

Correction to "Note on ecology, inequality, and the labor aristocracy thesis, and response to Moran on embodied Ecological Footprints and trade," and additional comments

Maoist Information Web Site

In ["Note on ecology, inequality, and the labor aristocracy thesis, and response to Moran on embodied Ecological Footprints and trade,"](#) it appears MIWS misspoke where it said: "Moreover, North America is a net exporter of biocapacity. There may therefore be no need to calculate the median Footprint of u.\$ residents, because there may be no net transfer to the united \$tates for even the united \$tates to be parasitic as a whole."

Actually, according to MIWS's calculations from the numbers in the Moran paper's Table 8, North America (including Kanada and the united \$tates, but not Mexico) is apparently a net importer of embodied appropriated biocapacity by 78.2 million hectares -- still seemingly small compared with North America's total Ecological Footprint in global hectares, but the opposite of what MIWS said in sign. MIWS was careless and read too much into the Moran paper's claims about net flows of biocapacity to "Rich" and "High Income" countries, and may have misinterpreted the table containing figures on flows between North America and China.

MIWS takes responsibility for this error and will try not be so generous to opposing or bourgeois sources next time. However, the fact that MIWS itself had to calculate these inter-regional net flows confirms what MIWS said about what is wrong with this paper, which purports to explore ecological trade balances in terms of Ecological Footprint. Moran says, "North America and Europe are the source of 42% of Footprint exports to all countries," but does not explicitly report North America's net imports of biocapacity from the rest of the world. Furthermore, not only is one of the largest inter-regional flows between Latin America and North America, as Moran does report, but there is a net flow from Latin America to North America of 45.6 million hectares of Footprint area. Again, MIWS has to be the one to point this out. And the flow between Asia-Pacific and North America is from Asia-Pacific to North America, not from North America to Asia-Pacific, as Moran seems to say; the net flow is 18.7 million hectares.

MIWS reiterates that people interested in ecological flows need to calculate inter-regional net flows, not just calculate the combined total exports of countries belonging to a region. First of all, most of a region's "exports" may actually be to itself, as in the case of North America. Net flows are more informative, than comparisons of total regional or country outflows, in thinking about potential transfers.

While Moran mentions the North American intra-regional flow, the statement "North America and Europe [Western Europe?] are the source of 42% of Footprint exports to all countries" (p. 20) in the Moran paper is very misleading in the context of arguing that the "South" is a net importer of biocapacity. Half of those exports (derived from import figures) are intra-regional. Even 45% of Western Europe's "exports" are within-Western Europe. On the one hand, the sentence would serve to support the idea that First World countries trade mostly among themselves in terms of biocapacity, but it also neglects inter-regional transfers. In fact, according to MIWS's calculations derived from Moran's table, not just Western Europe, but also "Africa," "Asia-Pacific," "Latin America," and "Middle East & Central Asia," are net exporters of biocapacity. "North America" and "Other Europe" are the only net importers of biocapacity among the defined regions for which there are figures in Table 8.

There are so many questions raised by the Moran paper upon closer scrutiny that MIWS actually would have to ask Moran to either retract the assertion that the "South" is a net importer of biocapacity from the "North" or provide a table with calculations for individual countries so others can calculate the net transfers themselves using regional definitions of their choosing. Whether the "South" is a net importer of biocapacity doesn't affect MIWS's surplus value argument about First World exploiters, but MIWS does not want people to be going around suggesting that the Third World is a net importer of biocapacity from the First World unless they have a certain number in their head, with clear regional definitions. Otherwise, it easily leads to chauvinism and polluting discussions of unequal exchange and ecology.

The net transfer to "High Income" countries that appears in Moran's Table 3 can actually be attributed in its entirety to "Middle Income" countries. In the World Bank definitions, "Middle Income" countries include China, which is a net importer of biocapacity from North America, according to Moran's Table 4, on China's inter-regional trade. But "Middle Income" countries also include the Russian Federation,

which, despite having a large proletariat, MIWS wouldn't count as part of either the Third World nor the First World. Middle Income countries include other former Soviet and Eastern Europe countries that may not belong to the Third World category. In Moran's Table 8, trade with Western Europe accounts for most of "Other Europe"'s net imports.

Middle Income countries also include most Latin American and Caribbean countries and several Middle East countries. But, as MIWS has pointed out, Latin America and Middle East & Central Asia in Moran's Table 8 are each net exporters of biocapacity to the rest of the world. Among North America and Western Europe, Latin America is a net exporter of biocapacity only to Western Europe, by 13.3 M ha, according to MIWS's derivative calculations. Among North America and Western Europe, Middle East & Central Asia is a net exporter of biocapacity only to Western Europe, by 0.4 M ha. Venezuela and Middle East countries are exporters of fossil fuel. MIWS would suggest that people making claims about net importation of biocapacity by the "South" consider how Latin America and Middle East countries may be trading non-renewable resources for biocapacity and the direct and indirect ecological costs involved in *that*. The suggestion that Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America are ecological parasites on the First World is not supported by the arguments and figures in the Moran paper as they are presented.

Lastly, for future reference, MIWS should point out that the Moran paper doesn't offer a calculation of unequal exchange in terms of an amount transferred, only money paid per Footprint hectare for imports from High, Middle and Low Income countries (Table 7, "Price paid for Footprint imports by 'Rich' vs. 'Poor'"). This information could be used to calculate EF unequal exchange. According MIWS's and Moran's own implicit (section 2.1) definition, "unequal exchange" refers to a transfer that can be attributed to trade of products whose prices don't reflect the amount of embodied unit, in this case embodied EF. If there were not unequal exchange, the EF balance of trade would be proportionally the same as the balance of trade in monetary terms. The difference between the two balances of trade can be quantified as unequal exchange. Thus, even if there were a net transfer of biocapacity from the First World to the Third World, there may still be unequal exchange favoring the First World. Two flows have to be separated from each other to isolate unequal exchange in the strict sense that MIWS and others have suggested. Regardless of the overall flow, the unequal exchange component may be large enough to play a significant role in the

world economy, processes of accumulation and oppression, and world inequality; further investigation with different methods would reveal whether this is the case.

MIWS encourages those with an interest in the questions raised here to do their own research and come up with more conclusive analyses. MIWS is not particularly interested in Ecological Footprint at this time as compared with other ecological topics, but wanted to demonstrate how to approach one ecological topic, which has captured interest, scientifically. Many communists express interest in the environment and claim to be scientific or uphold science, but most of the so-called communist movement doesn't concern itself with the environment scientifically enough to make substantive advances on environmental questions, because it is actually a reactionary, social-imperialist movement that uses rhetoric and opportunism to gain the support of the labor aristocracy and the rest of the First World bourgeoisie.