

Introduction

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In consideration of the centenary of the Mexican constitution (1917-2017), the beginning of the Trump presidency in the United States (2017), and the forthcoming NAFTA anniversary (25 years in 2019), contributions to this issue explore business in Mexico in times of great uncertainty.

The anniversary of the Mexican constitution, highlighted as “the legacy” of the Mexican revolution by current Mexican president Peña Nieto (2015), presents an opportunity to return to the question of whether there actually was a revolution in Mexico. Critics have, after all, repeatedly stressed that the Party of the Revolutionized Institution (PRI), which has marked Mexican politics since the 1920s, offers a neo-liberal agenda that was initiated by the Porfirian dictatorship, and continues to marginalise larger parts of the population (see Rius’s perspective, in Rings’s contribution to this special issue).

Trump has challenged Enrique Peña Nieto’s government in particular with his commitment to build a border wall with Mexico (see Trump 2017a), which might have a significant impact on the socio-economic and political relationship between the two countries. However, Trump also raises uncertainty due to his ambiguous position vis-à-vis NAFTA, the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Mexico, the United States and Canada, which came into effect on the 1st of January 1994. Initially completely rejected during his US presidential campaign, NAFTA remains an object of dispute, and Trump has repeatedly argued for significant amendments or, alternatively, a cancellation of this agreement (Bottoni 2017).

Finally, NAFTA has also been the subject of substantial scholarly debate within and beyond Mexico, and opinions remain divided. On the one hand, Marco Antonio Merchand Rojas (2014) and Luis Rubio (2014) – both reviewed in this *iMex* edition – have focussed on the benefits for international trade, while other scholars have elaborated especially on the deterioration of living conditions, slow economic development and lack of social progression, which they tend to regard as a consequence of new NAFTA-related levels of competition for Mexican companies (see Avendaño / Acosta 2009; Oddone / Granato 2006; Yúnez-Naude / Paredes 2004; Arredondo / Cruz, 2015).

In this context, most contributions in this *iMex* issue re-examine current strategies and business opportunities for Mexican companies as well as the potential for new business through enhanced intercultural business communication training.

Prof. Antonio Ciruela Lorenzo's and Prof. Dolores Tous Zamora's study "Las Redes Cooperativas como estrategia de comercialización en el sector aguacatero de Michoacán" explores the potential and limits of current avocado farming in the State of Michoacan and makes suggestions for enhanced commercialisation and competitiveness via business networks and joint initiatives.

In "The Heritage Business Industry", Prof. Sandra L. López Varela addresses the potential of developing a heritage business industry in Mexico for the purpose of economic growth. Her discussion challenges Mexico's reliance on tourism as a revenue stream in the context of high rates of violence and criminal activity, and examines its failure to promote its rich culture and history. The study also offers an alternative scenario to create value from Mexico's rich culture and history by introducing cultural resource management (CRM), an industry developed by private firms around the world, for the protection and management of cultural heritage in compliance with environmental and historical laws. In the context of international initiatives, mainly by the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, her contribution identifies key factors that pressure the Mexican government to introduce CRM in Mexico as well as alternative routes for financing heritage preservation. Considering Mexico's dependency on international institutions for economic growth, Prof. López Varela argues that the Mexican government might ultimately be compelled to embrace a more convincing definition and marketing of its heritage if it wants to increase its revenues.

Prof. Tanius Karam Cárdenas's study "Breve mirada al negocio de las telecomunicaciones en México" discusses the media industry with particular focus on the commercialisation of telecommunications. Drawing on his well-established publications in the field, Prof. Karam Cárdenas explores the impact of political reforms as well as economic pressures on the telecommunications sector and makes suggestions for improvements.

In "La intervención social desde un enfoque relacional", Dr. Joaquín Castillo de Mesa explores the possibilities of interorganisational networks to improve the efficiency of employment agencies and related public services. Drawing on recommendations in Merchand Rojas's *El inalcanzable desarrollo regional y sustentable en Mexico* de (2014), Dr. Castillo de Mesa suggests to make use of the results of a recent network project developed in Malaga/Spain – the "Mesa por el Empleo" – in order to improve social and economic capital in Mexico. His study examines the potential and limits of the Spanish network with regard to its transferability and argues that there are major opportunities to improve the link between staff working on job offers and staff dealing with job demands by adapting technological innovation to enhance formal and informal interaction between key employees.

Dr. Andreas Pöllmann's article "Intercultural Education and the Realization of Intercultural Capital in Mexico" examines the prospects and limitations of intercultural capital realization in contemporary Mexico. While his study does not engage in evaluations of NAFTA, it raises important questions with regard to alternative forms of intercultural cooperation that convey a vision beyond instrumental business interests. Drawing on the findings of three research projects led by Dr. Pöllmann, his study argues for a socioculturally sensitive educational development towards more intercultural literacy, both inside the multicultural national context and internationally.

In "Perspectivas interculturales en la relación México – Alemania: Un acercamiento a la colaboración en el sector automotriz", Yolanda López García and Theresa Endres explore the cooperation between German and Mexican employees in the automobile industry in Mexico. On the basis of interviews with experts from the sector, the authors examine the cultural impact on individual behaviour and cross-cultural interaction within a German company based in Mexico. They also discuss the company's strategies to overcome cultural challenges, and they make suggestions to enhance intercultural interaction in an industry that remains key for economic development as well as for relations between Mexico and Germany within and beyond the "Año Dual", México – Alemania 2016-2017.

Cécile Brochard's article "The sex industry in fiction: Rolo Diez' *Poussière du désert* and women's exploitation in Mexico" examines the portrayal of women's exploitation, violence and criminality in one of Diez's key crime novels, which draw on contemporary murder cases in Northern Mexico as well as ongoing domestic abuse cases. Certainly willing to depict that brutality, Diez's work often complies with sensationalist codes such as the eroticization of female bodies and complaisance, which leads to ethical questions. Dr. Brochard explores to what extent *Poussière du désert* is able to examine brutal exploitation without being endangered by exhibitionism. After examining the possibility for literature to represent obscenity without perverting both the author and the reader, her article focuses on Rolo Diez's representation of sexual violence towards women in Mexico, and questions in how far his crime novels avoid the risk of voyeurism.

The article section ends with Guido Rings's study "De la 'revolucioncita' al centenario de la constitución (1917-2017): 'business as usual' en la obra de Rius", which explores the critical interrogation of continuities in Mexican business and politics in Rius's graphic novels. In the context of the centenary of the Mexican constitution (1917-2017), which is supposed to be a key legacy of the preceding "revolution", Rings examines the images of that revolution in selected works of the famous caricaturist, and he compares these images with perspectives

presented by the ruling Party of the Institutionalised Revolution (PRI), international historiography and distinguished novels of the Mexican revolution. Key research questions are:

1. How does Rius portray the revolution and its legacy in *La revolucioncita mexicana* and *La interminable conquista de México*?
2. In how far does he offer alternative images to those disseminated by PRI and historiography?
3. In how far does he draw on images developed in key novels of the Mexican revolution, such as Martín Luis Guzmán's *El águila y la serpiente* and Agustín Yáñez's *Al filo del agua*?

The study concludes that Rius identifies strong socio-political and economic continuities from the Porfirian dictatorship to contemporary PRI governments, which lead him to argue that there was no revolution in Mexico. This perspective questions governmental legitimization of power since the Mexican constitution, and it correlates with historiographical perspectives after the Tlatelolco massacre that tend to categorise the results of the armed struggle in more limited terms, e.g. as "revolución burguesa", "revolución cultural/social" or "rebelión" (Tobler 1994, Vaughan 2006/Buchenau 2015, Meyer 1992). Rius's viewpoint is also very much in line with alternative perspectives developed in the novels of the Mexican revolution, although he does not manage to offer a comparable degree of differentiation. In particular, it is regrettable that he reconstructs homogenous and separatist notions of the Mexican people and the PRI, which is more in line with PRI propaganda than with the nuanced images presented in the novels of the Mexican revolution and in post-Tlatelolco historiography.

The editors conclude this special issue with a section of five book reviews. Erica Berzaghi discusses Marco Antonio Merchand Rojas's study *El inalcanzable desarrollo regional y sustentable en México*. Guadalajara, Jalisco: Edición Universitaria 2014, which has informed contributions to this issue, including Dr. Castillo de Mesa's work on interorganisational networks. Tony Morgan examines Luis Rubio's *Veinte Años del TLC: Su dimensión política y estratégica* Mexico D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica 2014, a pocket size book written for a wider audience that develops numerous ideas of how to improve business in Mexico. F. Manuel Montalbán Peregrín's review of Guido Rings's *The Other in Contemporary Migrant Cinema. Imagining a new Europe?* London, New York: Routledge 2016, discusses a book that includes substantial chapters on Mexican and Chicano films, which the author highlights as potential examples for new developments within transcultural cinema and beyond. Mónica Vallin explores Oswaldo Estrada's and Anna M. Nogar's edited volume *Colonial Itineraries of Contemporary Mexico: Literary and Cultural Inquiries*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press

2014, which focuses on a colonial Mexico that continues to shape contemporary Mexican identity constructs. Finally, Alejandro Arteaga Martínez review of Juan de la Villa y Sánchez's *El Muerdequedito*. Ed. Arnulfo Herrera y Flora Elena Sánchez Arreola. Madrid, Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana, Vervuert 2016, presents a book that has been a leading satire of religious life and politics in colonial Mexico of the 17th and early 18th century, and that could certainly be used more to inspire contemporary discussions of religious business in Mexico.

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