

Imperialism and Subimperialism in the Greater Mekong Subregion

CHARLES THAME

It is a great pleasure, dear Charlie, to do this interview on such a relevant issue. Could you, please, begin by talking about your education and intellectual trajectory?

Thank you, Monica, for taking an interest in our work (Charlie Thame and Jana Chin) and for offering us a chance to discuss it with your readers!

My main interest has long been political philosophy. I discovered anarchism and classical liberalism as a teenager, the first through punk music, the second the school library (they had Mill but no Kropotkin!). I was lucky enough to get the chance to pursue this at university, where I was introduced to Hegel in the first year of my bachelor's degree and Marx in the second. I found Marx interesting, but Hegel quickly became my real passion; I strongly rejected Fukuyama's liberal reading of him and the association of these ideas with the neo-conservative and imperialist "Project for the New American Century". It was obvious to me that the second Iraq War was essentially a war for oil, but there was also a normative aspect that I was interested in exploring. I spent most of my undergraduate and postgraduate studies exploring ideas of freedom, liberation, and emancipation in classical political philosophy and international theory, including my PhD¹, but this was always closer to Hegel's idealism than Marx's materialism. That changed when I moved to the Thailand-Myanmar border in 2011 in the final year of my PhD. Since the 1980s the border town of Mae Sot developed as a hub for labor intensive manufacturing based primarily on immigrant

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1 Thame, Charlie. 2013. Love, Ethics, and Emancipation: The Implications of Conceptions of Human Being and Freedom in Heidegger and Hegel for Critical International Theory. PhD diss., Aberystwyth University: Department of International Politics.

labor from Myanmar and I found myself surrounded by people who were subject to the most horrific exploitation by their employers and Thai authorities. I wanted to understand the structural reasons for this, which led me to work on migration, special economic zones, economic corridors, and Marxian political economy. That's what I've been working on for the last ten years.

How did you first get involved with Southeast Asia? Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* reveals his emotional and professional attachment to this region and was a fundamental literature to our research network. Ben came to visit and work with us three times in Fortaleza (Ceará State, Brazil): 1995, 2011 and 2015, for the launch of *Under Three Flags*.

I first visited Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia as backpacker in the era of cheap flights and steep exchange rates (in my favor) in 2004 but visiting my mum in Mae Sot in 2008 was more consequential. She worked in early years education and came to volunteer in the refugee camps along the border when I started my post-graduate studies. That was about a year after the monk's uprising in Burma (the "Saffron Revolution") and Cyclone Nargis, both of which forced more people to flee the country. The camps had been there since the mid-1980s, and an exiled human rights movement grew following the military crackdown on the 1988 pro-democracy uprising. I vividly remember spending the best part of a day at the Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) hearing stories of 88 generation students who had been imprisoned and tortured by the junta, often given 10+ year sentences for expressing support for the democratic opposition who then committed themselves to helping other political prisoners from exile on release. Witnessing their solidarity and resolve was transformative for me. I returned to the border in 2010 and 2011 and spent several months volunteering with that organization as a research associate as I completed my dissertation. Ever since, I've been drawn to understand the many real struggles across the region, in defense of the environment, against labor abuse and exploitation, and increasingly authoritarian regimes. I think that the people involved in this help to reaffirm

some faith in humanity and give us all a little bit of hope in a dysfunctional world on fire, often at great risk and personal cost.

I think one of Ben's great achievements, particularly his work on nationalism, was to "centre the periphery" by showing how better understanding phenomena in seemingly peripheral places like Indonesia could help us better understand the world as a whole. This is a source of inspiration and something I've tried to extend in my recent article on Myanmar's 2021 revolution by showing how it is of world-historical significance.² I consider it to be what Theda Skocpol would call a great "social" revolution, the likes of which we haven't seen anywhere in the world in the last 45 years (since the Nicaraguan and Iranian revolutions).³ If I ever manage to write a book half as good as one of Ben's then perhaps, I could come to launch it in Fortaleza too! I've never been to Latin America and would love to visit.

The article is very inspiring and makes interesting comparisons between Brazil and Thailand. What was your motivation to do the exploratory study? When was it realized?

Thank you. My motivation was the work on special economic zones and economic corridors in the 2010s. At the time, a lot of the stuff published on them was grey literature written (and paid) for by multilateral development banks, trumpeting the benefits of foreign direct investment and infrastructure construction. Both are clearly important: Investing in productive forces and providing electricity and water can help improve people's lives and livelihoods, especially in poorer countries and regions. But this was not really what was happening on the ground in the Mekong, where people have been dispossessed from land and customary livelihoods and pushed into poorly paid work that is fundamentally insecure and

2 Charlie Thame, 'Myanmar's Redemptive Revolution: Constituent Power and the Struggle for Sovereignty in the Nwe Oo (Spring) Revolution', *European Journal of International Relations* 31, no. 1 (March 2025): 152–77, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13540661241289445>.

3 Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

exploitative. This is the reality of the region's capitalist transformation. Liberal economists say that this suffering is a necessary price to be paid for development and is outweighed by aggregate and long-term gains at the national level. But they're not the ones paying this price and the focus on the aggregate hides something nefarious about the way that capitalist societies work. Countries such as Cambodia have clearly made important progress since opening up in 1994 (they later joined the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 1999 and World Trade Organization in 2004). This much is shown in mainstream development indicators such as GDP. But I was more interested what these indicators concealed.

This was something that I explored in a piece I wrote for *Focus on the Global South*.⁴ The basic argument was that these megaprojects enabled the commodification and extraction of the region's productive resources: land and labor. But I wanted to better understand how *much* value was being extracted, explore regional trends and dynamics in these forms of unequal exchange, and challenge the "common sense" of those mainstream indicators on their own terms with primary data on trade and investment. But I am not a trained economist, and I was only able to make small inroads into those questions in that piece. A few years later, I secured a small research grant from my faculty at Thammasat University to "quantify relations of unequal exchange" in the Mekong subregion which I used to offer a small honorarium to work with me on such a project and was introduced to Jana, who was interested and very capable. She's a trained economist who majored in the economics of development for her master's with a focus on Malaysia and Vietnam, had been working as a senior research assistant at an economic think tank in Myanmar, and had written about the garment industry, value chains, inequality, and job creation in Myanmar. We were working on the research report together, then covid hit and we secured some money from the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation to explore the impact of the pandemic on marginalized populations

4 Charlie Thame, 'SEZs and Value Extraction from the Mekong' (Bangkok: Focus on the Global South, 2017).

across the region.⁵ These two projects fed off and enriched each other, the first more quantitative, the second more qualitative, and effectively became one single project. We were then able to secure a little more funding to create an illustrative booklet to try to visualize and depict these dynamics for a non-academic audience.⁶ We, or at least I, had hoped to work it all up into a book but the military launched a coup in Myanmar, and I dropped the idea to write about that instead. A small window of opportunity came up last year to get the research report published as a journal article.⁷

In your perspective, which are the main contributions of historical materialism as the theoretical basis to the field of International Relations? And for the political economy of contemporary imperialism?

I think Maïa Pal captures it best when she explains that, in contrast to Realist or liberal approaches to IR, historical materialists challenge the notion that “the international” is derivative of states, and their assumptions about the emergence of the modern world as European *qua* international order of nation-states.⁸ Rather, states, relations between them, and international institutions that seek to mediate and shape them, are themselves derivative of social relations, which have in turn been structured by capitalist relations of production. So, the basic units that those mainstream approaches are predicated upon are mistaken, because interstate conflict, or *homo economicus*, are not timeless substances. They have a history (rooted in imperial expansion and globalization of capitalism), they may or may not have a future, and there

5 Thame, Charlie & Rue Glutting, Jana Chin “Corona Crisis in the Mekong: From Extractive Imperialism to A New Bloom” Hanoi: Rosa Luxemburg Foundation 2021.

6 Thame, Charlie, Nancy Chuang, and Jana Chin Rue Glutting 2021, “Expropriation, Exploitation, and Unequal Exchange,” Hanoi: Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, January. <https://bit.ly/2PwwF4e>

7 Charlie Thame and Jana-Chin Rue-Glutting, ‘Imperialism and Subimperialism in Mainland Southeast Asia: Quantifying Relations of Unequal Exchange.’, *Political Science Review* 11, no. 1 (2025): 167–272, <https://so05.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/RatthasatNithet/article/view/276288>.

8 Maïa Pal, ‘International Relations’, in *The SAGE Handbook of Marxism* (Sage, 2022), 858–75, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526436108>.

are alternative ways of doing things and collectively organizing ourselves than the relations of domination and exploitation that currently pertain under capitalist relations of production.

One of Marx's most important lessons is the importance of foregrounding *praxis* as the foundation of his social ontology. For all the violence, oppression, and internal divisions that human beings create, what endures is the social reality that we (the human we, part of the web of life) share a life together, itself dependent on biophysical and socio-political processes. Interaction between human beings mediated by these forces is the foundation of our social reality, and this encourages us to adopt a more process- and relational oriented approach to the social sciences. This kind of thinking has become quite influential in IR since the Fourth Debate (between positivism and post-positivist approaches in the late 1980s and early 1990s), with examples including Patrick Jackson, George Lawson and Barry Buzan, and Milja Kurki.⁹ But it is in Marx (and Hegel) that we find the foundations of this relational approach to theorizing, and returning to them allows us to develop a more radical and realistic understanding of the international. More radical in the sense of allowing us to grasp things by the root, more realistic in that we are dealing with the real world rather than some reification or ideological abstraction, which allows us to better understand, and hopefully address, the root causes of social ills such as war, oppression, and ecocide.

For me, one the most useful concepts in contemporary IR for understanding the relational, processual, dialectical, and inter-social constitution of the international is the Marxian (i.e. Trotsky's) concept of uneven and combined development. This helps us to understand the sociological processes that shape the big problems of IR: war, peace, and revolution, security and development, the

9 Patrick Thaddeus Jackson and Daniel H. Nexon, 'Relations Before States: Substance, Process and the Study of World Politics', *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 3 (1 September 1999): 291–332, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066199005003002>; Barry Buzan and George Lawson, *The Global Transformation: History, Modernity and the Making of International Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2015); Kurki, Milja, *International Relations in a Relational Universe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020)

rise of the nation-states system, globalization of capitalism, and climate change.¹⁰ When it comes to the political economy of imperialism, UCD works through the mechanism of unequal exchange, which is what Jana and I were trying to explore in various ways in our project.

Can you explain to Word Tensions readers why previous studies that focus on colonialism, U.S. strategic interests, and great power cultural and ideological processes underestimate the political economy of imperialism?

Sure, but let me clarify that this is a claim that we make about the existing literature on imperialism in Southeast Asia specifically. Briefly, that literature focused on the establishment of political control of Southeast Asian societies by colonial powers including Britain, France, Spain, the Netherlands, the United States, and Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the pursuit of US military-strategic interests in the region through the nineteenth century (e.g. in The Philippines), the twentieth (e.g. in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) and the so-called “new Cold War” between the US and China today. The expansion of political and military power are certainly aspects of imperialism, but focusing on this exclusively neglects how imperialism basically functions as an economic formation and can be advanced through “normal” processes of capitalist trade and investment. This is an important component of imperialism that has been underappreciated and understudied in previous studies of imperialism (in Southeast Asia at least, less so worldwide).

10 See for example Justin Rosenberg et al., ‘Debating Uneven and Combined Development/Debating International Relations: A Forum’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 50, no. 2 (January 2022): 291–327, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298211064346> but also Alexander Anievas and Kerem Nisancioglu, *How the West Came to Rule: The Geopolitical Origins of Capitalism*, Pluto Press, 2015; Alexander Anievas, ‘Revolutions and International Relations: Rediscovering the Classical Bourgeois Revolutions’, *European Journal of International Relations* 21, no. 4 (December 2015): 841–66, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066114565721> and Barry Buzan and George Lawson, *The Global Transformation: History, Modernity and the Making of International Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2015) and <https://unevenandcombineddevelopment.wordpress.com/>

Is there a “new imperialism”? Which are the similarities and differences with the previous classical studies of Lenin, Rosa, etc.? What about the main arguments of David Harvey and Walden Bello?

Rosa Luxemburg argued that crises of over-accumulation forced capital to expand into non-capitalist spaces to access new raw material, labor, and markets in a quest to secure profitability, and regarded imperialism as an inherent feature of capitalism from its beginning. Lenin on the other hand viewed it as a specific (i.e. the highest and parasitic) stage of capitalism, marked by transition from free competition to monopoly production and increasing reliance on revenues generated from the export of capital rather than commodities. From the 1950s, dependency theorists such as Samir Amin, Andre Gunder Frank, and Ruy Mauro Marini extended Lenin’s emphasis on monopoly finance capital to argue that firms located in the core of the world system increasingly relied on the extraction of rent from the periphery exerting monopoly power in the world market to remain profitable. According to David Harvey, what characterizes the “new imperialism” (since the 1970s) is a shift in emphasis from accumulation through expanded reproduction to accumulation through dispossession.¹¹ This pulls him closer to Luxemburg than Lenin in that profitability is seen to be more reliant on capital’s relation to its “outsides” (e.g. the plunder of social and natural wealth) than on its inner dynamic: (i.e. the exploitation of labor power).

Harvey’s perspective has been very influential, including in Southeast Asia, and I drew heavily on him for the piece I wrote for *Focus on Special Economic Zones in the Mekong* to make sense of how capitalists sought to restore profitability following the global financial crisis. However, this Luxemburgist conceptualization of imperialism doesn’t account well for the ways that value is extracted through labor exploitation: i.e., once basic commodities have been produced, and workers have entered the marketplace. This is one of the reasons that I’m uncomfortable with the term the “new” imperialism. Fortunately, there’s been renewed attention to relations of unequal exchange operative at international level that helps us to rebalance Luxemburg & Harvey’s emphasis on capital’s

11 David Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

relations to its outsides with a more Leninist emphasis on capitalism's inner dynamic since the early 2000s, which we review these in the article. Intan Suwandi's work on global commodity chains is an example and was a key source of inspiration.¹²

On the other hand, one of the benefits of this term "new imperialism" is that it foregrounds the centrality of the economic aspect of imperialism. This is something that seems to be underemphasized in those who understand imperialism as characterized by the exercise of military force. Walden Bello's understanding of the phenomenon is a case in point, which we take issue with. He wrote a piece in 2019 asking whether China can be considered an imperial power. He recognizes that outbound investment by the Chinese state since the 1990s has been accompanied by land grabbing, labor exploitation, debt politics, environmental despoilation, and support for dictatorships in the South, but argues that this has been marked by relatively little violence and force in comparison with Western subjugation, concluding that China cannot yet be considered imperialist.¹³ The shortcoming with this position is that it focuses only on military force as a defining characteristic of imperialism, thereby mistakenly equating it with colonialism and the exercise of violent state power rather than the drain of wealth. For us, imperialism is defined by that drain of wealth from dominated countries by coercive means, and military force is only one form of social power (along with political, economic, and ideological power).¹⁴ Even if military force hasn't played a role, other forms of coercion may have. Also, the old saying about imperialism and colonial subjugation, that "trade follows the flag" seems problematic to me. Look at recent developments in Pakistan and Myanmar for example. Both countries have massive economic corridors under construction and have granted Chinese private security forces authorization to protect Chinese investments in their countries. Here it seems the flag is following trade.

12 Intan Suwandi, *Value Chains: The New Economic Imperialism* (Monthly Review Press, 2019).

13 Walden Bello, "China: An Imperial Power in the Image of the West?", (Bangkok: Focus on the Global South, 2019).

14 Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power. 1: A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

You say and I quote: “Our view is that imperialism as a polyvalent phenomenon with political and economic aspects, as well as a militaristic one, and that semi-peripheral states like China may use their power to engage in subimperialism.”. Is that a conceptual definition? What about other aspects of dominance, such as ideology, and culture, for instance?

I think the more complete formulation is the one that we offer in the conclusion:

“Imperialism is best understood as a polyvalent phenomenon characterized by relations of unequal exchange, advanced through political, economic, ideological, and military power, and supported by mainstream approaches to trade and development. These facilitate drain of real (social, ecological) wealth from developing countries by focusing on the monetary value of trade rather than embodied resources (biophysical, labor), contributing to accumulation and valorization of capital (an alienated form of wealth) that disproportionately benefits fractions of capital located in dominant countries”.¹⁵

We see imperialism under capitalism as a property of the capital-labor relation; specifically, its international dimension, rather than an attribute of the international system per se. The latter view is common among the anti-imperialist left, but it leads to a circumscribed understanding of imperialism that tends to focus only on US imperialism. For us, states advance imperialism when they internalize the interests of capital and exercise power (military, political, economic, juridical, ideological) in support of those interests, such as through bilateral relations or multilateral institutions. This definition includes ideology, and arguably culture too, which both play important roles when it comes to the justification and “normalization” of unequal exchange. For instance, neoclassical economics maintains that exchanging money for commodities, including labor power, in the marketplace is essentially “free”

15 Charlie Thame and Jana-Chin Rue-Glutting, ‘Imperialism and Subimperialism in Mainland Southeast Asia: Quantifying Relations of Unequal Exchange.’, *Political Science Review* 11, no. 1 (2025): 167–272, <https://so05.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/RatthasatNithet/article/view/276288>. P.261

and equal exchange, neglecting the fact that the monetary value of labor power is fundamentally affected and suppressed by political forces such as labor regimes and immigration controls to name just two. For its part, consumerist culture encourages the valorization of monetary wealth as against natural and social wealth, encouraging people to believe that it is an appropriate tradeoff.

How does subimperialism, a concept developed 50 years ago in the context of Brazilian relations with our South American neighbors, allow us to clarify scenarios of the current era? The article explores this category in Thailand. Our journal has published some articles on Ruy Mauro Marini: Claudio Katz “The current modalities of sub-imperialism” (<https://revistas.uece.br/index.php/tensoesmundiais/article/view/369>) and Mathias Seibel Luce “Sub-imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism” (<https://revistas.uece.br/index.php/tensoesmundiais/article/view/471>).?

Thank you for the articles, I'll read them with interest!

Briefly, as I'm sure your readers will be well aware, subimperialism is an idea developed by the great Brazilian economist and sociologist Ruy Mauro Marini. It refers to the process whereby states that have reached a certain level of development develop their own exploitative relations with even less developed states to compensate for the contradictions arising in the course of their own development.¹⁶ This helps us to better understand contemporary changes in world order.

In short, there's a tendency among many on the left to understand imperialism as a characteristic of the world system as a whole, reflected in the debate above that Bello contributes to regarding China. By almost any metric China is a victim of imperialism: historically subject to imperial humiliation, territorial conquest, and unequal relations with Western powers, surrounded by US military bases, and subject to an aggregate drain of wealth

16 Ruy Mauro Marini, *Subdesarrollo y revolucion*, (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1969).; Ruy Mauro Marini, *Dialectica de la dependencia*, (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1973)

to core countries such as the US. Nevertheless, just because China is subject to imperialist exploitation does not preclude Beijing from engaging in imperialist relations with other states; to deny this is to ignore the realities of an emerging multipolar world order, not to mention the environmental damage done by rare earth extraction in places like northern Myanmar, or labor exploitation in special economic zones in Laos and Cambodia, both important nodes in commodity chains directed towards China. The category of sub-imperialism helps us to recognize that both realities can be true.

We also note similarities between Brazil following the 1964 coup there and Thailand following its 2014 coup. In both circumstances their respective military governments launched offensives against popular forces while reinforcing ruling class coalitions that linked domestic bourgeoisies with landowner-merchant oligarchies. In both cases domestic markets could not absorb increasing productivity, a contradiction that was resolved to a degree by expanding into new markets internationally, especially in their neighboring countries. In Thailand's case this has been through foreign direct investment into sectors such as mining, finance, construction, agribusiness and contract farming, facilitated by intergovernmental organizations such as the Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Strategy, Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy, and Lancang Mekong Cooperation mechanism.

Can you provide an overview of the methodologies developed to quantify unequal exchange relations, and the findings of your attempt to extend methodologies to an analysis of trade and investment trends in the Mekong region? What a challenge from a Marxist perspective, as you said: “behind the guise of what appears to be equal exchange (money for goods, goods for money) lies unequal exchange of value (money exchanged for increasing amounts of labour / biophysical resources)”.

We review three different methodologies in the paper: input-output analysis, exchange rate differentials, and profit rate equalization. The main challenge here is that unequal exchange is

obscured by categories of mainstream bourgeois economic theory and the statistical data based on them, which we have no choice but to work with, and there's numerous gaps in the existing data for the countries surveyed that meant we were unable to extend methodologies that have been used to quantify unequal exchange in other contexts to the subregional level. Instead, we had to develop a more granular analysis of trade and investment trends. I'll draw your readers' attention to the paper for details.

We would like to know the major findings of your research and, if possible, a brief conclusive picture of the five countries: Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos.

The main conclusion we draw is that major conglomerates based in Thailand, and to a lesser extend Vietnam, have been the main beneficiaries of subregional integration since the early 2000s. This has come at the expense of Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar, and fractions of labor in Thailand and Vietnam. The data shows that specific sectors have been preferred, such as mining, construction, the financial sector, and agribusiness, and that corporate valuations of Thai based firms have risen dramatically as a result, in a way that is disembodied from the reality of the Thai economy. This suggests that growth attributed to Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar may distort the data, with benefits accruing to Thai firms instead, possibly achieved through mechanisms of profit rate equalization. What we couldn't really explore due to data shortcomings was the extent to which Japan and China also net beneficiaries. Both have supported the construction of economic corridors since the 1990s and 2010s respectively, and there are indications in the data that Japanese firms may have captured much of the value thus produced through trade with Thailand.

Politically, Thailand has long played a subordinate and functional role in broader global contests over hegemonic visions of world order. The country served as a beachhead for the global expansion and consolidation of capitalist relations of production during the Cold War, while relations with China have strengthened since the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 and the 2014 coup.

In contrast to realist, liberal, or constructivist perspectives on those intergovernmental organizations I mention above, which emphasize their role in pursuit of hedging/balancing strategies amid great power struggles, win-win economic cooperation based on absolute rather than relative gains or socializing international actors into locally-led initiatives thereby empowering weak states, we suggest that our data supports a historical materialist perspective instead. According to this view, the role of these international organizations is to help ruling classes balance inter-imperialist rivalries in ways that maximize the profitability of dominant fractions of domestic capital and solidify ruling class coalitions, especially when confronted by popular threats from below.

Finally, how can this rich experience help young researchers who would like to immerse themselves in this field of study? What are the most promising issues, in your opinion? What suggestions would you give to our research network, the Observatory of Nationalities?

Well, a lot of work remains to be done when it comes to exploring the imperialist relations of semi-peripheral countries, such as China, Thailand, and presumably Brazil. My first suggestion would be for young researchers to interrogate what they understand imperialism to be. If they find our argument convincing, that it is best understood as the international manifestation of the capital-labor relation, then imperialism remains an inherent feature of capitalism, not just at the world scale with the US as the main beneficiary but also at the subregional level too. Here, subimperialism is a useful for helping to shed more light on a phenomenon that remains a major obstacle to the improvement of the human condition. This is particularly so in dominated countries that are subject to social forces that are transforming their societies to serve the imperatives of capital accumulation in the core and perpetuate the drain of real wealth (social and ecological), but also in subimperialist countries themselves. This is because domestic capitalists in those countries find it more profitable to reinvest the profits made from the exploitation of their working classes through foreign direct investment abroad, rather than developing

productive forces at home. Secondly, in terms of future research, we found it particularly challenging to explore relations of unequal ecological exchange, and that intermediate trade is a practice that is currently understudied. Both would be interesting areas to explore in more detail. Finally, long-lasting change and anti-imperialist struggle is something that is best pursued by rebalancing power relations between capital and labor. This requires more research aimed at empowering subaltern class fractions: helping them to understand the problems that they face and come up with solutions themselves that could help them better assert their power.

Many thanks, Monica