



HISTORIA INDUSTRIAL

Industrial History Review

Advancing the understanding of industrialization processes

Revista de Historia Industrial – Industrial History Review (RHI-IHR)

QUANTITATIVE BUSINESS HISTORY

Workshop of the RHI- IHR at the EBHA 2022 Congress

CALL FOR PAPERS

The [Revista de Historia Industrial-Industrial History Review](#) would like to invite you to submit a paper proposal for a session at the forthcoming European Business History Association Congress (Madrid, June 22-24, 2022). It will be organized by **Veronica Binda** (Bocconi University) and **Anna Spadavecchia** (Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship, University of Strathclyde).

In a provocative article published in 2010, Jari Eloranta, Jari Ojala, and Heli Valtonen discussed whether the relation between quantitative methods and Business History was an “impossible equation”. Their investigation into the use of quantitative methods in the articles published by the two premier journals in business history in the 1990s, highlighted a frequent use of basic quantitative tools, such as charts and tables, and a very limited use of advanced statistical methods. Furthermore, the key question, whether the articles based on quantitative analysis influenced the academic debate more strongly than those adopting qualitative methods, did not lead to a clear-cut answer. The use of quantitative methods *per se* had no significant, or even negative, impact on the citations of the articles. However, the use of quantitative methods in conjunction with the length of the articles (*Business History Review*) or theoretical focus (*Business History*) led to a higher number of citations, thus indicating a greater impact of these articles on the debate within and across disciplines. (Eloranta, Ojala and Valtonen, 2010).

The adoption of quantitative methods in Business History was explored in further detail and integrated in a comprehensive discussion on methodological approaches in Business History in its post-Chandlerian phase. One significant output of this debate is the Special Issue (SI) edited by Abe De Jong and David Michael Higgins published in *Business History* in 2015. This SI gathered contributions which explicitly engaged in theory-building and theory-testing in business history using a diverse range of methodologies and perspectives. The opening article by Abe de Jong, David Michael Higgins and Hugo van Driel explains how quantitative methods, such as necessary conditions analysis and variable-based techniques, in addition to qualitative methods, could be used to test hypotheses and elaborate theories. These aims resonate in Walter Friedman and Geoffrey Jones’ editorial where they encourage business historians “to make use of [...] rich empirical data in order to build broad generalisations” (Friedman and Jones, 2011). One of the discipline’s future paths identified by Geoffrey Jones is based on the use of quantitative tools and construction of databases in order to test hypotheses, as well as developing methodologies to analyze small samples and qualitative data (Jones, van Leeuwen, Broadberry, 2012). These indications are far from imply that the discipline should be dominated by one specific methodology, but rather they stress the need for a plurality of rigorous methodologies. Indeed, as Stephanie Decker, Matthias Kipping and R. Daniel Wadhvani reflected, testing hypotheses is only one of the aims of the discipline, in addition to “uncovering sequences and processes, or synthesising complex developments related to the phenomenon being studied” (Decker, Kipping and Wadhvani, 2015).

After more than a decade from the inception of this debate there have been many developments in and around the field of Business History. This workshop aims to discuss and assess:

- the current diffusion and typology of quantitative methods in the discipline;
- the aims and purposes that these methods serve *vis-à-vis* research questions that are not suited to quantitative analysis;
- how the discipline has been impacted by the diffusion of quantitative methods in relation to cognate disciplines, such as economic history, management and business studies;



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- updates to the existing literature on this topic, which has previously considered only leading British and American journals.

We thus especially welcome contributions which can broaden and enrich the current body of work on this topic. These include theoretical articles and original empirical contributions based on a diverse range of quantitative methods.

After a process of double-blind review, to be carried out after the congress, five of the accepted papers will be selected for a Special Issue of the **Revista de Historia Industrial – Industrial History Review** edited by **Veronica Binda** and **Anna Spadavecchia**, scheduled to be published in 2023. The remaining contributions, if accepted in the peer review process, can be published in regular issues of the journal.

Deadlines:

- Applicants should submit an abstract of no more than 500 words outlining their proposal and a short CV by **February 28, 2022** to **Veronica Binda** (veronica.binda@unibocconi.it) and **Anna Spadavecchia** (anna.spadavecchia@strath.ac.uk).
- Applicants will be informed of the selection process by March 15th, 2022.
- Participants to the RHI-IHR Session at EBHA Congress 2022 will have to follow the registration process established by the organizers of the Conference.
- The congress paper, or a long abstract of 2000 words, should be sent by **May 15, 2022**.
- The final version of the manuscripts for the Special Issue review process must be sent by **September 30, 2022**.

References:

- Stephanie Decker, Matthias Kipping and R. Daniel Wadhvani. 'New business histories! Plurality in business history research methods', *Business History*, 57:1, 2015, pp.30-40.
- Abe De Jong, and David Michael Higgins. 'New business history?', *Business History*, 57:1, 2015, pp. 1-4.
- Abe De Jong, David Michael Higgins and Hugo van Driel. 'Towards a new business history?', *Business History*, 57:1, 2015, pp. 5-29.
- Jari Eloranta, Jari Ojala and Heli Valtonen. 'Quantitative methods in business history: an impossible equation?', *Management and Organizational History*, 5:1, 2010, pp.79-107.
- Walter E. Friedman and Geoffrey Jones. 'Business History: time for debate', *Business History Review*, 85:1, 2011, pp. 1-8.
- Geoffrey Jones, Marco H. D. van Leeuwen and Stephen Broadberry. 'The future of economic, business, and social history', *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 60:3, 2012, pp. 225-253.
- Christopher Kobrak and Andrea Schneider, 'Varieties of Business History: Subject and Methods for the Twenty first Century', *Business History* 53:3, 2011, pp. 401-424
- Jari Ojala, Jari Eloranta, Anu Ojala & Heli Valtonen. 'Let the best story win – evaluation of the most cited business history articles', *Management & Organizational History*, 12:4, 2017, pp. 305-333.
- Andrew Perchard, Niall G. MacKenzie, Stephanie Decker & Giovanni Favero. 'Clio in the Business School: Historical Approaches in Strategy, International Business and Entrepreneurship', *Business History*, 59:6, 2017, pp. 904-927.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us through the following contact addresses: veronica.binda@unibocconi.it and anna.spadavecchia@strath.ac.uk, copying r.historiaindustrial@ub.edu.

The Editorial Board of the Revista de Historia Industrial – Industrial History Review (RHI-IHR)