



## Editors' Introduction

**Jackie Smith**

**Jennifer Bair**

**Patrick Manning**

**David Ruvolo**

**Adam Brode**

This issue of the *Journal of World-Systems Research* commemorates the contributions of a leading thinker and political leader in the world-systems tradition, Samir Amin. Amin died last August, just after he left us all with a call to action to renew efforts at convening a New International of People and Workers. In order to pay tribute to Amin and his life's work, we have invited scholar-practitioners to offer commentaries on Amin's call, and we hope this dialogue will help advance the critical intellectual and political work that is needed to bring about world-systemic transformation. This project is innovative in that it is a co-publication between three publications, [Globalizations](#), published by Taylor and Frances, and two open access publications, [JWSR](#) and the Pan-African [Pambazuka News Service](#). The full collection of essays appears on [Globalizations](#) website [Vol. 16(7)], and we include a subset of those essays here. Our aim is to reach as broad and diverse an audience as possible and to help more readers around the world learn about world-systems analysis and the important work of Samir Amin.

Our forum opens, following Amin's initial call, with an essay by Patrick Bond that offers what we might describe as a [world-system biography](#), situating Amin's life and work within a broader historical and political framework. He shows how Amin helped create spaces within which left thinking and organization could develop across countries of the global South as well as



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between North and South. From the Third World Forum to the World Social Forum, Amin was key in helping build movement formations that have been essential for advancing thought, organization, and movement leadership on the global left. In their essays reacting to Amin's call for a Fifth International, the authors gathered here agree broadly with Amin's two key points: namely, that in this moment we are facing an unprecedented world-systemic crisis, and that the global left must come together around a unified project of social transformation. As Kagarlitsky observes, "We are entering a period when bold strategic experimentation is needed." From there, our authors diverge over whether a Fifth International should be organized from the top-down by a cadre of leaders (e.g., Moghadam), or whether it should emerge from a more horizontalist, bottom-up approach (e.g., Agozino, Sklair). A third option is offered by Karatasli, who draws from a world-historical analysis of prior Worker Internationals to call for a simultaneous effort in both directions.

A second important question raised by contributors is whether the target of a Fifth International is states and the inter-state system, or an increasingly concentrated transnational capitalist class that defies our state-centric conventional thinking and political methodologies (Robinson, Sklair). The question of the state is not a new one, and Worth traces debates around the role of the state to the Second International and the important contributions there of Rosa Luxemburg, who saw national identities as a tool with which capital could divide workers and intensify their exploitation. This question remains critical for the global left, particularly as we see the wealth and power of corporations overtaking that of even mid-sized countries (see Winter 2019 JWSR on [Corporate Power and Local Democracy](#)). Sklair's analysis takes us a bit further, as he confronts the reality of the Anthropocene and its implications. His essay calls not just for projects of local production and exchange, but also for the development of "new mentalities" that challenge the culture-ideology of consumerism.

Essays by Maestrum and Juego identify lessons from prior struggles that can help address more concrete questions about *how* to advance Amin's proposed Fifth International. Maestrum draws from her extensive work within the World Social Forum process to call for a move "beyond slogans" to dig deeper into what it means to build anti-capitalist struggle from a range of movements tackling different aspects of global capitalism's effects. Yet, she sees values such as freedom, equality, solidarity, and human rights as having potential to help unify diverse strands of movements around a shared emancipatory vision. Juego's essay engages in more detail the type of organization needed for a Fifth International; he calls for it to be a "learning organization," that facilitates dialogue while also serving as a "global coordinating council" that helps distill the best ideas and practices from both horizontalist and verticalist organizing approaches. And wrapping up this forum, Álvarez and Chase-Dunn and Almeida examine the recent history of global and climate justice activism to show how the networks and ideas that have been developing through

those struggles provide a foundation for the kind of new International they see envisioned in Amin's parting call to the world left.

Leading off our research article section, Christopher Chase-Dunn and his colleagues provide evidence that bears on the question of the capacity of the Global left to respond to Amin's call and convene an impactful International of workers and people. These authors examine results of surveys of World Social Forum (WSF) participants to consider how those who claim to be "actively involved" in anarchist movements compare with other attendees. They argue that—despite relatively small numbers of activists—anarchists are connected with all the major issue-based movements, and their core principles such as participatory democracy, consensual decision-making, and rejection of institutionalized political mechanisms are widely shared among WSF activists and the broader Global left. The authors evaluate the implications of this influence of anarchist ideologies and strategies for the overall potential of global social movements to build the collective power needed to address the major social and ecological challenges of today's world-system.

Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz and Corey Payne draw from a developing World Magnates Database to explore the historical shifts in the world-system's core and periphery zones. They use data on the wealthiest individuals in the world to examine the evolution of the sugar commodity chain from the sixteenth to the late-18<sup>th</sup> centuries. In doing so, they interrogate common assumptions about how we classify world-systemic regions. They argue that definitions of "core" and "peripheral" regions and activities were not clearly bounded in this early period of capitalist expansion, and processes of "creative destruction" were at work to shape the relative profitability of various nodes in this commodity chain. For instance, the introduction of enslaved labor into this commodity chain substantially enhanced the profitability of production relative to other links in the commodity chain. Moreover, this study shows that states were not always central to shaping such processes. The term "corification" is used here to reflect this historic fluidity in the world-system hierarchy and to sensitize scholars to questions of "how various dimensions of creative destruction are manifested in particular times and places."

Aaron Major and Zhifan Luo examine the extent to which China's counterhegemonic challenge to the United States reflects its efforts to build military as well as economic power. They examine China's economic and political-military relationships with other states between 1993 and 2015 and compare these with those of the United States. Noting that China has used military engagements in a much more limited way than the United States did during its ascendance to global power and has been more willing to engage in multilateral military deployments, they conclude that "China has conducted its political-military activities within and around global structures crafted by decades of U.S. dominance." This echoes the point in Korzeniewicz and Payne, that we

must situate world-historical processes such as hegemonic ascendance and decline within their specific world-historical context.

The World-Historical Information section of this issue shows the continuing importance of analyzing the Atlantic slave trade, through an article documenting an innovative way to view the major passages of captives across the Atlantic from 1650 to 1860. Historian Patrick Manning and statistician Yu Liu have reorganized the well-known data of the well-known Slave Voyages website in terms of “routes” linking African regions of departure with American regions of arrival. Their results show that, of the 40 possible routes, the top nine accounted for 83% of the voyages and the captives sent across the Atlantic. The two most active routes were from West Central Africa (Angola) to Brazil and from Benin Republic to Brazil; the next six major routes were to the Caribbean from five regions in West Africa and from West Central Africa. Further, the results show the coherence of the routes: each route carried a relatively constant number of captives aboard each slave ship from 1650 to 1850. The article is backed up by a dataset enabling readers to explore and verify the details of this analysis of slave trade. JWSR’s World-Historical Information section expects to pursue its interest in online datasets: forthcoming issues will continue the tradition of publishing critical reviews of online datasets.

In this issue’s review section of JWSR, readers will find an Author Dialogue on “Race in the Capitalist World-System.” This format allows two scholars whose work is in conversation to engage each other directly by having them review each other’s work, and then respond to that review. The titles and authors featured in this Dialogue are *The Spectre of Race: How Discrimination Haunts Western Democracy* by Michael G. Hanchard, and *Into the Tempest: Essays on the New Global Capitalism* by William I. Robinson. What emerges from the exchange between Hanchard and Robinson is thoughtful debate and ample disagreement about topics that have long been central to the study of capitalism as a world historical system, including the autonomy of the political from the economic, and the relationship between race, capitalist exploitation, and inequality. While it does not provide definitive answers to these questions, the authors’ dialogue about the role of racial and ethnic difference in the making of the capitalist world system reflects the frontier of scholarship in this field.

In addition, we offer our usual collection of book reviews. Among the nine titles reviewed in this issue, environmental pressures, land use, and migration feature prominently. In *Extreme Cities* (reviewed by Jacob F. Northcutt and Brett Clark), Ashley Dawson discusses urban areas on the front lines of the climate crisis; in *Dust Bowls of Empire* (reviewed by Md Belal Hossain), Hannah Holleman draws out the connections, both historical and contemporary, between imperialism, industrial agriculture and ecological destruction; in *Saving the Sacred Sea* (reviewed by Salvatore Babones), Kate Brown contributes to field theory via an analysis of environmental politics in Russia; in *Dirty Gold* (reviewed by Tim Bartley), Michael John Bloomfield examines how

companies that make and sell jewelry respond to demands from environmental NGOs that they clean up their supply chains; in *Migration and Agriculture* (reviewed by Susan E. Mannon), editors Alessandra Corrado, Carlos de Castro and Domenico Perrotta and contributors provide a look at the challenges facing farmers and farm laborers in Europe's periphery; and, in *The Land Question in China* (reviewed by Wenkai He), Shaohua Zhan identifies small-scale farming and rural industry as providing a different and more welfare-enhancing path to economic growth than agrarian capitalism. Also included in this issue are reviews by: Thomas Reifer of the collection *Emotions and Mass Atrocity: Philosophical and Theoretical Explanations*, edited by Thomas Brudholm and Johannes Lang; Marilyn Grell-Brisk of Salvatore Babones' *American Tianxia*; and, Hiroko Inoue of *Giants: The Global Power Elite* by Peter Phillips.

We close by reminding our readers that the *Journal of World-Systems Research* is one of the most established open access, peer reviewed scholarly journals. As we worked to produce this issue, programmers working with the [Public Knowledge Project](#) (PKP), the organization that builds and supports the Open Journal System (OJS) software which we use to produce JWSR, gathered at the University of Pittsburgh for a work-session to improve the OJS and other open access tools. Technologists from around the United States and from Germany, the UK, Colombia, and Brazil gathered for a rare opportunity to work in person to solve programming problems, improve OJS accessibility and user-friendliness, and enhance translation tools and other features of the software. We appreciated the chance to meet some of the folks who work behind-the-scenes to help us run our journal and whose efforts are critical to our work to protect people's access to the knowledge commons. We look forward to introducing some exciting improvements to the JWSR website with our next issue. Finally, we remind readers that you are an important part of this work. To remain viable as a free and open access journal, we rely on all of you to help with high-quality scholarship and peer-reviews as well as to help us spread the word about JWSR and expand our readership. Please also keep in mind that the annual recognition of [Open Access week is October 21-27, 2019](#). This is a great time to make a special effort to publicize JWSR and open access!