On Academic History’s Future


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Abstract: The History Manifesto by David Armitage and Jo Guldi seeks to replace economists with historians as the foremost policy advisors of politicians. With the humanities in a persistent perception of periodic crises-mode, historians are in need of critical reflections and ideas about their profession and their role in society. The Manifesto advocates a return to the study of larger time scales to overcome an alleged epidemic of short-term thinking. The authors argue that a return to the *longue durée* is pivotal for an engaged historical discipline. Guldi and Armitage tackle important subjects for historical research such as long term perspectives, big data, digital methodologies, and a call for a more engaged and socially critical historical practice. The impressive international resonance which the History Manifesto has received online as well as in the *American Historical Review* and in *Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales* is a hopeful sign that historians are eager to have a continued debate on the future of history.

Keywords: Annales, American Historical Review, Big Data, David Armitage, Digital Humanities, Engaged Historical Research, Fernand Braudel, Jo Guldi, Longue Durée, The History Manifesto

The History Manifesto
Jo Guldi & David Armitage
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1. History in Crisis … Again?

The Manifesto argues that our society and the historical profession are plagued by an attitude of “short-termism”. The authors state that in political as well as in economic decision-making the gains have to be imminent, lacking any long-term strategy to tackle the contemporary challenges facing mankind and our planet, namely climate change in the Anthropocene (G. & A., 64-73), international governance (G. & A., 73-79), and widening inequality within and among nations (G. & A., 79-85). The authors argue that due to this focus on the ‘short past’ historians are having trouble with truth-finding, falsifying of ideological and political arguments, providing relevant policy and political advice, and demonstrating the ‘impact’ of historical research. Guldi and Armitage identify some additional problems faced by the historical discipline today: (1) Historians are witnessing “an explosion of knowledge, including a proliferation of data”; an “information overload” (G. & A., 16, 88, 102, 104-107). The authors note that “we are awash in data” (G. & A., 100). (2) Historians are haunted by “a general anxiety about disciplinary boundaries” (G. & A., 16). The Manifesto itself bears witness to this claim as it seeks to position historians atop of the social sciences and humanities in order to dethrone economists. (3) The authors worry about an increasing irrelevance of history (G. & A., 51, 84). The Manifesto seeks to restore history as a guide to life and a policy compass (G. & A., 10, 17-20). More eloquently put: “Are we content, as historians, to leave the ostensible solutions to those crises in the hands of our colleagues in other academic departments? Or do we want to try to write good, honest history that would shake citizens, policymakers, and the powerful out of their complacency, history that will in Simon Schama’s words “keep people awake at night?”” (G. & A., 116).

2. Solutions for the Alleged Crisis of History

To overcome all the challenges facing historians, the Manifesto proposes a two part solution: (1) a return to the longue durée in order to reverse the trend of the short past by “moving towards larger spatial scabs for understanding contemporary challenges” and (2) a restoration of the historical discipline as “engaged academia” and history as a guide to public policy and politics (G. & A., 37).

2.1.A. “We’re trying to repurpose the Longue Durée.”

In the first and second chapter Guldi and Armitage seek to convince the reader that historical research during the twentieth century witnessed a rise of the longue durée followed by a retreat of the longue durée, as a result of a general trend of short-term thinking. The

Nota Bene: This review has used the review copy of the History Manifesto and has not considered the changes that have been made to the online edition of the Manifesto. All websites were accessed on 27/04/2015. A shorter version of this review will appear on the History News Network. I want to thank David Armitage, Deborah Cohen, Jo Guldi, Lynn Hunt, and Peter Mandler for their comments.

References to the History Manifesto will be noted in this review as follows: “G. & A., [pages].”

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authors argue that historians are now engulfed by short-termism, an attitude that is the product as well as the origin of micro-history. An attitude which precludes historians from having anything to contribute to public debate. Guldi and Armitage make these claims based on research done by Benjamin Schmidt. In a post entitled “What years do historians write about” which was published on May 9, 2013 on Schmidt’s blog Sapping Attention, Schmidt visualizes the years covered in American Ph.D. dissertations in history of the last 120 years –compiled by the American Historical Association-. Schmidt used 8,000 out of 30,000 titles which “have two years in the title: usually, those are start and end dates”. Schmidt wrote me that “I [Schmidt] chose not to try to code periods like ”Ming Dynasty,” ”Soviet Russia,” or ”Twentieth Century” … because I felt those studies rarely actually study the entire period described.”

Figure 1

Both Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 were made by Schmidt and used by Guldi and Armitage. During correspondence between the author of this review and Prof. Schmidt, Schmidt  

acknowledged that “the second graph is the more accurate one of the two”.\(^3\) Fig. 1 was incorporated in the English version of an article which is set to be published in the French journal *Annales*,\(^4\) while Fig. 2 was published in the Manifesto. The Manifesto gives the same explanation for Fig. 2 as the article does for Fig. 1, despite of the significant changes to Fig. 1. The amount of data used to support the Manifesto’s major argument on the evolution of historiography and to a larger extent the nature of the historical discipline of previous decades and decades to come, is too limited. In addition, Fig. 2 does not agree with what the Manifesto claims it to represent. Because when a mere difference of 15 years in mean length of a period of historical study makes the difference between the reign of the *longue durée* and that of the *histoire événementielle*, than the *longue durée* is either quite short or the short past very long. If anything, Fig. 2 shows that historians—in general in the US—have already turned to the study of longer time scales for over three decades.

It may be fruitful to consider the authors’ definition of the *longue durée*. This definition was discussed during a roundtable dedicated to the History Manifesto at the Heyman Center for the Humanities at Columbia University November 17, 2014. Armitage declared that: “What we are trying to do is to repurpose the *longue durée* and say it doesn’t have to be non-dynamic, static, merely a backdrop in the classic sense of Braudel … So we’re throwing out his *longue durée*, repurposing it as something which is longer than a human time scale, it can go from eighty years … to fourteen billion years. How long is a *long durée* … [Armitage asks looking at Guldi].”\(^5\) Responding to a follow-up question from the chair Guldi gave her view on the *longue durée*: “I think the form of the *longue durée* that we privilege is the *longue durée* of the middle term. So the middle range, the range of the life of institutions from 80 to 200 years ….”\(^6\) Both authors define the *longue durée* differently—from the age of the universe to the age of human institutions. Both definitions stipulate that the minimum length of a *longue durée* is 80 years. Then it follows from the authors’ own definition and considering Fig. 2, that there never was a period in which the *longue durée* was dominant, as chapter one of the Manifesto argues. From 1890 to 2012, the mean never reaches more than 65 years, around 1892, and the median—arguably a much better indicator—\(^7\) never reaches more than

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\(^3\) From personal correspondence between myself and Benjamin Schmidt. I thank Prof. Schmidt for replying to my questions on this topic. Visit his website at [http://benschmidt.org](http://benschmidt.org).


\(^6\) A Roundtable on The History Manifesto: ibid. Transcription from 1:19:14 to 1:19:35.

\(^7\) The earlier periods are based on fewer data per year because the number of dissertations increases over the century. Thus in these early periods the mean is easier distorted by a few exceptionally low or high numbers.
in 2012, namely around 43 years. According to Fig. 2, the time period averagely covered in American Ph.D. dissertations in history made during the last decade has not been as high since the end of the nineteenth century.

The Manifesto seeks to strengthen the *longue durée*-argument by attacking micro history. The authors claim that: “[s]een in this light, much of Anglophone historiography from roughly 1968 to 2008 can be cast as evidence of a moral crisis, an inward-looking retreat from commenting on contemporary global issues and alternative futures. While historians refined their tools and their understandings of social justice, they simultaneously inflicted upon their discipline habits of microscopic attention that culminated in a sense of practical irrelevance, of the historian as astronomer in a high tower, distanced from a political and economic landscape.” (G. & A., 83-84). Very similarly they write on the short past in history: “[f]rom 1968 to approximately 2000, many a researcher in those disciplines was thus temporarily relieved of original thinking about the past and its significance for the future” (G. & A., 51). According to the Manifesto: “professionalization had led to marginalisation” (G. & A., 53).

Armitage, an intellectual historian, who until recently had not been such a diehard advocate of the supremacy of the *longue durée*, wrote in an article from 2012 on the history of the idea of civil war that historical research is a combination of distant reading and close reading; of diachronical histories based on serial thick descriptions; of transtemporal history with serial contextualism. Armitage summarizes this argument as follows “‘distant reading’ of large accumulations of sources now supplements close reading but cannot replace it.” There is but one moment that the Manifesto seems to agree with Armitage when the authors note at the end of the Manifesto that a new trend in historical writing should be “a fusion between the big and the small, the ‘micro’ and the ‘macro’, that harnesses the best of archival work on the one hand and big-picture work about issues of common concern on the other” (A. & G., 117-118 similarly 120, 121). The Manifesto does not engage further with this claim. The statement also comes as a surprise considering that the authors have spent the better half of the book condemning micro-history.

Jack Hexter noted in his critique of ‘Fernand Braudel and the Monde Braudellien’, that even Braudel as the historiographical father of *longue durée*, occasionally distanced himself from an overly dominant *longue durée*. In addition, Hexter pointed out that Braudels

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10 Armitage, David, ibid., 506.

commitment to the *longue durée* did not only originate from his research preferences and beliefs, but also from a teleological use of the division between micro and macro historians to further institutional strategies and advancements within the *Annales* and French institutions of higher learning.\(^\text{12}\) The *longue durée* is an important way of doing historical research, but it is but one of many. And its application does not ensure an engaged historical discipline nor a historical narrative that has the answers for the future.

### 2.1.B. Big Data and Big Aspirations

“Big is back” the Manifesto proclaims (G. & A., 86). In chapter 4, the authors make a case for the use of digital humanities in confronting big data. Historical research methods are increasingly relying on digital applications on every level: from digitizing archives, searching document databases, quantifying data from quantitative as well as qualitative research, etc. This era of -to use a trending term- ‘big data’, seemingly offers only one answer for historians: go digital in your research methods and communicate your research results through digital media. Armitage and Guldi make digital research methods a central argument in their quest for the *longue durée*. In order to overcome the alleged particularism and irrelevance of microhistory historians need to take the gravy train of big data. The Manifesto does not consider historical periods or subjects were there is just bad data, or where translation of sources into data has no merit, nor does it discuss any of the other challenges distant reading offers. Mark Mazower, director of the Heyman Center, warned Armitage and Guldi not to equate sources with data and against forgetting that historians write about sources.\(^\text{13}\) Data is the product of resource interpretation, the deliberate results of extensive studies of archives and sources. Are the historians for whom data sets are not available within their area of study then doomed to micro-history and thus, according to the Manifesto, an academic career of marginality? The Manifesto’s digital discussion goes into programs for visualizing data sets such as *Google Ngram viewer* and Guldi’s own *Paper Machines*. Both aim to present the use and thus show the importance of a certain term in respectively the books scanned by Google and in a selected bibliography in *Zotero* –an open-source reference management tool-. Guldi and Armitage plot ‘short-termism’ in Google Ngram viewer on page 2 of the Manifesto. They conclude that because the usage of the term ‘sky-rocketed significantly’ since the 1980s, there has been an epidemic of short-term thinking. But considering that the term short-termism was not used a century ago, the term’s absence should not mean that short-thinking was hence also absent.

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\(^\text{13}\) A Roundtable on The History Manifesto: ibid. Transcription from 36:08 to 36:17.
2.2. An Engaged Historical Profession

In this Manifesto Armitage and Guldi seek to make history into a tool “to focus on the past in order to gain insight in and make sense of the present” (G. & A., 41-42). The authors claim that historians have “abandoned the public” and have retreated to the high tower of practical irrelevance (G. & A., 84).

The Manifesto - strikingly - does not refer to the growing American and international movement of public history. Nor, do Armitage and Guldi tackle any moral challenges that await historians in these public environments. The Manifesto does not discuss how historians should engage with these new environments, except for one relationship: that of historians and politicians. Armitage and Guldi are fed up with seeing economists being the major advisors in public policy. “Historians ceded the public arena to the economists and occasionally lawyers and political scientists”, Guldi and Armitage proclaim (G. & A., 125).

Preparing for the Manifesto’s release, Armitage wrote an opinion piece in the British newspaper The Guardian entitled “why politicians need historians.”14 In which Armitage explains that “today’s politicians rarely seek historians’ views.” The press release that accompanied the review-copy of the Manifesto was entitled “Why politicians need historians.”15 The Manifesto asserts that we need to bring historians back as the human scientists and as the advisors of politicians.

A recent New York Times article by economist Justin Wolfers, a professor of economics at the University of Michigan, made a distant reading of the New York Times and the records of the 101st US Congress.16 He noted how many times the terms ‘economist’ and ‘historian’ come up. Wolfers argued that since the 1930s economists were referred to most. Historians are in second position, losing their first place in the 1930s after having been on top ever since the 1860s where the data starts. He notices that “[e]ach economic calamity since the Great Depression – stagnation in the 1970s, the double-dip recession in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the 1991 downturn- has served to boost the stock of economists.” This remark resembled what Mark Mazower asked the Manifesto’s authors at the Heyman Center: “How are historians exactly supposed to dethrone economics, when the greatest crisis in capitalism since the great depression apparently couldn’t do it?”17 Dan Edelstein, professor of French and history at Stanford University, at the same roundtable stated: “Do we have to become economists in order to fight the economists?”18

17 A Roundtable on The History Manifesto: ibid. Transcription from 34:57 to 35:06.

The exchange in the April issue of the AHR of 2015 features an introduction, a critique of the Manifesto by Deborah Cohen and Peter Mandler, and a reply by Jo Guldi and David Armitage. The critique by Cohen and Mandler is as the introduction to the exchange notes, decidedly negative and strongly worded. With terms describing the Manifesto’s arguments as simple and deceptive, bewildering, and far-fetched, the critique accuses Guldi and Armitage of ignoring evidence an making absurd distortions. Understandably that Guldi and Armitage in their reply state that Cohen and Mandler write as “hanging judges.” A first defense that Guldi and Armitage try to erect is the fact that there have been a lot more positive reviews of the Manifesto than negative ones. But surely it is not the quantity but the quality of the reviews that is important. And on that level, the critique by Cohen and Mandler brings home a lot of its claims. The critique focusses on the central arguments of the Manifesto on the return of the longue durée, an alleged crisis in history, big data, short-termism, engagement, and the idea that studying longer time scales will automatically improve the discipline’s public and political significance.

Cohen and Mandler challenge, first and foremost the interpretation of Schmidt’s data by Guldi and Armitage. The critique asserts that Guldi and Armitage “ignore the very data they cite.” Mandler and Cohen note: “How Guldi and Armitage manage to convert that expansion [of time scales] into a shrinkage is bewildering.” Cohen and Mandler introduce their own data to strengthen their interpretation of Schimdt’s data. They surveyed the reviews published in the AHR in eight sample years over a span of eight years. Cohen and Mandler conclude: “Based on our research, Guldi and Armitage have the facts backward, as their own chart should have told them.” Similar to this review and Schmidt’s own explanation, the critique concludes that Schmidt’s graph does not show what Guldi and

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25 See Fig. 1 and Fig. 2, cfr. supra.
26 Cohen, Deborah and Mandler, Peter. ibid., 531.
27 Cohen, Deborah and Mandler, Peter. ibid., 531.
28 Cohen, Deborah and Mandler, Peter. ibid., 531.
29 Cohen, Deborah and Mandler, Peter. ibid., 532.
Armitage describe—a return to the *longue durée* in recent years—but that “there is much more continuity than change across the twentieth century, and if anything, longer time scales had become more, not less, common as of 1986.” Guldi and Armitage respond by employing more data in order to support their conclusions. The Manifesto’s authors use “a much bigger sample than Cohen and Mandler’s, drawing on date ranges in the titles of roughly 68,000 history doctoral dissertations in ProQuest, as well as in 80,000 historical articles and reviews of historical monographs published in journals from 1920 to 2014 and available through JSTOR” and “data ranges in 15,000 articles and book reviews in the *AHR*.” They conclude that: “Time scales contracted and have since widened, with their greatest expansion in the last few years, just as *The History Manifesto* observed.”

But the new graphs Armitage and Guldi have come up with again do not support their argument of a contemporary return to the *longue durée*. All four figures they discuss show that since the 1980s’ historians have returned to the study of larger time scales after time scales had contracted somewhat or severely during the second quarter of the twentieth century (depending on which figure you look at because not one of the four combines all of the collected data in one figure). In addition, the reader is not informed about the data Armitage and Guldi are using. How are titles turned into data? What about the titles that have no numeral indication of the time scale discussed; for example titles that study historical periods without a clear start- and end-date. Did the figures used in the critique and in the reply in *AHR*, incorporate these sort of titles as opposed to Schmidt’s original data set? Also note that the figures in the reply switch between the use of mean time (Fig. 3 & 5) and median time (Fig. 2 & 4). The introduction to the exchange in *AHR* confronts a similar concern about this empirical kerfuffle. “Some of the dispute here is empirical in nature, hinging upon divergent conclusions from “big data” sources of books, dissertations, and journal articles. But how reliable are these—that is, as titles- as an indication of the chronological scope of these works? To take one notable example: to go by the title of Braudel’s *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, considered the ur-example of long-term history, its chronological scope was a mere seventy-one years—the life span of the Spanish monarch. There are rewards and pitfalls in the realm of big data.” Guldi and Armitage stick with their interpretations despite clear indications that they are not consistent with the data presented. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reported that several historians had questioned the ethics with which Armitage and Guldi used their

30 Cohen, Deborah and Mandler, Peter. ibid., 532.
31 Armitage, David and Guldi, Jo. ibid., 549.
32 Armitage, David and Guldi, Jo. ibid., 550.
33 Armitage, David and Guldi, Jo. ibid., 549-553.
34 Cohen and Mandler detail in footnote 8 how they selected and used their data. Cohen, Deborah and Mandler, Peter. ibid., 532.
35 See my discussion on this issue above.
data and interpreted their data.\textsuperscript{37} Armitage and Guldi responded by claiming that the article was reported and presented poorly.\textsuperscript{38} The \textit{Chronicle} based itself on the debate in the \textit{AHR}, in \textit{Annales}, and the work done by one anonymous \textit{blogger} who has gone through the Manifesto with a magnifying glass. Cohen and Mandler note that the Manifesto uses “forced arguments about the short-termism of academic history” because “they needed to invent a crisis of short-termism in the discipline in order to point clearly toward the advantages of the longue durée.”\textsuperscript{39}

The idea of a crisis in the humanities is key to the Manifesto’s argumentation. Because short-term thinking made historians leave the study of longer time scales, history has fallen to the dangers of short-term thinking, its only solution is a return to the study of longer time scales and big data. Not surprisingly thus that Guldi and Armitage are fervent in countering the deniers of that crisis. They diagnose “a crisis of the humanities in general, and for history in particular.”\textsuperscript{40} What causes do Armitage and Guldi see as the origins of this crisis? (1) The decrease of enrolments of history students.\textsuperscript{41} The \textit{American Historical Association} has presented evidence of this decline. Yet, is it not a short-term thinking inspired argument that enrolments have to continue to grow indefinitely? A historical interpretation, a \textit{longue durée} interpretation if you will, could be that enrolments will rise and fall, and that it now may be the case that enrolments are returning to ‘normal’ levels in the humanities after a period of very high enrolment? Let alone, that numbers of enrolment are the sole indicator of the importance or intellectual condition of a discipline. (2) Secondly, Armitage and Guldi see the seeds of crisis in “the decline in the number of tenured or tenure-track positions for historians …, the rise in the number of adjunct teachers, the decline in relative compensation, the rise of acute and accumulating pressures because of rising number of students.”\textsuperscript{42} But are these elements not problems of higher education as a whole, and not solely of the humanities, not solely of the historical discipline? Almost ironically it is again data provided by Benjamin Schmidt that counters Guldi’s and Armitage’s argument. In 2013, Benjamin Schmidt published an article in \textit{The New York Times} entitled “The Data

\textsuperscript{39} Cohen, Deborah and Mandler, Peter. ibid., 538.
\textsuperscript{40} Armitage, David and Guldi, Jo. ibid., 543.
\textsuperscript{41} Lynn Hunt debunks this argument in her article in \textit{Annales}. Hunt, Lynn. Does History Need a Reset? \textit{Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales}, Vol. 70, No. 2. [Forthcoming]
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Shows There’s No Real Crisis in the Humanities.”43 He notes that “the best data about the health of the humanities are the Department of Education’s surveys of college majors, available through 2011. As a percentage of all bachelor’s degrees, history degrees are up 19 percent from a quarter-century ago; in the same period, the relative share of business degrees fell almost a fifth, and economics is down more than 25 percent.”44 Schmidt concludes as follows: “But while the fields should and will keep changing, they don’t need to do so out of the fear that their very survival is at stake.”45

This brings us to another point of critique: the automatic connection the Manifesto makes between the study of longer time scales and relevance of historical research. The critique in AHR notes that: “far from closing themselves off in their professional ivory towers, historians in the last forty years have been reaching larger and ever more diverse publics in a wide array of public theatres...”46 Cohen and Mandler continue for half a page to give multiple examples of historians moving beyond the traditional borderlines of the University. The Manifesto does at no point consider the movement of public history and the venues it engages in. The critique explains this by maintaining that the Manifesto’s target audience “is not the millions of their fellow citizens, but very specifically a set of elites [policy makers].”47 Armitage and Guldi retaliate that their argument focuses, quoting historian John Tosh, on the historian as a citizen scholar, who is “not solely directed toward fellow academics.”48 The authors of the Manifesto continue to maintain that historians have far less ‘daily influence’ than economists, political scientists, and lawyers in the politics of modern governance.49 But “it was not ever thus”, according to Armitage and Guldi. They refer to the article in the New York Times by Justin Wolfers on the occurrence of citations of historians and economists in the newspaper and the 101st US Congress which I discussed above. Again their interpretation of the empirical data is curious, Guldi and Armitage write that “citations of historians in the newspaper’s pages consistently outnumbered those of economists until the mid-1960s, when citations from economists took off.”50 This is not what the figure presents. The figure shows that citations of historians were overtaken by those of economists in the 1930’s following the Great Depression. Guldi and Armitage note in their

44 Schmidt, Benjamin. 2013. The Data Shows There’s No Real Crisis in the Humanities. ibid.
45 Schmidt, Benjamin. 2013. ibid.
46 Cohen, Deborah and Mandler, Peter. ibid., 537.
47 Cohen, Deborah and Mandler, Peter. ibid., 537.
48 Armitage, David and Guldi, Jo. ibid., 547.
49 Armitage, David and Guldi, Jo. ibid., 546.
50 Armitage, David and Guldi, Jo. ibid., 546.
reply to their critics in *Annales* on the very same figure that: “the ascendency of economists over historians began even earlier than we had suspected, in the 1930s.”

One of the venues historians engage in, where their knowledge is used critically is the courtroom. Chandler and Mandler assign great importance to historians who have written amicus briefs, intervening in legal proceedings to inform to court of a certain historical aspect important to the case. The critique refers to other forms of forensic history such as the Sears case - *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission v. Sears Roebuck and Co.* - where expertise from historians Rosalind Rosenberg and Alice Kessler-Harris played a case-deciding role. Historians have been experts in litigation concerning creationism, industrial pollution, land rights of indigenous peoples, superfund site research, water rights of indigenous peoples, voting rights, tobacco tort litigation, historical jurisdiction over rivers, lead paint poisoning toxic tort litigation, other consumer product tort litigation, and many more issues. A subject Guldi and Armitage are not unfamiliar with as they praise Allan Brandt, a Harvard colleague of Armitage, and Robert Proctor, professor at Stanford, for their work in research on tobacco and health in American History. Both historians have served as expert witnesses for the Department of Justice in the federal landmark case *US v. Philip Morris et al.* In tobacco litigation alone over 50 American historians have been active in over 314 cases during the period 1986-2014. Engagement in legal proceedings by historians is a clear example of historians engaging with important social issues, Cohen and Mandler as well as Armitage and Guldi agree on. In tobacco litigation historians mingle in debates on public health and questions of negligence and personal responsibility for the consumption of tortious products. Yet, the questions are not about time-scales in these cases –those are in general obvious- but on ethics, remunerations by lawyers, collaboration with lawyers, objectivity, publication of research and peer review, declaration of third party.

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52 Latin for ‘friends of the court’.


54 Cohen, Deborah and Mandler, Peter. ibid., 538-539.


58 Cohen, Deborah and Mandler, Peter. ibid., 538-539. & Armitage, David and Guldi, Jo. ibid., 546, 548.
funding of research, transparency of consultancy and expert witnessing by historians, etc. With remunerations as high as hundreds of thousands of dollars and no peer-reviewed publications or communication on the part of the historians hired by the tobacco companies the question arises whether some historians are willing to trade their reputation and that of their university for the benefit of an interested party. These are the true practical challenges engagement offers, and those are not considered by the Manifesto.

Cohen and Mandler note, a point also made in this review, that in the end after that the Manifesto has spent a lot of time making “overheated claims” on micro-history and the possibilities of the longue durée, Guldi and Armitage make a weakly call “for a union of “micro” and “macro”.”59 The fundamental point, on which Cohen and Mandler as well as Guldi and Armitage agree on, is that “the time-scales that scholars adopt depend on the questions they are asking and the subjects they are investigating.”60 Even when appropriate times scales are used and the ‘right’ questions are asked, this does not automatically imply that historians are engaged and relevant. To face those challenges historians will have to ask questions that are not discussed in the Manifesto nor the debate surrounding it. Questions on objectivity, research ethics, collaboration with other disciplines, transparency of research funds, digital communication of research, etc.

With a new discussion pending with the publication of the critical dossier in the May-issue of Annales, the discussion on the Manifesto, and certainly on the subjects it confronts will continue to force historians to reflect upon their research methods and the goals of their research.

4. On the Opportunity of History
The History Manifesto leaves its readers hungry for more. The argument for the longue durée could have been brought home better with a little less attack on micro-history. Yet the core argument of Guldi and Armitage, history as a combination of serial textualism –a series of micro-studies as Armitage has described it- is an argument almost all historians will support. Yet the Manifesto is too rhetorically conceived to go into great depth about (1) big data and historical research as well as (2) engaged historical research’s connection with the longue durée. (1) The big data component is too narrowly presented in the book, thereby leaving out historical researchers who do not have access to huge chunks of data. Nor does the Manifesto consider any of the difficulties and serious challenges big data confronts historians with. (2) The engaged historical research component in the Manifesto is too concerned with replacing economists. Historians have valuable and legitimate knowledge to share with the public. But doing longue durée historical research will not automatically bring historians to the forefront of public debate. Historians have been taking on longer

59 Cohen, Deborah and Mandler, Peter. ibid., 536.
60 Cohen, Deborah and Mandler, Peter. ibid., 536. & G. & A., 119.
time scales for decades. The Manifesto does not notably confront that historians need to seek out different skills and attitudes to engage with a broader public and to weigh in on public policy and be truly engaged.

Reviewing for the International Network for Theory of History, I noted the absence of any reference to the philosophy of history, public history, and of an international perspective outside of western historiography. The Manifesto does rightly mention that universities have the duty and should have the opportunity to take a long durée view and do fundamental research which should not always be forced to prove its direct impact or value (G. & A., 5-6). The authors do not confront the increasing pressures mounted against historians and other scientists to publish and be productive, despite that this evolution is a clear example of a policy being motivated by short-term views—the epidemic the Manifesto ventures to reverse. The Manifesto’s most remarkable feat is its publication in open access which has brought about a larger discussion amongst historians, who have brought a lot of content to the debate.61

The Manifesto urges its readers to use data because data carries the connotation of usefulness and science, a basis from which historians can draw broad conclusions that have relevance in present and the future which can then be used by policy makers. Edelstein noted that the Manifesto had a “cliometric tone”.62 Armitage and Guldi proclaim on multiple occasions that historians are the arbiters of the past (G. & A., 7, 10, 12, 36, 56, 87, 94, 107, 112-114, 123.). This legal term leaves much to be desired. Historians give voice to different narratives and opinions in the past, rather than being the judges of a single past.

So I feel strongly that I should part by letting Braudel himself have the final word: “Ces pages sont un appel à la discussion.”63 Without debate no discipline can survive. The Manifesto has sought and found controversy amongst its readers, and historians should welcome it. There is much to be hopeful about for history and historians. History is very apparent in our daily lives.64 As some philosophers of history have argued: the past is no longer passing away.65 Historians all over the world are looking for engaged and practical pasts.66 History teaches us—as the Manifesto righteously notes—that history is an

61 See this website by Cambridge University Press for all the reviews of the History Manifesto: http://historymanifesto.cambridge.org/media.
62 A Roundtable on The History Manifesto: ibid. Transcription from 27:45 to 27:54.
66 See for example to new book by Hayden White: White, Hayden. 2014. The Practical Past. Evanston: Northwestern University Press. See also the second network conference of the International Network for
opportunity to learn and shape our own world out of free will (G. & A., 30-31). It is at this juncture where the present is shaped out of the old and the new where history lies and where historians have a practical role to play as social critics and civic voices, not as economic styled predictors of the future in service of politicians’ needs. Historians are engaged when they write controversial history that challenges a broader public. Historians are engaged when history helps people understand the present through the past and emboldens them to create a better future.

Bibliography

On Academic History’s Future - A Review by Ramses Delafontaine of The History Manifesto

