

---

**abstract** World-systems analysis is a perspective that argues that the two basic elements in scholarly social constructions are the choice of unit of analysis and of pertinent temporalities. It proposes a world-system as the appropriate unit of analysis, and analyzing social constructions in historical depth. However, the origin of social science disciplines must itself be explained. After 1945, the usefulness of these categories was challenged because of a changed geopolitical situation, permitting the constitution of world-systems analysis as a recognized knowledge movement.

**keywords** capitalism ♦ geoculture ♦ knowledge movement ♦ social science disciplines ♦ unit of analysis ♦ world-revolution of 1968 ♦ world-system

---

World-systems analysis is based on a rejection of social science categories inherited from the nineteenth century. It proposes to replace these categories with a new historical social science. Consequently, it rejects the utility and even the validity of sociology today as an intellectual category, while acknowledging its continued strength as an organizational reality and as a cultural preference. To clarify this distinction I am making between intellectual category, organizational reality, and cultural preference, it is essential to recount the historical evolution of world-systems analysis as a mode of analysis.

Almost any argument or proposition or concept in the historical social sciences has been asserted repeatedly. Tracing the history of concepts is an interesting and sometimes valuable exercise in intellectual history. We are not however here in search of the *first* expressions of various ideas that today constitute world-systems analysis. Rather we are in search of how it came to be a knowledge movement and its subsequent evolution, once it became a significant actor in intellectual debate.

It is only when a concept or set of concepts is adopted by a large enough minority of persons that it becomes able to affect the ongoing evolution of collective knowledge. When that threshold is reached, one can speak of there being a knowledge movement,

which means that there is a group of scholars strong enough numerically and coherent enough organizationally that they can hold their own in the collective debates, and perhaps win the debate over time. Of course, if and when they do win the debate, these concepts constitute a new temporary dominant mode of analysis, subject in its turn to a later challenge by new knowledge movements.

The argument we shall make here is that world-systems analysis has now reached this threshold. It is not a subcategory of sociology or of any other social science ‘discipline’ as defined by university systems. Rather it offers itself as a challenge to today’s dominant premises of the historical social sciences, which were established in a period running approximately from 1850 to 1945.

The report of the Gulbenkian Commission, over which I presided (Wallerstein et al., 1996), argues that these premises were adopted in a particular historical context, that of the world-system during that period. It was the period of the height of Western domination of the world-system – politically, economically, and culturally. In the thinking of the dominant sectors of the world-system, there existed radical differences between ‘the West and the rest.’

In its analysis, the Gulbenkian Commission asserted that the origin of the social sciences as intellectual

disciplines lay in two concurrent developments. One was the so-called epistemological divorce between the 'nomothetic' natural sciences and the 'idiographic' humanities, a divorce that occurred in the period 1750–1850, and which subsequently led to the transformation of the organizational system of the universities. The second was the geocultural impact of the French Revolution, which led to a widespread acceptance of two concepts: the 'normality' of change, and the location of national sovereignty in the 'people.'

The combination of these two concepts that were now for the first time widely accepted was potentially so politically radical that existing power structures sought to find ways to contain them. This led to the development of something we today call social science as a way of understanding how it might be possible to do this.

In the period 1850–1914/1945, six principal separate disciplines were created within the renewed university structures: history, economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, and Oriental studies. But why these six, and not others? This has to do with the three cleavages that emerged in the debate: the cleavage between the past and the present, that between the West and the rest, and that which separates the three presumed autonomous aspects of modernity – the market, the State, and the civil society.

History of course had long been a knowledge category. However, in the first half of the nineteenth century, Leopold von Ranke, along with others, launched what most analysts consider an epistemological transformation of history. His famous slogan defining the true objective of history, *wie es eigentlich gewesen* (how it really happened), was aimed at all forms of hagiography. Ranke was asserting the need to collect valid empirical evidence, which implied largely archival research. The assumption was that written documents from the period under study were not intended to influence the writing of historians at a later point but rather reflected the views of persons at the time.

Of course, Ranke accepted that these documents might have been forged or might have been written to deceive persons at the time. So historians had to engage in careful analysis of such documents (*Quellenkritik*, or source critique). To do this well, they needed a deep acquaintance with the culture and language of the people under study. This meant that it was likely that the majority of qualified analysts would come from the country under historical study. It also meant that one had to decide what defines the country under study, since boundaries and names constantly change.

Given this charge, historians began to utilize a 'backward' definition of the 'country,' tracing its history to a presumed starting-point far in the past. This was presumed to have settled the empirical question of the definition of the country under study. It also met with the strong encouragement of State authorities who were searching for scholarly help in reinforcing 'national' consciousness and thereby legitimating the State structures of the present. Of course, any such 'backward' definition of a country is inherently extremely subjective and subject to political debate in the present.

The new historians insisted that they were restricting their study to the 'past' for two reasons. The documents/archives that they wished to consult were usually controlled by State authorities and were almost never 'opened' to inspection until a certain time period had lapsed. There was however a second perhaps more important reason. The historians argued that they themselves were too emotionally and politically committed to present-day analyses such that they might not be 'objective' in writing about the 'present' but that they were free (or freer) from these pressures to the degree that the analysis dealt with past events.

The historians elaborated a complex epistemological position. On the one hand, the historians rejected the 'speculation' of philosophers as lacking empirical evidence. But they also rejected 'generalizations' from their empirical research, on the grounds that events could be analyzed only in their specific context. They were 'scientific' in that they were empirical but they were 'idiographic' in their rejection of the possibility of general 'laws' governing human behavior.

From the point of view of the power structures, the historians were thus very useful in promoting national consciousness and the legitimation of the States. They however were not particularly helpful in analyzing current problems faced by all State structures. Somebody therefore had to study the present. The strange thing was that, while there was thought to be a single discipline (history) to study the past, there emerged three separate disciplines to study the present – economics, political science, and sociology.

The argument underlying the emergence of three disciplines rather than one to study the present had to do with the premises of centrist liberalism, the dominant geoculture at this time (Wallerstein, 2011). Its proponents defined 'modernity' as the political (and hence analytic) autonomy of three separate spheres of social life – the market, the State, and the civil society.

The market became the domain of economics. The State became the domain of political science.

And the civil society (everything other than the market or the State) became the domain of sociology. All three disciplines asserted that they were in search of general laws that governed behavior in the modern world. In short, they were nomothetic disciplines.

The original organizational model of the social sciences based on the radical epistemological difference between the West and the rest led to a sharp disciplinary separation of the mode of studying each. There emerged a clear division of academic labor. History, economics, political science, and sociology studied primarily or exclusively the Western world. The study of the non-Western world was divided between two other disciplines: anthropology, which studied small so-called tribal groups, and Oriental studies, which studied large but said-to-be frozen 'high' civilizations.

The geopolitical context was to change after 1945. And the changed global realities presented various dissonances to the organizational model of the historical social sciences in effect as of 1945. The two principal changes in global realities after 1945 were (1) the assumption by the United States of the role of hegemonic power, and the particular relationship it established with the USSR, and (2) the considerable strength that the traditional antisystemic movements came to show throughout the world-system in the post-1945 period.

After 1945, this separation of social scientists between those who studied the West and those who studied the rest was no longer very useful or tenable, given the new geopolitical realities. They could not explain or analyze the emergence of nationalism in areas previously studied by anthropologists. Nor were Oriental studies helpful in analyzing the now resurgent and militant States that were located in zones previously reserved to Orientalists.

This led to a debate about whether and in what ways one might adapt the disciplinary panorama to make it more relevant to these new global realities. In the period running from about 1945 to 1965/1970, there were four different attempts to adapt the dominant premises of world social science to these new global realities. Each attempt seemed to make some plausible adjustments to the model, but each eventually was found to have severe limitations.

The first and probably most important attempt was that of modernization theory. Instead of separating the study of the 'civilized' world from that of the rest of the world as distinct epistemological sites, modernization theory attempted to historicize the differences between the two sites. It argued that the 'developed' world was not ontologically different from the 'underdeveloped' world, but simply temporally ahead of it. The underdeveloped countries

could 'catch up' with the developed countries by learning from the model of more advanced countries and making certain essential changes in their socio-cultural practices (Rostow, 1960).

The second attempt was that of dependency theory, emerging first out of the core-periphery analyses of ECLA (Economic Commission for Latin America) under Raúl Prebisch (Prebisch, 1991) and then elaborated with a more political emphasis by various Latin American and South Asian scholars (Dos Santos, 1971; Frank, 1969b; Marini, 1972). Unlike modernization theory, dependency theory had a different time model. As opposed to the idea that all States had started from the same point but some had moved forward faster than others, dependency theorists emphasized the 'development of underdevelopment' (to use Andre Gunder Frank's famous phrase).

What this slogan meant was that from the same starting point, some zones had moved forward to becoming 'developed' and others had moved forward in time to becoming 'underdeveloped.' It followed that the changes that were essential in order to catch up lay not in the socio-cultural arena but in the political and economic arenas. Only in that way, could 'underdeveloped' countries break out of their inferior position (Frank, 1969a).

The third attempt was that of Marxist revisionism which took two forms. The first variety was the consequence of the famous speech of Nikita Khrushchev to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956. Like modernization theory, the post-1956 Soviet model historicized the difference, and the proposed way to catch up turned out to be surprisingly similar to that advocated by modernization theory, with however one crucial difference. The Soviet version suggested that the 'advanced' country/model, the one to emulate, was the USSR and not the United States.

A second and possibly more important variety of Marxist revisionism went in another direction. It was launched by the discussion about the 'Asiatic mode of production' that took place primarily in Hungary and some Western European countries (e.g. Godelier, 1964). The Asiatic mode of production was one of Marx's less happy concepts, and one openly banned by Stalin (Foursov, 1997). Giving renewed credence to this concept had two theoretical consequences. It brought into question the automaticity of the sequence of modes of production that presumably led from primitive Communism to the Communist world of the future. It thereby made possible to discuss the validity of the Enlightenment concept of inevitable, unilinear 'progress.'

The second consequence related to the discussion

of the 'national question.' If some countries (or societies or social formations), but not all, passed through an Asiatic mode of production (or something equivalent), this meant that there was no longer a single path through which all countries passed. This implied that 'Marxist' social analyses of particular parts of the world had to be based on the historical particularities of that part of the world. Classical Marxism was essentially nomothetic. This discussion led one in the direction of an idiographic epistemology. It enabled Marxist analysis to move away from trying to fit non-Western history into a sequence derived from the analysis of European thought and institutions.

The fourth attempt was that based on the Braudelian concept of the *longue durée* (Braudel, 1958, 1982) and its double emphasis on the central importance of socio-economic history combined with the minimization of the importance of episodic political history, so-called *histoire événementielle*. This attack on traditional narrative politico-diplomatic historiography achieved great success in significant parts of the world community of historians.

The limitation of each of the first three revisions was that they continued to regard states/societies/social formations as autonomous separate entities following autonomous paths, at different paces, towards a more or less inevitable future. This failed to explain the continuing polarization of different zones of the world-system, a polarization that seemed to be widening rather than becoming reduced. Even dependency theorists found the solution within the political structures of each separate State. The limitation of the Braudelian path was that its practitioners tended to confine their work to an analysis of the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries, and were largely unready to look either at the present time or at the long itinerary of historical change across the millennia.

What undid the relative successes of all four forms of revisionism was the world-revolution of 1968 (Wallerstein, 1989). To be sure, the primary concern of the students and young people who led the various uprisings that we associate with 1968 was not the structures of knowledge. In their attack on the various structures of authority, they were first of all concerned with what they saw as the nefarious consequences of US hegemony as well as with what many (perhaps most) of them saw as Soviet collusion with the United States. And second, they were concerned with the failure of the historic antisystemic movements to carry through on their promised second step in the so-called two-step strategy – first obtain State power, then change the world – adopted by these movements in the late nineteenth century. In effect, they said to these movements: you have

achieved (for the most part in the 1950s and 1960s) State power, more or less, but you have definitely not changed the world.

However, as the world-revolutionary process went on, more and more of the participants in these uprisings began to feel that the existing modes of organizing knowledge and the categories that were being used were themselves major obstacles to the kinds of transformation they hoped to achieve. They turned their attention to the ways in which the dominant epistemological framework systematically neglected the 'forgotten peoples.' They began to demand that the institutions of knowledge refocus their attention on historical and sociological realities.

This new thrust – seen both by its advocates and its opponents as a political thrust – created another change in the realities of the world-system and made it possible for knowledge dissidents in all the disciplines to obtain sufficient support such that they could be said to have become knowledge movements.

World-systems analysis as a knowledge movement was born at this time and within this context (Wallerstein, 2004). What world-systems analysis tried to do was to take features of each of the four revisionist attempts and, by joining them together, construct a tool that would be able to challenge more fundamentally the previously dominant epistemological premises that had fashioned the disciplines – as intellectual arguments, as organizational apparatuses, and as cultural phenomena.

Like any other knowledge movement, world-systems analysis is not constituted by a disciplined army but rather is a collection of persons who, while they share certain key premises, pursue different emphases within this framework. I shall start by outlining what the combination of arguments that I call world-systems analysis means to me. I shall follow this with some discussion of other variants within the general camp of world-systems analysis.

The key element for me in world-systems analysis is the emphasis on the unit of analysis – a world-system rather than a State/society/social formation. The word 'world' is not intended to be synonymous with global or planetary but simply to refer to a relatively large unit (relatively large in terms of area and population) within which there is an axial division of labor. We are talking of 'a' world, not 'the' world, as Fernand Braudel would phrase it.

The second key element for me is that 'world-systems' (like all systems) are not eternal. They have lives. They come into existence; they pursue their historical trajectories within the framework of the rules that define and govern the system; and they eventually move so far from equilibrium that the system enters into terminal structural crisis. The crucial

element of the argument therefore is that all systems are historical as well as systemic.

The emphasis of modernization theory on the historicization of the difference between core and periphery was very helpful. But so was the notion of Prebisch and the *dependistas* that the gap between core and periphery has been widening rather than closing – a necessary part of explaining the drift from equilibrium over time.

A third crucial element, however, is the refusal of the ontological separation of the imagined arenas so dear to the old dominant set of premises – the political, the economic, and the socio-cultural. For modernization theorists, just as for those who adhered to the dominant set of premises before 1945, the intellectual autonomy of the three arenas was the primary defining feature of what they called modernity. For world-systems analysis, the three so-called arenas are intrinsically linked. They define each other. None of the three is 'primary' and all must be analyzed in their mutual defining of each other. Hence, world-systems analysis is inherently uni-disciplinary (as opposed to being multi-, inter-, or trans-disciplinary) in terms of the historical social sciences.

Finally, world-systems analysis refuses the nineteenth-century institutionalization of the concept of the two cultures and stands for the overcoming of this false (and historically quite recent) epistemological divide. The idiographic-nomothetic divide between philosophy and science dates only to the second half of the eighteenth century. With the nineteenth-century invention of the 'social sciences' as an in-between category, this divide was incorporated into the social sciences as the divide between idiographic history/anthropology/Oriental studies and the three nomothetic social sciences. World-systems analysis asserts that this epistemological divide between the idiographic and the nomothetic social sciences was always false, and is now obsolete.

As world-systems analysis gained strength as a knowledge movement, there were versions more or less within the broad camp, which placed different and/or additional emphases on the research and epistemological agenda.

One such version was that put forward by Chris Chase-Dunn, Thomas Hall, and others (1991). This version argued against limiting practical research efforts to that of the 'modern world-system' as a 'capitalist world-economy' – one that was located for most of its existence in less than the entire globe. Doing so, it was suggested, tended to leave certain major questions undiscussed. One was the analysis of what was happening in modern times in regions defined as outside the axial division of labor of the capitalist world-economy, as well as the complex processes by which external zones were incorporated

into the axial division of labor of the capitalist world-economy.

Furthermore, this group worried not only that a practice of devoting research efforts primarily, even exclusively, to the capitalist world-economy led to what might be called spatial exclusions of the analysis. It worried also about what might be called long-term temporal exclusions of the analysis. This group wished to look at two longer-term issues. One was the very long-term historical development of human social interaction. They actively confronted the long-standing issue of historical 'evolution' – what exactly 'evolved,' and whether evolution was teleological.

In addition, however, this group felt that there was valuable knowledge to be unearthed by systematic comparison of different kinds of historical systems, for which the cases would necessarily have to be drawn from analyses of historical systems of all kinds and in all geographical areas over several thousand years. One might call this comparative historical world-systems analysis.

A second version of comparative historical systems analysis that nonetheless limited itself to the 'modern' historical period (ca. 1500 to the present) was that put forward by Giovanni Arrighi, Takeshi Hamashita, and Mark Selden (2003). Basically, they proposed to compare the evolution of a China-centered trading system with that which developed as a Western Europe-centered trading system over the post-1500 period. They looked at the ways in which the structures of the two systems differed – Arrighi arguing that the differences persist to this day – as well as at the increasing linkages between the two systems over the centuries.

The increasing economic and geopolitical importance of China in the world-system since the 1980s increasingly turned the attention of world scholarship to the historic role of China, and led in particular to complaints about the intellectual neglect of China's role by pan-European scholars. In the period since then a relatively large amount of literature has been produced on China and the world in both East Asian and European languages (e.g., Bin Wong, 2000). This literature is diverse and only some of it can be considered to be within the broad framework of world-systems analysis.

Andre Gunder Frank in his post-1990 writings insisted on the concept that only one world system had ever existed (and he therefore spelled it without the hyphen). He traced its existence back at least some 5000 years (Frank, 1997; Frank and Gills, 1993). For Frank, China was always the center of this system (except rather briefly in the nineteenth century and part of the twentieth). While Frank used many methodological tools derived from world-systems analysis, he attacked other versions (indeed all

other versions) as being Eurocentric, and rejected the very concept of capitalism as a variable to include in the analysis.

Others in this group of China-oriented scholars, such as Kenneth Pomeranz (2001), insisted on a re-analysis of the data comparing Western Europe and China in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, and sought to show that 'the great divergence' between China and Europe occurred only as of the nineteenth century. Pomeranz however does not seek to place himself within the family of world-systems analysts, even though his concrete analysis in some ways concurs with the Arrighi–Hamashita–Selden version. In fact, Pomeranz's version reinforces the traditional and mainstream social science view that the key shift in modern times was the 'industrial revolution' that was considered to have occurred (at least primarily) in England at the cusp of the nineteenth century.

All versions of world-systems analysis have always emphasized the priority of empirical work, refusing any sense that work should be focused on deductive theorizing. The record of such work, on an enormous variety of subjects, can be located in many different places. There is the work of research centers specifically denominating themselves as focused on world-systems analysis: the Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems, and Civilizations or FBC (Binghamton, NY, USA); the Institute for Research in World-Systems or IROW (Riverside, CA, USA), the Onderzoeksgroep Wereld-System Analyse (Gent, Belgium), the Globalization and World Cities Research Network or GaWC (Loughborough, UK).

There are also specialized journals: *Review: The Journal of the Fernand Braudel Center* and the *Journal of World-Systems Research*. There is an annual spring meeting of the Political Economy of the World-System section of the American Sociological Association or PEWS, whose papers are published in a continuing series by Paradigm Press. There have been biannual meetings of the Colóquio Sistema-Mundo in Brazil. There were for some 20 years (1978–1995) International Colloquia on the World-Economy which met every 18 months in different parts of the world. There are of course in addition scholars located in a vast array of universities across the world who consider that they are doing empirical work from the perspective of world-systems analysis. Almost all of this material is available on the internet. What all this research shares is the sense of the importance of the unit of analysis (a world-system) and the need to make analyses in historical depth (the *longue durée*).

To be sure, as explained, there have been various

emphases within world-systems analysis, but persons of varying preferences have been willing and able to debate with each other within the framework of these structures. While this argument among world-systems analysts was going on in the period 1970–2010, two things happened, altering the character of world-systems analysis as a knowledge movement. The first was the rise, even triumph, of neoliberal globalization in the world-system. The second was the changed attitude towards world-systems analysis by the major disciplinary organizations and textbooks. Let us consider each in turn.

The stagnation of the world-economy beginning in the 1970s (a Kondratieff B-phase) was combined with the undermining of the dominance of centrist liberalism as a result of the world-revolution of 1968. The combination allowed conservative forces to launch a worldwide attempt to reverse all the political, economic, and cultural changes that had occurred in the 1945–1970 period. This political campaign was given the deceptive label of neoliberalism, and was incarnated originally in the political success of Mrs Thatcher's transformed Conservative Party in the United Kingdom and Ronald Reagan's transformed Republican Party in the United States.

The neoliberals shifted the analytic framework they applied to the world-system from 'developmentalism' (which had prevailed in the 1945–1970 period) to something they called globalization. They used this new framework to impose, primarily via the US Treasury and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a practical program that came to be called the Washington Consensus. It demanded that all countries that were not 'developed' institute a program that gave priority to export-oriented growth, while simultaneously opening their border to foreign direct investment, privatizing state enterprises, reducing their welfare programs, and downsizing their bureaucracies. Geopolitically, this effort was enormously successful worldwide in a period running roughly from the mid-1970s to ca. 1995.

Within the historical social sciences, the response to this new world political reality was to make globalization the principal buzzword of research and publication. One of the results was paradoxically to make world-systems analysis somewhat more academically respectable. Previously, world-systems analysis either was subject to strong denunciation for its alleged errors or was treated by a scornful refusal to acknowledge its scholarly character. Suddenly, world-systems analysis came to be seen, was even acclaimed, as a forerunner of globalization theory, if in a version that had been too politically committed. World-systems analysis (usually referred to, not quite correctly, as world-system theory) came to be includ-

ed in writings and textbooks as one alternative theoretical view among a list of alternative theoretical views of globalization.

In fact, however, world-systems analysis was not a forerunner of globalization theory but something quite different (Wallerstein, 2000). World-systems analysis had never sought to be one among a list of alternative theories. It thought of itself as formulating a rejection of the entire framework of mainstream social science. World-systems analysis called for a drastic reshaping of the intellectual framework of the social sciences, calling for a uni-disciplinary reorganization. World-systems analysis combined this view of the historical social sciences with a demand to overcome the epistemological division of 'two cultures' and the recreation of a singular epistemological framework for all knowledge.

The triumph of the Washington Consensus came under political challenge in the second half of the 1990s, as the neoliberal promises of universal economic betterment turned out to be a mirage. This increasing disillusionment was reinforced by the successive financial crises that have been going on ever since, and which finally led to serious questioning about the viability of the promised return to universal economic 'growth.'

The degree to which the capitalist world-economy can resume its traditional and repeated returns to normal expansion is a matter of some debate even within the camp of world-systems analysts. If one believes, as I do, that the modern world-system is in structural crisis, is therefore bifurcating, and is in the midst of a transition to some new global system (Wallerstein, 2013), then one question is what happens to world-systems analysis as a knowledge movement in this process.

The strength of world-systems analysis as a knowledge movement is that it has resisted the temptation to define itself too narrowly and dogmatically, while still not allowing itself to be defined so loosely that anything that seems to deal with questions beyond the space of single nations/societies/social formations is deemed within the family. This has been a difficult organizational project, one however that thus far has worked. Indeed, world-systems analysis as a knowledge movement has been relatively successful in spreading its adherents within all the existing major disciplines of the historical social sciences and spreading its organizational base beyond the United States to other parts of the world – notably, but not only, to Latin America, Western Europe, and East Asia.

The question for world-systems analysis as a knowledge movement is whether it can continue to play the organizational game the way it has played it

up to now. I have discussed this question in a paper on the 'rise and future demise' (Wallerstein, 1988) of world-systems analysis. But its fate is in fact linked to the fate of the capitalist world-system within which the epistemological divorce between science and philosophy was established and came to be questioned in the last half-century. The structural crisis of the modern world-system is a big topic which goes beyond the focus of this paper (see Wallerstein, 2013).

To the degree that a structural transition is favorable to those who are seeking to replace the existing system with one that is relatively democratic and relatively egalitarian, success for world-systems analysis might be measured by its disappearance as a knowledge movement as a result of the radical reorganization of the world of knowledge. It is much too early to tell whether this will indeed happen. But if world-systems analysis ends up as being merely one more theoretical position within the social sciences, it will have failed in what it had hoped to accomplish.

## Annotated further reading

- Arrighi G, Hamashita T, and Selden M (eds) (2003) *The Resurgence of East Asia, 500, 150, and 50 Year Perspectives*. London: Routledge.  
This book expounds why one should think of developments in East Asia over the past 500 years as parallel to and different from developments in the capitalist world-economy.
- Chase-Dunn C and Hall TD (eds) (1991) *Core/Periphery Relations in Precapitalist Worlds*. Boulder, CO: Westview.  
This is a collection of papers that explicates why and how one should engage in comparative world-systems analysis by looking at the precapitalist worlds.
- Frank AG and Gills BK (eds) (1993) *The World System: Five Hundred Years or Five Thousand?* London: Routledge.  
This collection of papers expounds why one should analyze the world system as a single entity over 5000 years, centered in China.
- Wallerstein I (2004) *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.  
This brief text expounds my view of world-systems analysis in greater detail, and has both a bibliography and a glossary.
- Wallerstein I et al. (1996) *Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.  
This report discusses the epistemological issues involved in the historical development of the social sciences.

**Immanuel Wallerstein** is currently Senior Research Scholar at Yale University. He was founder and director of the Fernand Braudel Center from 1976 to 2005 and president of the International Sociological Association, 1994–1998. His many publications include *The Modern World-System* (4 vols) and *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. [email: immanuel.wallerstein@yale.edu]

**résumé** La perspective s'appelant l'analyse des systèmes-monde soutient que toute construction scientifique d'une réalité sociale repose sur deux éléments clefs: le choix d'unité d'analyse, et l'identification des échelles de temps pertinentes. Le système-monde est, de son point de vue, l'unité d'analyse appropriée, dont il faut analyser les évolutions sur la longue durée. Cependant les sciences sociales en tant que disciplines ont elles-même une origine historique qu'il faut expliquer. Après 1945, le changement de situation géopolitique fait remettre en question l'utilité des catégories analytiques dominantes, ce qui a permis la constitution de l'analyse des systèmes-monde comme un mouvement de savoir reconnu.

**mots-clés** capitalisme ♦ disciplines des sciences sociales ♦ géoculture ♦ mouvement de savoir ♦ révolution-monde de 1968 ♦ système-monde ♦ unité d'analyse

**resumen** La perspectiva de la análisis de sistemas-mundo sostiene que los dos principios claves en la construcción social intelectual son la unidad de análisis y las temporalidades pertinentes. Propone un sistema-mundo como la unidad de análisis y la necesidad de colocar investigaciones en su larga duración. En otro, hay que explicar el origen de las ciencias sociales en tanto que disciplinas. Después de 1945, a la luz de una nueva configuración geopolítica, el utilidad de estas categorías fue cuestionada, lo que facilitó la constitución de la análisis de sistemas-mundo como un movimiento de saber reconocido.

**palabras clave** capitalismo ♦ disciplinas de ciencias sociales ♦ geocultura ♦ movimiento de saber ♦ revolución-mundo de 1968 ♦ sistema-mundo ♦ unidad de análisis