

Call for papers

Workshop “Nineteenth century businesswomen. A retrospective glance at women entrepreneurship”

Lyon, 8-9 December 2022

The workshop is organized as part of the INDUSTRIFEM project with the support of the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme Lyon St-Etienne, the Centre Lyonnais d'Histoire du Droit et de la Pensée politique. (CLHDPP), the French Cliometric Association (AFC) and the Magellan iaelyon Research Center.

A selection of the papers presented and discussed at the workshop will be considered, after peer review process, for publication in the book series *Frontiers in Economic History*, Springer.

Important dates

Expression of interest and abstract (500 words): May 30th, 2022

Notification of acceptance: June 25th, 2022

Deadline for submission of full papers: October 15th, 2022

Workshop: December 8th and 9th, 2022

Publication of the issue: June 2023

The papers should be submitted electronically to the following address: charlotte.le-chapelain@univ-lyon3.fr

Presentation

Economic history has long given female entrepreneurs a very minor place, relegating them to the status of historical anecdotes. The rise of industrial capitalism, with the move from small-scale craft industries to large-scale factories, would arguably have impaired women's opportunities to engage in business activities. The idea that the industrialization process was paralleled by the development of a socially constructed gender role ideology—the ideology of “separate spheres” (see Davidoff and Hall 1987)—has reinforced this view. According to the separate spheres doctrine, in the nineteenth century, women were progressively relegated to the private domestic sphere, the public sphere—which includes the sphere of businesses—being the preserve of men. This view is under reconsideration. A growing body of literature, which focused on the Anglo-Saxon world, shows that female entrepreneurship did not disappear with the rise of industrialization and that women business leaders were not exceptions in the nineteenth century. Women's contribution to the economic and industrial take-off in the nineteenth century was not only to provide low-skilled labor to the industry (especially to the textile industry): women in fact actively contributed to the industrialization process, holding key positions as investors and entrepreneurs. As emphasized by Gamber (1998), business history has long almost entirely ignored them. This is no longer the case. Yeager (1999), Gordon and Nair (2000, 2003), Barker

and Harvey (2003), Owens (2002), Kay (2004, 2009), Phillips (2006), Barker (2006), and Aston (2012) have brought businesswomen in Victorian England out of invisibility. Contrary to the presumed role assigned to women in Victorian society who were above the working class, these analyses show that a significant number of English women were engaged in business activities. “Unexceptional” American businesswomen have also become visible in contemporary historiography (see Kwolek-Folland 1998, Lewis 2009, 2020). As well as the many studies which focus on Britain and the United States, recent literature gives evidence of dynamic women’s entrepreneurship in Germany (Labouvie 1993, Rabuzzi 1995, Beachy 2002), the Netherlands (Van den Heuvel 2007), Russia (Ulianova 2016), Denmark (Gold 2018), Finland (Ijäs 2018), Sweden (Eriksson 2001), New-Zealand (Bishop 2021). Aston and Bishop (2020) bring together the most recent analyses that attest to the presence of women in business in Europe but also beyond, in Asia, Africa and South America.

Historical studies are scarcer as far as the French case is concerned. Focusing on Northern France, Craig (2001, 2015, 2016) has impressively demonstrated that the story of women’s disappearance from business activities also fails to apply for industrializing France. Recent work has focused on women in business in Paris (Craig 2020) and Marseille (Richard 1996, 2006). Furthermore, Khan (2016) has pointed out the existence of innovative female entrepreneurs in the early stages of French industrialization. While these works attest to the persistence of female entrepreneurship in nineteenth-century France, it remains largely under-assessed. The role played by these women entrepreneurs and the modalities of their entrepreneurial activity is also seriously understudied.

The organization of this workshop aims to fill this gap. This call for papers is open to scholars of all disciplines (economics, history of law, management science, history...). It seeks to stimulate research in this area in order to bring women entrepreneurs out of invisibility – including, but not limited to French businesswomen - and to highlight their contribution to the industrial take-off. It aims at shedding light on the specificities of their entrepreneurial exercise - if there is any - as well as on the role played by the legal framework within which it developed.

Article proposals which develop monographic studies shedding light on the entrepreneurial trajectories of business women in the nineteenth century are welcome. They may concern the French case or, in a comparative perspective, other entrepreneurial experiences in Europe and in the world.

Researchers are invited, but not limited, to address the following questions:

- What were the entrepreneurial trajectories of these women in the 19th century? Their managerial practices, their financial strategies, the influence of their family and their networks, their attitudes towards risk, their possible international development strategies, the forms of legal organizations chosen but also the innovations developed by their companies are subject to examination.
- In many European countries, women in business have been confronted with binding legislation. What legal mechanisms allowed women to overcome the constraints of their civil status during the 19th century and to actively participate in the governance of industrial companies that played an important role in the industrialization process? Analyses in the field of legal history (history of business law, history of family law and law of persons, history of labor law, history of the law of succession...) should be able to shed light on the role of these restrictive European legislations and the possible

circumvention strategies implemented by women entrepreneurs. Comparative analyses are welcome.

- Because widows often played a decisive role in the perpetuation of entrepreneurial activities in families, the history of women entrepreneurs is partly interwoven with the history of family firms. Insights into the role and status of women in family firms, from a historical perspective but also through comparative contemporary illustrations, will enrich the understanding of women's contribution to the processes of industrialization and growth. Contributions from researchers in management sciences, in particular, who are specialists in women's entrepreneurship today will be welcome.

Publication

A selection of the papers presented and discussed at the workshop will be considered, after process of peer review, for publication in book series, Frontiers in Economic History, Springer (<https://www.springer.com/series/16567>).

Full paper submission is expected by October 15th, 2022. The publication of the book is expected by June 2023.

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