



Editors' Introduction

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The study of social change and contention for power are important themes in world-systems research, as is the work of understanding such struggles within their world-historical context. Today we face a particularly significant and challenging political moment, one characterized by right-wing xenophobic and exclusionary nationalist struggles as well as by growing and unprecedented levels of world-wide anti-austerity and pro-democracy protests defending and demanding equality, freedom, and—in the words of many activists—*dignity*.¹ Many world-systems analysts characterize this as a time of *systemic crisis*, and thus our editorial team chose to focus this issue on the theme of counter-hegemonic challenges. Contributions to this volume focus largely on the contemporary period, but in keeping with world-systems practices, authors situate their analyses in the *longue durée*. They will help readers better understand how global level forces are shaping the articulation of both exclusionary right-wing and emancipatory struggles.

Perhaps among the most notable developments on the international politics scene is the rise of populist movements. In a 2016 address to the United Nations, U.S. President Barack Obama expressed concern about the worrying rise of a wave of “crude populist” politics breaking across

¹ See, "World Protests 2006-2013." by Ortiz, Isabel, Sara Burke, Mohamed Berrada and Hernán Cortés (2013), published by the Initiative for Policy Dialogue and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung New York Working Paper Series. At: http://www.fes-globalization.org/new_york/new-publication-world-protests-2006-2013/.



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rich and poor countries. While the election of Donald Trump as U.S. president and the Brexit vote in the UK are the most notable manifestations of this trend in the global North, what is perhaps most striking about the surge of exclusionary populist politics is its breadth across the structure of the world-system, with countries in the semi-periphery (e.g. Turkey) and periphery (e.g. Philippines) also proving fertile sites for populism.

Our objective in compiling this symposium on “Populisms in the World-System” was to situate the “populist moment” in a historical and world-systemic perspective, and the project had its origins in a Political Economy of the World System session at the 2017 American Sociological Association meeting. Authors responded to our invitation in a variety of ways. Leslie Gates embraces the charge head-on, calling for an incorporated comparison of populist movements as both a reaction to and manifestation of world-systemic dynamics across time as well as space. Such an analytical approach is more attentive to the differences in the origins and social bases among movements that conventional accounts tend to lump together under an overly broad populist label. Colin Arnold also raises questions about how the term populism is deployed. In an interesting counterpoint to Gates' essay, he argues for the value of a neo-Gramscian “political articulation” approach to populism as one that can help analysts identify shared structural roots of heterogeneous mobilizations. In her contribution, Val Moghadam underscores the gendered dimension of populism on the right—both its gendered implications, but also its appeal to women. She also stresses the resonances between right-wing populist nationalism and populist strains within Islamist movements.

Several of the essays in the collection explore populism on the left. Peter Wilkin argues that the distinction between right- and left-wing movements in the current wave of populist politics is simply the most recent manifestation of a long-standing conflict, dating from the Enlightenment, between universalism and nationalism. Timothy Gill and Gabriel Hetland review both the accomplishments and the challenges confronting Venezuela. Hetland notes that many of the achievements made in Venezuela have been undermined in the last few years, largely because of two fundamental weaknesses of the Chavista model: its dependence on oil and its inability to overcome a statist dependence. These themes are echoed by Gill, who emphasizes the challenges confronting the Maduro administration in the context not only of sustained opposition from the United States and an increasingly polarized domestic political scene, but also of declining oil prices; Gill underscores the importance of the Venezuelan government developing much-needed approaches for confronting these multiple challenges.

Collectively, the contributors to our symposium identify the degree to which populisms on both the left and the right can be understood as very different responses to the dislocations wrought by neoliberalism, and thus as a dramatic indication of the need for alternative visions.

Fortuitously—but not surprisingly given the political moment—there has been a spate of recent books responding to this need. Thus, we decided to pair our discussion of populism with a book review symposium featuring titles exploring “Counter-Hegemony in the Current Conjuncture.” The reviews in this section offer pointed and substantive engagements with nine books that outline alternative visions for what a more just and equitable world-system might look like, and how to get there.

In our research article section, Robert A. Denmark reviews world-systems scholars' expectations about how world-historical dynamics such as hegemonic decline, economic cycles, and systemic contradictions would be likely to shape prospects for nuclear war today, in a period he refers to as “systemic rivalry.” His application of world-systems analysis to the contemporary context shows that decades-old predictions about the timing of nuclear escalation have borne out in many ways, and that the factors that had mitigated against conflict in the past have been reduced, while those making escalation more likely have increased. World-systemic logics and the logics of nuclear deterrence, in other words, have brought humanity to a very dangerous situation. Denmark's analysis highlights the reality that the “specter of nuclear weapons [is] re-emerging, [and thus] it makes sense to invest additional intellectual effort to understand the dynamics of contemporary conflict.” His discussion offers an important supplement to today's punditry around nuclear proliferation and global conflicts.

In “Transnational Social Movement Organizations and Counter-Hegemonic Struggles Today,” Smith and her co-authors² report on a newly updated dataset on transnational organizing, offering a macro-level look at changes in the population of transnational organizations advocating for social change (TSMOs) over the last several decades. They test several propositions that emerge from world-systems theory and that shape expectations of how counter-hegemonic challenges are likely to be expressed, arguing that this organizational foundation provides important evidence about the future potential of counter-hegemonic struggles. Recent decades have seen a proliferation of transnational organizing that gives greater expression to populations from outside the core, which contributes to a radicalization of movement frames. In addition, these authors find growing regionalization in transnational activist organizations, which parallels trends in the inter-state sector. This, coupled with declining TSMO links to inter-governmental organizations, reflects what they call “counter-hegemonic deglobalization,” which is quite different from right-wing expressions of nationalism reflected in Brexit and Trump's trade wars. What counterhegemonic deglobalization emphasizes is not national trade advantages but rather the

² In order to ensure the integrity of the *Journal of World-Systems Research* review process, former *JWSR* editor Christopher Chase-Dunn oversaw the external peer review process for this paper, and he consulted with our Book Review Editor, Jennifer Bair. Chase-Dunn secured more than our usual three double-blind peer reviews, and we are confident that this process upholds our journal's rigorous review standards.

ability of people and communities—rather than states and corporations—to shape local conditions that affect their well-being and survival.

Finally, in “Classical World-Systems Analysis, the Historical Geography of British North America, and the Regional Politics of Colonial/Revolutionary New York,” Jonathan Leitner offers a world-systems interpretation of evidence on the historical geography of British North America to explore why the New York region supported independence, despite the presence of a strong metropolitan merchant class that was highly dependent on British imperial trade relations. His analysis shows how different actors in the region were able to develop economic relations and interests independent of British markets, subverting imperial influence and fostering greater support for independence struggles. This analysis complements the other content of this issue by showing how contemporary evidence about challenges to hegemonic leadership is paralleled in the historical record.

The World-Historical Information section of this issue includes discussions of two innovative interfaces for documenting and analyzing economic and social relationships. Karl Ryavec and Mark Henderson introduce an online system for teaching regional systems theory with the historical datasets of the late G. W. Skinner, including four online GIS exercises on nineteenth-century China and France. They contrast the regional systems analysis of Skinner (their mentor, famed for his regional analysis of China) with Wallerstein’s World-Systems analysis: they reveal the different data and relationships arising from regional geographic and national economic analysis. In a Dataset Review, Patrick Manning shows the strengths of Data-Planet, a for-profit website with 16 categories of socio-economic data, transformed so that variables can be combined, calculated and exported. The smooth design of the interface will be of interest to academics creating their own data resources.

As we close this introduction to our summer/fall issue, we remind our readers that the *Journal of World-Systems Research* remains one of the leading open access peer reviewed scholarly journals, and we are entering a new milestone in the coming year as we expect—at long last—to have our journal included in the Social Science Citation Index—a move that will help us continue to attract contributions from leading and up-and-coming scholars. Our editorial team and the American Sociological Association’s Political Economy of the World-System (PEWS) Section are working to create a sustainable structure for the journal while supporting the Open Access movement more broadly. We invite readers to support the journal with financial contributions (see the “donate” link on our website) or by assisting with copyediting or translating (email jwsr@pitt.edu to volunteer). We also remind you that [Open Access Week](#) 2018 is October 22-28th. Please take some time to recognize the week (in October and beyond) by increasing your own understanding of the importance of open access publishing, helping colleagues and students learn

about this vital movement, contributing to and promoting the work of Open Access journals like the *Journal of World-Systems Research*, or by attending or organizing an event on your campus. In its current form, the information economy leads to the increased enclosure of the knowledge commons, and [scholars and readers play a critical role](#) in helping keep access to information open and free. As one of the very first open access scholarly journals, *JWSR* is committed to helping our readers be part of the movement to keep scholarly research free and open to all readers everywhere.