

## [Uses of the Past by Enterprises in Central-Eastern Europe](#)

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Conference

Date:

October 23, 2020 to October 24, 2020

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Ukraine

Subject Fields:

Business History / Studies, Eastern Europe History / Studies, European History / Studies, Economic History / Studies, Public History

Call for papers:

### **Uses of the Past by Enterprises in Central-Eastern Europe**

#### **II. Workshop on Business History in Central and Eastern Europe**

Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv, Ukraine

October 23-24, 2020

The Ukrainian Catholic University in cooperation with the European Business History Association invite scholars and Ph.D. students of any relevant discipline to submit paper proposals in a broad range of topics related to the uses of the past by firms in Central-Eastern Europe (CEE). In the context of this workshop, we wish to approach the past as a resource, which is used or can be used by business organizations for their purposes in the present and the future. We understand history as performative interpretation, a tool that helps actors make sense of the past and present and build towards the future. We focus on uses of the past in CEE; however, case studies on other regions are also welcome in case they deepen our understanding of “uses of the past” by CEE enterprises.

The above understanding of history appears nowadays in more and more, specific areas of the discipline, replacing a traditional interpretation of history as being synonymous with the past. Business organizations also tend to see it now as a symbolic resource available for a wide variety of creative uses such as branding, strategy, and identity creation. However, CEE presents a special case in this respect, since most of the enterprises in the region experienced a discontinuity due to the socialist era and the corresponding processes of nationalization. When the Communist regimes collapsed, new capitalist companies were established, many of them on the premises of former socialist enterprises. They faced the problem of how

to handle socialist heritage, which was economically and environmentally unsustainable, and often considered as an uncomfortable past.

Most of the new capitalists decided to distance themselves from the problematic past and start their history from scratch. Therefore, the past was either to be forgotten or wrapped up in nostalgia. Later, many entrepreneurs learned how to commodify the past and tried to use it to legitimize their organization. However, the past is still rarely seen in the region as a source for creating knowledge, based on which business decisions are made. Entrepreneurs and business schools find the practices of multinational companies, such as Apple, Tesla, or McDonald's, more relevant as models than the enterprises from their own region. However, this approach ignores the regionally specific business environment and the path dependence factor. The lack of knowledge on CEE business history can result in a lack of understanding of the context, thus, in bad managerial and political decisions. Moreover, it deprives the international community of business historians of learning in greater detail about the varieties of capitalism.

Our workshop aims to explore the potential of the past as a resource in a business environment characterized by historical discontinuities. The call is open to all topics that fit the general scope of the workshop. However, we suggest some themes that are of particular interest. Papers may address one or more of the following questions:

1. How do firms use history to preserve their core values in a changing environment?
2. What are the various ways of using the past as branding and marketing? How do firms sell the past? How do they (mis)use "fauxstalgia" and "newstalgia"? What is the "dark side" of the commodification of the past?
3. How do business organizations rationalize, use, and abuse their tangible and intangible heritage? How do businesses handle their uncomfortable past? How can they turn it from burden to resource?
4. How do companies use their corporate museums as a tool for history-making and place-making?
5. How can the history of enterprises be turned into a resource for business learning? What are the promises and limitations of historical approaches to strategic entrepreneurship research and theory?

Depending on the number of proposals, we may organize an additional poster

session. We plan to set up a meeting with the editors of the leading international journals on business and economic history. Besides, we plan a session on the development of international grant proposals relevant to the business history of CEE.

**To apply, please, send an abstract of 500 words presenting the subject, the conceptual framework, the analytical approach, and the controversial issue(s) to facilitate the discussion, along with a two-page CV to [echist@ucu.edu.ua](mailto:echist@ucu.edu.ua) by May 1, 2020.** Papers for presentation will be selected following a peer-review procedure.

The format of the workshop is designed to facilitate a comprehensive discussion of selected topics. Participants will be invited to send an extended abstract (up to 1,000 words) or a paper (not exceeding 6,000 words). We will distribute these texts among the workshop participants prior to the workshop.

We cannot guarantee to cover the travel expenses and accommodation for the participants. However, we will apply to some funding agencies and try to provide financial support for those who cannot obtain funding from their institutions.

Please feel free to contact the organizers via [echist@ucu.edu.ua](mailto:echist@ucu.edu.ua) if you have any further questions.

**Organizers:** Volodymyr Kulikov (UCU), Vladyslava Moskalets (UCU), Alfred Reckendrees (EBHA, Copenhagen Business School)

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