

Abstract PhD- project Olivier Keller

Setting the Course for Cooperation and Connection? The United States Railway Mission in Mexico (1942-1946).

Mexico and the United States have long had an antagonistic relationship, and relations between the countries are still very much ambivalent and often complicated. However, today their unequal economies are highly integrated, and they strongly influence each other culturally and socially.

The tracks – figuratively and literally – for their close partnership were laid during the Second World War. In that period, Mexico pursued ambitious plans for industrialization and the United States needed raw materials and work force for their wartime industry. By cooperating for the first time in their shared history, the two unequal neighbors were able to satisfy each other's needs. The rapprochement was characterized by bilateral agreements as well as various cooperation projects, of which the *United States Railway Mission in Mexico* was the most important one. In the course of the *Railway Mission*, more than 1900 miles of railway tracks in Mexico were repaired and extended. These tracks subsequently enabled increased transportation of goods and people from one country to another and thus created further links between the two neighbors.

Based on the rich but largely unexplored source material on the *Railway Mission*, I want to research how this enormous infrastructure maintenance program, and the transnational railway in general, shaped the shared history of Mexico and the USA. Further, I will look at how the economic integration of the two countries developed during a global conflict and what the political, social, and environmental impacts of their cooperation were.