



## The Rise and Trajectory of *JWSR* Reflections on the 30th Anniversary

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The thirtieth anniversary of the [Journal of World-Systems Research](#) approaches and so this is a good time to tell the story of its birth and some of the main developments since that time. The world-system perspective emerged during the world revolution of 1968, when social scientists contemplated the meaning of Latin American dependency theory for Africa. Immanuel Wallerstein, Terence Hopkins, Samir Amin, Andre Gunder Frank, and Giovanni Arrighi developed slightly different versions of the world-system perspective in interaction with each other. The big idea was that the global system had a stratified structure of inequality based on institutionalized exploitation. This implied that the whole system was the proper unit of analysis, not national societies, and that development and underdevelopment had been structured by global power relations for centuries. The modern world-system is a self-contained entity based on a geographically differentiated division of labor and bound together by a world market. In the Hopkins-Wallerstein's version, capitalism had become predominant in Europe and its peripheries in the long sixteenth century and had expanded and deepened in waves. The core states were able to concentrate the most profitable economic activities and they exploited the semiperipheral and



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peripheral zones by means of colonialism and an international division of labor that was based on the unequal exchange of surplus value produced by labor.

The world-system analysts all focused on global inequalities, but their terminologies were somewhat different. Amin and Frank used the terms “center and “periphery.” Wallerstein proposed a three tiered-structure with an intermediate semiperiphery between the core and the periphery, and he used the term “core” to suggest a multicentric region containing a group of states rather than a single center. When the world-system perspective emerged, the focus on the non-core (periphery and semiperiphery) was called Third Worldism; current terminology refers to the global North (the core) and the non-core global South (the periphery and semiperiphery) (Chase-Dunn and Grell-Brisk 2019).

The [Fernand Braudel Center](#) at Binghamton University was founded by Terence Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein in 1976, and it published an important world-system print journal, [REVIEW](#), from 1976 until the Braudel Center closed in 2016. An annual spring conference began in 1978. These were held at different locations chosen by the Braudel Center and produced a series of published collections that contained articles based on papers presented at the conferences.<sup>1</sup> The [Political Economy of the World-System \(PEWS\)](#) section of the American Sociological Association was formed in 1980.

In 1995 Chase-Dunn (I) was a world-systems sociologist at Johns Hopkins University who had done a PhD under John W. Meyer and Michael Hannan at Stanford and then tried to formalize the world-system perspective as a theoretical research program. My *Global Formation* had been published in 1989. After that Thomas D. Hall and I began developing the comparative evolutionary world-systems approach, which uses whole world-systems as the unit of analysis for studying human sociocultural evolution.

### Rise of JWSR

Chase-Dunn (I) attended a conference in Boulder, Colorado in 1994. Marta Gimenez, a sociologist friend at University of Colorado-Boulder (UCB), introduced me to her husband Don Roper,<sup>2</sup> an economist at UCB, who was in the process of setting up Communications for a Sustainable Future (CSF). Don brought me to his apartment and showed me how he could ftp (file transfer protocol) into the card catalogue at the University of Texas from his home computer. I knew this was hot.

In January of 1995, Don helped me set up the World-Systems Network (WSN), a listserv for world-systems scholars<sup>3</sup>, and Don also hosted the newly founded *Journal of World-Systems Research (JWSR)* at Communications for a Sustainable Future. We used ftp and gopher text files

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<sup>1</sup> A list of these PEWS Annuals is at <http://www.asapews.org/annuals.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Don Roper died in 2022. His obituary is at <https://www.dailycamera.com/obituaries/don-edward-roper-boulder-co/>

<sup>3</sup> From the first version of “[The Rise of JWSR](#),” published in 2013. The World-Systems Archive (<http://wsarch.ucr.edu/>) contains most of the posts made to this list serve from 1995 to 2004. In later years WSN was moderated by Prof. Quee-Young Kim at the University of Wyoming.

before the invention of hypertext markup language (html). Techies had invented something called “ascii art,” which were graphics composed of ascii characters that could be displayed in a simple text file. We used an ascii art representation of the globe as the first logo for *JWSR* (see <http://jwsr.pitt.edu/ojs/index.php/jwsr/article/view/58/70>).

Gopher was clunky<sup>4</sup> but Tom Brown, a techie sociology graduate student at Johns Hopkins, helped us get it to work. Susan Manning, Salvatore Babones, and Bruce Podobnik, also Hopkins sociology grad students, helped to produce the first volume of *JWSR*. We were early adopters of internet technology just before the explosion of the Internet.

The philosophy of the global knowledge commons was clearly expressed in the first Editorial Purpose and Policy, which has unfortunately not survived the various techno transitions that have occurred since 1995. The original is appended below, along with the original masthead of staff and board members.

Our approach was to not worry about the surface of things, but rather to focus our energies on producing the best content we could. The review process was designed to help contributors improve their work. We had no trouble getting quality submissions because our colleagues were also enthusiastic about the idea of the global knowledge commons. Some must have worried about whether the journal would survive and whether it would be taken seriously, but this is the same problem for all start-ups.

We knew from WSN and the American Sociological Association (ASA) Political Economy of the World-System (PEWS) section of the ASA that there was a vibrant community of scholars who were excited about world-systems analysis. The great content published in *JWSR* over the years is the best evidence that we were right. Many colleagues worked very hard on the campaign from 2001 to 2008 to get *JWSR* adopted as an official journal of the PEWS section.

The future, like the past, will turn on the content. Linking to data sets and the use of audio and video in research articles have been encouraged from the beginning, but not much used; at least so far. We also always intended to publish in languages other than English, but not much of this has happened. These are areas that might be expanded in the future. Pretty pictures are nice, but real social science is still the gold standard. If the content is good, the form just needs to serve to communicate it effectively. That was our stance and I think it is still a good one, but *JWSR* has evolved since the late 90s.

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<sup>4</sup> From the first version of “[The Rise of JWSR](#),” published in 2013. The gopher file for the masthead page of the first issue of *JWSR*:

Gopher Menu

[Image] \*\*\*\*\*

[Image] □ □ \*\*\*\*\* □ □ □ JOURNAL OF WORLD-SYSTEMS RESEARCH □ □ □ \*\*\*\*\*

[Image] \*\*\*\*\*

[Image] Logo

[Image] Welcome To JWSR

[Image] How To View Tables And Figures

[Image] JWSR Volume #1, 1995

In 2000 *JWSR* moved to the [Institute of Research on World-Systems \(IROWS\)](#) at the University of California, Riverside and was published by the University of California's [e-Scholarship platform](#), and in 2008 *JWSR* became an official American Sociological Association section journal under the auspices of the PEWS section. From 2012 to 2018 Jackie Smith at the University of Pittsburgh was the Editor-in-Chief. She moved the journal from the University of California-system to a fully automated online submission platform run by the University of Pittsburgh's University Library System, which supports **open access** scholarly publishing through its e-journal publishing program, an arrangement that has been continued after the journal editorship moved away from the University of Pittsburgh. And Jackie also got *JWSR* included in the Social Science Citation Index and on the master list of the [Web of Science](#); and she implemented [PlumX](#), an alternative metrics index for assess usage of online content.

In 2019, Andrej Grubačić at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco became the Editor. He and his Managing Editor, Rallie Murray, assisted by Book Review Editor Alexandre White at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, have done an amazing job. Rallie is compiling a list of *JWSR*'s Greatest Hits, which can be found in the Editor's Introduction to this issue. Now the ASA PEWS Publications Committee is searching for a new editorial team.<sup>5</sup> Volume 30 (1) was published in April of 2014, and Volume 30 (2) is being published in August of 2024. The future of *JWSR* is bright because it has a sound institutional connection and scholarship on the global world-system and on earlier regional systems is booming. The Braudel Center closed at Binghamton, but a new Political Economy of the World-System Interuniversity Consortium (PEWS-IC) is forming in the global knowledge commons (see <https://irows.ucr.edu/pewsic/pews-ic.pdf>).

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### References

Chase-Dunn, Chris. 2017 "Social Science and World Revolutions." *Journal of World-Systems Research* 23(2): 733–752. <https://doi.org/10.5195/jwsr.2017.743> (see also IROWS Working Paper #121 available at <http://irows.ucr.edu/papers/irows121/irows121.htm>)

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<sup>5</sup> The Chair of the PEWS Publications Committee is David Smith at [dasmith@uci.edu](mailto:dasmith@uci.edu)

Chase-Dunn, Chris and Marilyn Grell-Brisk. 2019. "Oxford Bibliography in International Relations: World-System Theory." In *Oxford Bibliography in International Relations*, edited by Patrick James. New York: Oxford University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199743292-0272>

### **Appendix A: First Editorial Purpose and Policy of JWSR, February 1995**

\_Journal of World-Systems Research\_

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[gopher://csf.colorado.edu/wsystems/journals/](http://gopher://csf.colorado.edu/wsystems/journals/)

Editorial Policy

The main editorial goal of the \_Journal of World-Systems Research\_ is to develop and disseminate scholarly research on topics that are relevant to the analysis of world-systems. We especially want to include works that proceed from several different theoretical stances and disciplines. These include, but are not limited to, civilizationists, evolutionary approaches, international political economy, comparative, historical and cultural analysis. We seek the work of political scientists, historians, sociologists, anthropologists, archaeologists, economists and geographers.

We especially encourage works that take theory seriously by confronting problems of conceptualization and making definitions of concepts explicit, by formulating hypotheses, constructing axiomatic theories and causal models. Theoretical research programs that combine theory construction with comparative research are badly needed to take the world-systems approach beyond the stage of a perspective.

We also want to encourage the application of comparative, quantitative and network-analytic methods to world-systems research, though we will certainly also publish pieces that do not use these methods. Any empirical study that is deemed relevant to world-systems analysis may be published even if it uses a very different conceptual framework.

And finally, we also want to publish discussions of future

trajectories and options for the modern world-system and considerations of what can be done to create a more humane, peaceful and just world society.

The purposes of *\_JWSR\_* are:

- >to produce a high-quality publication of world-systems research articles using the advantages of the electronic medium;
- >to publish quantitative and comparative research on world-systems;
- >to publish works of theory construction and codification of causal propositions;
- >to publish data sets in connection with articles; and
- >to publish articles that are longer than those usually accepted by hard copy journals
- >to publish reviews of books relevant to world-systems studies
- >to publish a forum for world-system-relevant comments on current issues

Institutional Basis:

The institutional home of *\_JWSR\_* is the Program in Comparative International Development in the Department of Sociology at Johns Hopkins University. It is also associated with WSN, an electronic conferencing network located at Communications for a Sustainable Future at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

Governance:

*\_JWSR\_* is a self-published refereed journal under the control of the Editor and the Editorial Board. The Associate Editors are consultants who help to procure and evaluate articles for publication.

Operations:

Articles in *\_JWSR\_* will be published as soon as they are ready. All those appearing in a single calendar year will be in the same Volume. Each article will be assigned its own unique reference number. Each regular article published in the journal will be anonymously reviewed by at least one referee. Final decisions about publication will be made by the Editor.

Subscriptions:

Articles published in the gopher (ascii) version of *JWSR* will be available free to the user by ftp and gopher access from the World-Systems Archive at csf.colorado.edu. Subscribers to WSN, the world-system electronic conferencing network, will receive notices about new articles appearing in *JWSR*. In the future we plan to produce an html version of the journal for the World Wide Web. And we plan to make paper copies available to those who desire them.

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**Appendix B: Original Staff and Boards in 1995**

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