

BOOK REVIEWS

Labour-Intensive Industrialization in Global History. Ed. by Gareth Austin and Kaoru Sugihara. [Routledge explorations in economic history, Vol. 59.] Routledge, London [etc.] 2013. xiii, 310 pp. \$15.00; £80.00. doi:10.1017/S0020859015000218

When Phyllis Deane and David Landes published their path-breaking and enormously influential books on the Industrial Revolution¹ readers could have assumed that writing the history of this period of Western modernity is – and always will be – a challenging task but not necessarily one demanding a great deal of theoretical reflection. The features of this phenomenon seemed to be well-defined, and “where” and “why” questions at that time always sounded somewhat artificial: who really doubted that the industrial take-off and its continuation could only have happened in Britain, western Europe, and North America because all the factors relevant for their explanation (factor endowment, human capital, institutions, technological and scientific development, etc.) were simply there in this part of the world and missing anywhere else.

Theoretical naivety, however, had to be abandoned by the 1980s when it increasingly became clear that the societal and economic impact of the so-called Industrial Revolution often was not so revolutionary at all – at least with respect to rather modest growth rates in Western societies up until the first half of the nineteenth century. Thus, one had to rethink former assumptions concerning the very essence of industrialization, and this call for more terminological and theoretical efforts was further increased by the impact of arguments brought forward by global historians. In this context Kenneth Pomeranz’s famous contribution to the debate² was a new turning-point because it argued that Britain’s (and Europe’s) take-off in principle could also have happened in parts of China. Pomeranz claimed that Europe’s industrialization (and later world dominance) depended on rather contingent conditions and factors (coal and colonies!) which were simply missing in China. Thus, according to Pomeranz, the rise of the West had not so much to do with long-existing and robust secular trends and processes culminating in Britain’s take-off but much more with lucky circumstances. Thus, all those who found at least parts of Pomeranz’s argument plausible or challenging had to rethink conventional causal accounts of the Industrial Revolution and had to travel the often laborious path of a comparative history which above all takes seriously developments in the non-Western world.

Pomeranz’s move was not the end of the theoretical debate, however, since he never seriously questioned whether the way that Europe (and North America) industrialized was the only one available. Global economic historians and historians of consumer culture increasingly began to ask whether the intensive use of machines, technology, and thus capital

1. Phyllis Deane, *The First Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, 1979); David Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present* (London, 1969).

2. Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, NJ [etc.], 2000).

in Europe's Industrial Revolution would have been practicable at all in other parts of the world, whether economic growth in the non-Western world (and growth there was indeed) did not follow a different logic, a labour-intensive one for example. To put it differently: the implicit and ever more explicit question raised was, whether historians who always use the European industrialization path as the one and only ideal type might in fact misrepresent developments in other parts of the world, with tremendous implications even nowadays if one thinks about current approaches in the field of so-called developmental policies. What if there are plural paths towards industrialization, regional-specific roads? If this is so, then many of the theoretical assumptions accompanying conventional thinking about preconditions of growth and industrialization have to be changed or at least modified.

This is the starting point of Gareth Austin's and Kaoru Sugihara's well-organized and important edited volume, *Labour-Intensive Industrialization in Global History*, in which leading historians in the debate just sketched have contributed either highly interesting theoretical papers or instructive case studies. In their introductory essay, the two editors give a detailed and concise account of the contours, turning points, and new developments of the debate on industrialization, and correctly emphasize that the idea of a non-Western "labour-intensive" path was particularly created by scholars of east Asian history, not the least by Kaoru Sugihara himself.

Three essays contribute to the first and theoretical part of the volume. A paper by Sugihara screens the history of economic thinking (particularly developmental economics), and claims that many of the outstanding figures of this discipline such as Nobel laureate Arthur Lewis simply overlooked patterns of labour-intensive industrialization. Trained to see the Western model of industrialization as the standard path, these economists didn't realize that growth in Asia was based on completely different conditions and functional equivalents to Western institutions. It is not that everything was different in east Asia. As Sugihara makes clear, colonies such as Korea and Taiwan might have been as important for Japanese industrialization as was North America for industrialization in Britain. But as a whole the (successful) industrialization of Japan (and then other parts of Asia) was based rather on cheap labour, not so much on capital.

Jan de Vries's essay beautifully connects with Sugihara's arguments by also giving an account of the development of economic thinking and the writing of economic history in the twentieth century. But whereas Sugihara very much describes the empirical blind spots of economic theories, De Vries gives a theoretical explanation of their deficits, and argues that developmental models all too often have neglected, or at least under-emphasized, the role of (internal) markets in the process of growth, something which simply could have emerged with changes within the (agrarian) household economy. This is the point where his own and very prominent approach of the so-called "industrious revolution" comes in: according to De Vries, it was indeed the change of work and consumption patterns in the west European family in the early modern period which caused the enlargement and diversification of markets long before the impact of the Industrial Revolution could be felt, and which led to market conditions that turned out to be crucial for the continuation of this revolution. De Vries's essay concludes by pleading for broader comparisons in order to find out whether similar developments to the (European) industrious revolution could also be found in Asia, and whether and how all this was connected to Asia's labour-intensive path of industrialization.

Osamu Saito's essay on "Proto-Industrialization and Labour-Intensive Industrialization" is the last one in the theoretical part of the book. He forcefully argues that it might be the right

time to have a fresh look on the texts written under the heading “proto-industrialization” some decades ago. Although it is clear that proto-industrialization must not be regarded as a kind of early stage in the process of industrialization, it might be worthwhile to ask – so Saito argues – whether it was at least important insofar as in these early proto-industrial regions disciplinary mechanisms were in place and skills were formed which could be used successfully by industrial entrepreneurs in later periods.

Seven case studies (Tirthankar Roy on colonial India; Kenneth Pomeranz on the Yangzi delta in China’s late imperial period; Masayuki Tanimoto on Japan in the twentieth century; Pierre van der Eng on Indonesia between 1930 and 1975; Gareth Austin on West Africa; Colin M. Lewis on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Latin America; and Michel Hau/Nicolas Stoskopf on nineteenth-century Alsace) explore how the concept of “labour-intensive industrialization” makes sense with respect to the regions in question. All the essays are well-written and interesting in themselves and some raise really promising new questions, as when, for example, Tanimoto asks whether the concept of “labour-intensive industrialization” could be similarly successfully used in rural *and* urban regions, or when Austin reflects on the conditions in Africa where neither capital nor labour were plentiful, but land was.

Gareth Austin concludes the volume with a remarkably rich chapter, not only summing up the contours of the recent world-historical or global debate on industrialization and by relating Pomeranz’s contingency arguments to the different narrative offered by Sugihara in his publications on “labour-intensive industrialization”, but also by discussing in a fresh way the old and classical statements by Alexander Gerschenkron concerning the chances (and problems) of late industrializers. Austin also gives a very nuanced and balanced overview of the results of this volume by pointing out that “labour-intensive industrialization” is a useful terminological (or even theoretical) tool but one that certainly does not fit every region of the non-Western world. And, last but not least, he even asks why it is the case that the existence of a plurality of paths towards industrialization has come to an end insofar as all economies, once industrialized, at some point of their history choose the capital-intensive option and leave the labour-intensive one behind. It is not that such a question cannot be answered. But, as Austin makes clear, so far it has not been explained in a convincing way, so readers will have to wait for the publication of more volumes – which hopefully will have the same high quality as the one under review here.

Wolfgang Knöbl

Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung
Mittelweg 36, 20148 Hamburg, Germany
E-mail: wk@his-online.de

BROWN, KENDALL W. *A History of Mining in Latin America. From the Colonial Era to the Present.* [Diálogos.] University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque 2012. xix, 257 pp. Ill. Maps. \$34.95. doi:10.1017/S002085901500022X

Kendall Brown is a recognized specialist in colonial Peruvian history, particularly in mercury mining (centred around the town of Huancavelica). His book, *A History of Mining in Latin America*, is intended as a “general survey of Latin American mining”,