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Abhandlungen

Dominique Barjot und Harm G. Schröter: Informationsfluss in Organisationen. Theorien zum Informationstransfer und historische Praxis

Abstract: The transfer of information is a key function of any organization. Whether reflected and designed or not, systems emerge for this transfer. Like the nervous system of the human body, an information system is vital to any organization. How these systems function is of great importance. Well functioning systems are linked to success while a malfunction may lead to decline or even disaster. Though the relevance of information systems was not questioned in principle, they used to play a minor role in the writing of history. This lack of research is one main reason for this introduction; the other is to provide a short overview over the development of theories of information systems.

JEL-Codes: D 02, D 23, D 80, H 89, N 00

Keywords: Transfer of information, systems, theory

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Nuria Puig: Brokering Trust: The Construction of Transnational Family Business Networks, 1980-2010

Abstract: Family capitalism became considerably empowered over the three decades prior to the great recession in 2008. This article argues that the construction of transnational family business networks through the coordinated action of individuals and institutions was crucial to the overall legitimization of family capitalism. The rise of a family business institutional infrastructure in the United States and its creative translation into the European context are first described and then analysed in the light of organizational communication theory. Building on the communication as constitutive of organizations view (CCO) and on Casson's studies on the economics of trust, the article shows that interpersonal and inter-organizational trust and communication played a key role in the institutionalization of family business on both sides of the Atlantic. Consultants and the other drivers of this fascinating process acted primarily as trust brokers, helping to reduce transaction and information costs and bridge the gap between business owners, external professionals, and society. Finally, the story of the family business movement confirms that elites can easily manage cultural differences to engage in transnational networking. However, structural differences between US and European networks suggest that national institutional settings strongly influence communication among interest groups and its organizational outcome.

JEL-Codes: D 64, F 60, N 80

Keywords: family business, transnational networks, organizational communication, institutionalization, internationalization

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Sven-Erik Grieg-Smith: Knowledge Transfer in Organizations: The Case of the Norwegian Army Defending Bergen 1940

Abstract: This paper examines communication in crisis during the German attack on Bergen on the 9th of April 1940 and aims to clarify the difficulties under which military commanders operate. By the very nature of their role, leading officers inevitably take responsibility for the deaths of their own soldiers as well as of enemies but very few people appreciate – still less understand – the intricacies and stress of combat. This is especially so if there is a tension between the actions which appear most prudent to military officers in the field and those considered diplomatically appropriate by senior political officials.

JEL-Codes: H 56, N 44, N 10, M 19

Keywords: Surprise attack, command and control, crisis management, conflicting perspectives

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Hideko Kono: Communication in Inter-firm Network: *Guest Engineers and Knowledge Transfer in the Japanese Automobile Industry after the Second World War*

Abstract: This study examines communication in a system of inter-firm networks and the dynamics of knowledge transfer within such networks. The guest engineer system that was widely adopted in the Japanese automotive industry following the Second World War is the focus of this study. Significant positive effects of common knowledge shared by the firms involved, a constructive role of individuals as conveyors of information, and increased productivity and human capital gains are found to result from inter-firm network communication in the context of the Japanese automotive industry.

JEL-Codes: J 24, M 50, N 85, O 12, O 34

Keywords: Inter-firm Network, Guest Engineers, Knowledge Transfer

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Jonas Scherner: Die Grenzen der Informationsbeschaffung, -transfer und -verarbeitung in der deutschen Wehr- und Kriegswirtschaftsverwaltung im Dritten Reich

Abstract: During World War II an increasing share of the industrial output of Germany and the Nazi-ruled European economies was converted for use in the German war effort. In order to steer this conversion, information gathering and processing were crucial. This paper examines the institutions and instruments of the German system of information gathering and processing and tries to identify its successes and failures. It will be shown that the origins of the system stemmed predominately from specific bottlenecks Germany faced during the pre-war period, which necessitated a more active role of the state given the aims of the Nazi regime. The ad-hoc character of some of the measures implemented in order to improve the information basis of the German economic administration produced a system which was ill-coordinated and incomplete. During the war, the information needs further increased and several reforms considerably improved the information basis of the state. Nevertheless, some fundamental problems stemming from the private-property based economic order in Germany and the specific industrial structure remained unresolved even after Speer had become armaments minister.

JEL-Codes: D 82, D 83, N 44

Keywords: War economy, information asymmetries, communication

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Heiko Braun und Christian Kleinschmidt: Internationale Marketingstrategien und Marketing-Informationssysteme der westdeutschen Pharmaindustrie in den 1950er bis 70er Jahren: Eine „Marketing-Informationsrevolution“?

Abstract: Assuming that a formerly unknown quantity and quality of market data triggered a revolution in marketing information, we explore international marketing strategies and the significance of marketing information systems in the context of the re-internationalization of the pharmaceutical enterprises Bayer and Schering after 1945. Both companies faced an information deluge, and in both cases, distinct approaches to a modern marketing information system can be observed since the mid-1960s.

JEL-Codes: D 48, M 31, N 84

Keywords: Marketinggeschichte, Unternehmensgeschichte, Marketinginformationssysteme, Pharmazeutische Industrie

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Harm G. Schröter: Communication Theory in Business History

Abstract: Several theories on communication are tested on trial to what extent they can provide additional insight in business history. All are focused on one known example, the relation between the dyestuff cartel and its Japanese competitors in the interwar period. Can theory extend the limits of our knowledge even in well known cases? While the classification of types of information transfer according to Chun Wei Choo provides only limited new insights, other theories provided interesting results. One is the creation of mutual trust, which helps to explain the – from an economic point of view – quite surprising longevity of the cartel. Another application provides reasons for the cartel's largest strategic failure. Thus, communication theory can but need not provide deeper insights into business history.

JEL-Codes: B 41, D 42, D 85, L 22, M 16

Keywords: Communication theory, transfer of information, dyestuff cartel

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After receiving my PhD in 1981 I have worked at several universities in Germany, Norway and the United States, and since 1998 at the University of Bergen in Norway. My project is to find out more about Europe's specific economic profile and character. Therefore I have explored and published on the relation between state and the economy, economic cooperation (cooperatives, cartels, cooperation between capital and labour, etc.), European multinational enterprise, technological innovation, (dis-) advantages of European small developed states, institutions and innovation, and on the transfer of economic values. For the European future it is of utmost importance to know if Europeans have something in common, which is different in the rest of the World, also in the economy. I served as the President of *European Business History Association* and on several editorial boards. Latest books: Schröter, Harm G. and Patrizia Battilani (ed.), *The cooperative business movement, 1950 to the present* (with), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012; Schröter, Harm G. and Clifton, Judith and Lanthier, Pierre (eds.) *The Economic and Social Regulation of Public Utilities: An International History*, Routledge, London, 2012; With Dominique Barjot, *Economic cooperation reconsidered*, *Revue Économique*, 2013, vol. 64, No. 6.

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Ralf Banken and Christian Marx: Knowledge Transfer in the Industrial Age: The Case of Gutehoffnungshütte, 1810-1945

Abstract: The question about how companies solved their existing information and knowledge problems is rarely examined for companies of the 19th and 20th century. Therefore the following contribution takes a closer look at the methods used by Gutehoffnungshütte in this period for obtaining the relevant information and how it ensured that the information would reach the particularly targeted employee. This case study of one of the most important pioneers of the German industrialization shows that the company's management used different methods (bureaucratisation, reports, meetings etc.) which developed only slowly in an evolutionary and implicit way because knowledge basically remained bound to certain persons until 1914. After the First World War, the company grew enormously under the leadership of the new chairman of the executive board Paul Reusch, who created a management-by-letter system that provided him with a lot of information and a monopoly on power until his dismissal during the Second World War.

JEL-Codes: D 23, D 83, M 10, N 83, N 84, O 31

Keywords: German Enterprise 1810-1945, Knowledge Transfer, German Industrialization, Management Structure, Iron and Steel Industry, Internal Organization

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„Deutschland AG“. Historische Annäherungen an den bundesdeutschen Kapitalismus. Essen 2013, pp. 247-273; Die Manager und McKinsey. Der Aufstieg externer Beratung und die Vermarktlichung des Unternehmens am Beispiel Glanzstoff, in: M. Reitmayer/Th. Schlemmer (Eds.): Die Anfänge der Gegenwart. Umbrüche in Westeuropa nach dem Boom. München 2014, pp. 65-77. His main research interests are in the fields of Corporate Networks, German Business History, and European Business and Economic History in the 19th and 20th Century.

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Takafumi Kurosawa: Breaking through the Double Blockade: Inter-Atlantic Wartime Communications at Roche

Abstract: This paper examines the roles of information and knowledge sharing, and of communication in businesses during the interwar period and during World War II (WWII). It focuses on F. Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd. (Roche), a Swiss pharmaceutical company. During WWII, the Axis Powers and the Allies imposed a double blockade on Switzerland and Roche's market was divided between the two belligerent camps. Roche coped by mobilizing a unique twin-structure, a provision introduced during the interwar period, by transforming the ownership structure in terms of both ownership and control. While this strategy enabled its expansion in the U.S. market and safeguarded the group against various political risks, it also destabilized the group's unity. As intensive as it may have been, telecommunication across the Atlantic was not sufficient for sharing crucial knowledge and checking the U.S. subsidiary's thirst for independence. To control the situation, the financial director of Roche's Basel headquarters travelled to the United States, breaking the double blockade. Eventually, the on-site, face-to-face communication and a long-distance telephone call contributed to the survival of the company as a unified organization.

JEL-Codes: N 40, N 44, N 80, N 84

Keywords: information, knowledge, communication, multinational enterprise, holding company, business history, political risk, WWII, neutrality, Switzerland

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Professor of Economic Policy at the Graduate School of Economics, Kyoto University, Japan. His dissertation analyzed the Swiss economy and the formation of the cross-border economic region in the 19th century. He translated the Final Report of the Bergier Commission into Japanese, combining his original research outcomes. His publications in English explore multinational enterprises and political risk, industrial clusters, the paper and pulp industry, and industrial policy. His work includes European as well as Japanese cases. Since 2012, he has been leading a large-scale international research project on the competitiveness of regions, with a focus on the history of industry. Since 2010, he has conducted joint research with Ben Wubs (Erasmus University Rotterdam) on "Political Risks and Organizational Structure of MNEs: A comparative study on Anglo-Dutch and Swiss companies".

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Harm G. Schröter: Transfer of Information within Organizations – First Results

Abstract: A first overview on the usefulness of systems of information transfer for business history is provided, taking into account the contributions of this volume as well as others. The confrontation of empirical information and theory was useful to a certain extent, while it showed little progress in a couple of other cases. Within such systems of information transfer, trust, author and cultural knowledge play a significant role, which helps explain management results. Their degree can explain success and failure, though not in a linear way. The human factor plays an overriding part only in

exceptional cases where an extremely strong personality represents the top of an organization, otherwise structural factors prevail. Since there is no taxonomy it is difficult though not impossible to evaluate the quality and usefulness of a specific system of information. There is some indication that organizations which are exposed to competition make better use of their systems than non-competitive organizations.

JEL-Codes: B 49, D 83, M 1, N 80

Keywords: Transfer of information, information systems, business history

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Diskussion

Georg Stöger and Reinhold Reith: Western European Recycling in a Long-term Perspective. Reconsidering Caesuras and Continuities

Abstract: Scholarship on the history of material flows stresses the fundamental changes in the recycling of materials between the nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth century and points to different caesuras during this period. Industrialization and urban sanitation constituted a major turning point for recycling followed by another connected to the advent of the mass consumer society. Seen in a long-term perspective, however, the picture seems more complex. There were significant changes, but there are also indications of evolving and persisting recycling systems. Mainly dealing with urban settings, the article argues that pre-industrial forms persisted within the field of "modern" recycling alongside the ruptures that can be detected for material flows and recycling systems since the end of the nineteenth century.

JEL-Codes: N 51, N 53, Q 53, Q 56

Keywords: Environmental history, resources, recycling, sustainability, material flows

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Forschungs- und Literaturberichte

Gerold Ambrosius und Christian Henrich Franke: Pfadabhängigkeiten internationaler Infrastrukturnetze

Abstract: Since the 19th century, the development of international networks of infrastructure has been characterized by a stronger path dependency than national networks. This article discusses the reasons and concludes that various economic and technical factors as well as political and organizational causes were responsible. The interdependencies between national and international standards had the greatest influence: standards within the international framework opened up corridors for national specifications. These specifications themselves complicated the consequent change of standards at the national level. Furthermore, the mutual influence and stabilization of economic and technical as of political and organizational arrangements were important. In the light of the general qualities of networks, potential mechanisms for self-stabilization will be discussed first. In a second step, historical examples from the railways, telecommunication and broadcasting will be explored. Finally, general hypotheses about the path dependency of international infrastructure networks will be proposed.

JEL-Codes: F 5, N 4, O 3

Keywords: Pfadabhängigkeit, Infrastrukturen, Integration, Standardisierung, Internationale Beziehungen, Path dependencies, Infrastructures, Standardization, Integration, International Relations

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