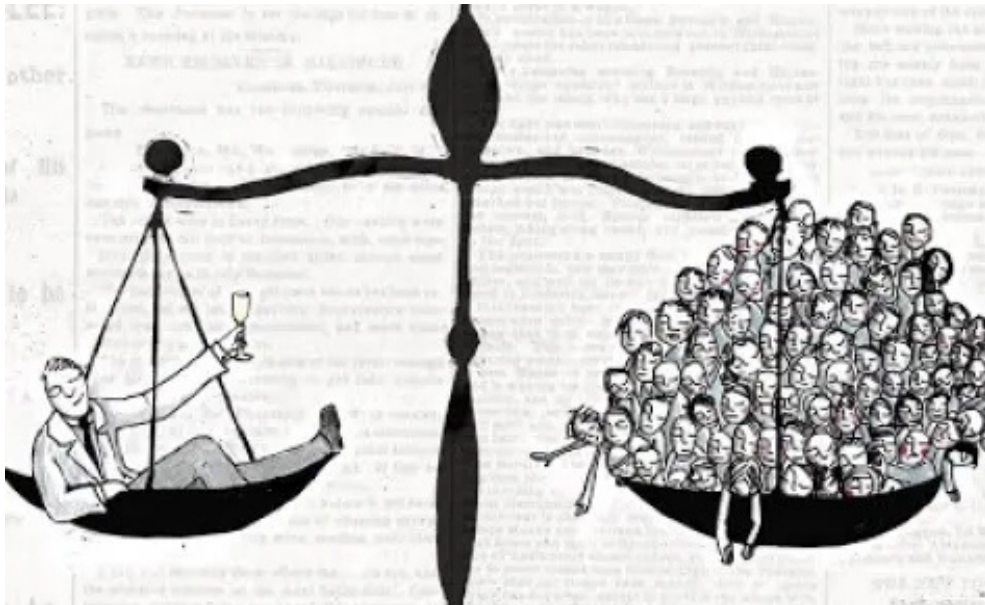


Arghiri Emmanuel's Theory of Unequal Exchange in the Twenty-First Century: Celebrating the Establishment of the Emmanuel Archive at IISH



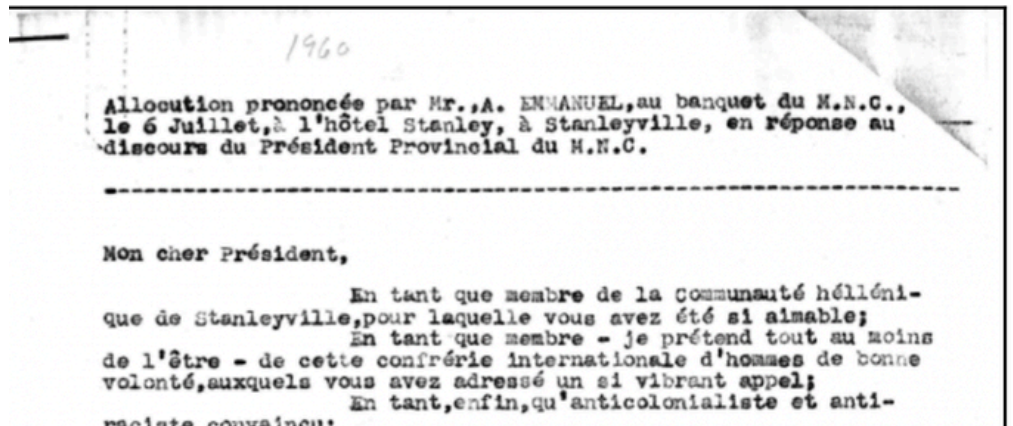
Why a conference?

Arghiri Emmanuel (1911-2001) was one of the leading theoreticians of the political economy of imperialism from the mid-60s and up through the 70s, accompanying the wave of national liberation struggle against imperialism.

Emmanuel put forward the idea of “unequal exchange,” which was the economic backbone of the theory. The concept and especially its political implications were widely discussed among academics as well as political activists at the time.

When Emmanuel passed away in 2001, the world was very different. It was at the height of neoliberal globalization.

The national liberation struggle had not managed to continue into an economic liberation from the grip of imperialism. Instead, transnational capital had outsourced industrial production to the Global South, taking advantage of the low wage level of hundreds of millions of new proletarians, making the concept of “Unequal Exchange” more relevant than ever. However, at the time, the discourse of “imperialism”, not to speak of “anti-imperialism,” was considered something “retro” from the 70s. Few were interested in the legacy of Emmanuel, and his archive and papers was stored in the cellar of his friend and collaborator Claudio Jedlicki. Twenty years have passed, and the world has changed again. The globalization of production, in the form of transnational supply chains, in the intervening period, have even further enhanced the importance of unequal exchange as the principal mechanism of imperialist exploitation. Neoliberal globalization is now in crisis, China has become the factory of the world, and the U.S has turned to military geopolitical struggle to uphold its hegemony. Today we see a new wave of resistance in the Global South against the dominance of the center. Imperialism has returned as a theme of interest, and so have the ideas of Emmanuel, reflected in many new books and articles.



The Emmanuel Association

In 2021, a group of people interested in the work of Emmanuel found out about Emmanuel's papers stored in a cellar in Paris, and decided to find a secure home for the archive in the future. We finally succeeded in May 2024, with the help of Emanuel's daughter Catherine and Claudio Jedlicki, when IISG accepted Emmanuel's most important papers. We also founded the Emmanuel association dedicated to make Emmanuel's work accessible to the public and spread the knowledge of his work.

Visit our website: [Who was Arghiri Emmanuel? - Arghiri Emmanuel Association](#)

Where and when

The conference will take place the 29-30th of January 2026 under the theme: Arghiri Emmanuel's theory of Unequal Exchange in the twenty-first Century, at the IISG in Amsterdam, the home of his archive.

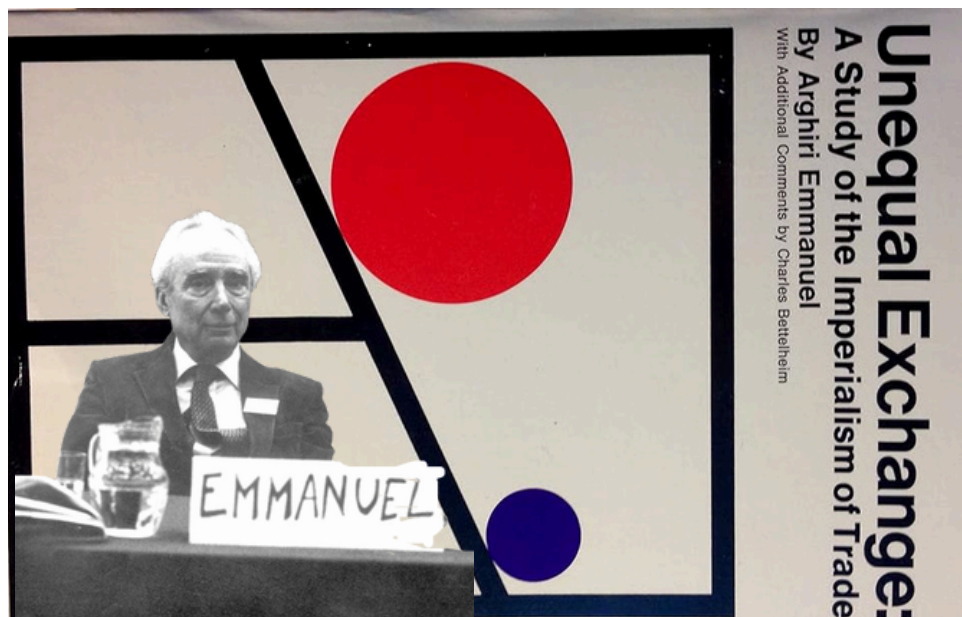
The intention with the conference is to present:

New biographic knowledge on the life story of Emmanuel, based on new research of his years in Belgian Congo (1936-42 and 1946-59), his participation in the Greek resistance during the Second World War, and his years of academic work in Paris. Representatives of IISH and the Emmanuel Association will present the archive. Emmanuel's daughter Catherine Emmanuel, and his friend and former colleague Claudio Jedlicki will give a personal account of Emmanuel.

Presentation of papers dealing with themes central for Emmanuel's work.

A new documentary of his life is under production and will be displayed.

Presentation of new articles, documents, and books on Unequal exchange.



Call for Papers

We hereby make a call for papers related to Emmanuel work, to be presented at the conference.

We invite submissions of papers covering*:

1. Biographical articles on the life and legacy of Arghiri Emmanuel.

3. Global production chains and measuring unequal exchange.
4. Ecological unequal exchange, including theoretical and practical research and action plans for de-growth.
5. Technological development and unequal exchange: the necessity to advance productive forces and gain economic sovereignty in the global South.
6. Settler-colonialism.
7. The transitional state.
8. Labor aristocracy and the question of international solidarity of the working class.
9. The Imperial mode of living, the ecological and political consequences of the consumption pattern of the global North.
10. Transitional socialist states shifting toward an egalitarian and developmental economy.
11. The future of unequal exchange in the changing trade pattern from North-South to South-South.
12. The question of nationalism in the development of socialism.

*The conference organizers will consider papers on additional relevant topics.

We plan to publish the material in a monograph after the conference.

Deadline for papers is: Abstract: First of September 2025.

Papers 15th of December 2025.

Abstract should be sent to the contact email on the website:

Contact - Arghiri Emmanuel Association

Organizers: The Emmanuel Association together with the International Institute for Social History

List of Endorsers

1. International Institute for Social History (IISG)
2. Arghiri Emmanuel Association
3. Anti-Imperialist Network
4. Journal of Labor and Society
5. Notebooks: The Journal for Studies on Power
6. Other endorsements may be included later.

Time: 29-30 of January 2026 (a Thursday and Friday)

Place: Amsterdam, The Netherlands, IISG

[IISG | International Institute of Social History](#)

Tentative Program:

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Thursday 29 January 2026 (10:00-18:00)

Opening Presentation

Representatives of IISH and the Emmanuel Association will present the archive.

Emmanuel's daughter Catherine Emmanuel, and his friend and assistant Claudio Jedlicki will give a personal account of Emmanuel.

A new documentary of his life is under production and will be displayed.

Lunch

Presentation of books and papers

Dinner

