

Franz Haniel (1779-1868)

A tribute to the man behind the Franz Haniel Chair for Public Policy

Johannes Franciscus (Franz) Haniel was born on November 20, 1779 in Ruhrort (now Duisburg) to parents Aletta and Jacob Wilhelm. Jacob Wilhelm passed away when Franz was only three years old. He was raised by his mother, who made sure that Franz understood the importance of education. However, Franz had to abandon his studies at the age of 15 in order to help with the family business.

In 1808 Franz Haniel founded a trade union with his brother-in-laws Gottlob Jacobi and Heinrich Arnold Huyssen, thus naming it Jacobi, Haniel & Huyssen (JHH). The business designed and produced steam engines and ships, railroad engines and rails and bridges, each of which contributed to the industrialization of the Ruhr region. Besides founding JHH, Haniel pursued other ventures, including a shipping and transport business and a coal trading company.

Franz Haniel quickly noticed the consequences of such aggressive industrialization on the workforce, and chose to begin focusing his attention more on socially-conscious capitalism. As a result, in 1837 he founded a "relief fund" for the individuals working at his steam dockyard, which was put in place to provide them with insurance in the event of accident or illness. It only took three years until all employees working for JHH were covered by this insurance.

Haniel didn't stop there. During a food crisis in 1847 which was caused by an unsuccessful harvest, Haniel stepped in and expanded the health insurance plan to help employees even in times of famine. To provide further support, he built houses for his employees and their families, making sure to even supply enough space for the family's goat.

Franz Haniel passed away on April 24, 1868 in Ruhrort, only months after the death of his wife.

Haniel was not only known as a key business player during the industrialization period, but was more importantly recognized for his reaction to the social implications and concerns surrounding this period. Through his pragmatic and proactive approach, he became a forefather of social responsibility. With the support of the *Franz Haniel Chair for Public Policy* funded by the Haniel-Stiftung endowment, the University of Erfurt commemorates Franz Haniel as pioneering the influence of social policy in business.

Dietmar Herz