



Editors' Introduction

Jackie Smith, Isaac Kamola, Alexandre White & Patrick Manning

As we produce this issue of the *Journal of World-Systems Research*, the global COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread, fueling growing popular anxiety and fear as well as economic turbulence. These tragic developments reinforce many insights, lessons, and expectations generated by world-systems analysis, and they call for fundamental changes in many aspects of public policy and social organization—from public health to economics and finance to workplace and social welfare.

One critical lesson from this crisis is that the open access model of publishing we use for our journal is critical to providing humanity with the tools we need to respond to emergencies like COVID-19. In a [March 3 column in the *LA Times*](#), business columnist Michael Hiltzik observed, “What’s most intriguing about the effect of the COVID-19 crisis on the distribution of scientific research is what it says about the longstanding [commercial] research publication model: It doesn’t work when a critical need arises for rapid dissemination of data — like now.” Indeed, the advance of knowledge and learning requires the free and open sharing of information, and digital technology makes such sharing more possible than ever before. However, public policies allow and encourage commercial publishers to deny scientists’ and other readers’ access to information—that is, to enclose the knowledge commons—in order to accumulate profits at the expense of the larger public, students, and the global scientific community. We hope this tragic reminder of the importance of our various commons for the health and well-being of all people can help strengthen the work we and other open access defenders do.



Articles in vol. 21(2) and later of this journal are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 United States License.



This journal is published by the [University Library System, University of Pittsburgh](#) as part of its [D-Scribe Digital Publishing Program](#) and is cosponsored by the [University of Pittsburgh Press](#).

At a time of an unprecedented global health emergency, we present in this issue research by Kelly F. Austin which sheds light on the problems of marketized health systems when it comes to protecting public health. She also uncovers the systematic ways in which the global economic order both undermines the abilities of governments to protect public health and encourages them to underestimate the extensiveness of disease among their populations. Her interviews with residents of a low-income community in Uganda reveal the impressive capacity of local residents to provide a critical analysis of how government policies and a changing climate has impacted malaria's spread. The insights should help inform public health research and contribute to improved efforts to prevent the spread of infectious disease.

While Austin helps link analyses of public health to changes in climate and ecology, Daniel Cunha's "Coppering the Industrial Revolution" provides an illustration of how the concept of ecological regime can inform our thinking about the relationships between important natural resources such as copper and the development of particular practices and industries that shaped the rise and fall of different actors in the world-system. He makes a compelling argument that without copper, industrial development and its beneficiaries would have followed a much different historical trajectory.

Peter Wilkin's article provides an analysis of France's "Yellow Vest" movement, analyzing its relationships to discourses around populism of the right and left. While some critics of the movement have tried to downplay its coherence and associate it with xenophobic and right-wing tendencies, he argues that the prevailing impetus and leadership of the movement articulates a progressive populism that demands social and economic justice. His portrayal of French politicians' reactions to popular uprisings over the hardships resulting from deep economic inequalities and austerity policies are being echoed today in the Trump administration's early response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our World Historical Information section features a research note that complements the summer 2019 article by Patrick Manning and Yu Liu, "[Routes of Atlantic Slave Voyages: Revised Framework and New Insights.](#)" This note provides new estimates of Atlantic slave trade volume, showing Bayesian procedures and results to estimate the number of captives in the Atlantic slave trade, 1650s – 1860s. The statistical appendix is also available for other researchers to use through the open-access [World-Historical Dataverse](#). This contribution thus illustrates how the *JWSR* and other projects to support open access publishing and data sharing can help us advance knowledge and learning.

Our book review section complements many of the issues discussed in the articles. Dr. Zophia Edwards (Providence College) reviews Jeb Sprague's 2019 monograph, *Globalizing the Caribbean: Political Economy, Social Change and the Transnational Capitalist Class*. Sprague's work explores in rich empirical detail the rapid accumulation of capital in the Caribbean by a new

transnational capitalist class alongside intense labor exploitation and political marginalization of local communities. Marek Mikuš' (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology) review of Micha Fieldschuster's book *Globalization, EU Democracy Assistance and the World Social Forum: Concepts and Practices of Democracy* (2018) examines the shifting spaces within the existing global liberal order. Gifawosen Markos Mitta's (Wolkite University) review of Michele Filippini's *Using Gramsci: A New Approach* examines several important concepts from *The Prison Notebooks* that have historically been overlooked or underexamined.

As most of our readers know, Immanuel Wallerstein, one of the leading founders and promoters of world-systems analysis, died on August 31, 2019. Given the importance of his scholarship to our journal, we plan to publish in future issues research articles based on conferences and symposia that are now being planned to honor Wallerstein's work and legacy. In this issue, past, present and future *JWSR* editors trace some of the influences on Wallerstein's work and show how he worked to advance the world-systems tradition by supporting scholarship and collaboration, creating institutions to foster world-systems research, and supporting social movements dedicated to transforming the world.

We are happy to introduce with this issue two new book review editors to our *JWSR* editorial team. Alexandre White is an assistant professor of sociology and history of medicine at Johns Hopkins University. His research examines questions of health, epidemic response and disease control at the intersections of postcolonial theory and political economy. Isaac Kamola is an associate professor of political science at Trinity College (Hartford), whose research examines the political economy of higher education, international political economy, and African anticolonial theory. And we want to recognize the seven years of service provided by our outgoing book review editor, Jennifer Bair. Jenn did an amazing job helping us develop the journal, and her efforts have helped expand participation of scholars from outside the global North while inspiring new review formats to keep *JWSR* vibrant. We look forward to building on her efforts!

Due to a delay in securing a new editor-in-chief, the 2020 volume of the *Journal of World-Systems Research* is being overseen by a transitional editorial team led by a mix of our current editor-in-chief, Jackie Smith, members of our incoming editorial team which will formally assume its leadership in the fall of 2020—book review editors Isaac Kamola and Alexandre White and managing editor Rallie Murray—our World Historical Information editors Patrick Manning and Ruth Mostern, and volunteers from the Political Economy of the World-System (PEWS) Section Kelly Austin, Mielants, Eric, Frank Lin, and Zhifan Luo. This team is working with the incoming new editorial leaders and the PEWS Section to build the institutional foundation for the *JWSR* going forward, and we look forward to growing our global and multi-disciplinary base. As always, we welcome feedback from our readers and contributors as we transition to our new leadership team.