



Editorial

# A Case for Global Microhistory

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Received: 21 August 2020; Accepted: 24 August 2020; Published: 2 September 2020



*Histories* is an international, peer-reviewed open-access journal in its starting phase. It was launched in the first half of 2020 and is planned to be an efficiently working tool for good historical scholarship. We have an Editorial Board from many parts of the world with a broad mix of research experiences and interests. At the moment, *Histories* is widely open for proposals: individual papers, Special Issues, and particular recommendations. We are confident that this infrastructure will soon be used by historians in intelligent, cooperative ways. Quite a few have already announced their interest.

Recently I was asked by a colleague if *Histories*, with its potentially global outreach, could be used for a collection of papers focused on one country and period only. I am not the only person to decide about the direction of the journal (this is the collective task of the Editorial Board, the Managing Editor, and the reviewers). However, in my opinion it is clear that this is absolutely possible and desirable. I encouraged my colleague to put his project into practice and, at the same time, to frame it into a larger picture in order to make it accessible to researchers in other places and possibly of other periods. This seems the way historical scholarship moves forward.

As you might remember, or know from literature, the 1980s and early 1990s saw the astonishing rise of microhistory. It was the triumph of the particular, individual, cultural, and seemingly accidental—in many ways a counterposition to the French *Annales* in their Braudelian period. For a short time, one could have thought that microhistory would become an organised branch, but suddenly the bulk of attention shifted to global history. The explosion of interest for this genre was driven by current globalisation processes through internet, economy and travel, and (in an ambivalent way) by the political criticism of globalisation, first from the left and then from the right.

At first sight, “micro” and “global” seem to be at different poles. In the last ten years, however, some people have tried to combine them. They have experimented with various designations, and the main term coming out from the group discussion is “global microhistory” (see for instance the collection in [List of Contributors \(2019\)](#)).

There is no need to promote this label to a single flagship for *Histories*. Nonetheless, there are quite a few points speaking in favour of the combination. The study of globalisation mostly requires a breakdown in various components, and hence various kinds of micro-knowledge. On the other hand, a classical microhistorical genre, such as biography, can require wide ranging knowledge, because many individuals move across different contexts during their lives. Global microhistory is also valuable because it destabilises the academic hierarchy between “big” and “small” topics, and because it infuses more temporality into research of the particular. After all, history is about time, and we should take it seriously. Few other disciplines are better suited to consider this fundamental dimension of human (and other-than-human) existence.

This is just a brief welcome address with a preliminary input. I look forward to your reflections and contributions to *Histories*—as authors, editors of Special Issues, reviewers, readers, and commentators. Thank you.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## Reference

List of Contributors. Past and Present, Supplement\_14, November 2019: “Global History and Microhistory”. 2019. Available online: [https://academic.oup.com/past/issue/242/Supplement\\_14](https://academic.oup.com/past/issue/242/Supplement_14) (accessed on 27 July 2020).

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