

The Role of Narcocorridos and Popular Music in the Non–State Cultural Diplomacy of Mexico

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this work is to analyze the phenomenon of narcocorridos in Mexico, in light of the influence that this musical genre can have on the country's popular culture, and, derived from this, on Mexican Cultural Diplomacy. To this end, a content analysis of the lyrics of some narcocorridos performed by different musical groups on the national scene was carried out, to identify significant elements in them that allow us to understand the essence, motivations and intentions of the genre, and then link it with possible explanations about why this style of musical composition is so attractive to many people in the country, especially young people. In this order of ideas, we will talk about the influence of cultural, psychosocial and historical factors that promote this phenomenon.

Keywords: Narcotraffic, Mexican culture, popular culture, Narcocorridos, Cultural Diplomacy

INTRODUCTION

Drug trafficking is a problem that has plagued Mexico for many decades, becoming a serious threat to governability and the security of citizens. Although it is an activity that is clearly condemnable, it has been producing a peculiar cultural phenomenon that has to do with the way in which the events and adventures of several of the big bosses and other characters involved are popularly narrated through songs, television series and other media products that, over the years, have become what is now called “narcoculture.” It is a set of practices that tend to idolize the lifestyle of drug traffickers, and to generate a series of values that challenge the traditional worldview of the social and cultural structure of the country, and that have been having an important influence on the aspirations of many young people, mainly those from lower social strata (Bautista, 2017).

Within this set of cultural products oriented by the narration of activities related to drug trafficking, one of the most popular comes from the music industry, and is known as “narcocorridos”, whose structure is derived from a type of musicalized stories very popular in the country since the revolutionary era, in which, like minstrels, they recounted the lives and works of peasant leaders and other unions that participated in the Mexican Revolution of 1910. These stories, called “corridos” have been a significant part of Mexican oral traditions to narrate, from the vision of the people, a reality that is perceived in an alternative way to high culture, and that is well known throughout the country, but mainly in the North (Becerra, 2020).

Although the function of narcocorridos is the same as that of those traditional corridos, that is, to tell stories from the popular vision of the people, the theme that they have adopted today, that is, drug trafficking, has meant that they are not seen with as good eyes as those, because it is considered an apology for violence, illegality, hedonism and the departure from good values. Despite this, its popularity among many young people is growing, and has encouraged the emergence of new identities guided by the aspirational desire to access the rewards that the world of organized crime offers (Bautista, 2017).

Thus, multiple musical groups have dedicated a good part of their career to exploiting this genre, and have achieved an important presence in the media, even transcending borders, since Mexicans who consume these products, and who live in other countries, such as the United States, have been disseminating them, so, in part, the vision we have of Mexico in the world can be influenced by it, contributing to its deterioration, thanks to the

international perception that we have of Mexican society and the degree of violence that drug trafficking has unleashed in the country (Valenzuela, 2014).

Due to this, the emergence of this narcoculture is of particular interest from the point of view of Cultural Diplomacy, since it deals with those issues related to the promotion of the image of a country abroad, and it is clear that, with that framework in mind, it is not convenient for these purposes that this type of expressions continue to gain ground in the consumption of cultural products among the population, since, as said before, these are contents that excuse crime, criminality and violence, so it is necessary, first of all, to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon, to establish intervention strategies that reorient the values that young people are pursuing, given that, if not done so, a fragmented and unsuitable social scenario could arise for the development of the social cohesion necessary to move towards progress (Becerra, 2023).

Therefore, a multidisciplinary approach is required to understand, first, what is the meaning and meaning of narcocorridos, second, why it is so popular among young people, and, third, what could be the implications of the growth of narcoculture in Mexican Cultural Diplomacy. The importance of studies of this nature lies in the fact that, by giving the analysis of violence a culturalist approach, it is possible to delve into worldviews rooted in the population that could help understand which people are most susceptible to entering the world of organized crime and, based on this, design prevention strategies that offer young people better alternatives.

Thus, to meet the objectives of this work, it will be divided into four sections: in the first, we will talk about the social and anthropological need that civilizations have to narrate their stories and leave testimonies of those situations and events that, to a greater or lesser extent, have contributed to building cultural identities. In that sense, the narration of such events and lives of characters can be done not only from formal sources, but also through popular art, as a means of expression and communication that aims to make known an alternative perspective of events to hegemonic sources.

Hand in hand with this first section, the second will be focused on analyzing the social function that corridos have fulfilled in Mexico, and their eventual derivation into narcocorridos, including in this section, an analysis of the contents of some examples of these pieces, to identify in them what are the senses and meanings that they intend to express, as well as elements to understand the lifestyle, worldview and axiology of those who are part of that activity, emphasizing the issue of living life to the limit and showing off material success in any activity. to be carried out.

Having that section as a basis, the third will be dedicated to trying to explain why this lifestyle is so attractive for many young Mexicans who seek to access the symbolic and material benefits that narcocorridos describe in their lyrics. To do this, social psychology will be used, with the aim of having theoretical foundations that allow us to understand the personal, contextual and situational motivations and incentives that contribute to feeling a deep aspirational desire to belong to that world, whatever the cost. In particular, the desire for power and hedonism will be discussed as stimulating factors of such aspirations, which, as will be seen, facilitate the entry of young people into a downward spiral in which the feeling of emptiness can only be tried to be filled with more immediate pleasure, with which life becomes a search for immediate satisfaction that leads to everything else losing significance and, with this, preferring to die young rather than lose the pleasures achieved.

Finally, in the last section, the repercussions that narcoculture could have for Mexican Cultural Diplomacy will be analyzed, in the sense of becoming a disruptive element for the national identity that must be contained to maintain a good image of the country abroad. Furthermore, in this section, the need to collaborate from the cultural sphere will be touched on for the construction of citizenship with values that reject violence, illegality and the apology for criminality, with the purpose of forming among young people civic identities suitable for life in the community.

The need to narrate life. Art and music as means to build identities

One of the most important elements in the construction of civilizations over the centuries has been their ability to transcend time, so that future generations can know and learn from their worldviews, their practices, their history and their culture. This transcendence has been achieved thanks to the devices and mechanisms to create

narratives of the cardinal events of each social group, including their successes, their visions and missions, their defeats, and even their tragedies (Becerra, 2020).

The narration of the history of civilizations allows us to connect the past with the present, and, in a certain sense, to trace a route to the future, since the learning that can be obtained from the lessons of the past can contribute to the processes of building perspectives. In that sense, the accumulation of knowledge allows it to be progressive, and links can be developed that foster the formation of an identity. That is, recognizing that a part of the national identities of peoples is built from the discovery of a common origin, it is clear that knowledge of the past is essential to trace the line of descent with the ancestors, and connect with the mission that has been established for each people (Hernández, Leal and Salgado, 2023).

Therefore, the narrative of the life of a civilization constitutes a scaffolding that favors the continuity of the people to the present, and on the way to the future. In addition to that, the different knowledge acquired from reading the past allows us to weave a sociocultural framework that feeds and strengthens the practices, values, and, in general, the axiology of a community, all of which is of great relevance to know ourselves and understand our role in the world, in which other civilizations do the same.

The above means that a people without an identity would probably not have enough cohesion to establish a cooperative community that could face adversity effectively, since collective identity fosters empathy and trust, necessary elements for the development of a strong culture, which serves as a reference for the members of a community, and allows them to see themselves in others. It is a necessary process in the development of nations, and it is so important that it is encouraged among the youngest through school institutions and traditions.

Now, this narration of the life and worldview of a people can be carried out through mechanisms that originate formal and informal sources, and that, in addition, can distinguish or be directed to different units within the community. In other words, due to the condition of the capacity for agency and the divergence of understanding, the same event can be understood and, therefore, narrated from different perspectives, depending on who produces the narration and for what (Becerra, 2023).

Thus, for example, rulers are usually in charge of producing and reproducing formal narratives that describe the “official” vision of the people, and which is what is encouraged in schools. This official vision aims to be the legitimate reference for the history of the people, and fulfills the purpose of building a patriotic worldview that exalts certain values that people are expected to adopt to achieve a national identity anchored to political interests. National anthems and basic education school textbooks, for example, follow this logic, since their intention is for the youngest to identify with the history of their ancestors, told in glorious terms so that it is attractive to adopt and reproduce them (Delgado, 2022).

This official narrative is usually prepared by professionals of History and other social sciences, so, in a certain sense, it is the vision of an elite, which, in some cases, usually describes events in terms of the construction of a negative otherness. That is, in the manner of a novel, historical events are narrated in such a way that there are heroes and villains, to promote among the population the existence of mythical beings who fought, and even gave their lives for the people, and are worthy of emulation, which seeks to strengthen the feeling of belonging. The creation of myths and heroic deeds, therefore, is part of this official vision (Hernández, Leal and Salgado, 2023).

On the other hand, social groups far from the elites also have their way of narrating events, as well as the characters and the different moments that they consider to be relevant to understanding themselves. From this vision, it is possible that some of the characters who, in the official vision, were presented as villains, experience a process of vindication, and vice versa: the heroes become villains. It is a dialectic that, to a greater or lesser extent, contributes to the cultural dynamism of a people (Delgado, 2022).

To construct these narratives, both formal and informal, people have at hand a vast menu of devices, and different actors, coming from different dimensions of knowledge, also intervene. Thus, not only texts and documents are used to capture these visions, but the arts are also used, recognizing the importance they have for the expression

and dissemination of emotions, ways of thinking and understanding the world. The arts, in this sense, become an instrument for the construction of a national identity.

Artists, as members of social groups, are not immune to the influence of events, and, therefore, are susceptible to experiencing emotions similar to those of other people, which they seek to express in their works, whether through books, paintings, symphonies, or any other of the fine arts. In parallel, communities also use art to express their visions, as anthropology has evidenced in its study of what, in some pejorative sense, is usually designated as “crafts.”

That is to say, if the designation of “fine arts” has a connotation of academic elites, it is not exclusive of other types of communities expressing their worldviews through works of “popular” art. The sum of all these expressions leads to the construction of a national culture, since the distinction between “beautiful” and “popular” is merely pedagogical. The difference may lie, as already said, in the perspective from which the events are narrated (Hernández, Leal and Salgado, 2023).

With particular regard to the use of music for these purposes, many examples could be cited throughout the centuries, both from the fine arts and from popular music. The works of Wagner, Tchaikovsky or Beethoven are clear cases in which music is used to tell stories of people, military leaders, exploits on the battlefield, or the honor of a nation. From folk music, the songs of Bob Dylan, Joan Baez or Johnny Cash also talk about life stories; of people's experiences in everyday life and even events with political overtones.

The need to express oneself and narrate life, then, is channeled through music and, when reaching audiences, contributes to the construction of a worldview and, in many cases, to the formation of a collective identity that gives people a feeling of belonging, correspondence, and even emulation. Especially, it is among the youngest that the values and lifestyles projected by popular music can have greater resonance, since, being in an age condition in which, psychologically, the personality is still in the process of definition, they are susceptible to the influence of idols who are perceived as successful (Soler and Oriola, 2019).

In today's world, characterized by a complex interdependence derived from globalizing processes, and where the development of digital communications has allowed many young people to have access to other cultures, it is possible that the issue of defining identity is a more difficult process, given that there are more cultural elements to consume, adopt and emulate, so the possibility of experiencing confusion in this regard is even greater.

In contexts such as Mexico, in which economic, political and social conditions are configured to produce environments marked by violence, inequality and discrimination, young people can seek escape routes from that reality, and the lifestyles that certain musical works relate, and the culture associated with them could be perceived as that path to escape. In a certain sense, it is a door that leads to a whole world that, for many of these young people, is perceived as the way out of the adversity with which they live on a daily basis (Soler and Oriola, 2019).

In fact, access to the world of the Internet provides many more ranges of cultural products that are within the reach of young people, and that, however, fulfill the same purpose as what was previously narrated, that is, to describe and relate life stories that can become an identity reference. Furthermore, being part of society, the authors and performers of these works are nourished by the contexts of each of them, so it is feasible to affirm that, as with other cultural dimensions, music and audiences have a feedback relationship (Ruiz – Corbella and Oliva, 2013).

In other words, popular music is fed by the dynamics of its society, and, in turn, the content of the themes of certain musical styles becomes a behavioral reference for some people, who adopt that lifestyle and develop an entire identity guided by those values. It is a cultural derivative that, to the extent that it is successful in its dissemination, can become its own particular lifestyle, which, in turn, leads to other practices that, depending on these contents, can encourage inappropriate behavior for young people.

Such is the case of narcocorridos, which, in Mexico, are very popular among young people who, as described in previous paragraphs, perceive in them a reference for values and cultural practices that can incite them to risky

behavior. To analyze this situation, the following section will address the phenomenon of the emergence of narcocorridos, as a derivation of the popular and historical genre of corridos, adapting the style to this new culture oriented by the lifestyle of members of organized crime gangs, with the negative social practices associated with it.

Narcocorridos as references of the subculture of drug trafficking

The Mexican Revolution of 1910 was a phenomenon that brought with it many changes in the social and political structure of the country, but also in culture, as it gave rise to a series of ways of narrating events, which were consolidated in various arts. In literature, for example, the revolutionary novel emerged, intended to relate the experiences of the men and women who participated in the armed conflict, mixing fiction with true facts that marked the course of the dispute. The painting also reflected, through muralism, the reality of the country in that context, and to this day, it represents a fundamental artistic movement for Mexican culture (Valenzuela, 2014).

As mentioned in the previous section, the natural need of societies to narrate their events can be manifested both from the fine arts and from popular expressions, and, in the case of music, this last dimension gained greater relevance thanks to the emergence of musical works that, as a historical record, recounted the lives and adventures of different characters who fought during those years. These characters, mostly coming from the lower sectors who participated, either in the Zapatista or Villista sides, gained such relevance among the people that they became worthy of achieving transcendence through those musicalized verses that, eventually, led to the birth of the genre known as “corridos.”

With simple structures and clear and direct lyrics, these corridos represented a kind of musical biography of characters who gained some type of relevance in the popular imagination, and who were immortalized through the singing of the performers. During the armed conflict and after it, these feats were remembered in cantinas, pulquerías and, in general, in popular gatherings throughout the country, although the greatest incidence occurred in the North, where the genre became consolidated and became a characteristic feature of the culture of that area of the country (Becerra, 2023).

Since then, the corrido has formed an important part of the Mexican oral tradition, and is a genre widely recognized among the population, and, in fact, a source of pride in various latitudes. As the decades passed, the corrido was transformed in terms of the type of characters its lyrics described, but not in its original objective, since the new composers, hand in hand with modern music, focused their themes towards other types of characters, always related to the popular vision. Thus, starting in the 1980s, with the emergence in national life of the large drug cartels, and the constant dissemination in the news of the practices, origins and lifestyles of the members and leaders of these organized crime groups, the corridos began to narrate the biographies of characters from that world and the environment of ostentation and then in which they developed; drug traffickers, giving rise to what is known today as “narcocorridos” (Correa, 2022).

These narcocorridos were accompanied by other cultural products inspired by the lives of the big drug trafficking lords, such as television series, documentaries, books, films and souvenirs, which gradually developed a subculture, or, if you will, a counterculture focused on that niche. This narcoculture has been growing in the country, and increasingly reaches younger people, which, added to the context of inequality and violence in which the country finds itself, contributes to promoting values contrary to civility and coexistence, and becomes an apology for violence (De la Garza, 2008).

Some academics (Valenzuela, 2014; Becerra, 2023) consider that narcocorridos are, in reality, a deviation or perversion of traditional corridos, because they can be perceived as apologies for violence, crime and drug consumption, but what is a fact is that this genre enjoys great popularity among a segment of the population. However, little can be said against the fact that narcocorridos perform the same function as traditional corridos, since they continue to be popular instruments to publicize the events and activities of characters from the people, from a vision that is not that of the cultural elites.

In that sense, defenders of narcocorridos argue that this genre is an alternative way of narrating the reality of the people, in opposition to the official vision that the State has of drug traffickers, in the sense of building around

them a narrative that demonizes and stigmatizes their figures, positioning them within public opinion as enemies of society, and a kind of monsters that should not serve as an example for anyone. Narcocorridos, in contrast, focus on the human part of these characters; in their desires, fears, worldviews, their humble origins and, in short, their most personal side (Heredia, 2020).

It is argued, in this order of ideas, that narcocorridos do nothing more than relate events that, whether we like it or not, are already part of the life of the country, since the power that drug traffickers have acquired within the country is an undeniable reality. The narcocorridos only, they say, offer a different vision of the facts, to make known another vision of the world that, for better or worse, is shared by a sector of the population that has become fond of this lifestyle and that consumes thousands of units of the cultural products of the musical groups that perform these works (Valenzuela, 2014).

Thus, among the main exponents of this genre, we can mention Los Tigres del Norte, Los Tucanes de Tijuana, or Grupo Exterminador, who offer concerts for thousands of people in different cities of the country and the United States and other territories, and whose record sales are among the main ones on the Mexican popular music scene. These outfits are an example of the popularity that the genre has among Mexican society, and that, thanks to the phenomenon of migration, they have been exported to countries where Mexicans spread their taste and make it known to their neighbors and other people with whom they live.

Now, to analyze the meaning and meaning of the lyrics of the narcocorridos, and thus try to reach an understanding of the vision and lifestyle that they seek to express, and, with this, understand indirectly the influence they have on the people who consume these cultural products and their aspirations to belong to that world, in this work it is proposed to divide the content of the narcocorridos, for pedagogical purposes, into four large categories, depending on the theme addressed: ostentation, rejection to poverty, justification, and acceptance of Destiny, as show non figure 1.

Figure 1. Categories of narcocorridos according its content

Category	Description	Ways of expression
Ostentation	The character in the song shows the world how powerful and rich he is	Parties, trucks, guns, alcohol and women
Rejection to poverty	The character in the song considers that poverty is the worst thing that could have happened to him and he never plans to return to it.	Better food, better clothing, better housing and better quality of life
Justification	The character in the song knows what he is doing is wrong and illegal, but he considers that he had no other choice, and that his life is better now.	Remembering the past in misery and suffering to recognize that life is better now
Acceptance of Destiny	The character in the song knows that he will eventually die or be arrested, but he bravely accepts it.	When he dies, let great parties be held and his life celebrated, and he be recognized as someone free.

It is considered that these categories are relevant to approach the most recurrent themes in the narcocorridos genre, since from them it is possible to have a frame of reference of the values, interests, experiences and motivations that are part of the lives of the characters whose adventures are recounted. At the same time, these categories facilitate knowledge of the ideals that serve as a reference for young people who seek to emulate the practices and sensations described in them, which is the foundation of narcoculture, that is, of admiration for that way of living, which, in turn, as will be seen in the following section, can provide information to try to provide a psychosocial explanation for this type of aspirations and behaviors (De la Garza, 2008).

The first category, called "ostentation", has to do with those narcocorridos whose theme has to do with the description of the lifestyle, full of luxuries, money, parties, women, power and fame that the characters in the story carry, and that develops within a climate of promotion within the criminal market of drug trafficking. There are many narcocorridos that talk about this, and, in general, they are works that try to express the feeling of invincibility and success that some of the characters achieve, and that they live life to the limit, enjoying everything that money can buy and, above all, showing it off to others (Aldaba, 2022).

That is to say, from this type of narcocorridos, what is projected is not only the success that the characters have achieved, but the enormous pleasure they feel in showing it off and demonstrating it to everyone in the great parties and celebrations they organize, since that is a substantive part of this lifestyle. It is not enough to be at the top, you also have to make it known to the world and show everyone how much power and money you have, which is also a very recurring element within narcoculture (Correa, 2022).

The song “The one from Durango”, by the group “Los pumas del norte”, describes this condition:

To get around, a good car. To live, my mansions. For my nerves, a cigarette and the sea for my vacation. To spend is money, to work is my plane. In boots and hats I also ride in a truck. I bring a squad and my horn for whatever is offered to me.

This lyric mentions part of what, according to De la Garza (2008), are the five goods most appreciated by the characters whose lives are described in narcocorridos: money, women, independence, celebration and recognition. Likewise, it can be seen that a clear allusion is made to the carrying of weapons and the pride that this represents, since both the “square” and the “horn” refer to high-caliber weapons that, if necessary, they use without hesitation.

In “Crystal King”, by the group “Los Originales de San Juan”, the same theme can be seen:

With my year-old trocona, with a super and a horn, with many barbies walking around. This is how I kill time. My life is a happy walk, one hundred percent Michoacan.

Again, the reference to weapons is in “a super and a horn”, as well as to another element that is characteristic of this lifestyle, such as trucks (trocona). Furthermore, the pride of belonging to a region (Michoacán) is exalted, which is of great importance to understand loyalty to the group to which one belongs, since, as is known, the territorial distribution of drug cartels in the country is a transcendental element in the fight for places and points of sale and distribution of merchandise.

Ostentation also has to do with the rank one has in the organization to which one belongs, and, in that sense, the narratives about the rise in it, and the change in lifestyle, towards one full of luxuries, is a recurring resource in these works, as related in “Little seed”, from “Los cuates de Sinaloa”, which refers to it:

Now come to my house so you can see how I live. There are luxuries everywhere thanks to forbidden dust. Now I am an important man, for everyone I am the godfather. Now I live on pleasure, my poverty is left behind, thanks to the little seed I sow there in the plot. I became the godfather, how comfortable this wealth.

Regarding the category of rejection of poverty, there are also a large number of references in the songs, in which it is clearly expressed that there is no worse way to live than being poor, and that the path of organized crime has been a way to escape that world forever. In many of the lyrics, it is said that living with economic limitations is hell, and that once they have the power derived from their participation in the drug trade, their life has changed forever and they do not plan to return in any way to the previous one, as expressed in “Eggs and beans”, by the group “Halcón de la Sierra.”

Already tired of eating only eggs and beans and having everyone humiliate me just because I was poor, I dedicated myself to smuggling looking for better things. I know I'm being fooled, that they want to arrest me, but while that happens I live like a king. I enjoy all the things that I couldn't have before.

This part of the narcocorridos clearly recounts the conditions of misery in which the characters lived and which included not only material deprivation, but also the discredit and humiliations they suffered. Due to this, once they achieved economic power, ostentation is a way to demonstrate that the risk of having enrolled in these activities has been worth it, since the standard of living has changed and now everyone respects them. That is to say, the success that these characters seek is not limited to material accumulation, but the symbolic aspect that comes with having a position of authority within criminal organizations is also of great importance.

In that same logic, the band “El Recodo” relates in “The two hectares” that:

The two hectares of land that my father inherited from me was planted with love to get ahead, but the reality is different; I was starving. A childhood friend one afternoon proposed to me: we are getting out of poverty, we are giving it another use. I swear to you that in a short time my situation was resolved. With those two hectares planted with weeds I started a new life, because they paid with dollars. Later he planted two hundred hectares.

However, the human part of the characters in these stories forces them, in some way, to try to justify their actions, because although they know that what they do is not correct, they consider that they were forced into it by not having better alternatives and, as already said, to escape from the hell of poverty in which they lived. Thus, the third category of this analysis, that is, that of justification, is oriented by content of this nature, as described in “Prohibited Corrido”, from “Los pumas del norte”, in which it is clearly described that:

I know well that my business is something that is prohibited, but may God forgive me, this is the only way I have survived. They say this is a sin, but with this I have eaten.

A certain awareness can be seen about how perverse it is to dedicate oneself to these activities, but, as the previous verse describes well, this has allowed the character to get ahead of the misery in which he lived. In that sense, he seems to justify his involvement in illicit activities, through the serious need he had in his previous life, and the lack of opportunities to earn an honest living. Something very similar is described in “The Kilo Cartel”; from the group “Los tucanes de Tijuana”, where the character clearly states that:

Many people criticize my life because I work against the law. They say I make dirty money. I don't deny it, I know that very well, but money, even if it is very dirty, takes away hunger, analyze it well.

In this category of narcocorridos, it is also common to find justifications based on the oppression that the characters perceived on the part of powerful people, which forced them to dedicate themselves to drug trafficking, as they did not have a better opportunity, since this oppression prevented them from being able to lead a good, dignified life. The justification, in this sense, is that engaging in drug trafficking activities was a way of rebelling against the injustices they experienced, as described in “Pure little corn was planted”, by the group “Los capos de México”, where it is stated that:

Pure little corn was planted on rented land. The owners of the land took all the corn to collect the debt that was never paid. One day a friend told me: I'm going to teach you a business. Thinking about being killed because I saw it dangerous, I crossed fifty journeys, that's why I am powerful.

Due to situations like this, many of the people who consume this type of cultural products feel identified with the lyrics and the characters they narrate, given that the difficult economic situation that is experienced in a good part of Mexican society can be a factor that stimulates the perception of injustice that, as that narcocorrido describes, can be alleviated through participation in drug trafficking, since, otherwise, oppression would prevail. It is a feeling of retribution or remuneration for the perception of mistreatment and injustice that many people experience, which could explain the admiration felt towards those characters who, by inserting themselves into the world of organized crime, managed to reverse that situation.

However, the human condition of the characters in the narcocorridos reveals the negative part of the lifestyle they have decided to lead, in those contents that belong to the category of acceptance of destiny. Particularly, this acceptance has to do with the fact that the characters know that they will eventually meet death or, in the best of cases, be arrested and imprisoned by the authorities. Faced with this reality, acceptance urges them to live life to the limit before that happens, and, when that destiny finally reaches them, it asks that their death not be mourned, but rather celebrated, because that was the path they chose. This is what the group “Exterminador” makes known in the lyrics of “Empty grave”, because there it is stated that:

In the graveyard of my town there is an empty grave waiting for me to die. It will be when God decides. Meanwhile, I continue to enjoy life.

Similarly, in “My Last Will”, by the group “Los huracanes del norte”, they talk about how, even in death, they want to maintain the style they displayed while they were dedicated to those activities:

Now when they are lowering me into that dark grave, do not forget, comrades, that there is only one life. Shoot an R-15 at the foot of my grave.

The awareness of an approaching death is, in this sense, the greatest motivation to fully enjoy all the pleasures that money can buy in the shortest possible time, since, knowing that, in that world, death appears around any corner and arrives when it is least expected. A short life is the price they choose to pay so that, although ephemeral, they live full of luxuries, parties, recognition and waste, so that, when their time comes, they are not left with the desire to experience or try anything (Valenzuela, 2014).

The conception of a life within a perpetual celebration can be seen even at the moment of death, since, as many narcocorridos that fall into this category describe, funerals are not expected to be moments of sadness, but, on the contrary, to be one more excuse to continue with the excesses, joy and unfading pleasure of the activities to which they decided to dedicate themselves. Even at the foot of the tomb, the party must continue, as told in "Party at my grave":

Let a party be celebrated at the foot of my grave. Let there be mariachis and bands, let the bitterness not be seen. May there be no shortage of women who were my madness in life. Sprinkle my grave with wine, I'm going to walk in good tune. I want to cheer up the dead in case anyone is bitter.

As can be seen from these lyrics, there does not seem to be any regret on the part of the characters for the life they have chosen, nor for the consequences of it. Once inside, there is no point of return, so, knowing that, they dedicate themselves to enjoying the time they have left. Pleasure is, at all times, the only thing that matters, and, also knowing that eventually everything will end, they take advantage of every second of life to squeeze as much as they can from all the benefits that money offers them.

As will be seen in the following section, dedicated to a psychosocial attempt to explain these behaviors, not only among drug traffickers, but among people who long to lead the life that is narrated in narcocorridos, this attitude reflects a reification of life and a loss of its meaning, since there is no other meaning that is worth it, other than getting all the pleasure you can, and never returning to poverty. From this perspective, a first approach to understanding why this lifestyle is so attractive to many young people is possible, but, as will be analyzed, it is a mirage and a path that not everyone can enter, so, in the end, expectations are broken and the return to reality can be emotionally devastating.

The attraction to narcoculture from a psychosocial point of view

Once what were considered the main categories of narcocorridos have been presented, and, with it, a substantive part of the axiology of the characters referred to in them, to understand, in part, the motivations and contexts that were involved in the decision to enter that world, it is now pertinent to analyze what corresponds to the fondness that many people, particularly young people, have for that lifestyle and, in general, for the narcoculture within which they are located. the narcocorridos.

To this end, a psychosocial approach will be used in this section that will consider, on the one hand, the subjective factors associated with the emotions and expectations of the followers of this musical genre, and, on the other, the influence of the structural environments and contexts of Mexican society which, as has been said, are characterized by inequality, violence and discrimination.

In this order of ideas, the desire for power, on the one hand, and hedonism, on the other, will be taken as explanatory variables, since it is considered that both have to do with the construction of expectations that young people have with respect to their own lives, as well as the ambitions for fame, recognition and, especially, pleasure, which, due to socioeconomic circumstances, represent a desire that, at least materially, they have no possibility of fulfilling, so the desire to belong to a criminal organization and lead a life like the one narrated in narcocorridos, represents for them a source of escape from the reality they live daily (Ruiz – Corbella and Oliva, 2013).

It is important to mention, within this analysis, that the age condition is of great relevance, while adolescence, which is the group that will be presented as the objective of this discussion, because it is the one that arouses the

interest of this section, since it is considered more susceptible to being attracted by narcoculture, as shown by figures on the consumption of these cultural products. Adolescence, as is known, is a stage in which the definition of identity is still under construction, so it is feasible that, in this process, identities of successful figures from the world of entertainment are temporarily adopted, as a mechanism to emulate, in a certain sense, the fame and recognition they enjoy (Soler and Oriola, 2019).

Thus, it is common to adopt practices and customs such as the way of dressing, the way of speaking, the consumption of certain products, and, in general, an attitude towards things. With this attitude, also comes an aspirational desire to achieve the rewards and benefits that the admired figure possesses, so the behavior of followers can begin to be guided by emulation of the steps of their reference. In other words, an identification stage is reached in which followers perceive that their own experiences and emotions are compatible and similar to those of the figure they admire (Román and Montero, 2013).

In the case of narcoculture, the figures of admiration are drug traffickers, whose lives and adventures are told, as mentioned before, through a diversity of cultural products within which narcocorridos are found. By listening to the songs that describe the lifestyles and values that were already presented in the previous section, young people can develop an aspirational desire guided by these examples, in addition to that, by describing the living conditions that the characters had before joining organized crime, which, as was seen then, had to do with poverty, marginalization and exclusion, the feeling of empathy and identification could be reinforced, especially among those from lower social classes (Heredia, 2020).

Thus, upon perceiving a similarity between their own experiences and those recounted in the narcocorridos, it is also possible that they wish to follow the same path as the characters to achieve the material success and recognition narrated in those stories. As already said in the previous section, the question of living life to the fullest in the shortest possible time is the main ambition, as well as a categorical rejection of poverty and a tacit acceptance of a premature death, but surrounded by fame and power.

Due to this, this part proposes to explain this aspirational desire through the dimension of power and hedonism, which, as will be seen below, become true addictions, subtracting all meaning from life, and returning pleasure not to a means to satisfaction, but to the end itself. Although many of the young people do not end up joining an organized crime group, the admiration they feel for it could lead them to risky lifestyles, as a consequence of the violence that is naturally associated with this type of activities.

That is, if the object of admiration is a character who has achieved his success through violence, it is plausible to assume that the admirer will also consider violence as part of his life, and that assessment could lead him not only to continue consuming this type of cultural products, but to go further and acquire weapons, consume illicit substances or even join gangs or other types of groups in which he can experience the feeling of power that is described in the songs (De la Garza, 2008).

The desire for power, in this sense, can be explained from the shortcomings that have been experienced, especially in a context in which access to the media constantly disseminates the successful lives of others, contributing to generating a feeling of dissatisfaction or injustice in relation to one's own life. If, in addition, we add to this that the characters and figures that are admired in the cultural products of narcocorridos are presented as lower class people who achieved monetary success and the life of luxury that accompanies it, starting from their entry into organized crime, an illusion is created that they can follow the same route (Bourdieu, 2007).

As has been said before, the issue of the display of power is not only material, but also has an important element of symbolism, related to the respect and recognition that are acquired when reaching a position of command. Young people from social classes who, on the contrary, experience that power from the other side, that is, from positions of subordination that can imply mistreatment, humiliation or even misery, perceive in the path of organized crime a way out of that condition and access to the long-awaited power (Trujano, 2013).

Therefore, their admiration for the power figures whose lives are told in narcocorridos is a kind of hope, in the sense that even they themselves could emulate those stories and be worthy of being commemorated with their own narcocorrido. The desire for power, which in narcocorridos is flaunted with the allusion to the possession

of weapons, trucks or women and endless celebrations, is fueled the less access to it one has, as it becomes an incentive that urges one to leave ethics and morals aside, just as the characters in the stories did, and do anything to possess it (Heredia, 2020).

As described in several of the narcocorridos exposed, the exercise of power entails revenge, since those who, during the period of poverty, suffered mistreatment from superiors or colleagues with better luck, when they reach power they claim their dignity by being aggressive towards them, in such a way that, by taking revenge, they recover the dignity that they perceived was taken away. Taking that into account, young admirers may wish to have the power to fulfill those same goals, which, psychologically speaking, implies a deterioration in emotional balance and a gradual loss of the sense of empathy necessary to live in society (Rodríguez et al., 2012).

It is a fact that those who participate in drug trafficking often engage in barbaric behaviors devoid of any sensitivity, since, they argue, they are necessary to survive in such a hostile environment. Knowing this, young admirers can imitate these behaviors and become aggressive within their communities, since they consider that, like their idols, through this way of acting they hold power and gain popular recognition, which can lead them to get into trouble and harm them or their families.

This condition can be explained, according to Alfred Adler, from the feeling of inferiority, and the consequent complex. According to the Austrian psychologist, the feeling of inferiority arises naturally during childhood, as a result of the recognition that children have regarding the difference in strength with adults, which causes them to experience feelings of weakness, frustration or fear. It is a normal stage of psychoaffective development that is eventually overcome, as emotional maturity is reached (Oberst, 2015).

However, in certain cases, this feeling is not overcome, and leads to the inferiority complex, in which the adult continues to feel weaker and incapable than the rest of the adults, and causes the character to be prone to manipulation, insecurity and low self-esteem, making it impossible for the person to fully exercise their abilities. According to the same author, this complex is the result of the child being very pampered by his parents, or, on the contrary, he experienced abandonment and, once in adulthood, he does not consider himself capable of solving problems on his own, nor of making decisions, since he became accustomed to someone else doing it in his place (Rodríguez et al., 2012).

However, this complex can manifest itself in another way, which is, in fact, what could explain the behavior of some of the characters reported in the narcocorridos, and of the young people who are their admirers. This other way of developing the complex, unlike the previous one, is attempted to be sublimated or overcome through obtaining power, since the person who suffers from the complex experiences relief when exercising power, as a compensation mechanism for the feeling of inferiority that was experienced during childhood (Oberst, 2015).

People who belong to this type usually have aggressive and dominant personalities, since in this way they try to get away from the sensation they experienced when they felt inferior. The continuous desire for power, then, is a manifestation of the complex, so they seek to preserve it at all costs, since its loss would imply returning to the state of helplessness that originated the feeling, which is intolerable. In an advanced state of the complex, the desire for power becomes a true obsession, which leads to a degeneration of empathy and compassion, causing cruel and aggressive behavior (Oberst, 2015).

Taking into consideration that many of the characters in the narcocorridos, and their admirers, have experienced deprivation, abuse and complicated living conditions, due to their socioeconomic status, it is possible to assume the possibility that they have developed feelings of inferiority, and that belonging to organized crime gangs, in the case of the former, or imitation of their lifestyles, for the latter, are mechanisms to try to overcome that feeling, since, as Adler described it, access to power becomes an important motivation for release the tension that comes with feeling inferior (Oberst, 2015).

On the other hand, it is necessary to consider that the desire to lead a lifestyle like the one narrated in the narcocorridos has an important hedonistic component, since, understanding this, in its postmodern semiotics, as the search for pleasure for pleasure's sake, there would be little doubt that the great celebrations, the ostentation,

the luxuries and the intention of living every moment to the fullest until death, which are related in those verses, are closely related as hedonistic behaviors that, at a certain moment, become the only meaning of life.

The understanding that, in that life, everything is ephemeral because death is part of that same dynamic, leads to having no other plan or meaning for the future, other than the immediate enjoyment of all the pleasures available to money. A significant characteristic of hedonism has to do with the spatial dimension. A hedonist takes neither the past nor the future into consideration, and is dedicated solely to seeking immediate satisfaction. This would explain why the characters in the narcocorridos relate the rejection of the past, and why they gladly accept their funeral destiny: they only care about living in the moment, ecstatic with pure pleasure (Román and Montero, 2013).

For those young people who have experienced deprivation and mistreatment, accessing that type of life is extremely tempting, as it would imply achieving everything they have never had and have always wanted, both symbolically and materially. His admiration for narcoculture and its characters is, in a certain sense, an attempt to insert himself into that world, as it offers escapes from reality, as well as a reference for expectations.

Now, it is necessary that the findings presented here be contextualized within the methodological approach used in the work, with the purpose of providing greater transparency. In this sense, it is important to remember that, as it is a study based on secondary sources, it has the limitation that the information collected has already passed through the hermeneutic filter of the aforementioned authors, without this implying that their interpretations lack scientific support, but rather, with the purpose of approaching in a more faithful way the worldview of the subjects of analysis, it would be convenient, for subsequent studies, to carry out in-depth qualitative research that includes interviews with musicians, fans, or relevant actors within the sphere of cultural diplomacy. However, this first approach to the analyzed phenomenon has contributed to laying the foundations for, in these subsequent studies, to investigate specific issues that have been the basis of the findings of this work.

Having touched on the question of why some young people are attracted to narcoculture, it is now pertinent to address the influence that this type of practices can have on Mexican Cultural Diplomacy, since it is a phenomenon that is growing more and more, and that is beginning to become a reference for national culture in other countries, due to migratory encounters.

Narcoculture from the perspective of Mexican Cultural Diplomacy

The objective of Cultural Diplomacy is to promote the identity of a nation in the world, through the values, worldviews and elements that, over time, have converged to build what distinguishes it from other nations, and that has become a substantive part of the way it recognizes itself. This promotion uses a series of cultural products that include arts, gastronomy, architecture, monuments and sites that are appreciated and valued as a part worth showing to the world (Bentriz, 2023).

The work of Cultural Diplomacy is to ensure that a nation is known and valued in the world, in order to strengthen ties of cooperation that promote mutual understanding and the exchange of knowledge and resources that favor peace, prosperity and collective development. In contrast to traditional Public Diplomacy, whose purpose is to directly influence the opinion of citizens of other countries to achieve political or economic interests unilaterally, Cultural Diplomacy is a softer mechanism of coming into contact with other identities and other peoples (Farej, 2023).

In that sense, Cultural Diplomacy aims to build a healthy image of nations abroad, so that they are attractive to others, and promote the establishment and consolidation of all types of relationships, including, of course, those that have to do with education and the arts. In this process, States select from within their collection of cultural products, those that they consider to be most representative and valuable to promote abroad, so that citizens of other countries feel interested in it and decide to learn about and visit it (Bentriz, 2023).

Although what is shown to the outside is the best of each nation, it is inevitable to recognize that all of them have dark sides and problems that are also part of their identity and that contribute to social dynamics. Although Cultural Diplomacy has the purpose of presenting the best side of a nation to the world, the constant flow of

news and information, derived from the development of new communication technologies, also helps to understand the complex problems and situations experienced within each society.

Following this line, it is the job of Cultural Diplomacy to work so that this negative image can be reversed and improved, and the world has a better conception of the country. In the case of Mexico, the greatest of its problems has to do with the violence unleashed by organized crime, especially that linked to drug trafficking, which has been taking over many territories throughout the country for years, causing not only economic damage and loss of human life, but also a significant deterioration in the reputation of Mexican society abroad.

The extreme violence that drug traffickers exert against the population has not gone unnoticed in the world, and this has contributed to the country being considered a dangerous, barbaric, corrupt territory and where impunity is a daily issue. Of course, this harmful image is contrary to what is expected to be promoted in terms of culture, given that the perception of danger that the country has abroad scares away citizens from other countries and lacerates the national identity, since it is presented as a stigma that has not been easy to bear (Villanueva Rivas, 2016).

Even more worrying is that the narcoculture derived from this, and which has been discussed here through narcocorridos, is increasingly rooted in the taste and cultural consumption of many people, especially young people. It is a cultural problem, because, as explained in previous sections, it excuses and promotes crime, violence, impunity and hedonism without any consequences. Therefore, it represents a great challenge for Cultural Diplomacy to address this phenomenon from a perspective that allows reversing the worldview related to this type of cultural products.

It is a rather complicated case, because it could be argued that intervening in this would be a prohibitionist practice that would attack free expression and the enjoyment of cultural property. However, it is a reality, as expressed before, that the fact that many young people feel attracted to this type of lifestyle, and that some of them try to emulate it, is a risk for the country's security, and a dark and deep stain on the national identity.

It is essential, therefore, to approach the phenomenon of narcoculture to know it, understand it and design intervention strategies that encourage its expansion in the tastes of young people to stop, without this being achieved through prohibitions or sanctions, since this could be counterproductive and, in fact, would contribute more to the heterodox narrative that narcocorridos disseminate in their lyrics, in relation to counter-hegemonic positions towards society and the values it promotes.

Furthermore, without a doubt, it is necessary to work on those dimensions that have nothing to do with Cultural Diplomacy, but do have to do with the development of criminal activities related to drug trafficking. That is to say, the Mexican State has to suppress this crime through strategies that are beyond the purposes of this work, but that are undeniably necessary so that the phenomenon of narcoculture stops being so attractive for many young people, increasingly younger.

At this point, it is convenient to take into consideration that narcocorridos are not the only musical genre in which the content of the songs and the lifestyles it promotes are related to violence, since, for example, it is possible to find in hip-hop, black metal, rap, or others, lyrics that excuse violent, aggressive, and even criminal conduct and behavior, such as drug use, destruction, gang activity, or attacks on different identities. In this order of ideas, although the object of study of this work was narcocorridos, the analysis that was presented, with respect to the motivations or contexts that can lead young people to imitate the practices that are narrated in these different musical genres, could be applied to other cultural contexts in which these genres are popular and can be a phenomenon analogous to that of narcocorridos, influenced by the conditions of each society, to have a broader overview of the phenomenon of the apology of narcocorridos. violence and crime through music.

Now, what is part of the scope of Cultural Diplomacy has to do with the promotion of values related to the culture of peace, education, cooperation and the rejection of all forms of violence as conflict resolution, as well as an unrestricted condemnation of crime, corruption and impunity. Within this work, it is possible to resort to the arts as a means to channel the feelings and experiences that the victims of the violence unleashed by drug trafficking

have had, to contribute to raising awareness among the population of how important it is to reject this type of practices. Exhibitions, events, dissemination of literature, painting and any artistic resources can help these ends.

This is a task that, although it can be directed and guided by the State, in reality requires the participation of citizens, parents, teachers and other actors who have the power to influence young people, to distance them from the perception that drug trafficking is a way out of the difficulties they face in their daily lives. Never before has the issue of educating in values for peace and harmonious coexistence been so important, since, in the face of the constant bombardment in the media of information related to violence, it is necessary that young people have adequate references so that they choose the correct path, and not that of aggressiveness.

The improvement of the country's image abroad cannot be carried out exclusively by Cultural Diplomacy, if these efforts are not supported by substantive changes in the social dynamics of the country, and the national security systems. However, Cultural Diplomacy can contribute, promoting that part of Mexican culture that has been built on peace, spirituality, respect for nature and brotherhood among peoples (Villanueva Rivas, 2022).

Mexican cultural history is extensive and valuable, and for many years has been a national pride. Only in recent times has the burden of drug trafficking clouded that vision, but it is necessary to continue working to achieve peace and for not only the image, but the social dynamics of the country, to improve significantly. In a context dominated by technology, it is important to take advantage of the resources available in this area to promote values that support the rejection of violence and apology for crime.

Within this effort, the production of new cultural goods that are attractive to young people is essential, since it would represent the creation of spaces that allow them to recognize that there are other solutions other than involvement in criminal life to achieve fulfillment. As narrated in narcocorridos, many of its characters became involved in that world because they considered that they did not have better options, so it is imperative to show young people that this is not the case, and that it is possible to have lifestyles in which violence is something that is categorically rejected.

Additionally, it is undeniable that, for a greater promotion of Mexican cultural diplomacy, it is necessary that more financial resources be allocated to state agencies dedicated to international cooperation and foreign policy, since, in order to consolidate the efforts made and the plans and projects oriented towards the dissemination of the Mexican identity in the world, financial support is essential, since the cultural capacity of the country has not been used optimally, due, perhaps, to a lack of full understanding on the part of the different public administrations. As a result, a lack of coordination has been observed between the different federal agencies to develop a sustainable and robust strategy that promotes the transformation of the exotic and barbaric image that Mexico has in the world, while reducing the potential of the efforts carried out by other relevant social actors in the matter. (Villanueva Rivas, 2019).

It is necessary, therefore, that the next federal administrations work together with civil society, private initiative and other relevant actors to achieve this joint strategy that has, on the one hand, adequate financial support to achieve the stated objectives, and, on the other, makes it possible to be self-sustaining, so that, eventually, it is possible to have institutions that do for Mexican culture, functions analogous to those of others of great prestige in the world, such as the BBC, Deutsche Welle or the Institute Cervantes, and, then, position the cultural interests of Mexico in the world in an effective and efficient way.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Culture is a broad set of elements that contribute to building the identity of a nation, and distinguishing it from others in the world. It is a progressive phenomenon, while each new generation brings new practices, visions and values that favor the accumulation of knowledge and behaviors, from which the nation is defined. In that sense, the heterogeneity of the social composition of a town means that the range of cultural elements is so wide that it can include some that are not always harmonious with each other, or that represent a factor of tension between traditional and emerging visions.

However, this tension is an unavoidable process that is part of the way in which a people represents itself and, for better or worse, contributes to the formation of images that are projected abroad, and contribute to the reputation it has in the society that comprises it. To influence this image, Cultural Diplomacy makes efforts to promote, link and strengthen relations with other countries, with the purpose of making the image the best possible to foster interest in the world.

In the case of Mexico, the function of Cultural Diplomacy is of utmost importance, given the context of violence and crime that the country experiences, derived from the actions of organized crime groups linked to drug trafficking. As it is a phenomenon that has been nesting in Mexican society for several decades, it has been able to generate and develop an entire worldview of the lifestyle of those who belong to these groups, leading to the emergence of a drug trafficking culture, which includes a series of values, attitudes, habits and expectations, which, as described in this work, has been able to encourage the production of cultural goods associated with that theme.

Speaking specifically of goods related to music, the narcocorridos genre, derived from this lifestyle and the admiration that many people feel for it, it is possible to recognize that, over the years, it has consolidated itself in the taste of thousands of admirers, as proven by the sales of discographies, reproductions on platforms and attendance at concerts of bands that perform songs with that content. Parallel to this, this narcoculture has diversified, thanks to information technologies, to produce not only music, but also television series and digital platforms, films, books and a variety of paraphernalia.

The consumption of these products can represent a wake-up call for society, as it can be perceived as an apology for violence and a trivialization of evil and criminality, but the most worrying thing has to do with the fact that it can represent a behavioral model for the youngest people who, aspiring to the luxuries and excesses that are narrated in these products, can lead them to try to emulate the path of the characters and begin a life in illegal and risky activities.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that this narcoculture is a product of Mexican society itself, which has gradually emerged as a result of the laceration of the social fabric and uncontrolled violence in many parts of the national territory. That is to say, it is not, like other products of the entertainment medium, goods directed by showbiz directors or producers, but, as the authors of narcocorridos themselves describe it, it is a vision narrated from the town, from the people, in opposition to the traditional narrative that is made of the phenomenon in the mass media.

This way of narrating the lives and practices of the characters related to drug trafficking presents them as humans, with ambitions, expectations and, particularly, origins similar to those of any other person, which is so attractive to those who perceive that their stories can be the same and, therefore, undertake in a similar way in that world and access all the associated material and symbolic benefits.

Therefore, it is necessary that society, as a whole, make efforts so that this reality does not materialize, and that narcocorridos do not go beyond being just another musical genre, and not a source of motivation and inspiration to emulate this type of behavior. For its part, Cultural Diplomacy must work to improve the image of the country through the promotion of values and products that demonstrate the vast offer that the country has to know. The search for peace and cooperation must always be the guiding principles of this diplomacy, and, although narcocorridos relate part of a reality in the country, it should not be a motivation for it to become something structural in Mexican culture.

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