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Prof. Dr. Heinzpeter Znoj

Essay

Supply Chains, Salvage Accumulation, and the Problem with Labour

Jonas Bernetta

jonas.bernetta@students.unibe.ch

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Introduction

In the last few years, popular ethnographic works have challenged the idea of the "proper job", understood as formalized standard employment, proposing to think beyond the concept of labour (Li 2014, Tsing 2015, Ferguson 2015). Their empirical research suggests that salaried employment as the "telos" of the working world does not apply to most contexts. The narratives of economic progress and the universalized transition from "rural peasantry" towards waged employment are not much more than myths (Li and Ferguson 2018). The dispossession of people from their land and means of production dislocates millions of people and pushes them somewhere else to sustain themselves (Sassen 2010, Li 2010). In this context, two narratives have emerged. The first one was put forward by James Ferguson (2015) who argues that many people have become irrelevant to global capitalism, recognizing these people not as creators of value but as "surplus" to the requirements of capital accumulation. The other narrative has been brought up by Anna Tsing (2009a, 2009b, 2015) and her studies on the relation between Matsutake mushroom picking and global supply chain capitalism, where she emphasizes the various ways human and non-humans make a living on capitalist ruins and are still connected to global capitalism across supply chains. By broadening the fixed models of political economy, she proposes to pay attention how non-economic factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexuality, age and citizenship are part of global supply chain capitalism (Tsing 2009a: 158, 2015: 61ff). Anna Tsing offers stories of resilient people that make a living in precariousness besides "formal employment", not rendering them as "surplus" to the requirements of capitalist accumulation by connecting cultural niches to global supply chains.

The shift towards global supply chains allows Tsing to understand how capitalism is taking advantage of value produced without capitalist control, what she terms "salvage accumulation" (Tsing 2015: 63). The term takes off from Marx analysis of "primitive accumulation", the "historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production" (Marx 2015 [1867]: 507). Basically, primitive accumulation grasps the inside-outside dialectic of how abilities, land and goods are transformed into capitalist value. While primitive accumulation describes a historical finished process, salvage is never complete.

In this essay, I am going to discuss "salvage accumulation" in the context of its emergence and the relevant contributions to it. As I will show, the shift towards supply chain capitalism allows us to see people not as "surplus" to the requirements of capital accumulation, but as structurally necessary for global capitalism. However, by missing the role labour-capital relations play in the formation of supply chains, Tsing misses an understanding of "capitalist ruins" also as a site of struggle linked to global capitalism. Therefore, I add to discuss "salvage accumulation" in the light of a broader concept of labour proposed by Susan Narotzky (2018). As I argue, the conceptual application of labour-capital relations allows us to see how capitalism is still hegemonial, linked to cultural niches at its edges. The mutual entanglement of labour-capital relations shifts the focus not only towards how diversity is commodified into supply chains, but also how supply chains are brought to capitalist edges. Following this line of

argumentation, the labour-capital relation is useful to understand how supply chains do matter for local practices in the sense that they define what is valuable and what not and how people react to it.

From Primitive Accumulation to Salvage Accumulation

The story of primitive accumulation starts with the enclosure of commons in the Northern England highlands as part of the transformation of the feudalist system into a capitalist system, where the common land was privatized into the hands of a small urban bourgeoisie elite (Marx 2015 [1867]). For Marx, primitive accumulation describes the historical process "which takes away from the labourer the possession of his means of production" (ibid.: 508). It marks the beginning of the capitalist mode of production when pre-capitalist modes have been transformed into capitalist ones.

Marx took the idea of primitive accumulation from Adam Smith's famous liberal version of "previous accumulation", who described the historical process in terms of a free-will and peaceful transformation from rural peasantry to industrial wage labour, where rationalized workers gathered and built factories to produce more efficiently – a process understood in terms of Efficient Market Theory (Smith 2003 [1776]). The Marxian conception is quite similar but differs in how it happened. Two fundamental transformations marked the process, first primitive accumulation transformed "the social means of subsistence and of production into capital" and second the transformation of "the immediate producers into wage laborers" (Marx 2015 [1867]: 508). Differently to Smith, Marx argued that the transformation was by no means desired but marked by much violence and expulsion.

Marx' concept of primitive accumulation is tied to his analysis of the enclosure of commons in the highlands of northern England through "forcible usurpation" by individual and parliamentary forms of violence and robbery (ibid.: 512). The transformation from a feudalist system towards a capitalist system pushed dispossessed farmers from their land, leaving the countryside, and working as wage labourers in the big factories in the cities. The process of the division was fulfilled, the workers were separated from their means of production, and have since been cheap exploited wage labourers. On a global scale, as Marx rightly points out, capitalism was still on the search of new land and workforce:

"The discovery of gold and silver in the Americas, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signaled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production" (ibid.: 533).

The global expansion of primitive accumulation marked the finished birth of capitalism. There is no need to say that violent dispossession all over the world had a massive impact until today. The global expansion of primitive accumulation was even more violent than in England, or in the words of Marx, capitalism was "dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt" (ibid.: 538). However, other studies have shown that primitive accumulation was not always violent and marked by the proletarianization of rural men into the working class. Silvia Federici rightly points towards the role of

the expropriation of women's unpaid labour or Michel Foucault famously worked out the disciplinary power of police and other institutions in transforming capitalist relations (Federici 2004, Foucault 1965: 42 ff).

According to Marx, primitive accumulation was a complete process, so what makes it interesting for contemporary analysis? It was Rosa Luxemburg's thesis of underconsumption which she elaborated in her book "Accumulation of Capital" published in 1913. She argues, with reference to Marx's thesis of primitive accumulation, that the demand for workers and land is brought to Capitalist production by non-capitalist strata or countries (Luxemburg 1968 [1913]: 352). Accordingly, there is a crisis tendency of capitalism which lies in its problem of underconsumption, meaning that there is a lack of demand inside capitalism, which can only be met outside capitalism (ibid.: 352)¹. She identifies the phenomenon of primitive accumulation as a core function, thinking of primitive accumulation as an ongoing process stabilizing and reproducing the capitalist system. Although her thesis of underconsumption was rejected by most orthodox Marxists during her time, she still made an essential contribution to contemporary analysis of capitalism and the political economy. Primitive accumulation was not a painful preliminary phase but a fundamental logic of capitalism: the inside-outside-dialectic of capitalist and non-capitalist strata and the dependency of capitalism to an outside. Since this process was not only historical but continuous, it became attractive for ethnography, social science, or other disciplines concerned with transformations in contemporary capitalism.

Besides some discussions throughout the 20th century, it was David Harvey's concept of "accumulation by dispossession" as a modification of Marx and Luxemburg analysis. Not underconsumption was the problem, but the crisis of overaccumulation, primarily defined as "a surplus of capital lacking profitable means of employment" (Harvey 2003: 42). According to Harvey, the crisis of overaccumulation activates state and governments to create new spheres of accumulation through a wide range of processes:

"These include the commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations; the conversion of various forms of property rights (common, collective, state, etc.) into exclusive private property rights; the suppression of rights to the commons; the commodification of labour power and the suppression of alternative (indigenous) forms of production and consumption; colonial, neo-colonial, and imperial processes of appropriation of assets (including natural resources); the monetization of exchange and taxation, particularly of land; the slave trade and usury [sic!], the national debt, and ultimately the credit system as radical means of primitive accumulation." (ibid.: 145)

Pretty much everything can be commodified, and the outside sphere of capitalism is inherently infinite – accumulation by dispossession is not limited to the birth of capitalism but an ever-ongoing process, where the outside is continuously newly produced. Accumulation by dispossession has become a

¹ I am not going into depth on this, for a detailed thesis of underconsumption and its relation to capitalist crisis tendencies, see Luxemburg 1913: 139 ff

fundamental tool for the analysis of various transformations in contemporary global capitalism across many disciplines from geography to social anthropology.

In her book "The Mushroom at the end of the world – on the possibility of life in capitalist ruins" published in 2015 Anna Tsing conceptualized many insights from her ethnography on the Matsutake mushroom spread all over the world in terms of political economy. One of the central and core concepts is "salvage accumulation", the "process through which lead firms amass capital without controlling the conditions under which commodities are produced" (Tsing 2015: 63). In a footnote Tsing clarifies that the term takes off from Marx's "primitive accumulation", however, in contrast to it, salvage accumulation "is never complete; accumulation always depends on it" (ebd.: 296). To grasp the inside-outside dialectic of accumulation, Tsing introduces us to the term "pericapitalist", meaning the simultaneously inside and outside of capitalism, instead of non-capitalist sites understood as outside of capitalism (ebd.: 63). Pericapitalism also refers to the ongoingness of the production of the outside as something inherently inside capitalism. Exemplary is her research, where Matsutake grows in Oregon forest which is a "ruin" of previous capitalist exploitation of wood – the forest is at once a product of capitalism (inside) and a left-behind ruin (outside).

According to Tsing, Salvage accumulation is at the core of global supply chains (Tsing 2009, 2015). She observes that without controlling labour and raw materials, global commodity chains can translate across various social, political, and cultural differences to amassing wealth out of non-capitalist (or pericapitalist) sites:

"Supply Chains" are commodity chains that translate value to the benefit of dominant firms; translation between non-capitalist and capitalist value systems is what they do." (Tsing 2015: 63)

Supply chain capitalism is the new regime of profitability. It differs inherently from David Harvey's understanding of capitalism as an overpowering global force absorbing everything into its logics. While Primitive accumulation and accumulation by dispossession change the issue of property by integrating the means of production into capitalist systems and by dispossessing the people from their means of production, they also *alter* people's lives by pushing them either into wage work or somewhere else to sustain themselves. At the core of accumulation of dispossession are dislocation, standardization, and discipline. Global supply chains otherwise do *not alter* people's lives by commodifying values into the capitalist system and by not dispossessing the people from their means. At the core of supply chains are diversity, non-scalability, and freedom (ebd.: 37ff, 73ff). The "free entrepreneur" has replaced the disciplined "wage employee" as the telos of the working world.

After Surplus populations – Coping and Resilience

Salvage accumulation is capitalism taking advantage of value produced without capitalist control (Tsing 2015: 63). As I have shown before, salvage accumulation differs inherently from Marx primitive accumulation and Harvey's accumulation by dispossession. However, for both, Marx and Harvey,

primitive accumulation was not only about changing commons into private property (the process of commodification) but also about separating the workers from the means of production, pushing them into wage work and establishing class relations (proletarianization) (Marx 2015 [1867]: 507ff). In her reading of primitive accumulation, Anna Tsing only refers in a footnote towards the issue, that salvage accumulation is needed to produce labour power (Tsing 2015: 296). In the following, I will elaborate more on this second issue of primitive accumulation.

In the 25th chapter of the first volume of the capital, Marx refers to the creation of an industrial reserve army (Marx 2015 [1867]: 442ff). On some points capital accumulation, according to Marx, requires a high increase in labour power, when there is no possibility in activating technological advancement. Therefore, capital accumulation and the production of surplus-value produces in the long term a "relative surplus population", which depress wages and can be activated when needed (ebd.: 443). While Marx thought that primitive accumulation dispossessed rural people and pushed them straight into wage work, David Harvey argued, accumulation by dispossession is also marked by the formation of labour reserve (Harvey 2003: 140ff). The formation of a "relative surplus population" is, therefore, part of the inside-outside dialectic of capitalism and not reduced to capital accumulation and overproduction.

In a remarkable contribution, Tania Li (2010) observed that the imagined gradual change of dispossessed rural people smoothly moving into wage labour was never a reality. She argues that "in order to fulfil the functions of labour reserve – that is, to depress wages, and be ready to work when needed – the population must not die." (ebd.: 70). What to do with these people, when not needed by capitalism? Different from Marx, Li emphasizes that primitive accumulation and the enclosure of commons only took the resources without giving people labour within capitalist relations. In her study of rural farmers in the Lauje area of Indonesia, Li shows, that the dispossession from land brought only prosperity to some while leaving others behind (Li 2014). The vast amount of people is not being brought into formalized jobs with decent wages but pushed somewhere else to sustain and reproduce themselves. The desired growth, promoted by developmental scholars, has become a "jobless growth", where many are desperately looking for jobs or other ways to sustain themselves (ebd.: 169 ff). In a similar way but from a more macro-perspective Saskia Sassen argues, that contemporary accumulation by dispossession has come to a "post-Keynesian" logic, where dispossession and "expulsion" of people does not lead to the "valuing" of people as workers and consumers, but creating surplus populations who are pushed to care for themselves outside wage labour (Sassen 2010). For Sassen, global capitalism undergoes a huge systemic transformation, expelling people and pushing them into refugee camps, ghettos, slums, prisons, destroying young bodies on the job and rendering them useless, as well as leaving devastating ecological ruins behind (ebd.: 45ff). Different to Li, Sassen argues that the transformation is not reduced to dispossessed rural people, but happens in the centres of capitalism, producing its edges and ruins by fast paced exploitation.

The analytical insights of Tania Li and Saskia Sassen have been echoed in James Ferguson's (2015) study on the growing mass unemployment in Southern Africa, where he also sees a "shift from a people-scarce system to a people-surplus one" (Ferguson 2015: 152). Empirical, he is not concerned with the emergence of capitalist relations and the production of surplus population, but rather with the way people make a living outside capitalism:

"excluded from *any* significant role in the system of production, ["surplus populations"] may often be found engaged in tasks whose fundamental purpose is not to produce goods at all but to engineer distributions of goods produced elsewhere by accessing or making claims on the resources of others." (ibid.: 90).

He examines a shift towards the expansion of extensive social welfare programs targeting the poor, which then distribute the perceived cash and goods via different relationship to reduce and stabilize their poverty, calling it an emerging "politics of distribution". He conceptualizes these kinds of work as "distributive labour", to appreciate that not the product is the object of labour, but distribution (ibid.: 97). This understanding helps us to rethink how labour, production, and distribution are related. Both Tania Li and James Ferguson give us valuable empirical insights into the mechanics of dispossession and how to make a living besides capitalism. They conclude from their analysis that social protection and state payments through unconditional income may be the best way to stabilize the threat of mass poverty (Li 2014: 178ff, Ferguson 2015: 191ff).

However, as Anna Tsing shows, the orientation towards distribution fails to understand the resilience and coping of people deprived of their means, and the productive power they can activate (Tsing 2015). Tsing brings up another narrative on life besides capitalism by locating her fieldwork in what Zygmunt Bauman (2004) once famously called "wasted lives in wasted lands" calling it "capitalist ruins" (Tsing 2015: 205ff). By decentring labour-capital relations and capitalism as an all empowering logic, Tsing highlights the various experiences of life and pays attention to how non-economic factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexuality, age and citizenship do matter in the "making for a living" (Tsing 2009: 158). In her story, peoples workforce is not at all limited to picking for a living; instead, Tsing highlights the non-standardized niche as culturally and socially heterogeneous diversity, where people come to understand themselves as free, picking for their reasons, some to forget war and displacement (Tsing 2015: 71ff). Salvage accumulation grasps an idea of how capitalism takes advantage of these non-capitalist life forms, and the value produced without capitalist control by humans and non-humans. In the end, we deal with a new phenomenon of capitalism, or at least of capitalist edges, as generative, flexible, creative, which besides do not rely on the discipline of working people. To decentralize waged labour as the core of the analysis bears some inviting insights since formal employment has become the object of "hope", "desire", or "masculinity", but which is often frustrated, especially for those that are routinely dispossessed and do not access a living wage (Narotzky and Besnier 2014, Li 2014, Ferguson 2015). Narratives of resilient people that offer possibilities of making a living in precariousness besides "formal employment" bears an optimistic view on a dystopian future.

Anna Tsing's contribution does not only reframe "surplus people" resilience and coping strategies, but it also informs critical feminist anthropology concerned with the ontological turn, which emphasizes in various ways that Western conceptions and categorizations may not be useful to explain life embedded in very different realities with different ontologies and epistemologies (Latour 1993, Descola 1994, Haraway 2008). In her earlier work, Anna Tsing already pointed towards the issue, that it is time to get rid of the big theories that try to elaborate single global logics and forces, that actively change local passive places (Tsing 2000, 2005). She not only refers to Michael Hardt's and Antonio Negri's "Empire" (2000), but also towards, and in a very critical manner, David Harvey and his book "The Condition of Postmodernity" (1989) where he builds a neo-Marxist account of global capitalism "beyond culture" (Tsing 2000: 341). Harveys distinct "blindness for everything outside dominant Northern Cultures and economies" misses that much more matters than objectified global economic accumulation in a local context and global north-south relations (ibid.: 341). Anna Tsing reminds us that what people do is always embedded in cultural and social systems that go beyond a narrowed single capitalist logic. Her contribution should make classic political economist aware, that the shift towards global supply chains, connections and translations across differences helps to re-imagine people's lives beyond their "surplus"-status towards capitalism. Anna Tsing highlights the ambiguity of lives and experiences of being by focusing on the multiple relations and differentiations human and non-humans engage with another.

Rethinking Labour in Supply Chain Capitalism

As much as the shift towards supply chains, connections and translations help to make sense of the various life forms and the resilience of not only the people but also global capitalism; the above-discussed debate obscures the role labour plays. Indeed, the discussion bears a fundamental problem since either the capitalist system seems to have no use for peoples labour power, making labour-capital relations irrelevant, or the concept of labour seems to bear epistemological shortcomings in describing local realities. Anna Tsing clarifies in her book that she refuses to understand Matsutake picking as labour, or even work, since "no pickers I [Tsing] met imagined the money they gained from matsutake as a return on their labor" (Tsing 2015: 77). However, as Stefan Ouma argued in his review of Tsing's book, besides her huge contribution towards the black box of how affects drive commodity chains and why people are part of and remain in even "the most exploitative global commodity chains and what they get out of it beyond monetary compensation", it still seems almost cynical to the ones actually living in precarious situations (Ouma 2018: 65).

Why is Tsing abandoning the concept of labour? In an earlier account, she argued, that labour, and labour-capital relations, grew out of an imagined industrial working class in Manchester defining and forming the context of wage labour (Tsing 2009a: 153). She emphasized that not "every oppressed person at that time was a wage laborer – and, of those who were, few were involved in the technologically advanced and well-organized factories of English industry" (ibid.: 153). The Manchester industrial workforce helped Marx and Engels to imagine a universal, alienated, and exploited working

class – which has its gendered, racial, and national character (ibd.: 153). The historical specificity of Marx concept of labour has been incorporated into her analysis of Matsutake picking. Since Tsing could not find any "disciplined industrial worker" or "standard employee", both requiring the "rationalization of wage labor", she abandons the concept to understand Matsutake-picking in terms of labour (Tsing 2015: 61 ff). However, I argue that as much as culture matters to the economy, as much does labour.

Tsing's critique has not been unnoticed. The *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* published in 2018 a special issue on "Dislocating Labour: Anthropological Reconfigurations", reframing and discussing the conceptual applicability of Marx concept of labour beyond its historical figuration. Taking the insights from empirical research, the contributors agree with Tsing that labour relations are by far not characterized by a single trend towards the "proper job" but rather compound of heterogeneous "non-standard" factors (Harvey and Krohn-Hansen 2018). With reference to David Graeber (2011), Harvey and Krohn-Hansen argue that the problem with concepts such as labour is, that they become analytically so productive, that "they get treated as objective realities – and much effort is then put into arguing that the world was never like that" (Harvey and Krohn-Hansen 2018: 19). Even if labour may not be experienced as such, it might still be a useful concept to explain and understand relations between the micro-level and macro-level. Therefore, they propose not to abandon the concept of labour, but to remain aware of its specificity (ibd.: 19). In her contribution, Susan Narotzky emphasizes that we need universally applicable concepts that go beyond native theory, which conceptually *explain* anthropological findings linked to global capitalism without objectifying local realities in terms of these models (Narotzky 2018). Following this, she proposes a modification of the concept of labour and to open it towards more complex dynamics and the various ways labour relates to capital (ibd.: 34).

According to Marxian labour theory of value, labour always has a dual character – the relation between concrete labour (energy, skills, and beliefs needed to create), and abstract labour (related to market exchange systems such as capitalism). Following this, Narotzky emphasizes, that concrete labour could be a universally applicable concept, and abstract labour theory of value restricted to hegemonic capitalism and accumulation of capital (ibd.: 33). By being aware of the concept's genealogy and historical specificity, that is concrete labour understood as wage labour, she departs from this narrowed view towards a radical opening by proposing to define the concept of labour "restricted to work effort (human energy expenditure) in its relations to capital" (Narotzky 2018: 41). Despite anthropological reservation over the use of such a universalizing category, the epistemological incommensurability of local experiences can in this sense be analytically grasped by an understanding of people's effort in "making a living" in terms of energy expenditure. The shift towards "energy expenditure" as the concrete aspect of labour allows an understanding of everything that is in any sense commodified into capitalist functions (which defines the basis of the abstract part) as part of labour-capital relations. The concrete and place-bound aspects of labour in this sense highlight the mutual ways of people's lives and their

diverse strategies to survive and how this is simultaneously linked to the global expansion of money as the relevant form of value and the social reproduction of a capitalist system:

"This perspective highlighted the diversity of jobs that households members undertook and the fluidity between stable, protected, waged work (formal), self-employment, peasant farming or small workshop ownership (partially regulated), casual jobs and unregulated self-employment (informal), and unemployment." (Narotzky 2018: 28)

The re-orientation of the concept of labour towards "energy expenditure" may be a useful tool to explain particular relations between humans and global capitalism. The dislocation of the concept of labour from its narrowed historical definition and its connection to supply chains emphasizes the structural and functional relevance of people outside formalized economies to global capitalism. It may be a useful model to explain how people "make a living" without understanding themselves as workers, but linked to the still-growing expansion of global capital. The mutual entanglement of labour-capital relations shifts the focus not only how diversity is commodified into supply chains, but also how supply chains are brought to capitalist edges. Following this line of argumentation, the labour-capital relation is useful to understand how supply chains do matter for local practices in the sense that they define what is valuable and what not. Obscuring the role labour plays, Tsing is not concerned whether informal Matsutake pickers receive fair share out of the picking or not. Exemplary the words from a Matsutake picker in a video by the New York Times:

"Who sets the price? I don't know about that – big guy does. Who's the big guy? I don't know the big guy. You know the big guy?"²

Global supply chains play a role in setting prices. We need to pay attention to how global supply chains affect local activities, by paying attention to which work they value and how this work reacts to this. Supply chains make use of peoples affect- and culture-driven efforts, and by that, they may change structurally what is possibly valuable and what not. Supply chains do not only take advantage of "salvaging", but they also do something with the people and ecologies. Even if labour may not be experienced as such, it makes conceptual sense to use labour-capital relations as a model to problematize the effects of supply chains on local working conditions. The fragmentation of labour individualizes struggles that are linked to capitalist hegemony and turns workers' interests against themselves. The decline of the "proper job" has not led to a "surplus population" structurally irrelevant to capitalism, but to a highly individualized and fragmented population that is connected into global capitalism through supply chains without any sufficient protection and security. By echoing these fragmentations, Tsing obscures the year-long fights of labour protection that ensure economic security.

² Matsutake Mushroom Hunting in Oregon – 2013. The New York Times. Min. 01:16
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jUh6_zksDgw> accessed 08. July 2020, own translation.

Conclusion

Global capitalism is undergoing huge transformations. The unruly forces of global neoliberalism left not only devastated land behind but also millions of people evicted from their homes. Economist toolkits with its models of standardization, scalability, or wage work have not provided sufficient explanation of current transformations. The transition from rural peasantry into work and prosperity has turned out to be not much more than a myth. Facing mass poverty and ecological destruction, the "jobless growth" observed all over the world has led to calls for more social protection by the state to ensure the possibilities of living in capitalist ruins. However, informality has mostly been linked to the disconnections of people from capital, seeing them as external to capitalist relations. Anna Tsing's contribution to global supply chains reframed this issue by establishing models that grasp how new capitalist modes are taking advantage of these "outside". By decentring capitalistic logics and revalue culture as essential to the economy, she reminds us that gender, race, ethnicity, and others matter in the making of the world.

As I showed in my discussion, "salvage accumulation" bears many insights in grasping the inside-outside dialectic of global supply chain capitalism and recognizing people more than just as "human capital" or "surplus" to capitalist needs. Tsing's contribution reminds us of human and non-human resilience and how they cope with new environments and situations. However, as much as culture matters to the economy, as much does labour. By linking her model with new contributions to the concept of labour, I hope to argue that labour-capital relations are relevant models to explain current transformations and struggles. The conceptual application of labour-capital relations allows us to see how capitalism is still hegemonially linked to cultural niches at its edges. We should be aware that the model does not provide objectified descriptions of local realities, but an analytical explanation of situations. Labour-capital relations allow us to see people lives in capitalist ruins also as a site of struggle linked to global capitalism. Therefore, this is not a call for more social protection (which is still needed) but for more labour protection requiring more collaborative types of organization and to empower communities to retain power and to ensure fair benefits and prices. An understanding of fragmentation and individualization not only as cultural emancipation but also as a site of neoliberal struggle calls for different protective politics.

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