Transformation in Business and Society: 
A Historical Approach

The term "transformation" is often associated with Karl Polanyi’s famous analysis of how, in the early 19th century, England’s traditional, community-based "welfare system" collapsed as new poor laws replaced local authorities’ responsibility for the welfare of the needy born in their jurisdictions.

But Polanyi’s "Great Transformation" is just one, albeit prominent, example of how legal, organizational, technological, and political developments force broader socio-economic change. Managing dramatic changes in social patterns and modes of production, such as that entailed by the "fourth industrial revolution," serve as both a challenge and opportunity for business. These transformations represent a sort of "exogenous force with the power of a tsunami," as one commentator put it. (© Nicholas Davis of the World Economic Forum) In our own era, for example, they create entirely new options for automatization and digitization, by rearranging a host of business costs and potential benefits. Historically, as Schumpeter wrote, these challenges to the existing order push the entrepreneur to relentless “creative destruction,” fundamental to business innovation. Even financial crises, political revolutions and regime changes have served as catalysts for the transformation of business institutions and organizations. By changing incentives,
legal frameworks, internal compliance and accountability, political upheaval refocuses business energies and structures.

For the European Business History Association's 21st annual congress, which will be held in Vienna on August 24-26, 2017, we, the organizers, therefore propose to discuss transformation processes in business and society in a broad, historical perspective. Such a perspective, in our view, should include political and social factors as well as technological and organizational innovations affecting businesses and the broad economy, both on national and international levels, into this century. Since Vienna, our conference site, was once the capital of an extended, East Central European multinational empire, we especially welcome the submission of papers that deal with the volatile history of the ECE region. The implementation, management and eventual implosion of „real socialism" and the ensuing efforts to reposition formerly socialist economies and businesses along market-capitalistic lines deserve to be called transformations of genuinely secular importance, comparable in geographic scope and impact with events as old as the abolition of rural feudal obligations around the middle of the nineteenth century. With the recent Brexit vote, this topic of transformation has taken on even greater significance.

We especially invite anyone interested in the conference theme of “Great Transformations” to propose papers and/or sessions and larger panels.

Additional topics include:

1. What business models are particularly important to developing economies?
2. How and why do organizations change over time?
3. How have business’s regulatory contexts affected commercial activity?
4. How have international capital flows transformed business models and business organizations?
5. How have business’s relationships with its principal stakeholders (for example, consumers, workers, unions, NGOs, media, national governments, and international institutions) changed over time and in different regions?
6. What is business’s relationship to environmental sustainability?
7. How does public and private entrepreneurship promote innovation?
8. How has internationalization affected companies? Do advantages and disadvantages relate to the category – form of business (family enterprises – multinationals)?
9. How do ethnic networks and family businesses affect business models?
10. What impact does immigration have on business globalization?
11. How has the image of business’s social contribution and professionalism changed since the 2008 Crisis?
12. What roles have women managers and investors played in the development of business?
13. How have the methods and sources of business history changed and how should these be adapted in order to meet the challenges resulting from digitalisation?

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14. How did the creation of the European Union and its possible demise affect business?

Papers with other foci, however, will be considered as well. We also invite other formats, such as workshops, debates, discussions and poster presentations. Those should be sent direct to the organizers.

Three formats are typical:

1. Single papers create sessions based on submitted stand-alone papers where the sessions are constructed by the program committee,
2. Session proposals of three to five papers suggested by the applicants,
3. Tracks of more than one session (up to three sessions – one afternoon)

Other formats might include, for example:

- **Workshops** - groups of scholars who want to use the opportunity of the congress to meet to discuss publications or specific themes, for example. The precondition for workshop formats is openness to new participants; all material to be discussed must have been published on the conference webpage three weeks before the congress.
- **Roundtable discussions** on the state of the field/select aspects
- **Debates** on new research agendas or new approaches in teaching “business history”
- **Discussions** on “business history” in the public arena, such as in films, museums, etc.

**Requirements for paper proposals**

The submission system consists of a template that specifically asks for

1. Author information
   - Affiliation
   - Short CV
   - Authored publications related to the paper proposal

2. An abstract of no more than six hundred words

3. Additional information important to the program committee
   - Clear statement of the research question (not more than 150 words)
   - Brief information on the theoretical/conceptual framework used
   - Major research areas to which the paper relates

4. Joint papers need a responsible applicant who will be at the conference if the proposal is accepted.

Please have this information ready to enter into the submission system via copy and paste.

**Requirements for panel/track proposals**

The criteria for single paper proposals also apply to session (and track) proposals. There is, however, a specific template for session/track proposals.

**Sessions** tend to work better in the Congress because they create a more focused theme and papers that clearly relate to each other. They can be ninety minutes long (usually three papers) or

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two-hours to accommodate more papers. A successful panel leaves significant time for the audience to raise questions, to comment and to generally discuss the panel’s theme. Good panels have a balance between cohesiveness and analytical breadth.

**Tracks** combine up to three **sessions** (a whole afternoon) in order to allow for a broader discussion of a specific approach, or large themes important to the field. In a track it is expected that the audience and the presenters, will engage in a wider discussion that continues throughout the track.

**Organizers of panels/tracks are suggested to make an open call for the panel/track.** This also draws attention to the congress and the potentially interesting debates that might take place.

Please note that paper, session/panel and track proposals must be submitted via the congress website. Paper proposals should include the title, abstracts (between 75 and 150 words in length), and the author's (the authors') CV (s). In addition, they should include a brief introduction to the overall topic addressed to the session. See the Conference Website for further details.

**The deadline for the proposals is January 15, 2017.**

Please use this link [http://ebha.org/public/C7](http://ebha.org/public/C7) to upload proposals.

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