

## New pathways in Business History

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Business history is a thriving part of economic history and during the last decades we have seen how new methods and theories have been deployed within business history to further our understanding of the role of companies and markets in long term historical development. We welcome submissions to this session that empirically and/or theoretically deals with different aspects of business history and how such a business history perspective can contribute to a more general economic history. The ambition of the session is to provide a forum to discuss issues like the evolution of new markets, the regulation of business, the role of finance, sustainability, and the development of market communication.

### *Transformations of managerialism through occupational structure*

Mathias Krusell, University of Gothenburg

My paper examines the occupational structure of administrative work in Sweden between 1970 and 2000. It is a part of my thesis on the development of corporate bureaucracy in Sweden during this time period, the thesis will look into both changes in the larger structure of the economy as well as investigate a couple cases more closely. Existing research into corporate bureaucracy and administrative work has found Sweden to be far less managerial than for example the US and the UK. Economist David M. Gordon studied the managerial top-heaviness of the American economy between 1945 and 1989 and found Sweden as a contrasting example with far less share of managerial and administrative work in relation to the work force in general. This paper re-examines the foundations for this claim and explore the existing data as well as the tools and structures used to produce this data. Administrative work can be a topic for labor history but since it is required in business management and especially in the information process and execution of decisions and management it also a pivotal aspect of business history. The sharp increase in managerial work during this time period needs to be presented and understood in a long time historical context. The rise of administrative work and the office as a work place was an important outcome of 20th century capitalism. The continuation of managerial capitalism will be even more significant for the understanding of 21st century capitalism.

### *Beredskapens marknadssegment: köpkraft och tidningsläsning i Sverige 1939–1945*

Klara Arnberg, Stockholm University

Detta papper undersöker konstruktionen av och förhandlingen om olika marknadssegment under beredskapstiden i Sverige. Som tidigare studier visat omdanades olika gruppers ekonomiska köpkraft under beredskapen, dels på grund av inkallelser och beredskapsarbeten, dels på grund av det begränsade utbudet på marknaden till följd av avspärrningar och ransonering. Reklambranschen och pressen påverkades också av detta, då efterfrågan på annonsutrymme sjönk drastiskt vid krigets inledning. Med detta som bakgrund används kommunikationen mellan pressen och potentiella annonsörer, där de förra sålde in sin publik

som köpstarkt marknadssegment. Hur förstods köpkraft i relation till kön, klass och medborgarskap och hur förändrades denna typ av tilltal i relation till det hotande kriget?

### *Environmental standards in the automobile industry*

Mattias Näsman, Umeå University

Attention toward business and the natural environment has proliferated among business historians in recent years. Regulatory pressure is currently forcing the automobile industry – one of the world's largest – to reduce its environmental impact, leading the industry to undergo technological change at an unprecedented scale and pace. Since the United States implemented the first car emission standards in the 1960s, environmental regulation targeting the multinational automobile industry has been a topic of much controversy on national and international scales. Studies of the automobile industry serves as a backbone in business history research, but business historians have scarcely explored how the industry has managed environmental transitions in the past, or to what extent firms and national industries have shaped the regulatory process. Regulatory standards for cars raises a number of complex issues, concerning how to accommodate goals on international trade and environmental protection, business power, the role of expertise in shaping conceptions of technological possibilities and necessities. This paper aims to explore the historical significance of government environmental regulation of the automobile industry, specifically by looking actors from the car industry, governments, and experts in Sweden but also in Western Europe.

### *Renewing Business History in the Era of the Anthropocene*

Ann-Kristin Bergquist, Umeå University

This paper is concerned with new approaches in business history. Although it is no longer accurate to claim that business, or other historians, have wholly overlooked the issue of business and sustainability, the discipline of business history has still only scratched the top of an iceberg. The environmental challenges which have become apparent over the last half century, symbolized by mounting evidence of climate change, as well the rapid development of empirical and conceptual research in other fields, calls for a renewed research agenda in business history focused on the biggest issue of our time.

### *Att konstruera nyliberalism genom börsinnovationer*

Oskar Broberg, University of Gothenburg

I pappret analyserar jag strukturomvandlingen som skedde på den svenska finansmarknaden från slutet av 1970-talet till mitten av 1990-talet, med fokus på de förändringar som skedde på Stockholmsbörsen och den konkurrerande börsverksamhet som växte fram ur Optionsmäklarna (OM). Den teoretiska utgångspunkten i pappret är att de finansiella och tekniska innovationer som låg till grund för denna strukturomvandling behöver förstås utifrån de idémässiga förändringar som den nya finansiella teorin förde med sig. I pappret analyseras hur dessa nya strömningar letade sig in i på den svenska finansmarknaden och bidrog till förändra det

offentliga samtalet så att börsverksamheten gick från att ha varit en marginell företeelse inom näringslivet till att betraktas som en central aktör för en effektiv samhällsekonomi.

*Building a Tourism Economy under uncertainty. The Spanish experience*

Elena San Roman, Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Águeda Gil López, Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Jorge Hernández Barahona, Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Alicia Sierra Pizá, Universidad Complutense de Madrid

This communication aims to better understand the process of tertiarisation in Spain from the perspective of business history. Our aim is to unravel the "black box" of how tertiarisation took place in Spain between 1940 and 1973. To achieve our purpose, we will analyze in comparative terms the start-up and early growth of four major Spanish hotel multinationals: Meliá, Riu, Iberostar and Barceló. All four companies are currently among the top 50 in the world in terms of revenue and number of rooms and have a very competitive position in major destinations such as the Caribbean. Building on the seminal work of Levi Strauss (1967) and more recently developed by Baker and Nelson (2005) and (Duymedjian and Rüling 2010), we will construct our analysis of the role that entrepreneurial bricolage played in an isolated economy such as the Spanish to face difficulties and uncertainties

*“A stamp of quality”: Made in Sweden as collective commercial brand and moral obligation, ca 1900-1990*

Nikolas Glover, Uppsala University

It has been argued that “quality” constituted a key concept in the cultural debates of Swedish 20th century society (Husz 2015). Focusing on the activities of firms, trade organisations and government agencies from ca 1900 to the 1990s, this paper traces the related history of the quality/qualities attributed to the export brand “Made in Sweden”. From the early 1900s, Swedish businessmen and ministers generally agreed that “Made in Sweden” was widely considered “a stamp of quality” in other countries. This truism was often repeated over the following decades, in particular in the 1950s and 1960s. By the 1980s however, there was general agreement that “Swedish quality” was no longer what it had been – but also that it was more crucial than ever. Even the Swedish King publicly admonished Swedish firms for being complacent and told them to stop relying on old laurels. The paper traces these shifting discourses in the export sector, arguing that “quality” meant different things over time: from being a quantifiable, technical characteristic, to a competitive “emotional value” and then a professionalised manageable process. I argue that a focus on these debates and uses of “Swedish quality” provides a means of shedding light on the cultural history of the open Swedish export economy, famously described as both “flexible” and “vulnerable” by Katzenstein. It offers insights into how influential elites in corporatist society sought to convey

this vulnerability and continuously adapt a competitive nationalist spirit in Swedish organised capitalism. The paper thus illustrates how outwardly-directed export branding of products and firms has also been used to remind companies, politicians and consumers of their moral responsibilities vis-à-vis their own nation.

*Comparative Costs and the Diffusion of Steam and Water power in the British Economy, 1800-70*

Haris Kitsikopoulos, NYU

The present paper begins with detailed calculations of the annual operating costs of three leading steam engine models, two of them referring to low-pressure variants while the third one being high-pressure. It finds that the last model exhibited, by far, the lowest cost. Next, the paper revisits the discussion regarding the threshold price of coal which favored one model over another. It provides a critical assessment of Nuvolari and Verspagen's account pointing to certain caveats and concludes that, given similar purchase prices of the various models, the critical variable was fuel consumption rates. In light of the blatant superiority of high-pressure engines in this regard, the threshold price of coal was zero, i.e., high-pressure engines were preferable across the country. The next section provides an estimate of the annual operating cost of a water wheel of the same power as the examined engines, and finds that it did have a lower operating cost albeit the gap with the respective figure of high-pressure engines was very narrow. Given spatial constraints imposed in the use of water power, the significance of the latter was diminished substantially when technological improvements on high-pressure engines allowed their diffusion beyond Cornish mines. The paper ends with a discussion of aggregate statistics in temporal and sectoral terms explained in light of the paper's calculations regarding the operating costs of the two competing power sources.

*From vision to failure: the history of the Nordic triangle, 1985-2005*

Andreas Mørkved Hellenes, Aarhus University

Visions of a "Nordic triangle" linking together Stockholm, Oslo and Copenhagen with high-speed rail became a major theme in Scandinavian transport policies in the 1990s. This was one of a series of visions of an integrated Europe, connected with alternative transports to polluting cars and airlines. The aim of this project is to analyse how, in the wake of Scandinavian Europeanisation, this vision was created and implemented before ultimately failing in the early 2000s. The purpose of the project is to use the rise and fall of the Nordic triangle to examine the failure of sustainable border-crossing integration in Scandinavia. I propose to do so by studying three connected sequences, starting with an exploration of the first European business visions of the Nordic triangle and their publicly and politically contested reception in Scandinavia. Secondly, I examine how policy networks embedded the Nordic triangle in Scandinavian and European transport policies and market strategies. Thirdly, I analyse the making and unmaking of a Scandinavian high-speed rail market through the case of the Swedish-Norwegian train company Linx (2000-2004). The results will contribute to three fields of research – studies of transport and infrastructural projects, histories of Nordic and

European integration, and the internationalization of incumbent railway operators, together providing valuable knowledge about the failure of sustainable integration in Northern Europe.