

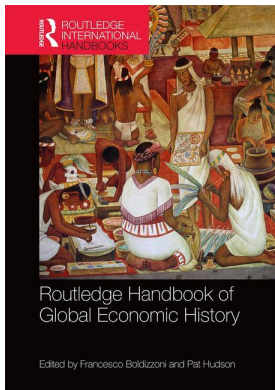
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## 10

# SPANISH ECONOMIC HISTORY

## Lights and shadows in a process of convergence

*Iñaki Iriarte-Goñi*<sup>1</sup>

The few instances of research that have analysed the evolution of economic history as a discipline in Spain (Vázquez de Prada 1990; Fernández Clemente 1995a and 1995b) coincide in affirming that it was a late developer compared to other countries. Indeed, its consolidation tends to be dated in practical terms to the 1970s; in other words, way behind the leading countries in the production of economic history, such as the United Kingdom or the United States. If we take our indicator to be the appearance of specialist journals on the subject, the delay is more than evident: while the *Economic History Review* was first published in 1927, and the *Journal of Economic History* appeared in 1941, the *Revista de Historia Económica* did not see the light in Spain until 1983. In spite of this, the study of economic history has forged ahead in this country over the past decades, and has significantly reduced the gap as regards other western countries. Today, the area of knowledge referred to as ‘economic history and institutions’ is taught at almost all the country’s public and private universities; the Spanish Association of Economic History has 445 members, and when this figure is compared to the data available for other countries, it puts Spain in eighth place in terms of the number of economic historians, or in twelfth place in terms of their number per million inhabitants (Baten and Muschallik 2011). Numerous domestic conferences and workshops dedicated to different facets of the subject (including its teaching) are held each year, along with the issue of many specialist publications; besides the aforementioned *Revista de Historia Económica – Journal of Iberian and Latin American Economic History* (RHE–JILAEH), there are a further three journals specializing in the subject, which in order of appearance are the following: *Historia Agraria* (HA, which appeared in 1991), *Revista de Historia Industrial* (RHI, appearing in 1992) and *Investigaciones de Historia Económica – Economic History Research* (IHE–EHR, first published in 2005). Beyond our frontiers, the publications by Spanish scholars in foreign journals on the subject, including the most prestigious ones, have increased significantly in recent times, as has attendance at international congresses. Spain (together with Portugal) was the country with the highest residual propensity to take part in the editions of the World Economic History Congress (WEHC) held in 2002 and 2009.<sup>2</sup> Although no data have been analysed on the matter, the impression gained from the 2012 WEHC held in South Africa is that the presence of Spanish researchers is continuing to grow, and the trend is likely to be confirmed in the 2015 congress to be held in Japan. One may conclude that the evolution of the study of economic history in Spain has certain similarities with the country’s own relative

level of development, in the sense that there has been a process of convergence with more advanced countries and, while admittedly not catching up with them, it has significantly narrowed the gap existing at our point of departure. It would be a mistake, nonetheless, to view this convergence process solely as a success story. The increase in research in the discipline, in the number of its dedicated publications and its growing internationalization all point to an improvement, but it is worth delving further into the matter in order to understand the keys that may explain this trend, while also seeking to appraise the problems that have accompanied it. These are this chapter's main aims, in which the discipline's evolution in Spain is analysed, contextualizing it within different historical periods and seeking to shed light on the main lines characterizing it. This is not a traditional historiographical analysis that provides a review of the leading authors and their main works, but instead a historical and thematic analysis of the discipline's trajectory more as an economic–social and intellectual phenomenon than as the mere sum of its individual works.

Based on these considerations, the chapter is organized as follows: section two traces the reasons for the delay in the consolidation of the discipline of economic history in Spain, as well as the causes that may explain its rapid development as of the 1970s, seeking to discover whether any advantage has been gained from the original state of backwardness. Section three covers the main research streams followed in recent decades, analysing them from a perspective that we might describe as group-based. Section four puts forward a number of ideas regarding the main traditional debates involving Spanish economic historians, exploring the extent to which they may be interpreted in terms of path dependency. This is followed by section five, which analyses the internationalization process in which Spanish economic history is currently immersed and its impact upon topics and methods. Section six provides a number of basic conclusions.

### **Advantages of backwardness?**

The temporal evolution observed in the development of economic history in Spain prompts three questions. First, why did it take the discipline so long to find its feet compared to other countries? Second, what are the reasons behind its rapid development basically from the 1970s onwards? Finally, and in relation to the two preceding questions, should we apply the concept of 'advantages of backwardness' that Gerschenkron (1962) proposed for economic development in general to the interpretation of the discipline's trajectory in Spain?

The delay in the study of economic history in Spain when compared to other countries, and especially the UK, may be linked to the country's economic and social development. The slow and irregular process of modernization that Spain underwent during the nineteenth century blocked the emergence of a suitable institutional and intellectual climate for the advancement of science in general, and in particular for that involving such disciplines as history or economics. Indeed, the works that address the development of history as science (Ruiz Torres 2002), economics (Fuentes Quintana 2003) or statistics (Merediz 2004) highlight the problems these subjects faced for their consolidation. Although the situation began to improve in the first third of the twentieth century, the Spanish Civil War (1936–39) and the policy of autarchy pursued during the early years of Franco's dictatorship, and which lasted through to the 1950s, continued to hinder any scientific development on a scale comparable to other countries (Otero Carvajal 2001). In spite of this pessimistic outlook, some individual researches were able to shine out. The work of Rafael Altamira at the end of the nineteenth century on the historical evolution of property rights in land, the economic analysis in historical perspective of Flores de Lemus at the beginning of the twentieth century

or, in the 1940s, the work of Ramón Carande on the Spanish sixteenth century analysing the problems of Charles V and his bankers, are good examples of how some intellectual creativity can flourish even in unfavourable social contexts.

It was in the 1950s that the intellectual atmosphere began to change, coinciding with a timid relaxation of the Franco regime. The founding of a number of new universities, a rise in the number of students in higher education (albeit still a very small minority of young people) and, in general, the country's own modernization led to the appearance of young opportunities for change. In the specific case of economic history, certain outward-looking professors began to use and disseminate the methodologies propounded by the *Annales* School (especially that of Braudel) and by other fellow French historians such as Labrousse and Vilar. Two major exponents of these currents were Jaume Vicens Vives and Felipe Ruiz Martín, whose merits lay not only in their works on economic history, but also in their ability to attract a school of followers.<sup>3</sup> The appearance of new faculties of economic sciences that taught subjects in economic history helped to mainstream the teaching and instruction of students interested in the subject. Although it did not specialize in economic history, the journal *Moneda y Crédito* was a major vehicle for the disclosure of research (Pérez Moreda 1975). Overall, the 1960s witnessed the formation of what could be considered Spain's first generation of economic historians in the current sense of the term.<sup>4</sup> The majority took part in the '*Primer coloquio de historia económica de España*' [Spain's first symposium on economic history], whose proceedings were published in the early 1970s (Nadal and Tortella 1974). In that same decade, several of them also published seminal works that, as we shall see, became veritable reference works.

The growth process recorded from then on should be set within a triple context: the reintroduction of democracy following Franco's death in 1975; administrative devolution through the creation of regional governments in the country's seventeen autonomous regions; and Spain's membership of the European Union. These three major milestones entailed economic, social, cultural and institutional changes without which one could not explain the development in the country of many scientific disciplines, including economic history. Yet within this general framework, the reason that best explains the growth in the number of economic historians in Spain is the consolidation of economic history as a compulsory subject in economics and business courses, and the persistence of that compulsory nature (albeit somewhat tempered) in sundry curricula from the 1970s through to the present day.<sup>5</sup> In response to this compulsory nature, the growth in the number of lecturers in economic history was linked to the sharp increase in courses in higher education.<sup>6</sup> This increase has been accompanied by an allocation of funding to higher education by both the central and regional governments, which amongst other things led to the creation of nineteen new universities between the end of the 1980s and 2000. All of these, as well as those that already existed, taught courses in economics and business. At the same time, the central and regional governments, as well as certain public institutions, have played a significant role in funding research, both through bursaries for the training of young researchers, and through the mainstreaming and regularization of projects in aid of research.

A more detailed analysis is required to discover whether the amount of the funding provided for science in general or for economic history in particular has been appropriate at each specific moment in time, and whether the funds have been managed in a more or less efficient manner. Yet with the benefit of hindsight it is difficult to deny that since the end of the 1970s, and at least until the onset of the current recession, public funding has been essential in the increased interest in Spain's economic history. The discipline's development is in some way reminiscent of Gerschenkron's view on the role the state may play in development

processes in cases of backwardness. Within this context, it is also pertinent to seek similarities with the advantages that this very backwardness has provided for Spain's economic historians. Through research sojourns largely financed with public funds, they have been able to access the working methods and innovative techniques applied at foreign universities with much more experience in research. This may have reduced the costs of incorporating new methodologies, saved time and resources in their selection and, in short, helped relatively quickly to narrow the gap in the study of economic history between Spain and other countries.

### Groups, networks and topics

The glut in research on economic history in Spain complicates the search for certain common denominators of development. Initially, the thematic focus of the research may be considered closely related to the creation of schools instigated by one or more 'masters', as pioneers in the analysis of certain topics. In the case of Spanish economic history, however, the rapid increase in output has largely outgrown this structure. Although especially in the 1970s and early 1980s some scholars opened up pathways that were subsequently followed by their disciples, the research has developed through groups rather than in schools, with the former not necessarily having a clear hierarchical structure of masters and disciples. Moreover, these are increasingly more open groups whose members tend to interrelate ever more closely with their counterparts in other groups, creating a complex networking structure. Within this context, it may be affirmed that the main research groups and networks in Spain have been linked to one or other of the discipline's scientific journals, which have acted not only as channels for the disclosure of the research, but also as vehicles for informing the research itself. We are therefore going to use the three oldest specialized journals (RHE–JILAEH, HA and RHI) as guides for listing the main research streams. This approach has the benefit of introducing some order into the narrative, but it is worth noting that this also poses some problems. The main one is that it is centred on works addressing the modern age, which are in a majority throughout the discipline.<sup>7</sup> This option leaves out most of the works studying the Middle Ages and especially the early modern period, which are of interest but we have insufficient space to cover them in this work.<sup>8</sup>

The groups and networks related to RHE–JILAEH in the early days were very closely linked to Gabriel Tortella (1973), author of *Los orígenes del capitalismo en España*, which studied the issues surrounding the implementation of a capitalist economy in the country, analysing mainly the role of the banking sector and the railways. Tortella is just about the only member of the first generation of Spanish economic historians who completed his education in the USA and who, probably influenced by that, very soon became the foremost exponent in Spain of what was termed New Economic History (NEH).<sup>9</sup> As regards the groups and networks associated with the journal RHI, the initial influence undoubtedly fell upon Jordi Nadal, who had already collaborated with Vicens Vives back in the 1950s, and who in the 1970s published his seminal work *El fracaso de la revolución industrial en España* (Nadal 1975) which set out to explain the reasons that, in his opinion, impeded greater industrial development in the country throughout the nineteenth century. Taking a longer-term view, and introducing more social elements, the work by Fernández de Pinedo (1974) was also a major referent in studies on industrialization, focusing in this case on the Basque Country.

For their part, the research groups linked to HA appeared somewhat later and had a more diverse origin, on the one hand attracting the disciples of a pioneer in studies on agrarian history, Gonzalo Anes (1970), and, on the other, scholars close to Vicens Vives, such as Josep Fontana and Ramón Garrabou, as well as certain disciples of Felipe Ruiz, such as Ángel García

Sanz. Some of the groups that were formed against this background were also influenced by historical materialism, although, with the exception of Josep Fontana, it is difficult to find openly Marxist approaches.

In the case of these three groups, they all became consolidated from the mid-1980s, with the appearance of a series of reference works; all with a much more detailed quantitative discourse than that adopted by the first generation, and which would set the tone for future research. In some aspects the stream related to the NEH emulated for Spain some of the classic works of the Economic History of the United States. The clearest example is the work about the role of railroads in Spanish economic growth (Gómez Mendoza 1982), clearly inspired by Fogel's approach. The work of Prados de la Escosura (1988) on the loss of the Spanish Empire at the beginning of the nineteenth century and the development of the Spanish economy until the 1930s, followed the NHE pattern with some provocative proposals and the use of counterfactuals trying to prove them. The reconstruction of some figures of GDP and the analysis of Spanish international trade was essential in this view. Also following neoclassical theory, other works reconstructed the monetary aggregates and the problems of monetary policy at the beginning of the twentieth century (Martín Aceña 1985) or public finance and its relation to economic performance in historical perspective (Comín 1988). In general terms, the concept of the backwardness of Spain in the context of the development of capitalism was the overriding idea of these works.

Networks focusing upon industrial growth in Spain also took important steps in the 1980s. One of the most important was the estimate of the Spanish Industrial Production Index (IPIES) for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Carreras 1988), constructed with a standard international methodology that allows comparisons with other countries. Figures of the IPIES reinforce the idea of *fracaso* (failure), coined by Nadal for the nineteenth century, and also the convergence process for the twentieth century, except for the period of the civil war and the autarchy (1936–50). A first general view of the outcomes of the different periods of the twentieth century was outlined in Nadal et al. (1987). From then on, many studies of industrialization appeared, focusing upon different industrial sectors including those that were not leading sectors (Nadal and Catalán 1994), or analysing regional industrial growth experiences (Nadal and Carreras 1990).<sup>10</sup>

Finally, networks oriented to the study of the agricultural sector also achieved important results in several ways. In the mid-1980s a big volume representing the state of the art in modern Spanish agrarian history (from 1800 to 1960) was published by Garrabou and others (1985 and 1986).<sup>11</sup> The contributions included not only aspects related to agrarian production, but also important questions referring to institutions, for example the establishment of a different set of property rights from the beginning of the nineteenth century. The importance of technology and also of long-term agrarian policy was stressed in some works. The interest in those topics led to a spread of regional and local research combining social with economic aspects of the rural world. If, in general, works coming from NHE or from industrial history grew apart from advances in social history, agrarian history was the field where interest in social development associated – or not – with economic performance was maintained.

In sum, during the 1980s the way for further advances in Spanish economic history was solidly paved. The 1989 edition of *Estadísticas Históricas de la España Contemporánea*, compiling the series produced by the leading specialists in each sector, constituted a major milestone in the consolidation of the quantitative approach to Spanish economic history (Carreras 1989; Carreras and Tafunell 2005) but was accompanied also by qualitative analysis of the main economic changes in the country.

## The path dependence of the traditional debates

Nevertheless, from then on controversies over numbers and also over their interpretation were quite common. If we analyse the main traditional debates related to content and interpretations, it needs to be stated that almost all of them appeared in the 1990s or just after 2000 and also all of them focused on the period falling between the middle of the nineteenth century and 1936 (the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War); in other words, on the period that witnessed the formation and consolidation of a capitalist economy in Spain. By contrast, a high level of consensus in interpretations pertained to the period of outright divergence that began with the civil war and early years of Francoism and lasted through to the 1950s, and the stage of relative convergence that began its consolidation from the 1960s onwards.<sup>12</sup>

The debates over the 1850–1936 period were highly influenced by hypotheses already formulated in certain pioneering works from the 1970s. The view of Spain as a backward country that did not manage to emulate the processes of growth of the first-comers during the nineteenth century has informed a very considerable part of the research. Although there has been agreement over the fact that Spain grew at a slower rate than the rest of the western world, most of the discussions have focused on the specific growth rates determining the degree of backwardness and on the causes for it. Regarding the former aspect, the bulk of the controversy has been informed mainly by technical aspects of the metrics used. The main disagreements flared up in the early 1990s between the industrial growth calculated respectively by Carreras and by Prados de la Escosura (see, Nadal and Sudria 1993). After that the reconstruction of Prados de la Escosura of the GDP series for the period 1850–2000 (Prados de la Escosura 2004) became almost hegemonic in the measurement of Spanish economic performance in the long run. The inclusion of this work in the Maddison Project had probably much to do with its success. Nevertheless, in 2009 Maluquer (2009a) provided different estimates of the GDP adjusting it to the new European accounting system. A technical discussion took place in that year between the two authors (Prados de la Escosura 2009; Maluquer 2009b), but the measurement problem remained open.

Insofar as the causes of backwardness are concerned, these have been posed usually in terms of disagreements about the effects of some economic actors or some economic policies. For instance, the role of liberalization policy in the mining industry in 1868 and the burst of mineral exports that followed it until the First World War have been interpreted as indicative of a quasi-colonial exporter economy or rather as a symbol of modernization and integration in the international markets. In similar terms, the construction of railroads in the middle of the nineteenth century with engines and material bought in foreign countries has been seen negatively as an example of policy against the national industrial interest or favourably as an example of steps forward for the integration of the domestic market.<sup>13</sup> But one of the most controversial questions has been the tariff policy application and its effects on trade and growth at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.

This debate started with some maximalist ideas about an extreme, comprehensive and indiscriminate protection of the domestic market oriented towards the interests of the industrial and agrarian lobbies. Although in this approach the measurement of the tariffs was quite rough, the trade policy was signalled clearly as a cause of Spanish backwardness.<sup>14</sup> After that, a revision of those approaches was made with better data, a refinement of techniques and the addition of more complex theoretical methods. The problem was inserted in the context of the external restrictions and the actual possibilities of the Spanish economy. In the new view, tariffs were applied in a selective manner, depending on the advantages of the different economic sectors.<sup>15</sup> Some authors, however, were unconvinced by the new measurements and

maintained the old position. The discussion became a very technical one of little interest beyond highly specialized researchers.<sup>16</sup> From all those perspectives, it seems reasonable to refer to a path dependency in the discipline's development that has been heavily influenced by the very concept of backwardness and by the difficulties encountered in seeking to emulate a successful development process.

Against this background, one approach that explicitly challenged this view was that of certain agrarian historians (Pujol et al. 2001). Faced with the recurring notion that agrarian backwardness was responsible for holding the rest of the economy back, their approach put the very concept of backwardness on hold and championed a more complex understanding of the development process. The aim was to consider a multifaceted approach (from environmental to productive, including technological change in its broadest sense and institutional analysis) that would reveal other dimensions of the process, over and above its correspondence, or not, with an ideal model of agrarian development. Although the book focused on agriculture, in essence it was a wake-up call regarding the *modus operandi* of the mainstream studying the country's economic history, and in that sense it was a source of controversy for some time.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, as noted by Naredo (2003), the argument of the controversy did not explore the heart of the matter. Most of the scholars who entered the fray over the book made interesting criticisms, although they once again focused on the extent to which it was right or wrong to consider institutional or geographical factors as the cause of backwardness in the countryside. The focal point, that was supposedly the discussion over the very concept of backwardness and the possibilities it provided for opening up alternative paths and for a renewed vision of the specifics of the Spanish economic path, was omitted from the debate and, to a certain extent, buried.

In sum, the general interpretations of this backwardness, seen as the series of problems encountered in consolidating capitalism in Spain in order to mirror the path followed in development by the most advanced countries, seems to have prevailed almost until recent times, in a process of path dependency that is not easy to avoid. The added problem is that the exponents of differing positions in the major debates were not capable of finding sufficiently sound arguments to sway their opponents, finally becoming bogged down in technical matters, without rekindling a new discourse.

### **Spanish economic history on the global stage**

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, Spanish economic history has been immersed in a clear process of internationalization that has had an impact upon it at several levels and changed almost in part the outlook aforementioned. On the one hand, there has been a considerable increase in the tendency to concentrate the dissemination of research through papers designed for publication in high-impact, indexed journals. The incentives introduced through the regulations of the central and regional governments for measuring output and winning projects and promotions have clearly marshalled researchers in that direction, which had already been marked out by the English-speaking world. In the Spanish case, this trend has been accepted in an almost uncritical manner, in detriment to other forms of dissemination, such as in monographs, which are increasingly becoming less relevant in the discipline.<sup>18</sup> Within this setting, Spanish journals have shown a clear tendency to align with 'quality' publishing systems, and are now being included in international databases. Their impact factors are still as yet low, and an analysis is required to discover whether this is due to the brevity of the time they have been included in the rankings, or whether it is because the papers published have not managed to attract the interest of other international researchers,



which may be because a large number of the papers are not published in English. Nonetheless, the indexing of Spanish journals is attracting an ever greater number of foreign authors (especially from Latin America), who publish research on their own countries.

Internationalization has also had other components. On the one hand, the past decade has seen sharp growth in the number of papers that Spanish economic historians have published in indexed journals abroad. When we compare the periods 2002–7 and 2008–14 with a view to obtaining a yardstick for this evolution (Figure 10.1), we may affirm that the total number of such papers has increased more than twofold. Furthermore, the process reveals another important aspect: the Spanish authors that publish in foreign journals are increasingly focusing on geographical areas other than Spain. Overall, in the second period considered, the papers devoted to Europe, other countries in Latin America or to other territories (including a few global studies) have accounted for 40 per cent of the total.

In this new scenario one question can be asked. Has this internationalization process led to changes in methods and topics followed by Spanish researchers? Table 10.1 includes the papers published by Spanish economic historians in the four main Spanish economic history journals and in foreign journals related to economic history, both grouped by topics. Although data are not conclusive, these figures can be used as a guide to say something about recent changes.

Regarding topics in Spanish journals, the agricultural sector continues to be a priority topic and account for more than a third of all publications. One reason is undoubtedly the importance, until only fairly recently, of the sector itself within the Spanish economy as a whole. Industry in its broadest sense (here including mining and infrastructures) also attracts constant attention over this period. In third place, the studies on businesses and firms have generated an interest that is clearly in the ascendant. The possibilities of resorting to case studies and also humanizing decision-making processes through the analysis of individual entrepreneurs seem to attract an ever increasing number of scholars. Elsewhere, the other two topics that are also revealing a growing dynamism are those referring to the public sector and the trend in standards of living. Finally, certain topics, such as those related to banking and finance and trade, have remained fairly stable over time. Others, such as the history of economic thought or demography have recorded a sharp drop-off in Spanish journals on

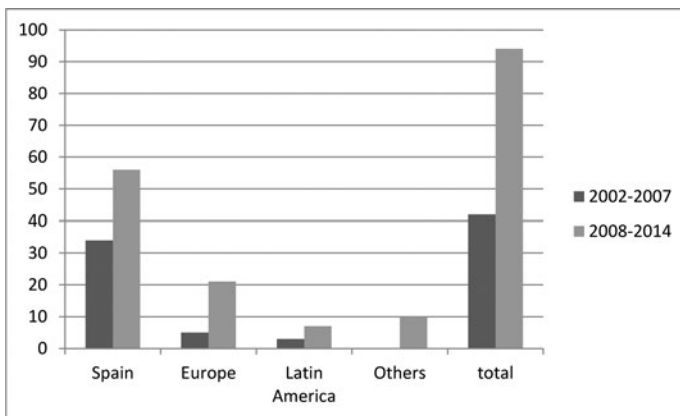


Figure 10.1 Papers by Spanish economic historians published in foreign indexed journals, sorted by area of study.

Source: EconLit and Spanish Economic History Association. Compiled by author.

Table 10.1 Topics in papers written by Spanish economic historians

	<i>Spanish</i>	<i>Foreign</i>	<i>Int Index</i>
Agricultural sector	36.3	17.0	0.15
Industry	18.9	12.1	0.20
Business and firms	11.9	25.5	0.67
Banking and finances	7.7	8.5	0.34
Public sector	7.0	9.9	0.44
Standards of living	4.0	9.2	0.72
Trade	5.5	3.5	0.20
Services	1.8	0	0
History of Economic Thought	2.4	0.7	0.09
Growth	1.8	11.3	2.00
Demography	1.8	2.1	0.38
Methods (and sources)	1.1	0	0
Total	100	100	0.31

*Source:* For Spanish journals: papers published in RHE–JILAEH, HA, RHI and IHE–HER. For foreign journals: EconLit and Spanish Economic History Association. Compiled by author.

*Note:* Int index = Number of papers in foreign journals divided by number of papers in Spanish journals, for each topic.

economic history, probably because they have remained on the margins of the discipline's structure in higher education, and because the research into those topics has been redirected towards foreign journals that specialize in these respective fields.

Topics in foreign journals show a different outlook. As is apparent, the two main topics in Spanish publications (agricultural sector and industry) record an internationalization index that is well below the average. By contrast, some of the topics that have increased in popularity over the past decade, such as business and firms, and standards of living, record a high internationalization index, which suggests that the expansion process these topics are involved in is also expanding beyond Spain's frontiers. A case worth mentioning involves those papers devoted to the analysis of growth processes, which scarcely feature in Spanish journals, but occupy a leading position in their international counterparts.

This state can be completed by combining it with methodological matters. In this sense, papers published in the last decade have followed very different paths. On the one hand, a considerable number of researchers (devoted to all the topics in Table 10.1) have not shown any particular disposition in their works to apply economic theory and refined quantitative methods. It is worth remembering in this sense that although Spanish economic history is taught mainly in the faculties of economics and business, a large part of the teaching staff that joined the profession had an academic background in history, and not in economics. Thus they have opted for traditional methods that, while mostly using and reconstructing quantitative variables, apply an inductive–statistical approach.

On the other hand, some researchers educated and trained in economics, most of them connected with departments, groups or networks using NEH from the 1980s, exhibit strength in a methodological stream based upon more and more sophisticated econometric tools. The organization from 2003 of the biennial *Iberometrics* conferences (along with Portuguese colleagues), has been the main debate forum for them. Topics have been varied. Although papers approaching general aspects of growth predominate, there are also papers about different

topics, for example, agriculture or inequality. Some of these works follow neoclassical economic theory with an almost blind faith in the market mechanisms functioning throughout history, and on occasions undervaluing the social, political and ideological contexts. Nevertheless others try to incorporate more variables and recent developments in theory, for instance in economic geography, to explain problems of industrial concentration and migrations (Pons et al. 2007) or regional inequalities inside the country (Rosés et al. 2010). The econometric stream has never held a majority in the overall discipline in Spain. In 2006, a paper that sought to measure its real impact on publications over the previous decades, despite following very lax criteria that validated any work that used a smattering of economic theory and some quantification method, however unreliable it might be, concluded that one could confirm NEH's influence on the discipline but in no sense identify its dominance (Coll 2006). In recent years, the use of econometric models based on varied theoretical approaches is becoming more commonplace, although it is still a long way from being the prevailing methodology. It should be noted, furthermore, that sometimes the performance of econometric exercises is not always synonymous with the application of deductive methods based on economic laws, but rather that inductive—statistical methods are often applied seeking to contrast hypotheses based on the correlation of aggregate data.

Beyond the cliometrics other methodological postulates have been proposed. Mention could be made of the book *La historia cuenta* (Tello 2005), which is certainly a thorough review of the different theoretical streams in economics and their possible use for the study of history, highly critical of the orthodox economic approaches commonly used in economic history. On the other hand, Gallego (2007) in his work *Más allá de la economía de mercado* (Beyond the market economy) put forward some very interesting proposals, considering new ways of relating theory and history, based on empirical works and on theoretical streams close to the surplus—reproduction paradigm and to several institutional developments. Surrounding those critical streams at least four different matters have had a remarkable development in Spain in the last decade. The first has to do with institutions, an issue with a long tradition in Spanish economic history which has been addressed with changing approaches. Until the 1990s, interest in institutions focused mainly in formal political institutions and the greater or lesser success of the laws they passed. From then on, the interest has moved to a deeper concept of institutions including general norms and especially the role played by property rights. In this respect the ideas of North and the New Institutional Economics have had some followers, but recently approaches derived from Ostrom, and stressing rules for collective action, are being more used.<sup>19</sup>

The second matter relates to the standard of living question which has also developed different approaches. Given the difficulties of working with reliable series of Spanish wages, other indicators are used. Works based for instance on life expectancy, anthropometrics or in consumption baskets related to nutritional levels are offering appealing ideas.<sup>20</sup> The third matter is about the relations between economic development and the environment in the past which has also attracted the interest of some Spanish researchers. New methodologies related to social metabolisms based on material and energy flow accounting (MEFA), and socio-ecological transitions are starting to develop interesting environmental approaches which can be combined also with social and institutional variables (González de Molina and Toledo 2014). Finally works devoted to the analysis of business, firms and entrepreneurs are more and more present in Spanish economic history. An early subject of internationalization from the 1990s on, and of the use of a varied range of theories (new institutionalism, transaction costs, agency theories, gender in business debates or industrial organization theories), have clearly strengthened this stream in the last decade (Sudría and Fernández 2010).

To sum up, the internationalization process of Spanish economic history has brought about an increasing plurality affecting methodologies and matters. In spite of that, internal debates have almost disappeared in the last decade. In this context it should be stressed that not all the streams are equally open to international forums. In fact those Spanish economic historians who have published in journals abroad over the past decade account for around 20 per cent of the overall membership of the Spanish Economic History Association, and a large number of them (not all fortunately) are engaged with the cliometric stream. This suggests that a large proportion of Spanish economic historians appear to remain stuck in the domestic framework. Some of them also remain fixed in traditional paradigms, even practising some kinds of parochialism. However, others, probably a majority, are making interesting efforts towards a new understanding of development processes, stressing their economic, social and environmental implications. Sadly only a small group is showing its work in the international arena, but probably it is just a question of time.

### **Concluding remarks**

Spanish economic history has undergone an undisputed transformation in recent decades, which has enabled it to narrow the gap with those countries in which the discipline has undergone greater development. Public support through regulations (compulsory nature of the subject on degree courses in economics and business), financing and incentives have played a key role in this convergence process. An overall assessment emphasizing its lights and shadows clearly shows that the former have prevailed over the latter. In these early years of the twenty-first century, the knowledge we have of our country's economic past and its international integration has considerably increased. From a quantitative perspective, beside the series of GDP and other macro metrics contained in statistical records, there has been a thorough reconstruction of series and indices of production, of domestic and foreign trade, and of agrarian and mining development, involving both infrastructures and industry, on a wide array of geographical levels.

From a qualitative perspective, we have a better understanding of the rural world and its transformations; of industrialization processes in different parts of the country, and of the sectors prevailing in each case; of monetary and budgetary issues and their ramifications; of working processes and technological change; of the workings of the institutions at different levels; and progress is being made in the analysis of standards of living, their metrics and the factors involved in their shaping; and also in the close relationships between economic growth and the environment. Although there is still a great deal of progress to be made, the overall assessment of the efforts expended so far must be a positive one.

Nevertheless, one should not be overly self-satisfied, and instead take a moment to note some of the shadows that have darkened the process. The scant interest that a considerable number of Spain's economic historians have shown for theory is one of them. The failure to embed research within a theoretical framework reduces the value-added of many papers by converting them into works that despite their interest do not fit into an articulated discourse. Another shadow cast over the study of Spanish economic history is that, for a long time, it has not managed to escape from a path dependency basically defined by a concept of 'backwardness' in which the most important aim was to explain why Spain did not get the same levels of growth as the richest western countries.

Recently an incipient process of internationalization is taking place at various levels. On the one hand, dedicated Spanish journals are following a process of alignment with top-tier international journals. This may be of importance for the disclosure of research, not only for

Spain but also for other countries in Southern Europe and Latin America. At the same time, certain Spanish scholars are increasingly featuring in greater numbers on the international stage, with publication abroad of papers not only on Spain, but also on other countries.

This internationalization process has brought about in Spain an increase in plurality affecting methodologies. There is no suggestion that Spanish economic historians have at any time been the champions of innovation in theory and methods of the discipline worldwide, but they are taking their cue and increasingly applying new approaches and techniques. Cliometric approaches engaged with the mainstream of the western canon of doing economic history have strengthened in recent years but it is far from being hegemonic inside Spain. Other theoretical approaches have also flourished, centred on institutions, the standard of living, the environment, or upon firms and businesses, with a complex understanding of the process of development and its implications beyond the realms of orthodox economic theory. The problem is that an important part of the Spanish researches on those matters is at the moment too poorly internationalized.

Regarding the new scenarios that appear to be opening up, everything seems to suggest that the importance of Spanish economic history in the future will depend upon its ability to further its international integration. An integration that far from following a single theoretical path should continue to involve different methodologies and questions, in order to contribute more broadly to global debates.

### Notes

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- 2 The attendance propensity has been calculated by weighting the number attending from each country by the distance from the country of origin, by language difficulties, by income and by the size of the community of economic historians in each country (Baten and Muschallik 2011, table 6).
- 3 Ruiz Martín guided Braudel himself through several Spanish archives, and was subsequently a guest at *l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes* in Paris. Vicens Vives was very active not only as an author, but also as the editor of publications that despite appearing within Spain's Higher Research Institute (CSIC) avoided the strict intellectual control wielded by that institution in those days (Marín 2002).
- 4 Arranged in order of their date of birth, this first generation includes the following: Nicolás Sánchez Albornoz, 1926; Jordi Nadal, 1929; Josep Fontana, 1931; Gonzalo Anes, 1931; Francisco Bustelo, 1933; Pedro Schwartz, 1935; Gabriel Tortella, 1936, and Ramón Garrabou, 1937.
- 5 Resolution stipulating the guidelines to be followed by the curricula of the Faculties of Economic and Business Sciences, Spain's Official Gazette, BOE-A-1973-1142.
- 6 In absolute terms, the population with university studies increased fivefold from 1970 to 2012. In relative terms, higher education extended to 2 per cent of the adult population between the ages of 25 and 64 in 1970, and the figure has now risen to 31 per cent, which is slightly higher than the average for OECD countries. In 2012, 53 per cent of students were enrolled in social science and law faculties, where economic science is taught (MECD – Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, 2012).
- 7 If we consider all the papers published in the four main Spanish economic history reviews in the last twenty years, around 75 per cent of them are centred in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
- 8 A large part of the analysis on the Spanish Empire and its effects were done from the 1930s by foreign hispanists, i.e. Hamilton (1934). On Hamilton and his works see López Losa (2013). The then state of the art on the Spanish Early Modern Age can be found in Llopis (2004).
- 9 Tortella himself does not use econometric models in his work, but he became the early main supporter in Spain of the application of standard neoclassical economic theory to historical analysis. Econometric exercises came later in the hands of some of his disciples.

- 10 More recent studies of Spanish economic history in regional perspective appear in German et al. (2001).
- 11 See the three volumes of contemporary agrarian history edited by Garrabou and García Sanz (1985); Garrabou and Sanz Fernández (1985); and Garrabou et al. (1986).
- 12 This consensus may end as research on the second half of the twentieth century matures, analysing changes in more detail.
- 13 Summaries of the debates may be found in Escudero (1996) for mining and in Herranz (2003) for the railways.
- 14 Palafox (1991), Tena (1992), Fraile (1993).
- 15 Two references to follow the debate are Gallego and Pinilla (1996), Tirado and Tena (1996).
- 16 See Sabaté and Pardos (2001).
- 17 In 2002, issue 28 of the journal *Historia Agraria* published several papers that challenged the book's findings.
- 18 The debate on the formats of research dissemination and on the problems arising from the way top-tier journals operate, such as those propounded by Macdonald and Kam (2007) for example, has yet to affect Spanish economic history.
- 19 An approach related to the New Institutional Economics is to be found in Carmona and Simpson (2010). Works associated with collective action problems are associated to the study of the Spanish common lands, cooperative movements and trade unions, or irrigation networks. See, for instance, Garrido (2011).
- 20 Most of the research involving these issues is enrolled in the NISAL Project (<http://www.proyectonisal.org>).

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