Increase in diversity: Nordic Dissertations 2014–2018

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This issue of the Scandinavian Economic History Review features a list of dissertations published in the Nordic countries in 2017 and 2018 (Appendix). As in our previous surveys (Ojala, Hemminki & Nevalainen, 2016 and 2018), we approached Nordic universities and business schools requesting them to provide full lists of dissertations completed in 2017 and 2018 addressing topics in economic and business history. This time our survey yielded altogether 46 dissertations. As in our previous surveys, the topic of the dissertation (not the department nor the discipline) was used to determine if it was eligible for inclusion to our survey. After compiling the list, we approached the authors requesting a summary of their dissertations. These summaries are included as an Appendix to this text. Unfortunately, we did not receive abstracts from all authors. The Scandinavian Economic History Review webpages provide direct links to all dissertations available on the Internet.

Table 1. Numbers of dissertations in economic and business history completed in the Nordic countries, 2014–2018.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Considering overall our previous and this latest survey, we can say that economic history research is doing well in Nordic countries: no less than 122 dissertations were produced in the period 2014–2018 (Table 1). There is some annual fluctuation in these numbers although overall the number of dissertations has ranged approximately between 20 and 30. Yet there are clear differences between the countries. Sweden is the powerhouse of Nordic economic history research: 57 per cent of dissertations in the period 2014–2018 were produced in Sweden, which produces some 13 to 15 dissertations per annum. Finland follows Sweden with a 27 per cent share, while Norway and Denmark produce roughly ten per cent each of all dissertations in economic and business history. Lund University is the most productive institution, producing some 22 per cent of all dissertations. The second most productive Swedish university is Uppsala (16 per cent), followed by two Finnish universities: Helsinki (11 per cent), and Jyväskylä (10 per cent).

English is the most widely used language in economic history dissertations in the Nordic countries: roughly 60 per cent of dissertations are written in English. However, there are some striking differences between the countries. While almost 90 per cent of the Danish dissertations are written in English, this share is in Sweden a slightly over 70 per cent and in
Norway it is 55 per cent. In Finland, however, the share of dissertations written in English is 30 per cent although this share is clearly on the increase in Finland.

If we look at the time periods the dissertations address there are, again, some differences between the countries. In the Finnish case the early modern era (here defined as roughly the time before the 1850s) is clearly prevalent, with a 42 per cent share. In other Nordic countries the bulk of the dissertations are concerned with the industrial era (here defined as lasting from the 1850s to the 1950s). There seems to be a slight trend towards longer time periods: in 2014 roughly one fourth of dissertations still dealt with time periods of 50 years or longer, while this share was 50 per cent in 2018. Moreover, the share of dissertations analysing periods of 100 years or longer has increased from nine per cent (2014) to 24 per cent (2018).

Table 2. Topics in Nordic dissertations (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public institutions (law, government, and economy)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business, organisations and industry</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare (standard of living, inequality, minorities, education)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth, cycles, industrialisation</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (demography, migration, housing)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade and transport</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology, investments</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary sources of income (agriculture, use of land)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crises (war, recession)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance, banking, credit</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (social, culture etc.)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Surveys in 2016, 2017 and 2018. Note: One dissertation can be classified into several categories; therefore the total number of cases is 332, whereas the total number of dissertations is 122.

Following our previous surveys and the categorization introduced by Whaples (1991, 2002) we further divided dissertations into 12 partly overlapping categories (Table 2). According to this categorization the dissertations most typically dealt with topics related to public institutions. These topics are especially popular in Norway and in Finland. Furthermore, business history is still an important topic in Nordic dissertations, although showing some annual fluctuation. Business history is especially topical in dissertations produced in Denmark, Norway and Finland. Welfare has been a fairly constantly important topic in recent years; this topic is especially important in Sweden and shows an increasing trend in Finland. Quite interestingly, growth studies as a whole show a clear declining trend in Nordic dissertations, while there is to some extent and increase in the category “others”, thus showing an increase in the diversity of topics in Nordic dissertations.

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1 Previously we used 13 categories. This time, however, we omitted the category ”Methodology, theory” as it overlaps in practice with all other categories.
References


Appendix

Nordic dissertations in economic history 2017–2018


This dissertation contains the first comprehensive dataset on private debt in Sweden in 1900 to 2013. It moreover shows that there is a long-term relationship running from inequality, via private debt, to the risk of financial crisis in Sweden.


The thesis demonstrates the rich and diverse histories of modern states in Africa over the long 20th Century by presenting novel data and analysis on taxation and development in four countries in francophone West Africa – Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Niger and Senegal. The evidence points to significant long-term growth of state capacity and development in the four countries, but also to their historical vulnerability and external dependence.


What characterised the merchants of the Danish Asiatic Company in China, which networks did they belong to and how did their affiliations influence the trade? Using Social Network Analysis, prosopography and microhistory, new light is shed on the people actually bridging the cultural distances, highlighting the importance of both formal, family and religious networks in the early modern global trade.


This thesis explores some of the causes of the mortality transition. The thesis considers the role of preventive actions, such as information provision, yet demonstrates that not all efforts were successful. The thesis also highlights that the effect of general economic development, via its effect on improved nutrition, was a factor in the mortality transition.


The dissertation analyses the role of loans and credit for Swedish freeholders 1770–1870. Special attention is paid to the importance of credit for investments in agriculture, the land market and during agricultural crises.


This dissertation undertakes an explorative historical analysis of problems associated with crowd phenomena in the U.S. financial markets between 1890 and 1940. While a study of crowd-related problems in the financial markets invariably involves examinations of panics and crises, the dissertation shows that crowds were not exclusively seen as crisis phenomena, but were considered by many financial writers to be of much broader significance to the organisation and functioning of markets.

Research on the Standard Employment Relationship, i.e. full-time permanent employment in a bilateral employment relationship, and non-standard employment relationships, is largely carried out by social scientists paying attention to changes in labor markets from the 1990s onwards. This thesis analyzes the changing content of the standard employment relationship as a social and legal norm in Norway in the period from 1947 to 2000. The thesis also discusses how standards for typical employment relationships were established, challenged, and changed.


The first part of this dissertation shows that from 1937 National Socialist Germany attempted to Aryanize, remove Jews, from its foreign trade relations in a structured effort headed by the Reichsstelle für den Außenhandel (RfA). Using Denmark as a case I reveal that race became a decisive criterion in order to trade with Germany, and by September 1942 the German diplomatic leadership in Copenhagen reported that ‘Jewish’ influences had been largely removed from Danish-German trade relations. Based on these findings we need to recognize that in the pre-war period Nazi racial doctrine was an integral part of foreign trade relations and could potentially cause economic losses for Jewish businesses, while governments at large had to respond to racial trade discrimination.


This dissertation presents an interdisciplinary study in economic history based on technology transfers from Finland to the Soviet Union cross the Cold War borders. The research is based on a vast array of new historical sources and combines the methodologies of economic, technological, environmental, and socio-cultural histories to explain the roles of natural resources (forests), technology transfers, innovations, and cross-border communications in the planned economy.

Thesis argues that the centralization of grocery retailing in Finland occurred well before 1938. It was primarily caused by the strong consumer co-ops, and the centralization also helped everyday life of consumers.


By analysing the role of governments, banks, and the League of Nations, this dissertation explores how politics and diplomacy intertwined in the process of making and maintaining international commodity cartels in the 1930s. It shows that sometimes firms were the least enthusiastic partners in creating cartels.


This dissertation uses new data and novel econometric methods to identify the causes of fluctuations in the British economy between 1750 and 1938. Modern drivers of the business cycle, such as shocks to regions, monetary policy, uncertainty and banking crises, were also important perturbations between the Industrial Revolution and the Second World War.


This dissertation advances the economic-historical focus on social movement formation. Empirically combining quantitative corpus analyses, meta-analysis of academic literature, and ethnographic field studies, the study demonstrates how a Brazilian history from below produces a vibrant narrative that enables participants of Brazil’s Landless Movement to take part in its continuity. By documenting that narrative enactment, the dissertation acknowledges the dynamics of a social movement historiography in the making.


The history of Finnish gambling from the 19th century to the 21st century can be formulated into three dispositifs: prohibition dispositif, common good dispositif, and
risk dispositif. The research offers new insights into the role of state-governed (gambling) monopolies for economic historians.


The role of the Swedish model in underpinning the structural changes of the 1950s and 1960s has been widely debated. The dissertation uses new data to re-evaluate the drivers of economic change during the period and shows that features such as the solidaristic wage policy and the mobility-oriented labor market policies played less of a role than previously thought.


The study shows the diverse influence of large-scale landowners as part of urban governance: they used power and also negotiated how power was used in the town. The manor estates were economically more a part of urban society than of the rural society in which they were located.


The dissertation examines highly successful company founders in Finland from 1870 to 1990. The thesis sheds new light on entrepreneurship and the development of the Finnish economy and Finnish society, and participates in the debate about entrepreneurship from the perspective of business history.


This thesis employs an international comparative perspective to empirically analyse the Czech energy transition between 1830 and 2010. It addresses the utilization of energy in shaping modern economic growth through structural and technological change and the implications of those changes for specialization and foreign trade. New historical data is collected and utilized to investigate the impact of changing institutional settings on energy and economic growth.


This dissertation examines how economic matters were depicted between 1770 and 1820 in two European kingdoms: Britain and Sweden. State newspapers, a form of stable media, are investigated to understand how economic matters were expressed
during an age of revolutions, a new approach to understanding the economy from an historical perspective. The results show how early modern economic matters can be viewed beyond a quantitative context with increasing abstractness, separation and emphasis as part of the state's attempts to inform and manage the loyalty of populations.


The study analyses the major decision-making processes of the Swedish civilian explosives industry during the period 1858–1950. The dissertation provides knowledge about how society’s regulation of different industries has evolved and how state and private actors have acted in the development of new regulations.


The thesis re-examines the role of the state in developing maritime technology and industrial capacity. It provides a new meso-level technopolitical interpretation of Finnish war reparations to USSR (1944–1952) through the critique of micro-business and macro-economic history.


Besides offering a new perspective on Finnish retail history, the dissertation contributes to the emerging field of management and organizational history. In particular, the study advances the theoretical understanding of institutions within the neo-institutionalist view of organization studies.


This dissertation studies Norway's economic transformation from independence from Denmark in 1814 and onwards, by analyzing the presence of favoritism in the newly founded government, the impact of suffrage expansions on public good provision, and by constructing a comparable series on the distribution of wealth for the 20th century. Taken together, it provides novel evidence on the development of Norwegian institutions and the development in inequality.

This study examines how the colonists in Jamaica tried to lead a fashionable lifestyle. By focusing on the white inhabitants of the island as consumers, rather than slave-owners or traders, this thesis contributes to research within the history of consumption.


The measurable impact of railroads on Russia’s pre-Revolution modernization including the peasantry’s transition to rationalism and individualism, transforming the landholding system, cannot be overestimated. I anticipate a novelty-laden disputation with Prof. Robert Fogel.


This thesis explores how wealthy actors in post-Soviet Ukraine seek to legitimize their extraordinary positions in society through elite giving and media strategies. The thesis develops an analytical tool inspired by a plurality of disciplines. The analysis sheds light on the agency of individual actors in relation to oligarchy as a social system, moreover, it contributes to the understanding of the role of elite giving in transition economies as well as in social change movements.


The dissertation discusses the effects of modernist planning of the location of urban restaurants in Stockholm. The main finding is that the effect was non-trivial and heterogeneous across different parts of the city.


This dissertation is a study of Swedish manufacturers of insulated winding wire and the market forces surrounding the industry between 1945 and 1980. It shows how a small family owned company with an entrepreneurial and patriarchal leadership style and the family’s tendency to re-invest profits became an important foundation for the company’s autonomy and expansion until its acquisition by the ASEA in 1973.


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This dissertation investigates the material circumstances that underpinned industrialization throughout the nineteenth century. Through a series of four research essays, it examines the changing role of natural resources, and specifically that of land, for economic development during the era of the first industrialization.


The dissertation combines elements from economic, social and environmental history and researches why and how an historically specific formation of social power, tar capitalism, expanded and took root in nineteenth-century northern Finland in the region known as Kainuu. The study uses the findings from historical research on the transformation in Kainuu’s sources of livelihood, social relations and conceptions of nature to reinterpret the theoretical discussions on the origins and development of capitalism and develops a research perspective called an environmental history of capitalism.


This study is the first analysis of the reasons, consequences and meanings of economic misfortune in 19th-century Finland. It gives a useful basis for further studies contemplating the prerequisites of 19th-century business life.


By studying power relations among masters and servants during the agrarian revolution in Sweden, this thesis shows that the servant position underwent a discursive feminization, and those aspects point to a situation where the servant position became feminized and wage labour became a new power base for men. This leads to the conclusion that servants were already regarded less as family members and more as part of modern labour relations during the agrarian revolution.


This thesis explores and presents conclusions on the background, motives, changes, and arguments of personal hygiene in the early 19th and 20th centuries in Sweden,
where solutions based on Finnish experiences as well as Anglo-Saxon and western European knowledge where applied. The contribution of this thesis is how economics can be affected by health as well as how new knowledge together with a strong belief can change a social norm and the behaviour of a whole nation.


This thesis investigates the history of the so-called ‘sleeping beauties’ of haute couture, that is, Parisian haute couture brands that, once world-renowned but long dormant, have been rediscovered and reintroduced as brands in the contemporary market. A sleeping beauty’s aim is to recover a cultural asset from a prestigious past in order to use it in the future. The dissertation contributes to the business history of fashion, providing new insights on business failure, as well as brand revival processes, including entrepreneurial profiles and strategic uses of the past in both production and storytelling.


This thesis investigates the inventive performance of immigrants in Sweden based on a special database which links inventors to the general population of the country from 1985 to 2007. It contributes to show that the inventive performance of immigrants is influenced by immigrants’ age at migration, region of origin, educational level, match between education and occupation and migration policy.