Comment on suggestions for an international MA in Microhistory
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Both concepts under discussion suggest an MA course which would run for two years. I think this is a sensible approach. Both suggestions have modules on theories and methods, and both suggested MA's are research oriented. Both suggestions are really interesting and have convincing conceptual points. The suggested programs differ most in their thematic focus, in their systematic approach, and their practical approach to the study programme.

Sigurdur Gylfi Magnusson suggests to put „particular weight on research on minorities which history has hitherto largely passed over" (quote from his paper), and also wishes to put emphasis on „periods and categories that hitherto received little attention from microhistorians" (idem). This would imply to find teachers and to offer courses and seminars which not only introduce microhistory as an analytical perspective, but also to focus explicitly on these themes. So one could sum up, that the proposed concept suggests an MA programme on microanalytical approaches to minority groups in modern European and American history. In my view, this is too narrow an approach. Minority groups, that is, what had been identified as „minority groups" in the 1980s, have been among the first which have been studied by microhistorians, and microhistory is traditionally associated with the study of marginalised groups in the early years of doing microhistory. I think it is important to widen the perspective, which obviously, does not imply, that minority groups should be neglected. Finally, I would not limit year two to modern history, and I do not find the division in past, present and future microhistory very helpful as a structural element for an MA study programme. However, changing perceptions of what microhistory implies, and changing ways of doing microhistory should be addressed, and a possible place would be under the heading of historiography (see below). I do think that there are a number of very helpful ideas in the suggestions under discussion, which should be followed up.

István Szijártó suggests to establish a flexible framework of modules which are, at the same time, organized under specific analytical and spatial categories, i.e. microhistory and material culture, or microhistory as local history, as global history etc.. This proposed programme allows to introduce and to test microhistory as an analytical perspective on a number of themes, regions, and topics, obviously including minority groups, but not exclusively. The suggested module headings are organized around methodological and theoretical concepts rather than specific themes, continents or historical periods as in Sigurdur`s suggestions. This emphasizes the understanding of microhistory as an „analytical perspective", not a particular theme, which I think is very important. Istvan's suggestions allow flexibility in the choice of topics/themes, while addressing key problems microhistorians deal with. I find this a very convincing and also a very pragmatic approach, which, I will argue, should be syncretized in some respects, with Sigurdur's suggestions, as well as complemented with further suggestions I would like to add.

Having compared both suggested concepts in this way, I would like to propose to use Istvan's structure and to implement some of the important ideas voiced in Sigurdur's suggestions. There are some blank slots in Istvan's proposal, which invite to think of additional Modules. It will be important, I believe, to fill these blank slots with broad

analytical and spatial categories like the one's already suggested by Istvan, in order to stick to this systematic structure.

(I have slightly changed the order of Istvan's suggested concept for systematical reasons, i.e. local before material culture, because I think the local is a more central and/or well known characteristic of microhistory and should come first. Also, I like the module on material culture and microhistory very much, but at the same time, material culture could/should also be addressed under each „methods and sources", because it s a particular source which obviously implies a particular method)

Here are my suggestions

General remark: the MA-course is research oriented from its very beginning

Year 1, Semester 1:

Module I: Introduction – Microhistory as an analytical category

Course 1/1: **The Historiography of Microhistory** (this course will address the various origins of microhistorical studies within history and within related fields such as anthropology, ethnography, gender studies, Alltagsgeschichte and it will discuss how microhistory has developed up to the present; it will introduce key readings of the early microshistory from various European and American scholars, making students aware of different traditions and terminologies, as well as making them aware of changing ways of understanding and of doing microhistory; it would be possible to create a reader with key texts as a basis for this course)

Course 1/2 : **Theories and Methods** (there is not a single method or theory of microhistory, but depending on the theme, source material, and research question, microhistory as an analytical category uses different methods and relates to different theories; it is the aim of this course to introduce some of the key methods and theories that have been used by microhistorians, to show how they have been implemented by looking at some chosen empirical studies, and to introduce key concepts and terms from social sciences and cultural studies which are relevant for microhistorical analysis; here, too, a reader with key texts would be helpful)

Module 2: Local History

Course 2/1: **History through a magnifying glass** - **Microhistory as Local History** (one of the key characteristics of microhistory is to change the scale of analysis, in order to be able to

see the complexities and contingencies of past and present societies and historical changes. The aim of this course is to introduce some of the most influential microhistorical studies which have focused on small units such as a village or a town while addressing „big" historical changes such as the reformation, (post)colonialism, revolutions, war, or economic changes. Students are to discuss if, and what difference microhistorical approaches made/make to traditional explanations and categories of historical change, and of understanding the social.

Course 2/2: **Sources and Methods** (this course will introduce a variety of methods and sources used by microhistorians, and show how they have been implemented by reviewing a number of empirical studies. Students will learn to apply these methods in small empirical sample studies based on a selection of sources)

Year 1, Semester 2:

Module 3: **Race, Ethnicity and Gender**

Course 3/1: **Race, ethnicity and gender as analytical categories in microhistorical analysis (**this course will make students familiar with key readings on these analytical categories and introduce them to relevant scholarly debates, amongst others in cultural studies, postcolonial studies, subaltern studies, and diversity studies. With this theroetical background, students will read, analyse and discuss microhistorical studies which explicitly address these categories)

Course 3/2: **Sources and Methods** (this course will introduce a variety of methods of how to apply the categories of race, gender, and ethnicity in historical analysis; it will further introduce a selection of sources which allow students to test these methods and to become sensible for aspects of race, ethnicity and gender in historical records. They will further analyse how these categories have been used in research by reviewing a number of empirical studies. Students will learn to apply these methods in small empirical sample studies based on a selection of sources)

Module 4: World History - Global History

Course 4.1: Microhistory as Global History: (this course will acquaint students with world and global history based on selected readings and debates, and more specifically, with the theoretical/conceptual scholarly debate on how to research global microhistory. Students will thus be introduced into a young and growing field of micohistory; they will read, analyse and discuss various empirical studies and compare the use of various methods and sources)

Course 4.2: Sources and Methods (building on methodological and theoretical knowledge from previous courses, students will be acquainted with the particular challenges of global microhistory. Using original sources, students will conduct small empirical case studies)

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Year 2, Semester 1:

Module 5: **Microhistorical Analysis and The writing of Microhistory**

Course: 5/1: **Microhistorical analysis (**this is an advanced theoretical and methodological course which focuses critically on the wide variety of sources available for microhistorians and their merits and limits. Special emphasis will be placed on ego-documents, on material culture, on visual and sound cultures, but also on quantitative and seriel sources. The discussion of these sources will be related to detailed discussions of methods and of relevant theories such as practice theory, theories of the subject, human agency, discourse analysis, actor-network theories et al)

Course 5/2: **The Writing of Microhistory (**from its very beginning, microhistory was not only an analytical perspective, but also a way of writing history. The historical narrative in contrast to abstract analytical studies was/is a key characteristic. This course aims at discussing key texts on how to write mircohistory together with chosen case studies. Students will test their own writing skills as microhistorians in a specific tutorial on „writing/narrating history“ which is (could be) offered by experienced microhistorians who have specialized on this, and/or by certified writing coaches for academics).

Module 5 prepares the MA thesis, and it encourages and supports students to already find a research topic for their MA-thesis.

Year 2, Semester 2: MA thesis module

Modul 6: Research Colloquium (in preparation for this semester and building on Modul 5, students will write and present a first draft of their research proposal which will be circulated in advance, and which will be discussed at the beginning of the semester. Students are then supervised in further developing and specifying their research project, in conducting their research and in writing the thesis.