Narco-Propaganda in the Mexican Drug War
Organized Crime = serious threat to Mexican state & civil society
(though boundaries blurred between cartels and police/military)

Anthropology of Crime deconstructs criminalizing discourses of the state

But we also need to deconstruct discourses generated by organized crime groups (who have relative autonomy from the state)
Mexican organized crime groups ("cartels) produce a quasi-political discourse—a form of narco-propaganda

Narco-propaganda = not a fully formed political ideology

But is an important part of public discourse in Mexico (though data is mysterious and ambiguous)
The mysteriousness of narco-propaganda gives it even more power

Narco-propaganda = a discourse directed at rival cartels, general public and government

Narco-propaganda = a form of psychological warfare/terrorism - designed to intimidate, dehumanize & dominate
Forms of narco-propaganda:

(1) Acts of symbolic/orchestrated violence for public view

(2) Narco-messages: written statements and signs, acts of violence and torture

(3) videos and cyber-postings

(4) genres of narco-music and lyrics

(5) control and/or censorship of mass media & information
Types of Narco-Violence

Decapitations: Individual & multiple

- Posted in YouTube videos
- Timed to be on TV news

Desecration of Bodies
- Maiming, torture, chopping off limbs, organs, etc.

Symbolic meaning of specific amputations
- Fingers (dedo/snitch), tongue (informant), hands (stole money or drug load), etc.
Rape & Sexual Torture—some of the Juarez “femicides” linked to narco

Ritualized Presentation/Spectacle of Bodies—enteipados, encajuelados, entambados, encobijados

Bodies hung from bridges & buildings, crucifixions, displays of severed heads, bodies piled up

Inscribed bodies—writing names, insults, slogans on

Decorated bodies—pig mask, pants pulled down, knife stuck in head, face stitched to a soccer ball
Narco-messages:
Narco-mantas—signs, banners, manifestos
—with insults, threats, denunciations, attacks on politicians and drug lords

These are political statements
—not just criminal acts, but political positioning
Narco-pintas—narco-graffiti on walls

In style traditionally of leftist radicals but with bad grammar, expletives, death threats & political content about who controls the drug plaza.
Narco-blogs—with mutual insults between cartel members, details about killings, & macho posturing

El Blog del Narco—cyber source of videos, PHOTOS, and reports &

You –Tube Videos
—of sadistic torture, extracted confessions, beheadings & dead bodies

But also QUASI-POLITICAL DIATRIBES & MANIFESTOS
BY ONE CARTEL AGAINST ANOTHER
OR AGAINST PRESIDENT CALDERON
Narcocorridos—norteño musical anthems celebrating drug lords & cartels & their exploits & the drug life in general

Narcocorrido “house bands” for narcos

Murders of musicians by cartel members

Murder & Intimidation of Journalists
Censorship & Control of Journalists/Newspapers by Cartels
—Cartels laying down “la linea” of what can be published or not published

Collectively, narco-terror and control of information form a primitive discourse, a kind of narco-propaganda

The message of narco-propaganda—“We, the members of X cartel are the legitimate owners of the plaza…and we exterminate anyone who gets in our way.”
Ultimately, this nihilistic/fascistic rhetoric is about

CONTROL of TERRITORY

and PROFITS of drug trade and other crimes

It is an unorthodox POLITICS with serious consequences for the future of the Mexican state and society

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOJaIbvFEyQ