

Business history in Chile: where are we now?

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Resumen

Este es un número especial de la Revista Contribuciones sobre historia empresarial en Chile. Su objetivo principal es promover historial empresarial como una disciplina en Chile. Hay consenso que éste es un campo de investigación importante, pero que está poco desarrollado en Chile. Para comenzar a promover el mismo en Chile, organizamos una conferencia financiada por Conicyt, la que reunió a líderes mundiales de este campo. En la misma ellos explicaron qué es historia empresarial, por qué la disciplina es importante, cómo se investiga en este campo, cuáles son los centros de investigación líderes en esta área de investigación y qué hacen los mismos, y cuáles son los principales trabajos historiográficos sobre el tema para América Latina. Sus ponencias son recogidas como artículos en este número especial de la revista.

Palabras claves: historia empresarial, Chile, CIHEAP, redes

Abstract

This is a special issue on business history in Chile. Its main objective is to promote business history as a discipline in Chile. There is agreement that this in an important field of research but it is uncultivated in Chile. To start promoting the field in Chile, we organized a conference funded by Conicyt, where world leading scholars explained: what is business history, why it is important, how research in this field is conducted, which are the world leading centres on business history and what they do, and which are the main historiographical works on the field for Latin America. The proceedings of the conferences are the articles of this special issue.

Key words: business history, Chile, CIHEAP, networks

In early 2014, at the Faculty of Management and Economics of our university, the International Centre for Research in Economic, Business and Public Administration History (Centro Internacional de Investigación de Historia Económica, Empresarial y de la Administración Pública, **CIHEAP**) was created. The Centre currently has five principal researchers (including an Executive Director, Dr. Diego Barría), all of them employed full-time at several departments of the University of Santiago, and three external associate researchers. They have been active in publishing in academic journals, as well as winning Fondecyt's research projects. Administrative support for the centre is currently provided by Lilibette Correa of the Department of Economics. CIHEAP is overlooked by an internal Academic Committee chaired by the Dean of the Faculty of Management and Economics (Dr. Jorge Friedman) and advised by an external Orientation Committee of distinguished international scholars, including Dr. Rory Miller (Reader in International Business History, Management School, Liverpool University, UK), Dr. Bernardo Bátiz-Lazo (Professor of Business History and Bank Management, Bangor Business School, Bangor University, UK), Dr. Xavier Tafunell (Professor of Economic History, Department of Economics, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Spain), Dr. César Yáñez (Professor of Economic History, Departament d'Història i Institucions Econòmiques, Universidad de Barcelona, Spain & Universidad de Valparaíso, Chile), Dr. Guillermo Guajardo (Investigador Titular, UNAM, México), Dr. Herbert Klein (Stanford University, USA), and Dr. Xabier Lamikiz (Lecturer, Economic History and Institutions Department, Universidad del País Vasco, Spain).

The main areas of teaching and research at CIHEAP are: Economic History of Latin America (broadly defined); Business History of Latin America (of private and public entities); and History of Chilean Public Administration. The centre promotes research, teaching, seminars and conferences in all these areas, as well as the creation of international networks on these themes. More details of our publications, grants, and interests can be found on our web page: <http://www.ciheap.usach.cl/>

Despite being a new centre, just a few months after its creation, the CIHEAP won a Conicyt's grant to support international networking between research centres (Redes 14023). The main objectives of this grant are: to promote links between CIHEAP and Harvard Business School, and in particular using its Business History Initiative, to build a world-leading centre in Business History; to raise awareness of the importance of business history as a field within the Chilean academy; to contribute to the establishment of business history as an important field in Chile; to improve teaching skills in business history, including the application of the case method taught by Harvard University, an innovative approach to teaching business history; To enhance research skills in business history, and in particular to gain a better knowledge of current research themes in the discipline, as well as new primary sources and resources available to researchers worldwide.

With these objectives in mind, during early July 2015, CIHEAP, together with Talca University, organized a Workshop titled 'Business History in Chile and Latin America', mainly funded by Conicyt. The main aims of the conference were: to analyse the state of business history in Chile and Latin America and to brain storm ideas about how to improve it; to promote business history in Chile and at our university in particular; to discuss the development of the business history syllabus for undergraduate courses on business history, to be applied to courses taught in Chile; to discuss how to integrate the latest business history research into teaching materials; to discuss new and innovative pedagogical methods, including web-based learning and the use of oral history applied to business history; to become aware of the availability of primary sources on Latin American business history.

The following distinguished scholars spoke at the workshop: Geoffrey Jones, Faculty Chair of the Business History Initiative of Harvard Business School and editor of the *Business History Review*; Bernardo Bátiz-Lazo (Bangor University), a world leading business historian, specialist in Latin America; Rory Miller (Liverpool University), world leading business historian specialising in Chile and

Peru; Carlos Dávila (Universidad de los Andes, Colombia), arguably the most prominent Latin American business historian; Andrea Lluch (Conicet, and Universidad Nacional de la Pampa, Argentina), one of the most important researchers in Latin American business history, a former post-doctoral researcher and part of Harvard's Business History Initiative. The papers they gave during the first day of the conference are the core of this special issue of *Contribuciones*. We are very grateful to José Luis Martínez and the editorial board for inviting us to publish this special issue in *Business History in Chile*. The authors and titles of the papers are as follow:

- Geoffrey Jones, 'What is Business History? Why it is important?'
- Bernardo Bátiz-Lazo, 'The Case Study Method and The Methodology of Business History.'
- Carlos Dávila, 'Docencia e investigación en Historia Empresarial en América Latina: El caso de la Universidad de los Andes, Colombia, 1974-2015.'
- María Inés Barbero and Andrea Lluch, 'Historia de empresas en América Latina: breves reflexiones sobre su desarrollo y la agenda de temas de investigación en el siglo XXI.'
- Rory Miller, 'Writing the history of British business in Latin America.'

In addition to the authors of the papers published in this special issue, we invited academics and researchers from our university, but also from many other Chilean universities (both private and public) where there is an interest in business history teaching and research, such as Cieplan-Universidad de Talca, the University of Chile, the Catholic University, Valparaiso University, Universidad del Desarrollo, Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez, Universidad Alberto Hurtado, amongst others. We are very grateful to all of them for attending the conference, but in particular to Gonzalo Islas Rojas (Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez), Bernardita Escobar (Cieplan-Universidad de Talca), Andrea Lluch (Conicet) and Luis Ortega (Universidad de Santiago) for agreeing to be part of a panel titled 'Business history in Chile: challenges and perspectives'.

The panel came to a unanimous conclusion: business history in Chile has not been cultivated, and, therefore there is a lot to be done. It is perhaps surprising that in a country rich in firms and entrepreneurs, business history has been given little attention within the academic community. There are just a handful of historians who have diverted their attention towards business history, notably Ricardo Nazer, Luis Ortega, Ricardo Couyoumdjian and Gonzalo Islas. We need the support of deans and programme directors in order to include business history as an elective course on the curriculum. We also need further support in order to promote research in this area, not only from deans, but also from entrepreneurs and firms themselves: Chilean companies need to preserve their archives and open them to researchers. That said, Chilean researchers also need to be creative in their approach to try to access private firms' archives.

Business history is given a great deal of importance in important world-leading universities such as Harvard University, Copenhagen Business School, Glasgow University, Liverpool University, Bocconi University, University of Illinois, Reading University, Universidad de los Andes (Colombia), amongst many others. Why not follow their example? They have understood that studying companies and entrepreneurs will help us to understand the problems faced by many countries today (e.g. how firms have faced the economic crisis); that there are lessons to be learnt from past experiences of firms and entrepreneurs, in particular about how actors have solved the problems they have faced in the past; how and why firms fail or succeed; amongst many other topics.

Finally, during the second day of our workshop some recent papers on Chilean business history were presented and commented on, and again we are grateful to both presenters and commentators. They were:

- Gonzalo Islas Rojas (UAI). 'Baburizza: Un grupo empresarial a inicios del siglo XX'. Commented on by Jaime Rosenblitt (CIDBA).

- Ricardo Nazer (Universidad Alberto Hurtado). 'Familias empresariales, herencias y traspaso de patrimonios: de emprendedores a rentistas, 1880-1914'. Commented on by Carlos Dávila (Universidad de los Andes).
- Bernardita Escobar (Cieplan). 'Mujeres y las patentes de invención en Chile, 1870-1910'. Commented on by Andrea Lluch (Conicet and Universidad Nacional de la Pampa).
- Erica Salvaj (UDD) and Andrea Lluch (Conicet and Universidad Nacional de la Pampa). 'Women and Corporate Power: A Historical and Comparative Study in Argentina and Chile, 1901-2010'. Commented on by Bernardita Escobar (Cieplan).
- Cristián Ducoing (Universidad de Valparaíso) y Montserrat Pacull (Universidad de Barcelona). 'Innovación, redes y recursos naturales. Los empresarios cupríferos del Huasco. 1810-1860'. Commented on by Rory Miller (Liverpool University).
- Luis Ortega (Universidad de Santiago). 'El empresariado y las operaciones políticas e ideológicas en el diseño de un nuevo proyecto de sociedad, 1953-1973'. Commented on by Bernardo Bátiz-Lazo (Bangor University).

These and others papers will be published during 2016 as a collection of essays titled *Empresas y Empresarios en la Historia de Chile, XIX and XX centuries*, to be published by Editorial Universitaria, and edited by Diego Barría and Manuel Llorca.

References

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