intimidación: la llamada ley ‘de plata o plomo.’” (Calderón 2010).

⁷¹ In Spanish ‘derecho de piso’ which refers to a quota which is charged by criminals in Mexico for having a business or a house in their territories (Calderon June 2010).

criminal organizations” (Calderon 2010:III). With these so called “solid facts”, the justification of the strategy takes place.

Calderon identifies the need for the “containment of the expansion of the activities of criminal”⁷² (Calderon 2010:IV) for which a strategy of Public Security is devised and complemented by the Mérida Initiative.⁷³ The framing of the problem results in a five point Public Security strategy including: joint operatives, technology capacities, legal reforms, prevention measures, and international cooperation (Calderon 2010:6-9)⁷⁴ and the signing of the 2007 Mérida Initiative.⁷⁵ In this way, the government attempts to regain state spatiality through: a confrontational policy, a strong discourse; deployment of military forces, an increase in the capacities of the Federal Police and reforms to the constitutional and justice systems(Ibid 2010:8). State spatiality is threatened in states such as Michoacán and Chihuahua and in cities such as Tijuana, Juarez and Monterrey (Logan 2010). In particular, La Familia Michoacana represents a challenge for the current administration and for this reason Calderon has made it his priority to regain control and re-establish the state’s presence militarization and two other actions which will be elaborated on in the next section.⁷⁶

⁷² Quote in Spanish: “contener la expansión de las actividades de los criminales” (Calderón 2010:IV).

⁷³ Calderon uses prognostic framing, which consists of the “articulation of a proposed solution to the problem” and later motivational framing which is a call to arms or a call to the solution (Benford and Snow 2000:616-617).

⁷⁴ The Public Security policy includes: 1) joint operatives with the support of local authorities and citizens 2) increase the operative y technological capacities of the state military forces 3) legal and institutional reforms 4) an active policy for the prevention of criminality and 5) the strengthening of international cooperation (Calderon 2010:6-9).

⁷⁵ The Mérida Initiative has as its main objective the maximization of the efforts to fight criminal organization through the establishment of security in main cities in Mexico (Beittel 2009:18).

⁷⁶ An attempt to re-establish encompassment through militarization can be observed in changes of daily life in places like Monterrey or Juarez. People in these cities have to deal with military check points daily and see the military and federal police on the streets everyday (Logan 2010), actions that create the perception that the military is everywhere and encompassing. In Juarez, the “murder capital” of the world, it is the same thing, as “10,000 federal troops and police officers into the city to booster, outgun and corrupt local police

Calderon's state spatiality in Michoacán

The state's attempt to re-establish state spatialization can be observed in Michoacán, the state that was made first priority in the fight against drug cartels in 2006 (Padgett 2010)⁷⁷. I argue that Calderon's main objective is to construct the image of the state as being above every aspect of society and as such the only legitimate actor entitled to the use of force and violence. Calderon's discourse and consequently strategy used to establish spatiality in three specific ways: the provision of security through the deployment of the military; the combating of corruption in Municipalities in Michoacán, known as the "Operation House Cleaning"; and governmental response to narco-propaganda.

The provision of security: militarization

The "militarization"⁷⁸ of the conflict in Michoacán (Finnegan 2010) reflects the strategy implemented to re-establish power and legitimacy through encompassment where La Familia has obtained significant power and control. Militarization consisted in the deployment of 65,000 troops in Michoacán, a strategy that replaced state and local law enforcers and installed the military in order to combat drug cartels more effectively (Moloeznik 2009b in Astorga and Shirk 2010:17). With this strategy, the state acknowledges the threat that La Familia posed to its power and attempts to ensure and demonstrate that the provision of security was a task that belonged to the state and not to La Familia. Militarization establishes encompassment through the construction of the image that the military and consequently the state is all around. The creation

force". Brent and Craig Renaud's video footage shows how military forces patrol the streets armed with heavy artillery while people continue with their daily lives (2009: 0:26).

⁷⁷ Confirmed by Astorga and Shirk (2000:18).

⁷⁸ The term "militarization" is used in Astorga and Shirk working paper entitled "Drug Trafficking Organizations and Counter-Drug Strategies in the U.S.- Mexican Context (2010:17), however the quote is cited from Moloeznik (2009b).

of this image attempts to restore the state as the only legitimate actor in Michoacán and it is a palpable strategy that the state uses to obtain the support of the population in its fight against the drug cartels.

Achievements and unintended consequences of militarization in Michoacán

Calderon's discourse and strategy altered the balance of power significantly, which can be observed through a number of achievements; however there are also a number of negative consequences. It is important to consider some of the government's outcomes regarding militarization in order to examine another response by the government which is relevant and to later understand the reactions of the population regarding this strategy.

Militarization has created some successes for the government. In December 2010, La Familia's main leader Moreno Gonzalez was killed by a military operation (Wilkinson 2011), which debilitated its structure significantly. The second success came in June 2011 when the organization's second leader, Jose de Jesus Mendez, was captured by authorities after months of intense fighting (Wilkinson 2011). According to Alejandro Poire,⁷⁹ "with this capture, what was left of the command structure of this criminal organization is destroyed" (Wilkinson 2011). After five years of the implementation of militarization in Michoacán, the strategy seems to have achieved its aim consisting in the elimination of La Familia's leaders and with it the supposed destruction of the threat to security. Calderon celebrated the state's success by "personally lauded the arrest on his Twitter account (Gomez Licon 2011). The twitter message published on

⁷⁹ Alejandro Poire is the Mexican government's official spokesman for security affairs (Wilkinson 2011).

21 June 2011 said: “Big blow of the federal police to organized crime. One of the most wanted criminals was captured. Congratulations”⁸⁰ (Calderon’s Twitter 2011).

However, although the government had successfully debilitated La Familia’s structure, analysts and experts concluded that militarization in Michoacán has not obtained the intended results and had brought instead unintended consequences (Astorga and Shirk 2010: 18). First, militarization changed the power dynamics of La Familia as the power structure changed from hierarchical to vertical. This meant that the elimination of the leaders of this drug cartel meant very little for its functioning (Grayson 2010). The result was that more violent factions splintered off from La Familia in order to continue with the trafficking of drugs in Michoacán (Wilkinson 2011). Splintering factions was the result of in-group fighting for the leadership which resulted in more violence in Michoacán.⁸¹ The success of the government quickly turned into more violence, because “With Moreno gone, Mendez disputed over control of La Familia with Servando La Tuta Gomez Martinez. The two spit violently this year, with Gomez creating a faction bizarrely named the Knights Templar, after the Christian warriors of the Crusades” (Wilkinson 2011). The unintended consequence triggered the displacement of 25,000 residents of Michoacán who fled their homes due to the violence (Wilkinson 2011).⁸²

⁸⁰ Quote in Spanish: “Gran golpe de la policía federal al crimen organizado. Uno de los criminales más buscados fue capturado. Felicidades.” (Calderón’s Twitter 2011).

⁸¹ Michoacán experienced an increase in violence from 135 to 203 homicides in the first months of militarization (Astorga and Shirk 2010: 18).

⁸² The Christian Monitor reported that “in the state of Michoacán, residents in villages throughout the ‘Tierra Caliente’ or ‘Hot land, where drug traffickers who rule swaths of territory have fled their homes to make refuge in impromptu shelters after gun battles between rival drug gangs erupted (...)” (Miller Llana 2011).

A second unintended consequence from militarization is human rights abuses⁸³ on behalf of the military forces since their deployment over the past 10 years (Miller Lana 2009; Amnesty International Report 2010; Human Rights Watch 2010). Human Rights violations cited large distrust in the government forces, as complains of human rights abuses against military forces increased from 182 in 2006 to 1,500 in 2009 (Camp 2010: 27-28). The most reoccurring human rights violations attributed to military forces include: “extrajudicial executions and other unlawful killings, enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment and arbitrary detentions” and victims are mainly women, migrants and marginalized communities (Amnesty International Report 2010:223,224). These human rights violations are in most cases followed by impunity, which the government does little to address (Amnesty International Report 2010: 224). One reason for impunity is that only a few cases of human rights violation by the military have been investigated and prosecuted and when they have been prosecuted this has been done by military authorities rather than civilian authorities decreasing the punishment most of the times (Freeman 2010: 8-9). This adds to the population’s disenchantment with the government and its strategy.

Governmental response to societies pleads regarding the provision of security

After five years of militarization, the Mexican state has responded to concerns and pleas by the populations through public speeches. Following the advertisement of massive demonstrations and criticism of the security policy, Calderon publically addressed the Mexican society one day before people took to the streets to demonstrate (Calderon May 2011).⁸⁴ Calderon’s speeches

⁸³These abuses have been systematically reported by nongovernmental organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and other state actors within the international community.

⁸⁴ This information is confirmed by Johnson’s article “Mexicans vent anger over toll of 'Calderon's war' on drugs”, May 2011.

justify the state's strategy in "confronting with firmness criminality" and appeals to the society for their support in their fight against criminality (Calderon May 2011). The state confirms its strong conviction for public security and emphasizes the strengthening of security as it pledges to assist the society in whatever they can.

Another governmental response has been the creation of spaces for dialogue between the society and the government which could exemplify encompassment. This consists of dialogues with the victim's relatives in order for the state to listen to their stories and to demonstrate that they are not alone in this fight against drug related violence, an aspect which seeks to de-bunk the discourse of drug trafficking cartel. In June 2011, as a result of these dialogues "President Felipe Calderon apologized to victims of Mexico's war on drugs in an emotional meeting with bereaved families on Thursday that sought to try and quell rising anger over violence sweeping the nation" (Graham and Gutierrez 2011). However, although an apology was provided to the victims, Calderon nevertheless was firm on the strategy his administration was implementing. According to Graham and Gutierrez "the president refused to apologize for taking on the heavily-armed cartels with the armed forces. 'If there's anything I regret, it's not having sent them sooner,' he said as the interior minister, attorney general, public security minister and other top officials looked on" (Graham and Gutierrez 2011)⁸⁵. As a result, Calderon affirms several times that the provision of security has to be done in with this strategy; however he appeals to ministers, state governors and other authorities to do their part in order to stop the violence and impunity, so that the vicious cycle of violence and criminality will stop (Calderon 30 June 2011).

⁸⁵ This point is affirmed by Malkin's article "Tens of Thousands March in Mexico City" where the government was seen to have taken a defensive stance in defending their strategy (2011).

Anti-corruption policy

Calderon attempts to re-establish verticality over Michoacán with the implementation of an anti-corruption strategy. In 2008, Calderon's administration sent out the message to the population that it would firmly fight corruption in the municipalities with the "Operation House-Cleaning" (Grayson 2011:127). Grayson argues that "After the first five armed incursions into the state, Calderon changed his strategy to focus on politicians who were enabling La Familia and other cartels to act with impunity" (Grayson 2010:65). The confrontational strategy was expanded to entail the political structure in Michoacán, due to a high rate of infiltration by La Familia in municipalities (Grayson 2010:62). During the operation, 27 public officials⁸⁶ at 11 municipalities were arrested on charges of corruptions, proving to be a direct attack against the actions of drug cartels in government posts (Grayson 2011:67, 127; Operación Limpieza 2009). This action placed a stain on the relationship between the municipalities and Calderon since according to Leonel Godoy⁸⁷, Calderon failed to consult him before "occupying his state" (Grayson 2010:68).⁸⁸ Through this performance, the federal government makes it clear that it would take measures it would normally not take in order to establish state spatiality, since the municipalities in Michoacán were unable to fight corruption themselves.

An analysis of the Operation House Cleaning makes it clear how the federal government's action was a graphic performance intended at creating verticality in Michoacán. Through this performance, Calderon sends out the message that corruption would not be tolerated in

⁸⁶ The arrested public officials came from all ranks including mayors, municipal security directors, law enforcement personnel and public servants (Grayson 2011:67).

⁸⁷ Governor of Michoacán at the time when the operation took place.

⁸⁸ The reason that the federal government bypassed the state government was that Godoy's brother, who had just been elected for the seat of federal deputy, had close ties to La Familia (Ibid:68). The federal government did not want to compromise the operation and therefore it had acted as the vertical most supreme power in Mexico to take such an action.

Michoacán or any other state. This performance, which is not violently coercive, as is the case in the performances by La Familia, constructs an image which symbolizes how Calderon took matter into his own hands and “cleans” the municipalities of infiltrated and corrupt officials.

The image is even depicted by the name of the operation, as the state can be pictured as physically storming into the municipalities and removing corrupted officials. With this image, the federal state demonstrates that they are more powerful and encompassing than local officials and drug cartels because they too have access to information regarding municipality officials maintaining ties with La Familia. The federal state sets a clear precedent for future reference regarding their fight against corruption. The bypassing of Godoy, illustrates that state is above (verticality) every municipal and society and has ultimate control. In this way, the state makes sure that state officials know that their actions corruption and impunity will not be tolerated.

The State’s response to narco-propaganda

The third strategy used by the state to establish spatiality is through the response to narco-propaganda and the discourse used by drug cartels. According to Pacheco, “the loss of the Mexican state’s ability to manage effectively perceptions of security and insecurity has resulted in a spike of violence geared at expanding MDC spheres of influence, asserting not only territorial control, but also a certain degree of legitimacy” (2009:1034). For mainly this reason, the state has responded on several occasions to La Familia’s discursive strategy as it aims to debunk or deconstruct this discourse and in this way re-establish its authority over territories. For example, when La Familia made its first appearance, the state refuted their claims:

‘La Familia Michoacana’ consists of a modality of drug-trafficking which works as ‘counterintelligence’, and takes advantage of the political and social circumstances of the

country and is based on an overused discourse on social differences, reinforced with religious phrases, to carry out the executions with the aim of achieving social endorsement” (Yañez 2006).

This statement deconstructs La Familia’s discourse and in its place constructs the official state discourse as the state clarifies the real objective and functions of this drug cartel. First, the state indirectly emphasizes that La Familia constructs an “us and them divide” in order to obtain social support. According to the state this support is obtained by La Familia because it confuses the population in order to justify their actions (Yañez 2006). Then, the state warns the society that La Familia uses mass media to expand their influence and power as well as to legitimize their activities through what they call “counterintelligence” (Yañez 2006). Finally, it discredits La Familia’s discourse by pointing out the incoherence regarding drug trafficking and their religious message:

These groups seek to legitimize their criminal activities to society, and securing their sympathy through gifts, messages and speeches that same use social and economic needs, as the religion, "two clichés" of the society. This famous Familia, is the same one who sells drugs, the same one that murders people, the same one that poisons one and another’s group, i.e., there are not ones that are good and ones that are bad, all criminal groups are bad and all deserve the disapproval from society and the persecution by the authorities (Daniel Cabeza de Vaca in Yañez 2006).

The Mexican State’s Twitter Account

A second response by the government to La Familia’s narco-propaganda is the state’s increased use of social networks, internet and e-mails to further deconstruct drug cartels discourse and to

establish encompassment. The government's realization of the importance of mass media, attributed to the use of social networks by drug cartels, has led to the increase number of Twitter accounts opened by government officials and institutions in Mexico (Johnson May 2011). The state aims to use these social networks to further deconstruct and discredit cartel discourses which attempt to contest the state's authority (Johnson May 2011). In addition, the state uses this strategy to set the record straight as to what is actually happening in the country (Rios⁸⁹ in Johnson May 2011). In this way the state establishes encompassment, as the state interacts instantly with people around the country and provides them with news alerts, security information, tips and announces dangers in different states (Johnson May 2011). Effectively, the government has made a great effort in making sure that all the institutions are present in every aspect of life, even in the digital world, a clear example of encompassment.⁹⁰ Tweets are even posted by Calderon himself on a daily basis as a way to be closer to Mexican people and to update the nation almost instantly.

Narco-corridos: singing to La Familia

Through the banning of narco-corridos, songs that glorify the drug cartels and their leaders, the state seeks to establish spatiality in places where narco-corridos⁹¹ are common. In Michoacán, singers have been known to praise La Familia for their "leadership, praises its devotion to Christian principles and applauds its contributions to the communities and vilifies Los Zetas" (Grayson 2010:45). When examining the relevance of narco-corridos it becomes clear that the state takes these songs very seriously as there have been government laws developed against these songs. In 2001 the Mexican Senate discussed narco-corridos and their impact on society

⁸⁹ Fernando Rios is a Mexican government official in Durango State.

⁹⁰ For research purposes I was able to open an account in Twitter and was able to follow the different institutions and political figures in Mexico, including President Calderon.

⁹¹ Excerpts of narco-corridos can be found in Appendix B.

which resulted in the passing of a petition stop radio stations from playing narco-corridos in 15 states (Wellinga 2011). The argument behind these measures was that narco-corridos served to glorify drug traffickers and their activities and thus promoted violence and criminality (Wellinga 2001). In recent years, narco-corridos have also made headline news when governors from different states banned them⁹², such as in 2009 when Oscar Marin Arce “introduced legislation to punish authors of narco-corridos with up to three years in prison”, although this law did not pass (Corcoran 2011). In May 2011, a governor from Sinaloa banned narco-corridos (Ibid). The state’s response in the most recent case was to praise governors who took this action (Ibid). However, some have argued that this is limiting freedom of speech. Although there have been relevant points made on both sides of the debate regarding the banning and censoring of narco-corridos, the state has said that the messages from these songs will not be tolerated in Mexico. In this way the state makes it clear that it will take all the necessary measures to establish spatiality within their territory. The same can be observed in the government’s expectations of the media’s role in its strategy.

The State and the Media

As examined in the previous chapter, the control of the media is essential to La Familia as it seeks the control over the interpretation of violence in order to construct and communicate its discourse and mold the perceptions of the population. The Mexican state has realized the implications of the control over the media and has responded with extensive statements regarding the use of media outlets by La Familia. In a further attempt to debunk La Familia’s discourse and re-establish its spatiality, state signed a 10 point pact with the media containing parameters for reporting (Barrera Diaz and Gutierrez 2011). The pact obtained the commitment

⁹² See article “Mexican broadcasters take ‘narco-ballads off the air” by Howard LaFranchi.

of “Major daily newspapers and the top television broadcasters, Televisa and TV Azteca, [as they] said they would also seek to make sure that drug cartel leaders ‘are not seen as victims or public heroes’ and are unable to use the media as a propaganda tool” (Barrera Diaz and Gutierrez 2011). The agreement aims at reducing the amount of graphic images presented to the Mexican public, which the government argued was benefiting the drug cartels (Barrera Diaz and Gutierrez 2011). The pact has been portrayed as a victory for the government and its strategy (Booth 2011). However, although 700 media executives signed the agreement, two of the most influential news sources, *Proceso* and *Reforma* abstained from taking part and criticized it by arguing that the Mexican population deserves to know the truth about what is happening in their country (Booth 2011). Other journalists and academics were also skeptical; Aristegui “expressed concern that the accord smacked of ‘almost patriotic journalism’ and called for uniform behavior by what is often a free-wheeling press” (Booth 2011). Benitez Manaut, argued that agreement consisted in censorship and “it could threaten freedom of expression and investigative journalism” (Booth 2011).

Whatever the effect that the pact between the media and the government might have on the war on drugs, it fits into a larger scheme of the governmental strategy, as it is important to point out that the government is eager to involve all sectors of the society in its fight against the drug cartels. In this way, the Mexican state is proving once more that it will take the measures necessary to re-establish verticality over society, as the PRI once did.



Figure 1: Illustrates the media's dilemma as to type of news they should cover after signing the pact with the State.⁹³

Conclusions

This chapter demonstrates how the Mexican state established spatiality in the past and compares it to the present. The PRI used a hierarchical strategy based on a clientelist structure which ensured political stability over the long term and a co-existence with drug cartels. The current administration adopted a confrontational policy and establishes spatiality in four ways: the articulation of a solid and firm discourse; the provision of security through militarization and the addressing of concerns of the society; the provision of an anti-corruption policy; and a concrete response to narco-propaganda. Through these strategies, the state legitimizes itself as being the only power allowed to: dictate the rules of the game, control the interpretation of violence and have the monopoly over the use of violence and force. The government is therefore actively looking to establish alliances and searching for support and approval of its strategy by ensuring

⁹³ Translation of quote in Spanish: "So we will no longer be able to present criminals as heroes. Does that include ex-presidents, governors, police chiefs and businessmen?" from article: "The 'Mexico Initiative' PR Campaign Returns to Distort and Sanitize News Reports" by Erin Rosa.

encompassment. Even though the government has good intentions and has had some successes, it has also had some unintended consequences, such as human rights abuses by the military or the high number of casualties attributed to its strategy. These consequences have provoked the outcry of the society through movements taking the street to protest in a peaceful manner not only the discourse and strategies used by criminal organizations but also those used by the government.

Chapter 4

These are no times for honking: Society's response to violent discourse

La Familia and the State's discourse and strategies help us to understand some of the responses by Mexican society concerning drug related violence. In this past year, the Mexican government captured and killed two of the deadliest drug traffickers in Mexico. This provoked demonstration in Michoacán in apparent support for La Familia, which puzzled the government. In other news, the discovery of mass graves and the death of the son of a poet and writer provoked mass demonstrations which made headlines as people took to the streets to demand justice, an end to impunity and no more violence. Two apparently different groups of protesters were both demonstrating against the government. What is the reason for this? Obviously there are different responses to violent discourse and strategies among the society which should be analyzed. For this reason, this chapter examines three different responses by Mexicans to La Familia and the State. These responses include: support; submission, silence and inaction; and social mobilization against drug cartel and the State. This analysis ties the three previous chapters together in order to finally reach some conclusions and recommendations for the situation in Mexico.

Support for La Familia

In December 2010, after Moreno Gonzalez's death, La Familia's spokesman called on the people of Michoacán for their support through a message transmitted on a local radio station which was later diffused profusely. The message said:

Accompany us in the demonstrations that are being programmed, invite people. People are hurt and upset. Let us support the people as best we can, let's invite everyone, our cousin, our brother, our nephew and move from one side to another, (...) everyone be ready, ready with your weapons, have them right next to you, do not abandon them, do not lay down your weapons, please. (...) We are going to move forward all together, all together with great force, with much longing we will achieve what "El Doctor" wanted and what he fondly instilled in us." (La Tuta in Suverza and Aristegui 2010).⁹⁴

With this message, La Tuta called for the mobilization of people in support of La Familia. According to Ruiz, what at first glance seemed to be a demonstration for peace organized by the local government, turned out to be 'demonstrations' for La Familia (2011). This demonstration was characterized by 300 people holding posters with messages such as:

"Nazario will always live in our hearts."

Mr. Nazario, for students your ideals live on."

"We support La Familia Michoacana. We will always remember Nazario Moreno, the Doctor" (Ruiz 2010).

⁹⁴ Quote in Spanish: "Acompañemos a las marchas que se programan, invitemos a la gente, la gente está dolida y molesta, vamos a apoyar a la gente con lo más que podamos, invitemos a todo el mundo, a nuestro primo, a nuestro hermano, a nuestro sobrino y movámonos de un lado a otro, no seamos blancos - blancos fáciles de ubicar, entiendan los motivos por qué a veces no podemos hablar un poquito, tenemos que estarnos moviendo a ciertas distancias para que no fácilmente se nos ubique; todos pónganse listos, estén listos con las armas, ténganlas a un ladito, no las abandonen, no abandonen las armas, por favor. vamos a seguir hacia adelante todos unidos, todos unidos con mucha fuerza, con mucho anhelo vamos a lograr lo que "El Doctor" quería y que con mucho cariño nos inculcó, aunque de una u otra manera hayan personas que no entienden el mensaje de él y que lo tachen de delincuente o de una mala persona, eso es mentira, los que lo conocimos a fondo sabemos el gran corazón que tenía, sigamos para adelante, no declinemos compañeros, vamos hacia adelante, todo va seguir igual, no se preocupen..."

“La Familia Michoacana is more than one state.”



Figure 2: image of girl in demonstrations in support of La Familia.⁹⁵

The images were broadcasted not only in Mexico but also internationally and could lead to a range of questions regarding drug cartels in Mexico, such as: Do people in Mexico support drug cartels? What are the reasons that people supported La Familia instead of the government? There are three plausible explanations for these questions. The first explanation is that the people of Michoacán truly believe the discourse of La Familia that they are the protectors of Michoacán and are convinced by narco-propaganda, ideology and provision services. Grayson quotes a migrant worker for saying “I know they [La Familia] are really crazy. In fact, I think they are sick sometimes, but they are the only people in my town who can help you if you get in trouble, so that’s why I joined the group” (2010).⁹⁶ This example shows how La Familia’s discursive strategy had an impact on the population and it can be argued that it has effectively constructed an image of being the provider or security through which both vertically and encompassment was established.

⁹⁵ Image from the website Insightcrime. “Phone Calls Give Clues on Mexico Drug Gang Propaganda Tactics” by Patrick Corcoran.

⁹⁶ For this quote, Grayson cited: Tuckman and Vulliamy, “Drugs ‘Taliban’ declares war on Mexican State.”

From this analysis the next questions that lead to the other two explanations are what part of the population supported La Familia? And how was La Familia able to mobilize the people for these demonstrations? In order to answer these questions, it is important to consider the economic context of Mexican society⁹⁷ (elaborated on in chapter 2). The second reason is that economic and political transformation led to an increase in poverty for which a weak state could not provide for which caused “disenchantment of the government (Finnegan 2010). Neoliberal transformation resulted in power and economic vacuums which could not be filled due to the state’s limited capacity under the PAN. In this way, drug traffickers filled power and economic vacuums and provided services for the most marginalized. As a result it can be argued that the most marginalized or periphery communities are the ones who most likely support La Familia’s discourse because they benefited from these services. People thus began to resort to La Familia instead of the government to solve their problems (Finnegan 2010) which is also attributed to the fact that people know that government officials are corrupt and have little leverage when it comes to drug cartels. The result is what Pacheco describes as “some communities publicly [requested] authorities not to intervene against drug-lords” (2009:1035). People supported and reaffirmed La Familia’s authority and were willing to go to the street and openly defy the government’s discourse and strategy of militarization.

The third possible explanation for people’s participation in these demonstrations is that La Familia might have paid them to go to the streets. Pacheco affirms that “narcotraffickers have gained the reputation of giving away money to their followers” (2009:1035). This strategy has been used by La Familia and other drug cartels in Mexico, such as the Gulf Cartel or the Sinaloa

⁹⁷ Elaborated in chapter 2 under the subheading “*Economic Context*”.

Cartel.⁹⁸ As early as 2006, SIEDO⁹⁹ confirmed that La Familia had given away toys and other things in exchange for their support (Yañez 2006). In this way, La Familia is contesting the state through the use of economic resources. Payments and charity are strategies commonly used in Latin American and Mexican politics to win support among the most marginalized people. As a result, the provision of houses or entertainment can be interpreted as a strategy to establish verticality and encompassment, by confirming that La Familia will provide for the people, even if the state does not.

Submission, silence and inaction

Another possible reaction among the Mexican population is that of submission which consists in silence and inaction due to fear of drug related violence. This might be the reaction most opted for in Mexico, which has meant that people have changed their practices and routines to avoid confrontation and remain silent. In this way, the people of Michoacán have attempted to avoid falling victims of the drug related violence by avoiding their involvement with the government or La Familia.

When analyzing the reaction of submission, inaction and silence, Pacheco describes that new modus operandi such as beheadings and executions “aims to engender a message of fear, terrorizing not only narco-adversaries, but also security authorities and masses of people from without Mexican society” (Pacheco 2009: 1024). As we have seen, La Familia’s violent performances indeed contain a strong message which involves threats, injuries or death. For this reason the most common response is fear, silence and inaction. Therefore, people are coerced to

⁹⁸ This point is affirmed also by Grayson (2010 and 2011) and Finnegan (2010).

⁹⁹ Siedo, a Mexican institution in charge of investigating La Familia said that La Familia Michoacana “gave away a ton of toys and organized massive events, to win over the population and avoid denounces by the population” (Yañez 2006).

indirectly accept the new form of authority and anyone who speaks or acts against it will be punished.

So, the question that remains is why are Mexican people opting for submission, silence and inaction? Or what has led to this type of reaction by the Mexican population? Political, economic and cultural contexts can provide an answer to this question. Politically, in the past the PRI controlled every aspect of Mexican life which was based on a clientelist system. It was an all inclusive system that had a very strong network which was tolerant of drug traffickers as part of their *caciques* and resulted in high levels of corruption. Mexico's bankruptcy in 1982 resulted in neoliberal reforms which degraded the political stronghold. The collapse of the PRI due to neoliberal reforms and political instability (corn crisis in Chiapas) led to the collapse of the PRI structure. The economic and political transitions weakened the government and a less powerful, less inclusive and less networked PAN took over power. As stated before, power vacuums were gradually filled by drug cartels and a new form of authoritarianism of organized crime took over (Shelley 1999:32). With these forms of authoritarianism there is a political culture of repression ever so present in Mexico.

This new form of "authoritarianism" of organized crime began to dominate the society in every level by installing fear. Consequently, civilians begin to live in fear of the non-state actors as the intimidation of politicians, journalists and law enforcers began (Shelley 1999: 32). People's fears are re-enforced because the state is not the one in control but rather as some analysts claim, "the drug cartels *are* the State" (Taibo 2011). Also due to high levels of corruption people find that they are not able to resort to the state or law enforcers because La Familia will hear of a threat being reported and thus people will be intimidated until they are silenced, as has been the case

with journalists. In addition, civil society is also limited or non-existent and in the cases where it does exist, criminal organizations “undermine and co-opt civil society” (Shelley 1999: 37).

Silence or you will be hurt

The silence and inaction response can be briefly illustrated by an example that resulted from the voicing out of frustration and indignation regarding violence in Michoacán. A resident from Morelia described, in an informal conversation, that people are tired of all the violence that is happening in the state.¹⁰⁰ The resident of Michoacán described how a girl had once openly expressed her disgust for La Familia by yelling that they were worse off with them and they should leave the people alone. Days later the girl’s mouth had been sown shut. Although a confirmation of the story was not obtained, whether or not the story is true is beside the point. The important thing is that these stories, legends or myths are transmitted by word of mouth creating narratives of La Familia and its actions. Compared to the killings and corpse messaging and other images of violence, it serves to mold the behavior of the people. This is the clearest indication that imaginings of La Familia as all encompassing, they see and hear everything. The image of shutting a person’s mouth also sends the message that silence is expected of people who do not support their cause. However, not only does this example provide a graphic image of what would happen to people who talk against La Familia, but it also sends a very strong message as to the means they will employ to punish defiance, that is violence.

Living with fear: changing routines and practices

¹⁰⁰ This was confirmed by Javier Valdez in an e-mail conversation March 22, 2011. This has also been confirmed through interviews of people participating in mass demonstrations against violence, which will be examined later on in the chapter.

The manifestation of fear can be observed through the “modification of the forms of life, the way that one decides to live on a daily basis” (Valdez 2011). There is an evident change of practices and routines ranging in activities such as what route to take to go to work or go to daily activities to curfews for going out (Valdez 2011) which can be observed in cities such as Juarez, Nuevo Laredo¹⁰¹ and Morelia. Valdez (2011) describes public retreat of the social activities, events because of fear that they will get caught in the crossfire (Freeman 2006:6). This was also affirmed by a resident of Michoacán who said that in Morelia social life is almost inexistent, there are no bars or restaurants open late and people are at home shortly after 8 pm (February 2011). In this way people find themselves limiting their activities and staying at home more than usual due to a heightened fear of a possible confrontation with a member of a drug cartel (Valdez 2011). Seclusion becomes a means people use to protect themselves and their families from the dangers that exist in everyday circumstances. As a result, people are forced to live their lives considering La Familia’s every move but also considering the government and law enforcement activities which is a reason why people resort to social networks to obtain instant information.¹⁰²

Valdez provides an analogy which illustrates the fear and situation which Mexicans live with, he describes that people find themselves with a gun to point at their head at all times. Valdez argues that people are aware that drug traffickers are in charge and they can pull the trigger and kill them through an automobile accident because of a wrong look, or a flickering of the car lights

¹⁰¹ See Freeman’s report “State of Siege: Drug Related Violence and Corruption in Mexico” pg. 6 for more information as to how residents react.

¹⁰² See article “Mexicans turn to social media for news about drug crimes” by Tim Johnson, May 2011.

(2011)¹⁰³. This can be illustrated by an image which was published in an article in *La Jornada* earlier this year:

The most frightening of anecdotes: in Torreon a man is stopped at a red light. When the light turns green, the car in front of him stops without reason. He wants to lay on the horn, but resists the urge. These are not times for honking. The road is backed up. The light cycles through and turns red again. The man decides to get out of his car and kindly ask the men in the stalled car if there was a way he could be of assistance. The driver of the stalled car shows him a gun and hands him 200 pesos [US\$18]. ‘You seem like a good guy. I just lost a bet with this jerk.’ (Pointing to his co-pilot, who, smiling, shows off an Uzi). ‘If you had honked, I would have shot you. Today is your lucky day, pal.’ The car takes off. The kind man just stood there in a cold sweat (Taibo 2011).

The message that this narrative illustrates is that a human life in Mexico is worth less than 18 dollars, in this case. This is mainly due to impunity which has given criminals the green light to do what they want without any consequences. For this reason, people are more cautious about their reactions as they look for ways to avoid confrontations through the change of practices. The specific example which demonstrates the change of attitude is when the main *wants to lay on the horn, but resists the urge. These are no times for honking* (Taibo 2011). Instead, the man opts for silence, a clear indication that he has to submit to the rules of the game established in an atmosphere of violence. People are suppressed by fear because they understand that dangers could be present anywhere, a clear example of the encompassing power that drug cartels have. People thus adapt less confrontational responses so they will not become a victim. If the man’s

¹⁰³ Quote in Spanish: Es “una sociedad postrada porque sabe que el narco manda y que puede jalar en gatillo en cualquier momento y que pueden matarlo a uno por un accidente automovilístico, un choque, una mirada, un claxon o un cambio de luces”.

response would have been anything but kind, the men would have shot him just to demonstrate their power over people.

Mobilization: Hasta La Madre!

Through polls and interviews it has become clear that people are discontent and distrust the current state's discourse and strategy and are tired of the violence and insecurity by drug cartels. Security has become one of the greatest worries among people, even more than the economy¹⁰⁴, as reported by The Economist (2011). The security concern has been tied to Calderon's approval rate which fell below 50% for the first time since his election in 2006 (Ibid:2011). In addition, a poll taken by Demotecnia affirmed that six out of 10 Mexicans believed that the war was not being won by the government but rather by the drug traffickers which indicated people's dissatisfaction with how the government was managing the security issue (Johnson March 2011). As a result of high levels of insecurity and the death toll approaching 40,000, people have begun to look for alternatives to oppose government discourse and strategy. In consequence, people have resorted to support an outspoken leader of the civil society, in order to voice their concerns as a unified society against violence (The Economist 2011).

The Movement for Peace and Justice with Dignity

A third response by Mexican population has been the recent mobilization initiated by the Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity led by Javier Sicilia. The movement consists of "a group of the families of the victims of the war against drugs" (Gil Olmos 2011). The leader of these mass protests Javier Sicilia is a Mexican poet whose son was murdered earlier this year and

¹⁰⁴ The economy is a factor that, according to La Familia, has been high on the list of concern for Mexicans (The Economist June 2011) however security is a growing concern.

for whom he is looking to make justice. The publication of an open letter to criminals and politicians in *Proceso Magazine* paved the way for the mobilization of thousands (Javier Sicilia: *Carta abierta a políticos y criminales* 2011). The open letter directly criticizes Calderon's war against drugs, the corrupted political class and the criminal class (Sicilia April 2011). Sicilia writes about the indignation deaths, of not only his son and friends but of thousand others, which has led Mexican to finally say "We have had it"¹⁰⁵ (*Estamos hasta la Madre*) (Sicilia April 2011). Excerpts from his letter emphasize this phrase:

We have had it with you, politicians (...) because your power struggles has torn apart the fabric of this nation, because in the midst of this poorly planned, poorly done, poorly executed war, you have placed this country in a state of emergency, you have been incapable - because of your doubts, your struggles, your miserable grid, and your its struggle for power- of creating the consensus that the nation needs to find the unity without which this country will not have a way out; [of the violence] (...) (Sicilia 2011).¹⁰⁶

The letter is also delivers a harsh message to criminals:

You, criminals, we have had it with your violence, of your loss of honorability, of your cruelty, and of your nonsense. Formerly you had codes of honor. You weren't so cruel in the settling of accounts and you did not target citizens or their families. Now you do not distinguish. Your violence cannot be named because it doesn't even have, as the pain and

¹⁰⁵ In Spanish "Estamos hasta la madre" means "We have had it". A phrase coined by Sicilia with which Mexican's have identified.

¹⁰⁶ Quote in Spanish: "Estamos hasta la madre de ustedes, políticos (-y cuando digo políticos no me refiero a ninguno en particular, sino a una buena parte de ustedes, incluyendo a quienes componen los partidos-,) porque en sus luchas por el poder han desgarrado el tejido de la nación, porque en medio de esta guerra mal planteada, mal hecha, mal dirigida, de esta guerra que ha puesto al país en estado de emergencia, han sido incapaces -a causa de sus mezquindades, de sus pugnas, de su miserable grilla, de su lucha por el poder- de crear los consensos que la nación necesita para encontrar la unidad sin la cual este país no tendrá salida; (Javier Sicilia: *Carta abierta a políticos y criminales*, April 2011).

suffering it provokes a name or reason. You have even lost your dignity to kill. You have become cowards like the miserable Nazi Sonderkommandos who murdered, without any sense of humanity, children, boys, girls, women, men and elders, in other words, the innocent. We have had it because your violence has become inhuman subhuman and imbecile, - animals do not even do what you do-. We are up to here because your desire for power and enrichment has humiliated our children and you have destroyed them and have produce fear and terror (Sicilia 2011).¹⁰⁷

After the direct criticism against both factions of the society, who Sicilia identifies as responsible for the escalation of violence he calls for two actions. First, Sicilia calls on politicians to quit their jobs if they are not able to do them properly. Second, he calls for a massive mobilization of the citizens of Mexico, to unite in a situation of national emergency. Through this mobilization, Sicilia calls citizens to “create an agenda of unification of the nation to build a real state of governability” through which justice and peace are demanded in a peaceful manner (Sicilia 2011).

¹⁰⁷ Quote in Spanish: De ustedes, criminales, estamos hasta la madre, de su violencia, de su pérdida de honorabilidad, de su crueldad, de su sinsentido. Antiguamente ustedes tenían códigos de honor. No eran tan crueles en sus ajustes de cuentas y no tocaban ni a los ciudadanos ni a sus familias. Ahora ya no distinguen. Su violencia ya no puede ser nombrada porque ni siquiera, como el dolor y el sufrimiento que provocan, tiene un nombre y un sentido. Han perdido incluso la dignidad para matar. Se han vuelto cobardes como los miserables Sonderkommandos nazis que asesinaban sin ningún sentido de lo humano a niños, muchachos, muchachas, mujeres, hombres y ancianos, es decir, inocentes. Estamos hasta la madre porque su violencia se ha vuelto inhumana, no animal –los animales no hacen lo que ustedes hacen–, sino subhumana, demoniaca, imbecil. Estamos hasta la madre porque en su afán de poder y de enriquecimiento humillan a nuestros hijos y los destrozan y producen miedo y espanto.

The result of this letter was a four day national silent march which took place on April 6, 2011. The mass protests lead by this movement demonstrated how a few people were able to mobilize approximately 35,000 people in 32 cities in Mexico and obtain solidarity support in cities around the world such as Barcelona, Buenos Aires, Paris, New York, Amsterdam, and The Hague (Gil Olmos 2011). It was reported that “some 100 civil society groups supported Sicilia's four-day silent march” (Johnson 2011). The uniqueness of this movement and the mass protests is that: first, it is based on the principle of non-violent resistance in protest of drug related violence; second, it is a protest against drug cartels and governmental discourse and strategy; and third, it is the first movement in years which was able to mobilize the number of people that it did. When analyzing the initiative and mobilization that led to the massive protests the words and slogans that characterized the protests are mainly: “We have had it” (Estamos hasta la madre), the term coined by Sicilia in his letter; “No more blood” (No más sangre) and “Not one more dead” (Ni uno más). These words contain a strong message of peace through non-violent resistance which has become a symbolic way for people to come together and protest drug related violence (Gil Olmos 2011). Apart from the signs, images that characterize the protest included fountains being filled with blood-red dye (The Economist June 2011) symbolizing the bloodshed in recent years and appealing to people’s consciousness through what might also classified as a performance. Mass protests are an indication that people are beginning to move away from their silence and fear as they support an initiative which they actually believe in (Interview by Aristegui to Sicilia).¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ This interview to citizens Beatriz Alvarez, Javier Ramirez, can be found on YouTube under the title “Aristegui-Marcha Nacional Contra La Violencia (Javier Sicilia) 1/2” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oua8M0IJK_s&NR=1>. They are protesting to show their inconformity to violence.



Figure 3: A girl holding a sign saying peace during one of the mass demonstrations in Mexico.¹⁰⁹

Following the success of the mass protests, Sicilia has continued to diffuse his messages through YouTube¹¹⁰, Twitter and Facebook which has mobilized people to other actions, such as the placing of plaques containing the names of victims in the “plazas”¹¹¹ in the cities of Mexico. This act creates a visible and tangible image of the victims who have died (Sicilia “Emergencia Nacional” 2011). Another action is the “National Peace Caravan”, which started in Cuernavaca, and included cities such Morelia, Mexico City and Ciudad Juarez (Caselli 2011). In Michoacán, the National Peace Caravan obtained overwhelming support such as 1,000 people consisting of the indigenous representatives from Purepecha in Cherán (Rosa 2011). Maria Lupita Dulcero welcomed the caravan by saying “Welcome! Welcome! We welcome you with open arms!” (Rosa 2011). She affirmed that they did not support the war against drugs because the government was responsible for the disappearance of their family members and the drug traffickers did not allow them to implement development projects in their own lands (Rosa 2011).

¹⁰⁹ Picture by: Yasmin Ortega Cortez.

¹¹⁰ See YouTube video “Emergencia Nacional: Convocatoria de Javier Sicilia a los Pueblos de México”.

¹¹¹ Plaza means main square in Spanish.

Sicilia's demands to the State

The mass protests also served as a platform for Sicilia to express the discourse of the citizens. In an interview he called the government to live the reality of the people and he criticized the fact that it is easy for the government to:

Talk and talk and have discourses that never solidify. The word when not embodied is pure noise, pure emptiness and pure garbage. It is very easy to talk when you have all the assurances. We want politicians to come out every day as the citizens do, to show us that they really are with us, and to solve the problems” (Interview Sicilia by Aristegui).¹¹²

Sicilia also demanded that:

So I repeat again, as I said this in front of military barracks. We cannot allow that neither a child nor a young person dies; they are not collateral casualties, they are not numbers, they were lives that ceased to exist. The army should return dignity and confidence to this country. We do not want to see them out of their barracks. And to the politicians I repeat: if they cannot [do your jobs] go, but we have to make sure that they leave, because when one of them sends to kill someone's mother, we have to make sure they leave (Gil Olmos 2011).¹¹³

¹¹² Quote in Spanish: “Y es muy fácil hablar y hablar y tener discursos que nunca se arman. La palabra cuando no se encarna es puro ruido, es puro vacío, pura basura. Es muy fácil eso cuando tienen todas las seguridades. Que salgan todos los días como la ciudadanía. Que nos demuestren que realmente están con nosotros, no y que resuelvan los problemas” (Aristegui - Marcha Nacional Contra La Violencia (Javier Sicilia) 2/2 April 2011).

¹¹³ Quote in Spanish: “Lo vuelvo a repetir, lo dije al frente al cuartel militar. No podemos permitir que ni un niño ni un muchacho más mueran no son bajas colaterales, no son números, eran vidas que cegaron. El Ejército nos debe devolver la dignidad y la confianza a este país. No queremos verles fuera de sus cuarteles. Y a los políticos les repito: Si no pueden, váyanse, pero hay que asegurarse que se vayan porque cuando uno manda a chingar a su madre a alguien, hay que asegurarse. Gritos de “que renuncien, que renuncien!” lo

Following this statement, Sicilia made demands for the “government to change its strategy as well as the resignation of Genaro Garcia Luna, the director of public security and the architect of Mr. Calderon’s battle against drug gangs” (Malkin 2011).¹¹⁴ Although some demands have been presented by this movement the leaders of this initiative still have much to do, since analysts have noticed that its leaders “are still squabbling over their demands, such as whether the army should get off the streets at once or withdraw gradually” (The Economist June 2011). The Economist also signals to the possible establishment of truth commissions as a demands for the government (June 2011).

Sicilia’s success at mobilizing society

Analyzing Sicilia’s success difficult because there have not been many analysis as to why Sicilia’s movement succeeded at mobilizing society when countless others had failed. However, from testimonies surrounding these mobilizations, three possible reasons can be presented.

The first is that Sicilia, a Mexican poet and writer, is known for his articles in Proceso magazine on a broad range of topics such as ethics, democracy, religion, drug trafficking and human rights (“Javier Sicilia y sus detractors” July 2011). Due to his line of work, it has been argued that Sicilia “has extensive contacts within the national media, and he succeeded in galvanizing numerous people for his campaign” (Johnson May 2011). The open letter published in Proceso gave Sicilia a space to voice his frustrations, address the population and convoke to a massive protest. After the success the protest, the organizers of this campaign also made use of social

secundaron y, ante esta reacción, corrigió: “No hay que pedir la renuncia de Calderón porque si se va no pasa nada y todo estará peor, mejor hay que decirle que le cumpla a la ciudadanía” (Gil Olmos April 2011).

¹¹⁴ Also affirmed by Procesos an article by Gil Olmos “Sicilia exige a Calderón la renuncia de García Luna” May 2011. El Universal’s article “Sicilia pide la renuncia de García Luna” by Morales and Torres, May 2011 and La Jornada’s article by Urrutia “No más muertes; que renuncie García Luna a la SPP: Sicilia”, May 2011.

media such as Twitter (Gil Olmos 2011) and Facebook to diffuse information of upcoming protests and connect with people who agreed with the message.

The second possible reason why Sicilia's movement and discourse was successful has to do with the wording and the message. Slogans such as "Not one more dead more" or "No more violence" convey a message of peace with justice and dignity which appealed to many in Mexico who were tired of the violence and who identified with Sicilia's situation. The message that he diffused is that of hope as it presents an alternative and peaceful solution to violence. The protests gave people hope and a voice such as Martin Azalea Torres from San Luis Potosi who said:

This caravan gives us hope to keep fighting so that those responsible are made to pay and so that justice can intervene when it is meant to. Here in San Luis Potosi, there is a climate of fear like many other cities in Mexico. This march encourages us not to stay silent, to keep fighting, to be able to keep standing" (Caselli 2011).

Olga Reyes from Ciudad Juarez said: "This movement is very good. I believe that little by little people will get rid of fear in Mexico. They will gain courage, they will speak out" (Caselli 2011).



Figure 4: Two men holding a sign with one of the mottos of the mass demonstrations in Mexico. “No más violencia”.¹¹⁵

The third possible reason, which is closely related to the wording and message, is timing. Sicilia’s son death came at a time when Mexico had discovered mass graves in border state of San Fernando in the state of Tamaulipas¹¹⁶ which discovered 279 bodies.¹¹⁷ The motto of the protest is “we have had it” conveys a message that people have reached their limit regarding the violence in their country. A woman interviewed in a protest in San Luis said: “We have had it that in our country things will not change. Everything changes. Everywhere else in the world the situation is changing, except in our country. Every day we are worse off” (“Marcha Nacional Contra la Violencia”).¹¹⁸ People have also noticed that they have to do their part to stop the violence, a sort of social responsibility. The protests and caravan of peace provided a space and time for people to leave their silence behind, and protests injustices and place demands on the government in a peaceful manner.

Analysis of the civil society’s discourse: Can this campaign be considered a manifestation of transnational governmentality seeking spatiality?

¹¹⁵ Picture obtained from the following website:

<http://www.google.com/imgres?q=marcha+por+la+paz+mexico&um=1&hl=en&biw=1280&bih=709&tbm=isch&tbnid=FBPfflg1t80llM:&imgrefurl=http://picasaweb.google.com/FabrizioLorussoMex&docid=kfXQVt3yfrvj6M&w=640&h=480&ej=TAE8Tu_JDsngQeWH2dMH&zoom=1&iact=hc&vpx=836&vpy=373&dur=2538&hovh=194&hovw=259&tx=134&ty=95&page=1&tbnh=128&tbnw=170&start=0&ndsp=24&ved=1t:429,r:16,s:0>.

¹¹⁶ See article by Maklin and Cave 2011 “At Mexico Morgue, Families of Missing Seek Clues”.

¹¹⁷ See article by Reuters “Body count from Mexican mass graves nears 300”.

¹¹⁸ Estamos hasta la madre ya de que nuestro país no cambie las cosas. Cambia todo. En todo el mundo las cosas está cambiando la situación, menos en nuestro país. Cada vez más estamos peor. (Woman. Video “Marcha Nacional Contra la Violencia”. Quote in Spanish by Javier Ramírez: [Estoy aquí] “más que nada para demostrar mi inconformidad ante tanta violencia y pues solamente la sociedad participando puede poner su granito de arena. No podemos dejarlo todo al gobierno. Nosotros también tenemos que poner de nuestra parte también.”(Interview Sicilia by Aristegui).

The final question is can Sicilia's movement and initiative be considered a manifestation of transnational governmentality? When analyzing the discourse and the use of words during the protest it is clear that Sicilia and his movement are non-state actors who are seeking to gain a place in the political sphere. Through these protest Sicilia voices the needs and concerns of the citizens and looks to shift the agenda of the government and the actions of the drug cartels. Sicilia's open letter called on civil society to act with Sicilia as the figure representing the families of the victims of drug related violence. Indeed, Sicilia in this way formed part of transnational governmentality in Mexico and used this vehicle to challenge the state's policies and strategies to meet the needs of the people. Sicilia never aspired to obtain state spatiality or to replace state's power. Sicilia's discourse and strategy is rather an attempting to create a bottom-up change in Mexico by appealing to an alternative way to violence, which includes peaceful demonstrations. Sicilia's movement does not seek to establish verticality or encompassment, but rather makes use of democracy and attempts to use civil society to give a face and a voice to demands and concerns of the population. In this way, Sicilia seeks that the government change its strategy to a more inclusive one which will benefit the population and not hurt it more.

Conclusion

The responses of the Mexican society bring together the rest of the ideas in this paper because it demonstrates how the society responds to the discourses and strategies used by La Familia and the State. It is evident that there are some sectors of society which are more receptive to La Familia's discourse, as is the case with the most marginalized people and their protest in support of Moreno Gonzalez as oppose to the State. In this response by society, it becomes clear that verticality and encompassment is successfully established by La Familia. The second response illustrates how people have been coerced into accepting said discourse. Verticality and

encompassment create fear because people believe that the members of this cartel are present everywhere creating silence, inaction and a change of practices and routines, direct results of encompassment. The third response, are mass mobilizations which have gradually let people put aside their fear and silence in order to demand justice and no more violence. They protested not only violence by drug trafficking organizations but also the State's discourse and strategies which have led to an increase in violence and impunity. In this way Sicilia's movement, became part of the transnational governmentality through which he challenged State. However it is important to emphasize that his methods were peaceful and his objective was to give citizen's a voice in order for their demands to be heard by the State. In other words, Sicilia made use of civil society and a basic principle of democracy, civil participation, to obtain change and bring back hope to society.

Conclusions

The analysis concerning the violence and contest of power in Mexico shows the complex dynamics of interaction involving the state, the drug trafficking organizations and the society. The use of Ferguson and Gupta's ideas of state spatialization and transnational governmentality help to shed light on how La Familia Michoacana uses discursive strategies such as narco-propaganda and ideology as well as the provision of services to contest the power of the state through narratives, performances and inscriptions. In this sense, I argued that La Familia obtains power through the construction of images that enable it to establish verticality and encompassment in the society. This image ultimately helps mold the perceptions of society and create a social base for La Familia. Along the same lines, the examination of the State's response to drug cartels in the past and present is essential since it provides an explanation as to why there has been an escalation of violence over the past 11 years. A combination of La Familia's and the State's discourse and strategy provide an understanding some responses of society in the past and in recent months. The response in recent months has been the mobilization of thousands of people in massive demonstrations against drug related violence and in that case specifically against organized crime and the State's discourse and strategy which have meant the death of 35,000 people since 2006.

Findings and conclusions

The contestation of power by La Familia Michoacana is evident in the sense that it makes use of narco-propaganda, ideology and the provision of services to try to appeal to the population and to openly defy the government. Through discursive strategies La Familia has justified its existence through "Divine Justice", the clearest example of verticality. The manipulation and corruption of

municipality and law enforcement officials reinforced La Familia's verticality and encompassment as it strategically situated itself on a parallel¹¹⁹ level to the local and state authorities and above the population. Encompassment was demonstrated by: the charging of protection fees to business owners; La Familia's infiltration into the economy; and finally through narco-messages and the use of the media which suggested that La Familia knew exactly what was going on their territory at all times.

Through the establishment of verticality and encompassment, La Familia was able to obtain to a certain extent support amongst the people as was demonstrated in December 2010 when one of the leaders was killed. This support was manifested in a demonstration by people in Michoacán. However it is not clear until what extent this support was staged or paid. It is however, a factor which was considered in this analysis. The strategies used by La Familia also created submission and inaction as it created an atmosphere of fear which led people to change their daily routines and practices. One example provided in chapter four illustrated the retreat of people to their homes at night, resulting in a practically inexistent nightlife. People in other words tried to protect themselves and their family from possible confrontation which could ultimately cost them their lives. This change in routine and daily activities is significant because it shows the power that drug trafficking organizations have in specific towns and it also shows that people are less and less willing to react to what is going on around them for fear that someone is watching, a palpable example of encompassment.

This is precisely where the government strategy comes in, since the state is the one responsible for providing the basic service of security to its citizens. The strategy implemented by the PRI was examined and it was determined that verticality and encompassment was established through

¹¹⁹ The parallel state was a concept argued by Samuel Logan and Grayson.

a clientelist system based on caciques which allowed them to have a tight grip over all the activities in Mexico, even the drug trade (Astorga). A co-existence policy allows pacts and accords which maintained the government power above the population as well as the drug cartels. In this way state spatiality was crucial for the government and it made an effort to preserve the status quo and stability within Mexico. As a result, violence was relatively contained; however a downside to this system was high levels corruption in institutions. In the transition period from authoritarianism to democracy, the policy was drastically changed to a policy of confrontation (Bailey and Taylor 2009) which was undertaken by Fox and continued by Calderon. The confrontation policy based on disruption and elimination of drug cartels caused an escalation of violence as the new democratic government sought to re-gain the image of state spatiality in cities where drug trafficking organizations seem to have the control. In 2006, the state of Michoacán saw the first manifestation of the implementation of Calderon's "Public Security" policy which consisted in militarization and the "Operation House Cleaning". Statements and policies allowed the state to clarify what La Familia actually was, that is a criminal organization and to transmit the message that corruption would not be tolerated in the municipalities or any other public institution. In addition, the state sought to make alliances with other sectors of the society such as the media through the signing of a pact that would benefit the state and ensure encompassment. The use of social networks and other digital technologies also helped the state establish encompassment because it allowed them to transmit their message and make sure that people obtain the "correct" information.

Despite the good intentions of the government in the deployment of the military to establish security in violent and corrupt states, it did not take into account the power of La Familia Michoacana or the consequences that this strategy would have. To summarize the two negative

consequences included: human rights violations by military agents and an increase of violence. This has caused a great amount of criticism by society as a whole. The result was mobilization efforts led by a grieving father who convoked to peaceful protest through an open letter to the criminals and politicians. Sicilia's movement forms part of the transnational governmentality because it challenges the state's discourse and strategy. The movement aims at shifting the government's discourse and strategy so that it can take into account the needs of the society. With these peaceful demonstrations people have begun to move away from the the silence and inaction to a more proactive action under the heading "We have had it". The use of social networks such as Twitter has been a crucial tool in the mobilization of people.

The State has responded by organizing dialogues with the society and meeting with Sicilia. However, the State will not admit that its strategy is wrong nor will it be changed. It is clear that the Mexican state will listen to society but demonstrates its authority and power by not acknowledging that his discourse and strategy is causing unintended consequences. It re-enforces that the state should not be taken for granted and reinforces the image the state's vertically and encompassment.

Opinion

Discourse plays an important role in power and politics. As mentioned before, discourse can lead to action and as this paper illustrates, discourse can lead to the support of one actor or another in Mexico. For this reason, the Mexican State should keep on focusing on its public relations discourse and should aim at informing the population in the best way possible.

However, in my opinion the relationship between the State and the society should be strengthened. I think it is the duty of the civil society to set precedence for the upcoming

presidential candidates and the eventual president elect in order for the new policy and strategy will be directed toward the needs of the society. Calderon's strategy, although backed by the United States, in my opinion is flawed because it did not include the input of the civil society groups or society for that matter which is reflected by the dissatisfaction of the people in mass demonstrations. The needs of the people should be taken into consideration for the strategy that will be implemented during the next coming years. It is important that the state establish spatialization; however there are other ways through which this can also be done. Grassroots and civil society organizations should participate in the formation of policy so potential challenges do not become sever forms of civil disobedience.

The first step has already been taken but this is only the beginning. Although the Movement for Peace and Justice with Dignity and its campaign is far from perfectly planned it is an example which should be followed because it has achieved what no other civil society organization has achieved in years, that is to protest against drug related violence. As already mentioned, approximately 100 civil society groups backed the initiative led by Sicilia in its first silent march in 38 cities around Mexico (Johnson 2011). This march gave people a space to voice their fears and their demands not only to the state but also to demonstrate that they are not longer willing to tolerate the violence by the drug trafficking organizations. Consequently, for the first time since 2008, the state set up dialogues with the victims' families to apologize to them and to hear their demands. Even though the state's stance is strong regarding its discourse and strategy, it is a step in the right direction for change since people are no longer willing to stay silent and are beginning to act.

On the other hand, the State should listen to society with an open mind instead of maintaining a ridged stance based on fixed beliefs that violence is the only strategy possible. An integrated

policy based on citizen's participation would take into consideration the needs of the people and would result in a better and more focused public security policy. For this, the Mexican government needs to realize that it requires the support of the society if it wants to win the war against criminal organizations. This has already been advocated by academics and experts, however it is worth emphasizing. The Mexican State's website places an emphasis on projects which have been implemented; however more of these projects and programs should be created and should focus on targeting and working with the most marginalized populations in order to improve their socio-economic situation. In addition, there should be a continuation of reforms on law enforcement units and the judicial system based on transparency and zero tolerance for corruption.

The bottom line is that politicians must realize that the society is the moving force for winning the war against drugs trafficking and must work with them in order to establish spatialization. If the society is not taken into consideration, the war is lost and the state will have less and less support as time passes. The consequences of this could be catastrophic for Mexico and its people.

Appendix A

Chapter 2: Other examples of the use of digital technology by La Familia

Other examples of the use of e-mail communiqués, narco-banners and leaflets were employed by the alliance known as the Carteles Unidos, consisting of the Gulf Cartel, Sinaloa Cartel and La Familia Michoacán. These messages warned people to stay indoors at night, to be patient and ask the people to actively cooperate with information and report any suspicious activity by Los Zetas. An example of what this message might look like is:

People of Tamaulipas, don't be afraid. We are only looking out for your wellbeing. We are trained individuals, not children. We respect women. We don't kill civilians. ...We are from Tamaulipas and we respect our own. (Carteles Unidos cited in Cartels, military battle for public acceptance March 2011).

In addition, the identification of the alliances vehicles became common in many parts of Mexico (Cartels, military battle for public acceptance March 2011). With the marking of the cars with the initials of the alliance, drug trafficking organizations make use of images that would typically be used by the government in the demarcation of their law enforcement cars. In this way they are enforcing their verticality but also their encompassment by demonstrating that they are the power in the towns as well as the entity that is all around.

Blogs and the changing of routines

After the death of Nazario Moreno Gonzalez in 2010, La Familia Michoacana apparently published a death threat to Felipe Calderon as an act of retaliation (Carrasco Araizaga and Castellanos 2010). The threat was made through a blog becoming of popular use *Blog del Narco*. In this announcement, information regarding the emergence of different “guerrillas” or groups in different parts of Michoacán was also made public (Ibid 2010). There was also a warning issued for the population to stay away from (Ibid 2010). An apparent intensification in use of narco-propaganda followed the death of Moreno Gonzalez, with Michoacán and Morelia witnessing the hanging of narco-banners in support for La Familia, especially in the Municipality of Apatzingán (Ibid 2010). One narco-banner stated:

This is not narco-terrorism, it is a guerilla, it is the war for peace and against the federal forces of Michoacán, Mr. Juan de Arantepacua has his people and we are going to give our life for it all. Greetings.

Message for the people of Michoacán:

Do not fear, do not try to go out to the streets so that the pigs of the federal forces will not be disrespectful to you and to avoid lost bullets. Do not go to the hospitals; do not go to

the store, watch TV and stay at home please. (La Familia Michoacana cited in Carrasco Araizaga and Castellanos 2010).

Appendix B

Chapter 3: Examples of Narco-corridos

Excerpts from Wellinga's work "Narco-corridos: ballads Drugs in Mexico" contain the translated lyrics to some narco-corridos. Some examples from Wellinga's work are:

"Poverty does not bore me, / I was tired of the promises / I died of hunger / and just because I was honest. / Like many others / I right to life. "I know that business is hard, / I put my life on the line, / because I violate the law. / Since I started painting I knew," but in order to get out of the poverty / wax the only way out ." (Wellinga 2001).

"The message has come through: / dedo they have been slain. But before his execution, / they scorched his fingers. / Let this be an example / for those traitors."(Wellinga 2001).

"The fault of bad rulers, / kill each other for power, or must we leave our family / and we have in this country / humiliation and ill treatment / and many even lose / life here to be taken. / Our only crime is that we are hungry, / hunger in the stomach and to get ahead, / but they treat us like inferior beings / and prosecute us like criminals. / We have not come to steal or beg, / we only want to work. / We all blame the gringos / not us in their country show, / vultures ambitious but if there were not / would not in this country we have to find. / Hunger breaks, however, as they say, the law / and obliges us to flee, and undocumented to be, / but the guilty parties in their royal palaces / from other countries are going to enjoy / of the fortune they have stolen six years together / and in a thousand years to gather. / They are happy and enjoying life / while the people deeper and deeper into misery sinks." (Wellinga 2001).

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