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Ciencia, tecnología, innovación y desarrollo económico en perspectiva histórica
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Coordinadoras

Susana MARTÍNEZ-RODRIGUEZ (Universidad de Murcia, España)
susanamartinezr@um.es

Seven AGIR (METU, Turkey)

Sesión 6. Women who count: firms, investments and ventures (19th and 21th Centuries). Finding new differences and similarities

Women as entrepreneurs and investors has been neglected until recent years in the Business History. The lack of information in the official and published sources, along with biases in traditional business historiography, has been responsible for this voluntary oblivion. Fortunately, a growing group of researchers, using alternative sources or conventional sources in a more imaginative way, have made contributions that reinforce the idea that "women count" in the last decades. Until 1990, gender studies had been focused on the labor market and labor relations, analyzing the female economic contribution as workers, rather than employers, owners, or independent contractors. Also, the history of women had focused their efforts on social and labor issues. After 2000, new publications analyzed the presence of women in business structures, mainly in American and English frameworks.

This session aims to show, providing a selection of ongoing research, that women have had a tangible impact on the development of modern capitalism. The session will provide an opportunity for specialists in the economic history of different areas of the world to present work in progress on different themes connected to female entrepreneurs. Some of the scholars will present cases of understudied contexts such as Russia, Spain, Switzerland, or Turkey. There is also room for the female managers in Britain, a suggestive world approach on the state of art of female entrepreneurs around the world during all the 19th Century, and a longitudinal study of the last long crisis in Europe (1991-2005). The chronology of the session covers from the 19th Century and gets into the 21th Century. Our session "Women who count...Finding New Differences and Similarities" aim to analyze the strategies employed by those women who settle economic ventures,

establish firms, and manage businesses. We will also shed light on the unconventional ways in which women act as entrepreneurs; shape family businesses; affront crisis or fight bankruptcy. The session will also pay attention to the financial contribution of women to the business fabric, providing new evidence on how financial institutions captured female capital to push modern economic development, while, paradoxically, women had little freedom to use their money.

The session will seek to discuss new contributions and to show new dimensions of businesswomen in the contemporary world.

PARTICIPANTS AND ABSTRACTS

AGIR, Seven (Middle East Technical University, Turkey); **KAYHAN ELBIRLIK, Leyla** (Bogazici University, Turkey), *Managing the Family: Women and Business in the Turkish Historical Context.*

Very few studies examine women's roles in business in Turkey from a historical perspective. This is an exploratory study that aims to put Turkey on the map and investigate potential insights from a gendered approach to the newly emerging field of business history in the region from Early Republican Era to 1980s. The paper first presents hitherto unexamined quantitative data on the role of women in business through evidence of their formal participation in businesses as entrepreneurs, shareholders and board members. The extensive data sheds light on women's place across broader trends in Turkish business history. Then, the paper uses qualitative methods, i.e. case studies and oral history interviews that explore women's agency in creating and sustaining family businesses in Turkey. In particular, the study explores how women's agency plays itself out in their various, sometimes conflicting, roles in shaping family businesses that are disguised in classical narratives of business history.

GINALSKI, Stéphanie (Institute of Political Studies, University of Lausanne, Switzerland), *How women broke into the "old boys" Swiss corporate network.*

Although the situation has improved during the last decades, Switzerland is clearly lagging behind most of the Western countries concerning women's representation on corporate boards. The aim of this contribution is to investigate the historical and political factors that have contributed to the exclusion of women from boardrooms for a very long

time, and to their recent – and relative– increasing presence. For this purpose, this study investigates the presence of women among the 110 largest Swiss firms from 1910 until 2015. It shows that until the beginning of the 1970s, the very few women who were present in the boardrooms belonged to the owning families of the firms. Several factors contributed then to the progressive opening of corporate elites to women. First, the extending in 1971 of the “universal suffrage” to women at the federal level improved their position in the Swiss society. Second, the increasing globalization and internationalization of the economy at the end of the 20th century led to the decline in the cohesion of the very male and Swiss corporate elite. Finally, the concomitant decline in interlocking directorates among Swiss firms, which had been a major form of business elite social network during the greatest part of the 20th century, contributed in all likelihood to allow women to step into the breach.

MARTÍNEZ-RODRÍGUEZ, Susana (University of Murcia, Spain); **HERNÁNDEZ-NICOLÁS, Carmen M^a** (University of Murcia, Spain), *Another silent nation of shareholders? The women of the Hispano Americano Bank (1922-1935). Gender differential and financial inclusion in historical perspective.*

There is no studies on the investments of women in the historiography economic modernization in Spain. The analysis of the lists of shareholders of the Banco Hispano Americano (1922-1935) offers for the first time results that give answers in this line of research. The female shareholders were the 40% and they owned more than one third of the share capital of the bank. Women have a greater presence among small and medium shareholders which would find a clear parallel with the British “widows and spinders” that pursued assets looking for economic benefits. Besides, women tend to have more links with other shareholders which would mean that in the purchase of shares was a familiar instrument, except among shareholders with a larger portfolio of assets (+500 shares). An imperative question is to know if the financial institution analyzed was an exception, or, contrarily, this is a starting period of “female agency”.

MUÑOZ-ABELED0, Luisa (Santiago de Compostela University, Spain); **CAÑAL, Verónica** (University of Oviedo, Spain), *Women doing business in North Spanish port cities (1880-1913).*

This contribution analyzes women’s participation on business and commerce in some principal Spanish fishing, industrial and commercial ports. The study uses different and varied sources: trade directories, newspaper advertisements, industrial and commerce

taxes to know the kind of business women did in different Spanish Atlantic (Vigo, A Coruña) and Cantabric (Gijón). The paper links those sources with demographic sources (nominative population census) commercial letters from different corporations to discover how important was female business participation in local economies, in which economic sectors were located. The study reveals the activities of lower middle-class women in business, especially in commercial enterprise. Women entrepreneurs contribute to economic modernization and urban growth in those Spanish Ports creating employment through their participation on different local companies.

RODRÍGUEZ-MEDROÑO, Paula (Pablo de Olavide University, Spain), [Female entrepreneurs in times of crisis: a longitudinal study of European countries.](#)

The concept of an entrepreneur has historically been that of a male; however, female entrepreneurship as a phenomenon has always existed and it has increased quite markedly in Europe since the mid-1990s. The last economic crisis helped even more to bring to the fore the relevance of self-employment for women, since starting a business was considered as the best viable option for women who have lost their jobs and were facing the difficulties of finding a non-precarious one. This study uses longitudinal microdata from the European Working Conditions Survey on 35 European countries (1991-2015) to provide a clear understanding of the dynamics of female entrepreneurship and investigate their work and living conditions from a gender perspective. Since home is an important part of the entrepreneurial context for women, especially in times of crisis, this study also analyzes home-based female entrepreneurs to understand the economic implications of home-based work.