The Emerald Handbook of Entrepreneurship in Latin America
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The Emerald Handbook of Entrepreneurship in Latin America: Unleashing a Millennial Potential

EDITED BY

OSCAR MONTIEL
Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez (UACJ), Mexico

And

ARACELI ALMARAZ ALVARADO
El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Mexico

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To all the academic scholars who participated in this project. Thank you so much for your hard work, and confidence. To all the Latin American entrepreneurs and agents, who fight every day against so many obstacles to make a better entrepreneurial ecosystem and take their businesses and our region to the place it deserves.

To my family.

– Oscar Montiel

To groups of entrepreneurs, business families, Latin American creatives, institutions dedicated to technological change, universities and research centers, as well as groups of specialists who, next to me, write the history of business in our region.

– Araceli Almaraz Alvarado
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About the Contributors

**Araceli Almaraz Alvarado** is Full Professor at the Department of Social Studies, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (Tijuana-Mexico). She is a Member of the National Research System, Mexico. She is Secretary of the Mexican Association of Economic History and represents Mexico in the Ibero-American Group for Business Studies and Economic History. Since 2016 she has been a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Evolutionary Studies in Business*. She was accepted as member of the Mexican Academy of History for Baja California in 2019. Her recent books include: Almaraz A. (coord.) Historias de nuestras regiones. Un breve recorrido, Academia Mexicana de la Historia, 2021. Almaraz A. & Montiel, O. (Eds.), *The History of Entrepreneurship in Mexico: contextu-alizing theory, theorizing context*, Emerald Publishing, 2021. Almaraz, A. & Ramírez, L. A. (Coords.) *Familias Empresariales en México. Sucesión generacional y continuidad en el siglo XX*, Second edition [on line], El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2018.

**Lorena del Carmen Álvarez-Castañón** is Professor at University of Guanajuato (MX); Leader of Track 5 (Development and Sustainability) in the Academy of Management Sciences (ACACIA, MX); and Member of National Research System (CONACYT, MX). Her academic publications include topics such as innovation and technology management, ecotechnologies, universities, entrepreneurship, and sustainability.

**Claudia Milena Alvarez Giraldo** is a Psychologist, with a Master’s Degree in Human Talent Management and Business Administrator and a PhD in Business Management. She is Senior Minister Researcher, evaluator of the Ministry of National Education-Colombia, and an international academic peer of the Ibero-American Bank of Evaluators-BIEN CONACYT. She is a business consultant in the areas of Human Talent, Organizational Management, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation.

She also has served as a research professor at the University of Manizales, Colombia, and at the National University of Colombia, Manizales campus. Equally, she is the research coordinator for the Faculty of Accounting, Economic and Administrative Sciences. In addition, she is Director of the research group in administration and human management, with her line of research “Strategic Management of Human Talent” at the University of Manizales, Colombia. Finally, she has also served as a research professor in the Master of Management in Organizations program at the Universidad de Occidente, Sinaloa, Mexico.
Fernando Armas Asín is Doctor of Philosophy and Letters (History), currently a Professor at Universidad del Pacífico (Lima, Peru) and member of various economic history associations. He is a researcher specialized in tourism and religious heritage, with fifteen books and more than fifty published articles. Among his most important books are: *Iglesia, Bienes y rentas Secularización liberal y reorganización patrimonial en Lima (1820-1950)* (Lima, 2007); *Patrimonio divino y capitalismo criollo. El proceso desamortizador de censos eclesiásticos en el Perú* (Lima, 2010); *Una historia del turismo en el Perú. El Estado, los visitantes y los empresarios (1800-2000)* (Lima, 2018); or the coedition, with Martín Monsalve, de *La memoria de Manuel de Argumaniz: un empresario peruano del siglo XIX* (Lima, 2019). ORCID ID: 0000-0001-7050-1423

Jose Ernesto Amorós is Professor and Doctoral Programs Director at EGADE Business School, Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico and Professor Adjunct at Universidad del Desarrollo, UDD, Chile. Until December 2015 he was the Executive Director of the Entrepreneurship Institute at UDD. He has been Member of the board of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, GEM, project. He holds a PhD in Management Sciences from ESADE Business School, Spain. He has a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration and an MSc in Marketing from Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico. He is a Member of several academic organizations and VP of the Iberoamerican Academy of Management. His research interests are entrepreneurship and competitiveness, high-growth new business, entrepreneurship and regional development, and corporate entrepreneurship.

Bernardo Bátiz-Lazo read economics (at ITAM, Mexico, and Autónoma de Barcelona, Spain) and history (Oxford) and has a Doctorate in Business Administration (Manchester Business School). He has been studying financial markets and institutions since 1988. He joined Northumbria University in 2020 after appointments at Bangor, Leicester, Open University, and the Queen’s University of Belfast. He has combined full-time appointments with consulting and executive training in Europe, the Gulf States, Latin America, and Asia. Bernardo has contributed to or written over 45 refereed articles, three books, and eight distance learning books. He was elected to the council of the Association of Business Historians (2008–2014) and is actively engaged as external adviser to other learned societies, namely, the Business History Conference (2013) and the Economic History Society (2014–to date). He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society (2010), the Academy of Social Sciences (2020), and a member of the editorial board of traditional outlets, including Business History, Business History Review, Enterprise and Society, Essays in Economic and Business History, and Journal of Management History. Since 1999 he has been the curator of a weekly report on new working papers in business, economic, and financial history (see http://econpapers.repec.org/scripts/nep.pl?list=nephis). The blog with this report was launched in 2010 and has been referenced in the Wall Street Journal, Financial Times, and The Economist (see http://www.nephis.org).

Azalea Canales is Professor and Research Coordinator at the Faculty of Economics of the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México. She holds a PhD in
Economic-Administrative Sciences from the Autonomous University of the State of Mexico. She is a Member of the National System of Researchers, Level 1 and winner of the ANUIES Award for the best Doctoral Thesis on Higher Education (2014). She has a Master’s Degree in Economics with a Specialty in Business, Finance, and Innovation from the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana and a BA in Economics from the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México. Her research interest lies in innovation, entrepreneurship, knowledge networks, and economic institutionalism.

Christian A. Cancino is an Associate Professor of Strategic Planning and Management Control at the University of Chile (U. Chile). He received a PhD in Economics and Innovation Management from the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM). He also holds a BA in Business Administration and a BA in Management Control Engineering from the University of Chile. He has several scholarly international publications in: International Business Review, Journal of Small Business Management, Journal of Cleaner Production, Computing and Industrial Engineering, International Business Review, Scientometrics, Personnel Review, Management Decision, Current Science, Academia-ARLA, Innovar, among others. He has also presented his work at many international conferences (Academy of Management, Babson Conference, CIE49, SIGEF, AMSE, CLADEA, Conf-IRM, etc.).

Mario Cerutti is Full Professor at Facultad de Economía de la Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (Monterrey-México). He is member of National Research System, Mexico. He is Founder and former editor of Siglo XIX. Revista de Historia and Siglo XIX. Cuadernos de Historia, y Fundador, and also was collection director in Historia Económica del Norte de México (siglos XIX y XX). He is currently the Editorial Advisor to NortEstudios (2020–2021). He is founding member and former Executive Secretary of the Association of Economic History of Northern Mexico and founding member of the Ibero-American Group of Business Studies and Economic History. He is an Academic of the Mexican Academy of History (Number 8).

Carlos Dávila Ladrón de Guevara is Emeritus Professor at Universidad de los Andes (Colombia) and Head of the Business, History, and Entrepreneurship Research Group (GHE). His research interests are in Colombian and Latin American business history, organizational studies, and management education. He is the author, coauthor, and/or editor of 20 books and several chapters in books and journal articles. He has edited the volume Empresas y empresarios en la historia de Colombia (2003), coauthored (with J.C. Dávila, L. Grisales and D. Schnarch) Business Goals and Social Commitment, Colombia’s Fundación Social, 1984–2011 (2014), and wrote Empresariado en Colombia: Perspectiva histórica y regional (2013). He coauthored (with Gareth Austin & Geoffrey Jones) (2017), The Alternative Business History: Business in Emerging Markets (Business History Review, 91(3) and, (with Rolv P. Amdam) (2021), Making Managers in Latin America: The Emergence of Executive Education in Central America, Peru, and Colombia. Enterprise and Society, 1–33, doi:10.1017/eso.2021.25. He was a Latin American
Visiting Fellow at the University of Oxford (St Antony’s College) and a Visiting Research Scholar at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

**Claudia De Fuentes** is Associate Professor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the Sobey School of Business at Saint Mary’s University. Her research experience includes innovation in firms, systems of innovation, the creation and use of knowledge in a globalized economy, innovation in global value chains, new forms of academia–industry collaboration, and science, technology, and innovation policy. Her work has circulated internationally. She has collaborated with several research groups to work on projects financed by SSHRC (Canada), CONACYT (Mexico), the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS), the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the Foro Consultivo científico y tecnológico (FCCT) in Mexico, and for the International Development Research Center (IDRC).

**Yoel Modesto Gonzalez Bravo** is Professor at Catholic University Andres Bello (Caracas, Venezuela) on Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Risk Management, and Microeconomics. He is a Member of the Steering Committee at the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center of the Andrés Bello Catholic University; Director of the Venezuela E-commerce Chamber; and CEO at Negociosdigitales.com, C.A., a Venture Capital Investment firm (Caracas, Venezuela). He holds an MA in Risk Management (University of Nottingham), a Diploma in International Development (University of London), and a BSc in Economics (Andrés Bello Catholic University). His research interests include entrepreneurial finance, corporate venturing, and political risk management. ORCID ID: 0000-0003-2563-7174. E-mail: ygonzale@ucab.edu.ve/yoel.gonzaleznd@gmail.com

**Ignacio González-Correa** has a BSc in Economics and an MSc in Economic History from the University of California and works as an Adjunct Professor of Economic History in the same. In addition, he works as an instructor of Economics at the Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities at the Universidad de Chile. Between 2016 and 2019, he worked in the public sector at the largest bank in Chile, BancoEstado. His academic research focuses on the Latin American financial market, especially in Chilean state-owned financial institutions. His work has been published in journals such as Historia Agraria and Revista de Historia Económica (RHE-JILAEH).

**María de los Dolores González-Saucedo**, PhD, is a Professor of Entrepreneurship, Strategy, and Family Business in the School of Business and EGADE Business School at Tecnologico de Monterrey. She has promoted entrepreneurship education in Mexico and Latin America over the last 25 years, participating as coauthor of National Entrepreneurship Training Programs fostered by the Mexican Ministry of Economy. As a researcher, she is an active member of the Academy of Management, USASBE, ISBE, and ACACIA. She has received the Emerald Outstanding Paper Award for her study Gender, Human Capital, and Opportunity Identification in Mexico. Her research areas are entrepreneurship education, opportunity identification, innovation, and women entrepreneurship. She is currently the Director of the Business Administration Program at Tecnologico de Monterrey Campus Monterrey.
Rebeca de Gortari Rabiela is a Sociologist from UNAM and Historian from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in France. She is the principal researcher at the Institute in Social Sciences Research of UNAM. She has published books and articles on university–business linkages, networks, and knowledge transfer in large and small rural businesses in Mexico and on social studies in emerging technologies such as nanotechnology and biotechnology. She is a Teacher in Bachelor of the Faculty of Political Sciences and tutors postgraduates in Administration and History at UNAM. For 10 years she has co-coordinated the Seminar on Social Studies of Science, Technology, and Innovation.

Ignacio De León is CEO of the Kozolchyk National Law Center in Tucson, Arizona, as well as entrepreneur in the blockchain industry, business mentor, and advisor for the Inter-American Development Bank on Digital Regulation and Innovation Policy. He has published three books, Innovation, Startups and Intellectual Property Management (2017, Springer); Institutional Assessment of Antitrust Policy (2009, Kluwer); and Latin American Competition Policy (2001, Kluwer). His research interests include digital regulation, antitrust policy, intellectual property commercialization, and innovation policy. He is a Fulbright Scholar (2000–2001) and British Chevening Scholar (1994–1997), as well as Founder and Superintendent of Pro-Competencia, Venezuela (1992–2000). He holds a PhD (University College London); an MBA (UFM); an LLM (Queen Mary College London); and an LLB (Universidad Catolica Andres Bello, Caracas).

Bruce Lezana has a Degree in Management Control and Information Systems and a Master’s Degree in Finance from the University of Chile (U. Chile), where he has worked as a research assistant and lecturer of financial mathematics for the Master’s Degree in Accounting program. He has profound interest in entrepreneurship, public policies, and applied econometrics, having published two research papers as lead author at The Mexican Journal of Economics and Finance and the Journal of Entrepreneurship Education, as well as a book chapter at Emerald Publishing Limited. He has also presented his work at the International Congress on Innovation and Sustainability (ICONIS, 2019).

Dr Naira Maria Lobraico Libermann is Adjunct Professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS, Brazil), teaching innovation, entrepreneurship, leadership, small business management, and strategy at the Business School. She is also the strategic coordinator of IDEAR – The Interdisciplinary Lab for Entrepreneurship and Innovation – at PUCRS University. Her research focuses on education for transdisciplinary entrepreneurship powered by information technology and knowledge networks. She holds a PhD in Educational Sciences from the University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro (Portugal) with recognition from the Catholic University of Brasilia (UCB-Brasil).

Manuel Llorca-Jaña is Full Professor of Economic and Business History at Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez. He has published two monographs, The British textile trade in South America in the nineteenth century, Cambridge University
Press; and The globalization of merchant banking before 1850, Routledge, and has also edited four books. He has also published over 50 journal articles, including in journals such as Business History, Business History Review, Bulletin of Latin American Research, Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, International Journal of Maritime History, Cliometrica, Economics and Human Biology, and Journal of Iberian and Latin American Economic History. He is member of the editorial board of several journals, including Essays in Economic and Business History, Enterprise & Society, and Economic History of Developing Regions.

Martín Monsalve Zanatti is a Full Professor at Universidad del Pacífico (Lima, Peru). His research focuses on the evolution of family firms and business groups in Peru in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He is the coeditor (with A. Lluch and M- Bucheli) of Historia Empresarial de América Latina. Temas, debates y problemas and author of a dozen of journal articles and chapters in edited collections on Latin American and Peruvian economic and business history. He is currently the head of the Humanities Department at the Universidad del Pacífico. He earned his PhD in history at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. ORCID ID: 0000-0001-7141-2625

John Mills is Associate Professor in Emergent Technologies and Journalism Innovation. Based at the Media Innovation Studio at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), John’s research interests span journalism innovation, the Internet of Things (IoT), augmented paper, mobile journalism, wearables, human-centered design, drone journalism, and innovation theory. He is a Fellow of the UK’s Royal Society of Arts and collaborates with publishers and academic institutions globally.

Hortensia Minguez is a Doctor Cum Laude in Fine Arts from the Universitaria Politécnica de València and a post-doctorate from the Universitat de Barcelona. She has been a Member of the National System of Researchers in Mexico since 2008 and of REINECYT. She is founder and leader of “Contemporary Graphics,” research group attached to the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, an institution where she has worked at since 2007, as a Full-Time Professor and Researcher in the Institute of Architecture, Design, and Art (IADA-UACJ) where she teaches on fields of studies on Creativity and Interdisciplinarity, among others.

She has published in different publications and magazines of international prestige in England, Peru, Spain, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, and Taiwan, especially around the discourses of the Artist’s Book as a genre and the study of the idea of the multiple as an artistic strategy.

Dr Oscar Javier Montiel Méndez is Professor of Management at Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez (UACJ). He obtained his PhD in Management Sciences from Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (UNAM). He is a Member of Mexico’s National System of Researchers and former chapter leader, Entrepreneurship, Academy of Administrative Sciences of Mexico. He has been editor/coordinator of several books on Entrepreneurship, and has published
papers on national/international conference proceedings, journals, and chapter books.

**Henrique Muzzio** has a PhD in Business (Fundação Getulio Vargas – São Paulo, Brazil). He has been an Associate Professor at Federal University of Pernambuco (Brazil) since 2012. He is also a Professor in Administrative Sciences Department and Postgraduate Program in Administration (Management) – (PROPAD), and a Researcher in creativity, innovation, and organizational studies.

**Anel Flores Novelo, PhD**, is Full-Time Professor at the Faculty of Accounting and Administration of the Autonomous University of Yucatán (México). She is a Member of the Mexican National Research System. Her research interests include areas such as social entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial intention, and digital marketing. e-mail: anel.flowers@correo.uady.mx

**Dr Ana Cecília B. Nunes** is Adjunct Professor at Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, PUCRS, Brazil, teaching digital media, innovation, and entrepreneurship for creative industries such as media, journalism, and design. She is also academic head of IDEAR, an interdisciplinary entrepreneurship and innovation lab at PUCRS. Her research focuses on the challenges of media innovation, particularly in the field of journalism, as well as media entrepreneurship and innovation labs. She holds a PhD in Social Communications, a joint degree between PUCRS University (Brazil) and the University of Beira Interior (Portugal), with a period as visiting researcher at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) under the Media Innovation Studio Visiting Researcher programme. Her PhD was partially financed by Capes/PDSE, a Brazilian government fellowship.

**Jahan Ara Peerally** is Associate Professor of International Business at HEC Montréal, Canada. Her research encompasses the activities of multinational versus domestic and social enterprises in developing and emerging economies. Her publications have focused on the technological capabilities and innovation activities of foreign subsidiaries, domestic and social enterprises, and other socioeconomic development effects of these enterprises through inclusive and social innovation. She has published scientific articles in peer-reviewed books (e.g., Edward Elgar) and journals (e.g., *World Development*, *Long Range Planning*, *Economics of Innovation and New Technology*) and teaching case studies and notes in peer-reviewed journals as well.

**Prof Eduardo Campos Pellanda** graduated in Advertising at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul – PUCRS, in Brazil. He holds a Master’s degree and a PhD in Media Communication at PUCRS. In addition, he is a Visiting Scholar at MIT-MEL, USA. Pellanda is a Professor of Media Communication at PUCRS Famecos, a Member of the Graduate Program at Famecos PUCRS, and Director of the research laboratory UBILAB. He is also an Apple Distinguished Educator and former Member of the Advisory Board of the Global Alliance for Media Innovation of the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers.
Ismael Núñez is a research fellow at the Institute of Economic Research of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (IIEc, UNAM) where he is member of the Knowledge Economy and Development Research Unit. He is an economist from the Metropolitan Autonomous University and has a Doctorate in Administration Sciences from the National Autonomous University of Mexico. He also has a degree in Technology Administration from CIT-UNAM. He is the coordinator of the UNAM project and the Latin American network on Latin American thought on technological change for development: https://pensalatitec.iiec.unam.mx/

Marisol Morales Rodríguez, PhD, is a Professor at the Faculty of Psychology at the Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo. Her line of research is in adolescent development in its various stages, which includes the study of Entrepreneur Psychology in university students.

Cristian Alejandro Rubalcava de León holds a Master’s Degree in Business Management and a Doctorate in Administrative Sciences from the Faculty of Commerce and Administration of the Autonomous University of Tamaulipas Autonomous University of Tamaulipas (UAT). His line of research is social entrepreneurship. He is also a part-time professor at the Autonomous University of Tamaulipas (UAT) ORCID: 0000-0002-9926-2902.

Elizabeth Salamanca is an Associate Professor at the School of Business and Economics at the University of the Americas Puebla (UDLAP). She is a Member of Mexico’s Researchers National System and a nonresident scholar at Rice University’s Baker Institute.

Carlos Alberto Santamaria-Velasco has a Doctorate in Economics and Business from the Rovira I Virgili University. He is a Member of the National System of Researchers Level I of CONACYT. He is a full-time tenured Research Professor at the Centro Universitario de los Valles of the University of Guadalajara. His main lines of research are entrepreneurship, innovation, and regional development.

Esteban Santamaría is a Mexican lawyer, professor, and international consultant. He is also Director of CAIINNO, a Mexican think tank. A graduate of the George Washington University, he received his Master’s Degree in Intellectual Property Law. He is a recipient of a Fulbright scholarship. He has obtained his Bachelor’s Degree in Law and a Master’s Degree in Law and Economics from the University Autonomous of Puebla, graduated cum laude, the highest recognition. He has worked as a consultant for the Inter-American Development Bank as a specialist in intellectual property, creative economy, and innovation. Esteban has participated as a professor, representative, and speaker in several places such as the World Bank, the WIPO, the UNCTAD, the USPTO, among others.

María Josefa Santos has a degree in Social Anthropology from the Ibero University and a PHD in Anthropology from the National Autonomous University of Mexico. She is a Senior Researcher at the Institute of Social Research (UNAM) and a Member of the National System of Researchers in the area of
Humanities. She is a member of the editorial committee of the journal *Nueva Antropología*. Her area of research is in technology and culture on which she has taught at more than 50 national and international conferences, in 41 courses, and directed more than 25 theses. She has also published articles in specialized journals, book chapters, and books.

**Rosalina Torres-Ortega** is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Business and Economics, Linnaeus University, Sweden. She received her PhD in Entrepreneurship and Management, from the Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain. She has been a Visiting Scholar at the University of Southern Denmark (Denmark) and University of Turku (Finland).

She is a researcher at the Center for International Business Studies on Emerging Markets (CIBEM), and Knowledge Platform: Global Mind – Business competitiveness in changing landscapes at Linnaeus University. Her research interests include entrepreneurship, international entrepreneurship, international marketing, and emerging markets. Torres-Ortega has published empirical articles in journals and book chapters.

**Arturo Torres** is a Professor and Researcher in the Master’s and PhD programs in Economics, Management, and Innovation Policies at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Campus Xochimilco. He holds a DPhil in Science and Technology research studies from SPRU, University of Sussex, UK. He is Member of the National System of Researchers by Conacyt, Mexico. His research interest includes university–industry linkages, learning and building of technological capabilities at the firm level, innovation in the health sector, entrepreneurship, and innovation policy studies.

**Mario Vargas Saenz** is a Philosopher and a Specialist in Industrial Relations, holding a Master’s Degree in Administration from EAFIT University and a PhD (magna cum laude) from the UPS of Rome. He has been the Director of the EAFIT University for more than 14 years. Currently, he directs EAFIT Social and is also in charge of the GUIE, the Research Group on Innovation and Entrepreneurship. He coordinates the Master of Social Business Management for Social Innovation and Local Development. With more than 25 years of experience in university teaching at the national and international level, he has been a business consultant and has provided his services to international organizations such as UN Habitat and the OECD.

**Oscar Alejandro Vazquez Bernal** is Associate Professor, School of Basic Science, Technology and Engineering, Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia UNAD, Bogotá DC, Colombia. He has a PhD in Engineering, Industry, and Organization, an MBA, and a BS in Industrial Engineering. **ORCID:** 0000-0001-6584-1984

**Diana Karen Vélez-Sánchez** is currently a doctoral student in the Doctorate in Management Science program at EGADE Business School in Monterrey, Mexico. Her research interests include entrepreneurship and innovation,
entrepreneurship education, social capital, nascent entrepreneurs, and start-up strategy, among others.

Javier Jasso is a Full-Time Senior Professor in the Graduate School of Accounting and Management at National University of Mexico (FCA, UNAM). He coordinated the Graduate Program in Management Sciences and was also head of the Investigation Division FCA, UNAM. He has a PhD in Economics from the Complutense University of Madrid. He is Member of the National System of Researchers by Conacyt, Mexico. His research interest includes interaction of science, technology, and society as innovation, competitiveness, and learning and technological capabilities at the firm level.

Trinidad Zaldivar, PhD, is Chief at the Creativity and Culture Unit within the Inter-American Development Bank’s (IDB) sector of Knowledge, Innovation, and Communications. She is a specialist in the Creative and Cultural Industries, and her work also harnesses the worlds of culture and creativity to infuse innovative thinking into the full spectrum of the bank’s work.

Prior to moving to the United States, she balanced academia and the private sector. At the age of 25, she founded and managed her own company, which aimed at bringing culture closer to the people and activities of private companies. She produced and published books on history and art; corporate, educational, and cultural institution histories; as well as art exhibits and script writing. During that time, she graduated with a PhD in History from the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile and Université Paris 1, Pantheon Sorbonne. Afterward, she began a career as a university professor and researcher.

Upon moving to the United States, she worked at several international organizations. She joined the Organization of the American States (OAS) to lead the OAS museum’s fundraising and development efforts, as well as updating the museum’s mission and vision. Then, she moved briefly to the World Bank, where she was part of the Change Management Process that the organization was undergoing at that moment.

Mariana Zerón Félix has a Doctorate in Administration and a Master’s Degree in Finance from the Faculty of Commerce and Administration of the Autonomous University of Tamaulipas (UAT), and is a Specialist in Studies of the Mexico-United States Border from Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF). Currently, she is the Research and Postgraduate Secretary of the UAT and a Member of the National System of Researchers Level I (SNI) of CONACYT. Her current line of research is strategies for the development of the territory.
This preface is written in an unorthodox manner. We felt that in this way, a better and more complete lens can be brought to the Handbook’s audience. We end it with a consensus statement.

Oscar

A preface commonly directly addresses the book topic, but sometimes a little bit of history on what was built before can give a better picture. Back in 2018, a vision was beginning to build up. I had just received a grant from the Mexican Government, in support to buy academic books and enrich my research library. Looking through the many options available, I began to see that there was a nascent interest in exploring and understanding entrepreneurship from the historical studies perspective, but there was a lack of books regarding this issue, at micro, meso, or macro levels. A couple of ideas began to cross my mind on how to approach this gap.

So, I began to reflect on elaborating a book with a focus on my country, Mexico. Since my area was entrepreneurship, the search for a partner that could bring a historical perspective to the project began. Bernardo Batiz-Lazo, a Mexican world-renowned historical researcher, was very kind and put me in contact with Araceli Almaraz Alvarado, who, without even knowing me, believed in the project and agreed to participate. In 2020, *The History of Entrepreneurship in Mexico: Contextualizing Theory, Theorizing Context* was published, a seminal effort not only for our country but also for the Latin American region and at a global scale, since there are very few books regarding this perspective.

Once the first book was published, there was space for a second idea to take form. The entrepreneurial processes that the aforementioned book showed can be (of course, context-dependent) extrapolated more or less to the Latin American region. So, to understand better the diverse entrepreneurship dilemmas that our region faces under this new geopolitical order taking place in our era, a Handbook was proposed, focusing not only on the academic audience but also on others interested in this angular, vital issue of our time. It is indeed a critical junction.

My position on entrepreneurship is under a multidimensional perspective always within an allostasis process. Sadly, entrepreneurship is still generally looked under an economic mirror, where outcomes linked to the productivity
dilemma are an axiom, a kind of dualism. For us, this not only cruelly atomizes the construct, losing the intrinsic opportunity to extract an otherwise rich, deep, socially constructed process and multiple realities, but also and most importantly dehumanizes it.

Despite that the Handbook reflects the entrepreneurship etic tradition built upon the grand narrative contribution from the Western hemisphere and makes a strong call on recovering Latin American ontology and roots, an emic position that can recapture and reinvent the way our economies have been operating since neoliberalism arrived and was adopted into the region. A dialectic task and a historicism (Dilthey’s view, not that of Popper) should be fruitful (and a breaking point from the “anacyclosis” that Latin America has fallen in), given the indexical way of thinking of Latin American entrepreneurship – a Latin American theory of entrepreneurship.

The data are clear. Our region, generally speaking, has not been able to insert itself properly into the dynamics of the global economy. Remember that East Asia was, in the post–World War II era, in economic terms, behind Latin America. Then, a clear disengagement can be detected, wherein public policies that failed to grasp and achieve creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship throughout the region, where they must blend theory (knowledge and thinking), poiesis, and praxis (action and doing), to increase its efficacy (not forgetting the unintended and undesirable consequences entrepreneurship might incur in), must capture the verisimilitude of our context, increasing a potential symbiosis as Latin Americans, but inserted in a geopolitical world. Real photosynthesis in our entrepreneurial ecosystem is inclusive, where all of its actors can increase their chances of improving their quality of life.

So, this Handbook, the first in Latin American history, should be approached in many ways, depending on the different positions each author brought to their chapters, but also without overlooking other research positions that should bring more richness (i.e., big history studies, feminist perspectives, among others). It is a critical view, even with a via negativa process that can shed light on each of the topics within this Handbook, where historical processes tacitly or explicitly are embedded in each chapter and myriad elements juxtapose unceasingly to depict a genealogy of what has been written in the region. Moreover, infer what has been left out, and also reflect on the repercussion the Handbook might have.

Araceli

Creativity, Entrepreneurship, and Technological Development in Emerging Economies

Considering that the so-called emerging economies reflect development paths and a relatively successful business base, it allows us to place the Latin American region at the center of a new debate. This Handbook allows us to understand to a great extent technological transformations, innovations, and the global
development of markets from the Latin American position. In this way, we want to highlight the research agendas on the history of business, entrepreneurship, and creativity. This Handbook attempts to break with a priori inferences and omissions about the advancement and evolution of Latin American creative dynamics. The three sections in this Handbook make a call to discuss the economic organization of our region, innovation, technological development, and entrepreneurship; the readers of this Handbook will have their vision of Latin America transformed.

Communities of undergraduate students, mainly from careers in business administration, economics, industrial sociology, and those who focus on corporate strategies, as well as groups of specialists around the world, will have the opportunity to have statements, theoretical reflections, and references to a good part of the works that have been published throughout the twentieth century on Latin American advances in terms of the advancement of organizations, sectoral evolution, technological development, and entrepreneurship. Each chapter, as well as the testimonies presented, outlines the characteristics of the economic spaces, of the branding spaces, including the heterogeneity of the Latin American reality, who in turn expose the enormous potential of the organizations and business groups.

The antecedents of this Latin American vividness and greatness have been overshadowed by the inability of governments to overcome recurring crises, especially those of the twentieth century. However, it should be noted that Latin American economic problems faced throughout the nineteenth century, immediately after the independence processes, were not minor; the difficult moments of Latin American resulted in long periods of political and economic instability. Added to these circumstances was the public debt situation, which had intrinsically diminished the strengthening of nation-states since the first decades of the nineteenth century. In two centuries, the weakness of Latin American financial systems and slow productive advance (heterogeneous and uneven) was reflected in great difficulties to sustain the growth of the countries.

The mismanagement of current accounts, inconsistencies in trade balances, high rates of inflation, a disorder in public finances, as well as constant increases in public debt, devaluations, and scarce monetary reserves largely explain the erratic behavior of Latin American GDP throughout the twentieth century. The attention to structural problems detracted from the attention that local and regional systems of innovation should have technological development and creativity as internal engines of Latin American development. The development paths were subsumed by national models with divergent industrialization processes via import substitution, which in some countries arrived early and without planning, and in others by the effervescence of regional policies promoted by organizations such as the ECLAC.

The millenary knowledge of our region and the potential of the primary sectors associated with the wealth of raw materials were not enough. The influence of the modern business model and the management of resources and inputs were not combined with the vestiges of a native productive organization, and their meanings on sustainability and the care of natural environments. After World
War II, the economic models adopted in Latin America were largely oriented toward promoting and protecting domestic markets. As international trade was accelerated by the Breton Woods Agreement (1944), new policy instruments and economic regulation schemes appeared. However, the nascent “international cooperation” scheme strengthened the commercial relations of most industrialized countries. In this context, one of the countries most interested in reviving the world economy was the United States. In the voice of its Secretary of State William Lockhart Clayton, the following was emphasized: “We need large markets around the world, where to buy and sell.” This phrase had a very clear background for the country and for Clayton’s businesses, which since the 1920s had started one of the largest family-based companies in the United States, dedicated to the sale of cotton: the Anderson Clayton Co.¹ The international monetary system from 1947 onward was controlled by the International Monetary Fund, and world trade by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which was replaced in 1995 by the World Trade Organization (WTO). The stabilization of the economies affected by the war required a model of world integration, which did not prosper due to division between capitalist states and socialist states, and in the middle the dependence of the Latin American region.

The global economic dynamics of the 1980s undermined Latin American economic structures through the privatization of parastatals and structural reforms. Trade opening and the gradual collapse of tariff barriers have been motivated to a large extent by the different generations of Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs) as described below. In 2018, 280 Regional Trade Agreements were enabled, of which 80 were concentrated in Latin American countries. According to the IDB, RTAs “constitute a commercial policy strategy that guarantees multiple benefits, such as a greater volume of trade flows, attraction of investments, the achievement of political objectives and other commercial complementarities” (IDB, 2018), and tariff liberalization is one of the key elements.

RTAs, according to the IDB (2018), use three types of liberalization: (1) “liberalization by baskets” by which the elimination of tariffs is assigned to all products and a set of differentiated categories, “providing each one of them a time frame and a path toward the complete elimination of tariffs for goods that originate in one or more of the ACR partner countries.” In this case, the rule of the Most Favored Nation is applied, which avoids conducts unfair; (2) “liberalization by sectors” that subjects all the products of the sector with the marking of exceptions especially for those in which a country is stronger, also working with “protocols that regulate the treatment granted to agricultural products, fishing, and processed agricultural,” and (3) “liberalization through preferential tariffs” which focuses on a preferential tariff.

Subregional Agreements and Customs Unions From the 1960s to 1991. The agreements signed by Latin American countries in this period were the Central American Common Market (CACM) “which began in 1960 as a free trade agreement,” the Andean Community in 1969, the Caribbean Community (Caricom) in 1973, and the Southern Common Market (Mercosur) in 1991 initially signed by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay, and later by Venezuela, and bilateral agreements signed in the framework of the “Latin American Integration
Association, known as Economic Complementation Agreements (ACE)” whose objective was to provide access to markets and eliminate tariffs.

ACEs correspond to firms between individual countries and between individual countries and RTAs of Latin American countries: for example, Mercosur-Bolivia, Mercosur-Chile, Mexico-Bolivia, Mexico-Uruguay, Mexico-Brazil, and Mexico-Argentina. According to IDB (2018), a significant number of agreements between Latin American countries are due to the increasingly protectionist positions of developed countries, which contradict the principles of international cooperation proposed since the late 1940s by the countries themselves, which were regulatory bodies for trade and international diplomacy.

Intrahemispheric Trade Agreements. The second stage, or second generation of agreements, runs from 1994 to 2003-2004. The most emblematic agreement of the period is undoubtedly the NAFTA, which has concluded its first 25-year stage in 2019 to be renewed as a next-generation agreement. This second wave of RTAs, initiated by Mexico and its partners, was also replicated in the Asian region. In 1996, Canada signed a trade agreement with Chile and in 2001 with Costa Rica. In 1998, Mexico signed agreements with Chile, and in 2004 and 2005 with Mercosur, and with the Andean Community. In 2003, Chile and the United States signed a free trade agreement, followed by the free trade agreement of the Dominican Republic, Central America, and the United States (CAFTAS-DR) in 2004.

Bilateral transcontinental agreements. The third stage or generation of ACR began to take shape between 2000 and 2006. In this regard, we will only point out the agreements in which Mexico participates: the global Agreement between Mexico and the European Union that entered into force in 2000, the Trans-Pacific Treaty (TTP) signed in 2011, and the Economic Association Agreement between Mexico and Japan, signed in 2005, which constituted the first extraregional free trade agreement of Japan (IDB, 2018).

Mega Regional Commercial Agreements. Finally, the latest generation of RTAs have two characteristics: (a) they are agreements that involve mega-regions and b) they constitute aspects that exceed most of the rules negotiated in the first RTAs, including electronic commerce, intellectual property, public procurement, state-owned companies, union and business aspects, exchange of academics, tourists, among other aspects. The latest generation agreements are therefore conceived as “the embryo of new trade rules” because they go beyond the rules of the WTO created in 1995. The IDB pointed out in 2018 that while the latest negotiations of the WTO initiated in Doha in 2001 were bogged down, the RTAs advanced in the integration of the countries, promoting an open regionalism for the benefit of the countries and their companies, and recognizing new employment segments and exchange sectors such as the financial sector, and cross-border relationships.

This scenario of opening and gradual integration between Latin American countries and outside the region does not leave aside the pressure to reduce the costs of large global companies and the time in production cycles. This has led Latin American governments to continue reviewing their development models and implementing strategies to promote innovation, creativity, and technological
development. Now, beyond the international fragmentation of production processes and the opening of economies, Latin American companies with global reach have also emerged in the last four decades, among which are techno-Latin companies.

The millennial strength of Latin America seems to be recovering with the circulation of knowledge in global production networks, the collapse of tariff barriers, and the growing participation of the region in global value chains. Local learning, synergies between companies, entrepreneurs, and the articulation between universities and local governments have made it possible to locate and reinforce regional Latin American innovation systems whose characteristics resemble models such as the Triple Helix. In this context, it is possible to distinguish the presence of important family-based Latin American groups with more than two and three generations, the positioning of business families, and particular modes of entrepreneurship. Latin America has been experiencing for several decades the presence of new developments and technological environments, new financing schemes, and new groups of investors. The growth in product volume and quality has been notable since the early 1990s. The features of Latin American entrepreneurship and its regional foundations can no longer be ignored, even in recent times of uncertainty due to SarsCov2. The legacy is such that one cannot but imagine a better future.

We believe that this Handbook covers topics that have been or might be of relevance for the future of entrepreneurship studies in Latin America. We consider its publication a timely (15 years ago might have been unthinkable, since the topic seeds were just getting planted in our region), breaking point event for the ecosystem and all our colleagues (participants in the Handbook or not) throughout the region, since all their work, a wealth of knowledge now substantial and mature, is directly or indirectly reflected in it. The Latin American works are growing more than ever before, and a solid research corpus is now formed, exploring theoretical frameworks and methods from various epistemological positions.

Its audience can get a first approach on the region’s literature on creativity, innovation, and how this is related to entrepreneurship (all three areas are deeply embedded, the reason why the Handbook was organized in three sections, one for each, so a more integral view can be made on the last one, entrepreneurship), and how the latter has been evolving through time, and what the future might behold or, most important, what issues should get attention and change the actual patterns.

The reader will have timely information on the theoretical/empirical research that has been done in our region, some of them groundbreaking in the global literature but for some reason, until now, not available to a global audience. This is a project (like we once said in a Zoom meeting we held with all the contributors)
that belongs to all parties involved in the entrepreneurship ecosystem, since everyone, more or less, has contributed.

Although 27 chapters cover the multidimensional reality of the entrepreneurial spectrum in our region, by no means are they exhaustive, and we acknowledged some topics were not covered, such as venture capital, feminist perspectives, technological dynamics, sustainability topics, climate change, and COVID-19, among others. We apologize for that, as agenda issues of our colleagues or the pandemic context were the main obstacles.

We are sure that this Handbook will be a turning point to inspire entrepreneurs, policymakers, academics, not-for-profit organizations, students, teachers, or everyone involved within the ecosystem, to make a change in one’s trench, to build a new path for our people and region. Exciting possibilities await to be pursued, explored, and make a real impact in our societies.

Special thanks to all the chapter authors and reviewers, thank you so much for your patience and trust, and to Emerald and our Editor-in-Chief Fiona Allison, for believing in this idea.

The time has come.

Oscar Montiel
Araceli Almaraz Alvarado

Note

1. The expansion of this company into countries in Latin America and Africa reveals business interests that became state interests, as well as the way that Clayton and the United States dodged trade barriers.