

“Meet Interesting People”: Social and Spatial Mobility in *Nshila*, a Magazine for Africans in Colonial Zambia, 1958–1963

Daniela Atanasova*

Abstract

Nshila (“The Way”), a fortnightly state-sponsored magazine aimed at an African readership in colonial Zambia, participated in the production of a late colonial discourse, which, under the guise of providing affirmation and ‘progressive’ teachings, repackaged long-standing ambitions to control Africans’ spatial mobility and to manage their social and spatial mobility aspirations. While containing some openings through which educated Africans could comment on aspects of a changing reality, *Nshila* ultimately strove to keep political and mobility ambitions in check, and inculcate in its readers ideals of hard work, personal initiative, and self-help. It thus shared in the late colonial state’s efforts to foster a new form of economic subjectivity among the African population. Crucially, *Nshila* constructed a narrative of social mobility that identified key channels of African advancement but failed to acknowledge how vastly out of reach these opportunities were for the majority of Africans in Northern Rhodesia. This narrative ambivalently linked social mobility to geographical mobility, certain kinds of which came to stand for achievement and a ‘modern’ lifestyle, while others were deemed disruptive and discouraged. This article combines historical contextualisation with content and discourse analysis of about eighty magazine issues published between 1958 and 1963.

* Daniela Atanasova, PhD candidate, Department of African Studies, and Research Platform Mobile Cultures and Societies, University of Vienna. Contact: daniela.atanasova@univie.ac.at
This research was funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), as part of the project FWF-Doc.Funds 256 “Cultural Mobility Studies”.

© 2023 The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited, a link to the license is provided, and it is indicated which changes were made.

Introduction

“Along the Copperbelt streets glides a sky-blue American car. It stops in front of a garage and out steps a lean man in an open-necked shirt. This is Luka Mumba, come to town to do business.”

Nshila No. 1, 4 February 1958

Thus begins the story of Luka Mumba, a rural businessman from the Northern Province of colonial Zambia, which appeared in the first issue of *Nshila* (“The Way”), a government-sponsored magazine for Africans, in its section entitled “Meet interesting people”. What was so interesting about Luka Mumba, according to the unnamed author of the portrait published in *Nshila*? Mumba lived in “a town like many others” and had been born to a father who had “kept the family by growing what he could in the poor soil”, like everyone around him and before him. But Mumba was to have a different journey. When he was about eight years old, he was sent to live with relatives in the Belgian Congo, where he attended mission school for a few years. Afterwards he spent a decade moving around—“Uganda, Tanganyika, back to Rhodesia—doing all kinds of jobs”. A key skill he learned on the way was driving. In 1942 he bought an old truck and started offering transport services. It was not all smooth sailing from there, however, as “the truck kept breaking down, and life was a struggle”, but “Luka won through”. In 1958, he was the owner of “thirteen vehicles including eight buses, a well-run farm, a hotel, a retail store and several trading boats”. Not to forget his large house “anyone would envy” and the “sky-blue American car” with which he “glides” into the scene of the article (*Nshila* No. 1, 1958: 30).

Success stories of this kind were a signature rhetorical tool of the fortnightly *Nshila*, published by the information departments of the colonial and postcolonial state of Zambia from 1958 to 1968. In its colonial edition, on which this paper chiefly draws, *Nshila* was an English language publication¹ of about forty pages featuring political news, women’s², sports, and entertainment pages, and stories

¹ Alongside *Nshila*, the colonial government’s information department also published and circulated four newspapers in vernacular languages: *Nkani za Kum’awa* in Chinyanja for Eastern Province, *Lyashi* in Chibemba for the Northern and Luapula Provinces, *Intanda* in Chitonga for Southern Province and Central Province, and *Zwelopili* in Lozi for Barotseland (in 1961 *Intanda* incorporated *Zwelopili* and was renamed *South-Western Star*).

² The women’s section called “Woman’s World” published advice pieces on fashion, hygiene and housekeeping, but over the years it also increasingly reported on advances in women’s education, featuring profiles of accomplished women and news on schooling and training opportunities open to girls and women.

about strides in development and ‘progressive’³ individuals from the different provinces of Northern Rhodesia.

In Zambian historiography, state-sponsored colonial media have been variously assessed as tools of propaganda (Smyth 1983) and control (Chikowero 2014; Thakkar 2021) and as agents of modernisation that sought to promote a set of Western values, habits, and forms of consumption associated with the ‘modernising mission’ of the colonial project (Spitulnik 1998; Kalusa 2013; Heinze 2016). They have also been read as spaces of interaction revealing ways in which Africans negotiated the emergent worldviews, lifestyles, and norms they encountered in these media and in their environments (Englund 2015; Heinze 2016; Kallmann 1999). The vernacular state press in particular, Englund (2015: 223) has pointed out, enabled Africans to mobilise “alternative languages of claim-making” that confounded the limited categories of anticolonial, pro-colonial, or nativist sentiments that historians have used to interpret African interests in the late colonial period. Thakkar has further asserted that state-sponsored media in Northern Rhodesia participated in the production and circulation of a late colonial discourse of “developmentalism”, which supplied Africans with “a vision of progress without equality” (2021: 3).

The present article⁴ adds to this literature by showing with the example of *Nshila* that, under the guise of providing affirmation and ‘progressive’ teachings, this discourse repackaged long-standing colonial ambitions to control Africans’ spatial mobility and to manage their socioeconomic aspirations. While containing some openings through which educated Africans could comment on aspects of a changing reality and even challenge government messaging, *Nshila* ultimately strove to reconfigure notions of success, keep political and mobility ambitions in check, and inculcate in its readership ideals of hard work, personal initiative, and selfhelp. In this way, it shared in the late colonial state’s efforts to foster a new form of economic subjectivity among the African population.

The choice of mobility as a thematic and methodological lens in this article serves a twofold purpose. First, it brings to the fore a broader range of topics about which state-sponsored colonial-era media can offer insights as historical sources. Second, it allows attention to the full array of mobilities referred to in *Nshila* and

³ “Progressive” was a term used by the magazine to describe not only the people it introduced in these stories but also its projected reading public. “Progressive people read *Nshila*” was a slogan occasionally printed on its second or last pages as part of an advertisement to attract new subscriptions (as in *Nshila* No. 182, 1965: 44).

⁴ I wish to thank the special issue co-editor Martha Lagace, my PhD supervisors Professor Kirsten Rütter and Marja Hinfelaar, and the two anonymous reviewers for their detailed and constructive feedback that greatly improved this article.

entangled in the life histories of individuals portrayed in the magazine (labour, but also educational, trade, and other mobilities), including social mobility. Whereas migration has been criticised for typically implying one-directional movement from one point in space to another (de Bruijn et al. 2001), the term mobility is better able to accommodate (repeated) return and complex trajectories involving multiple moves in different directions and intermediate stays or “moorings” (as per Schenck et al. 2021) of various duration (also see Leander Schneider’s contribution in this issue and Guthrie 2018).

The findings are based on a reading of around 80 issues⁵ of *Nshila*, with special attention devoted to two genres focused on profiling noteworthy Africans. The ensuing discussion combining content and discourse analysis with historical contextualisation will show how *Nshila* constructed a narrative of social mobility that identified some key channels of African advancement but failed to acknowledge how out of reach these opportunities were for the majority of the African population in Northern Rhodesia. Crucially, in this narrative, social mobility was ambivalently linked to geographical mobility, certain kinds of which came to stand for achievement and a forward-looking lifestyle while others were deemed disruptive and were discouraged.

Positioning *Nshila*

Colonial *Nshila* was produced in the Northern Rhodesia information department’s Lusaka office by mainly African editorial staff under the leadership of a managing editor and a white information officer, who was an expatriate colonial servant. It was sold across the territory of Northern Rhodesia in both urban and rural areas.⁶ By the end of its first year it had reached a print run of 8,200. In subsequent years it continued to maintain “a satisfactory level” of circulation (Colonial Office 1959: 69), although it never became one of the most popular print media in Northern Rhodesia.⁷

⁵ I reviewed close to 80 pre-independence issues (No. 1, No. 64–126, No. 138, No. 141–154), and a handful of postindependence ones, borrowed via inter-library loan from the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart and the University Library Johann Christian Senckenberg of the Goethe University Frankfurt am Main. Those were all the issues retrievable at these libraries, and all the issues I was able to review in their entirety. I also looked at excerpts from a few issues held at the British Library. The National Archives of Zambia’s *Nshila* collection was unavailable for perusal in both 2021 and 2022 because of its poor state of preservation. The British Library holds more issues, but I have not yet consulted those.

⁶ Although judging from the letters section, the bulk of its readers were in the towns of the Copperbelt, Zambia’s mining region.

⁷ These were, by the colonial government’s own account (in Colonial Office 1962), the commercial daily *Northern News* and the weekly *African Mail*, which in 1963 became the *Central African Mail*. These mostly catered to urban readers, while *Nshila* and the vernacular newspapers reportedly “circulated widely in rural areas” as well (Colonial Office 1962: 65).

Although the magazine carried the caveat “The views expressed in *Nshila* are not necessarily those of any government”, reports of colonial authorities show that its thematic foci were determined by a distinct government communication agenda. Even as such, colonial-era *Nshila* had to strike a balance between following the didactic priorities of the colonial state, staying relevant to its intended African public, and not infuriating the white settlers who controlled the federal government.⁸ Editorial freedom under such conditions was narrow.

Politically, the magazine was conservative, and up until the very last moments of white minority rule, its vision did not include equal political participation for Africans. For this reason, it sometimes attracted sharp pushback from some of its more critical readers. For instance, in a letter Chisenga Sarlley from Ndola commented on *Nshila*’s disapproving coverage of the *Cha Cha Cha* nationalist uprising of 1961:

Dear Sir, I think that your magazine *Nshila* ought to be given to every Civil Servant ‘free of charge’ and the common man must be left with the question of whether or not to buy it. I say this because anybody can see or tell from your editorial comments that the Editor of *Nshila* is a white man, or, if he is black, he does not look at the black nationalists as an ordinary moderate man does. In other words, you stand for white supremacy. (*Nshila* No. 106, 1962: 6)⁹

The fact that this open challenge was published at all suggests that there was some space for African readers’ views in *Nshila*. On its letters pages, predominantly male readers from urban centres discussed changing gender relations, the merits of indigenous customs, and other social and economic issues. However, letters critical of government were usually accompanied by curt denials from the editor, and sometimes by direct answers from government institutions, as in: “All Government appointments are made on merit alone” (*Nshila* No. 72, 1960), exposing *Nshila*’s close ties to the colonial state.

⁸ At the time, the British protectorate of Northern Rhodesia was part of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (1953–1963), which was ruled by a federal government headquartered in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia (today’s Zimbabwe).

⁹ The editor’s replies to this and other letters, usually printed on the same page, do not reveal his name or racial identity, and I have not yet found any other sources that do so. Harri Englund (2015: 233) states for *Nkhani za Kum’awwa*, *Nshila*’s vernacular counterpart for Eastern Province, that while “the editorial oversight rested with the white information officer”, the “actual editing and reporting” was done by Africans.

Nevertheless, elements of *Nshila's* message undoubtedly appealed to parts of the educated African minority who supplied its readers and a good number of its writers. Hundreds of African men and women agreed to have their achievements recognised in its pages, and presumably thousands read it on a regular basis. While the work of anti-colonial agitation was being done elsewhere, similarly to the vernacular government press (as analysed in Englund 2015) *Nshila* brought to the fore a host of other African concerns, reflecting the diversity of perspectives, interests, and social positions in Northern Rhodesia's African society during this transitional time. Furthermore, Africans' continued patronage of this "prestige magazine" (Colonial Office 1962: 67) also shows to what extent parts of the newly rising African aspirational class had come to share the colonial government's vision of development (Cooper 2005). At the same time, they did not necessarily subscribe to all aspects of its modernising ethos, such as, for example, the invitation to model kinship and consumption after a Western ideal of the nuclear family (Kalusa 2013). Their aspirations to 'modern' lifestyles manifested in a desire to acquire manufactured consumer goods (Ross et al. 2013; some of these goods were advertised in *Nshila*, see Kalusa 2013), control new kinds of wealth, and project new forms of political authority and social status. These combined readily with emerging and existing indigenous social and cultural practices that subjected Western-style goods to local uses and meaning-making processes (Ross et al. 2013; Kalusa 2013).¹⁰

I use the term 'aspirational class' heuristically to refer to the reading public *Nshila* purported to address, represent, and call into being. While *Nshila's* direct readers were of necessity Africans who could read English, its wider audience¹¹ included many of those who were endeavouring, in different ways, to improve their livelihoods and social positions by becoming active in the colonial money economy. The main *Nshila*-approved avenues to this end were Western-style education and in/formal wage employment, or private enterprise, in the form of trade, transport mobility, commercial farming, and other occupations. The term

¹⁰ In addition, in Northern Rhodesia, Africans' aspirations to 'modernity' were often constructed in opposition to (or disregard of) the conservative vision of some colonial servants who, as per Heisler (1974), believed that an African path to development would have to be culturally distinct, self-determined, and, most importantly if it was to be authentic, *rural*. Such administrators were then often appalled by or lamented the actual ways in which Africans chose to self-determine, for instance by moving to the urban areas in large numbers. However, colonial servants' views often clashed with the interests of companies operating in the colony, and those of European settlers and the federal government. Colonial policy was complex and multivocal (Ferguson 1999), just as the interests, positions, and aspirations of the African population were diverse and resisting easy classifications (Englund 2015).

¹¹ I borrow from Kallmann 1999 and Spitulnik 1994 the distinction between the actual readers of the magazine and its audience "referred to in the text", which represented "the imagined reading public projected and consumed by producers, editors, and readers" (Kallmann 1999: 73).

‘aspirational class’ is broader and more dynamic than the comparable concept of ‘elites’ as it hinges on aspirations rather than actual achievement of exceptional levels of wealth, status, and formal education. Nevertheless, a modicum of prosperity and a semblance of a ‘modern’ lifestyle, or at least the promise of it, was required to attract *Nshila*’s attention. Aspirations had to be pursued in ways that allowed individuals to be hailed as examples of ‘modern’ capitalist values, such as forward-looking discipline, productivity, and self-initiative. These Africans were to be the embodiments of an ideal rational economic subject that colonial discourses, ideologies and policies sought to encourage (Frederiksen 2014). However, this depiction did not have to reflect or even allude in any way to the full spectrum of their activities or their actual self-understandings and social, cultural, and political allegiances.

A social mobility narrative – the importance of education

As already suggested, *Nshila*’s intended readers were educated Africans, who could act as opinion leaders and influence a potentially larger and heterogeneous aspirational class. The editorial of the very first issue provides further clues to the magazine’s goals and method:

What sort of magazine will this new one be, as it follows the well-loved *Listener*¹²? Let us tell you now. It will aim to show the way ahead, guiding you around Northern Rhodesia to discover the people who are doing important and interesting jobs, to learn about the exciting developments in this young and growing country of ours. (*Nshila* No. 1, 1958: 1)

In claiming to “show the way ahead”, *Nshila* assumed authority over what constituted progress and what the future should look like. However, it mostly refrained from communicating these ideas directly but identified Africans who seemed to personify them. As a result, an impressive number of Zambian individuals had their names and accomplishments documented in *Nshila*, especially in its preindependence format, which remained relatively unaltered from 1958 to about 1963. Profiling Africans who ticked its boxes for “progressive people” was one of the magazine’s chief rhetorical strategies. This strategy found

¹² *Nshila* was a successor to the monthly radio listener magazine *The African Listener*, which Northern Rhodesia’s information department had been publishing since 1952 (Smyth 1983). The editorial of the inaugural issue describes *Nshila* as “an experiment, a journey in a new direction” from the old *African Listener*. It was to set a new tone that was “bright and lively” and to register the “progress” taking place in the country (*Nshila* No. 1, 1958: 1). So far, I was not able to find copies of *The African Listener* to compare its content to *Nshila*’s.

expression in a variety of genres, of which two main ones provide most of the material used in this analysis.

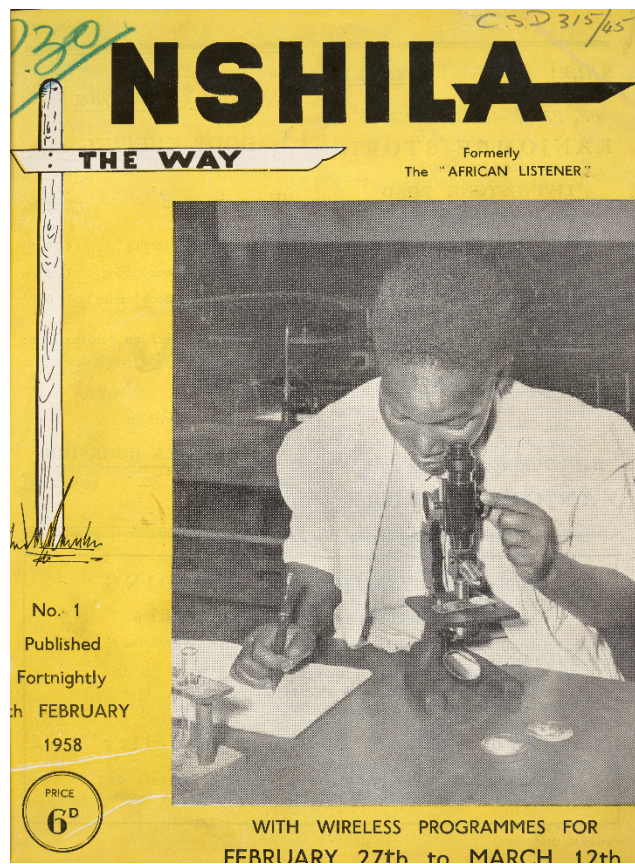


Image 1: The cover page of the first issue of *Nshila* © British Library Board C.S.D.315/45 4 February 1958, 1.

The first genre consists of news pieces on educational achievements, study trips abroad, and promotions in the civil service. These stories have titles like “Stanley wins trip to America” and “First African District Assistants appointed”. They celebrated many “firsts” for Northern Rhodesian Africans, in education as well as in the civil service and private companies where, in the last few years of colonial rule, Africans were increasingly being promoted to positions previously occupied by Europeans. The second genre is the fullpage column “Meet interesting people”, presenting a more eclectic selection of noteworthy individuals from many walks of life. An example is “Big businessman of the bush”, the article about Luka Mumba whom we already met at the beginning (*Nshila* No. 1, 1958: 31). The stories in both genres take the form of third-person narratives and recount the career, educational, and mobility histories of the selected individuals.

What the men and women featured in these stories (although women were a minority¹³) have in common is that they had all managed to improve their “station in life” and reached a certain level of material prosperity or educational success, or were working to do so. Theirs were stories of ‘upward’ social mobility (both achieved and aspired to), illustrating what avenues of socioeconomic advancement were available to Africans in the last years of colonial rule, as well as in what ways social mobility was imagined and articulated in the public discourse of the time.

At the same time, the particular framing showed only a part of the picture. Strikingly, these articles failed to point out the manifold obstacles standing in the way of fulfilment of African aspirations in late colonial Northern Rhodesia, and the complex realities and allegiances of the African aspirational class whose accomplishments *Nshila* was trying to harness into an unnuanced tale of progress and opportunity. This omission reflected the information department’s effort to paint colonial rule in Northern Rhodesia as a success story in its final years, and to impress (ambivalent) ideas of what constituted desirable, ‘modern’ lifestyles on its African audience.

A central metaphor the magazine employed to describe social mobility was that of a “ladder of success”, a classic image still used today to characterise the allegedly meritocratic social structures of capitalist societies. The stories in *Nshila* imagine the ladder in national dimensions, as shown by this sentence from a 1962 article: “Among the people on top of the ladder of success in this country is 23-year-old Miss Gwendoline Konie, the first woman Probation Officer of Northern Rhodesia” (*Nshila* No. 106, 1962: 6). However, while the notion of a ladder creates the impression that anyone who invests enough effort could reach the highest steps, Northern Rhodesia’s social structure at the time resembled more a pyramid or a “narrow staircase”, with very few opportunities at the top, and those typically dominated by whites (Serpell 1993). To illustrate, in the early 1950s there were fewer than 200 secondary school places for Africans in the whole country. In the 1960s the situation, although improving, had not changed dramatically (Carmody 2004). As a result, movement up the ladder was impossible for the vast majority of the African population, a fact that colonial *Nshila* never directly acknowledged.¹⁴

¹³ The gendered aspects of *Nshila*’s social and spatial mobility narrative deserve a whole separate discussion, for which there is no space in the present article.

¹⁴ It was only with the achievement of political independence that *Nshila* endeavoured to provide a more realistic view of educational opportunities and achievements for the majority population. In its first issue of 1965, the new Minister of Education of Zambia John Mwanakatwe delivered a sobering statistic: “The

Unsurprisingly, *Nshila* identified formal, Western-style education as the most promising path to upward social mobility. The Africans who were coming to occupy the newly created responsible posts in the civil service and the best posts available to Africans in the mining companies had not only obtained the highest possible educational qualifications in Northern Rhodesia, but many had studied abroad or acquired foreign degrees via correspondence study. Looking farther back in these individuals' profiles depicted in *Nshila*, they were all graduates of the country's most prestigious, and for many years *only*, secondary schools, Munali Secondary School for men and Chipembi and Mindolo for women.¹⁵ Previously, they had attended mission schools and, in many cases, their parents had also been educated or had worked closely with missionaries and understood early on the benefits schooling could bestow on their children.

Furthermore, *Nshila's* biographies of most of the African men and women who had climbed to the highest ranks in civil service, teaching, or nursing, and in private companies, demonstrate a close link between acquiring additional qualifications and rising to a better-paid position. Qualified people were so few that a new degree or training course usually meant a higher-level post. Alternatively, promotion could lead to sponsorship for further training, especially in government service. However, this applied mostly to the few with a full secondary education and rare higher education credentials.¹⁶ At the lower levels of educational achievement, *Nshila* emphasised, qualifications such as Standard VI (the equivalent of eight years of schooling or full primary education) were already being devalued; in the early 1960s they no longer guaranteed access to highly esteemed white-collar jobs. *Nshila* advised men with lower qualifications to stop "loitering" about towns, waiting for jobs that were not coming their way, but to try to put their schooling to other productive uses (*Nshila* No. 68, 1960: 15).

At the same time, demand was growing for higher education degrees, but the only higher education institution in the Federation, the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, established in 1955, was in Salisbury and enrolled only

grim fact is that half of our adult males and 80 per cent of our adult females have never been to school" (*Nshila* No. 181, 1965: 42).

¹⁵ Munali Secondary School in Lusaka started as Munali Training Centre, which in 1939 enrolled its first ever Standard VII class (consisting of fifteen boys), thus becoming the first secondary school in Northern Rhodesia. The second one came in 1946, when the primary school at Chipembi for the first time offered a secondary course to girls (Carmody 2004: 14-15).

¹⁶ *Nshila* reported in August 1962 that at that time the Northern Rhodesia Government employed 51 African university graduates, which probably came close to the total number of Africans with university degrees in the country (*Nshila* No. 120, 1962: 26). Heisler (1974: 67) mentions that there were 105 university graduates in Zambia at independence in 1964, only "a handful" of whom were women.

a small number of African students (Parker 1961).¹⁷ Thus, Africans who wished to continue their studies beyond secondary education had to find ways to study abroad. *Nshila* described the select few who managed to do so as having reached the “top of the ladder of success” in the country, as in the abovementioned example of Gwendoline Konie, who obtained a Diploma in Social Science from the University of Swansea in England (*Nshila* No. 106, 1962: 6).¹⁸ Through its regular coverage of scholarship awards and educational trips overseas, *Nshila* constructed educational mobility abroad as the most prestigious form of recognition a Northern Rhodesian African could receive, representing both a reward for achievements and a promise of future service to the country.

Nshila’s coverage of educational mobility abroad was partial, however, as it mainly showcased individuals who studied in Britain, the United States, or occasionally West Germany. Yet, recent research has shown that from the 1950s onwards Africans were among the chief beneficiaries of an increasingly diversifying “architecture” of foreign scholarship programmes (Burton 2020). Conspicuously absent from *Nshila*’s pages were East-bound mobility routes, which took aspiring scholars to countries like the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, East Germany, Poland, and Bulgaria¹⁹, and were mediated by local actors associated with the anticolonial cause (such as nationalist parties like UNIP, the United National Independence Party, or their officials).²⁰

Pointedly, colonial-era *Nshila* took no note of the alternative social mobility channels offered by UNIP’s burgeoning party structure of the time. Its coverage of educational achievements and its portrayal of social mobility trajectories was limited to those facilitated by actors representing the ideological positions it favoured, which in the terms of intensifying Cold War divisions were unequivocal-

¹⁷ Only 31 of the 188 students enrolled in 1959 were Africans (Parker 1961).

¹⁸ In 1962 she went on to become a member of Northern Rhodesia’s Legislative Council and later a prominent politician and diplomat in independent Zambia.

¹⁹ Only one among the *Nshila* issues that I read carried a report on a Northern Rhodesian’s experience studying in an East-bloc country. The letter by Inyama Maboshe, who in 1959 won a UNESCO scholarship to study medicine in Poland and in the UK, was published in fragments and accompanied by commentary from the editor. It concluded thus: “If the individual accumulates more property than a certain prescribed limit in Poland then the state will take away from him the excess, for which he will not be refunded. Some people, of course, do not like this and think that our Western system is the better one. As from the West I, of course, think the same.” (*Nshila* No. 80, 1961: 42)

²⁰ Katongo Mulenga Maine, a successful Zambian businesswoman and later a politician, recounts in her autobiography (Maine 2018) how she was noticed by a neighbour and then invited by a UNIP founding member in 1960 to train as a nurse in East Germany. In contrast to *Nshila*, the *Central African Mail*, a commercial weekly published on the Copperbelt in the same period (1963–1965) which was openly supportive of UNIP and the independence cause, did not shy away from reporting on scholarships awarded through UNIP and taking Zambians to Eastern-bloc countries. (Based on my review of issues held at the National Archives of Zambia).

cally those of the Western bloc, and within Northern Rhodesia, those of the colonial government. Furthermore, its enthusiastic reports on the opening of new schools and first African graduates or trainees in different fields, reflecting the modest expansion of educational and career opportunities in the late colonial period, belied the huge gap that remained. For years after political independence was achieved, foreigners continued to be employed in high-skilled positions because of the insufficient numbers of qualified Zambians (Beveridge 1974) and because of enduring racial bias (see Burawoy 1972). The resources the colonial government invested in African education fell far short of the needs, which made schooling a highly exclusive conduit to social mobility, more promise than reality for most.

Meet interesting people

While a large part of the magazine's space and energies was devoted to demonstrating the importance of formal education, *Nshila* sometimes attempted to loosen the discursive link between schooling and a forward social trajectory by featuring portraits of people who forged alternative paths to wealth, self-reliance, and valued forms of consumption. These portraits usually appeared in the "Meet interesting people" section. Whereas in other sections *Nshila* identified success with educational degrees, formal jobs, and international mobility, in this column success was equated with material prosperity of a distinct kind.

'Interesting people' lived in both urban and rural areas, were chiefly men (only six of the close to eighty columns I reviewed featured women), came from a great variety of occupations²¹, and were not necessarily formally educated. Most prominently, they frequently earned good money, owned 'modern' brick houses, buildings, shops, tearooms, farms, and other businesses, and possessed valuable consumer goods such as vehicles, farm machinery, and house appliances. Many of them were entrepreneurs who had found the courage and resources to strike out on their own, usually after years of working in government service or private companies. Solomon Ngulube, who in 1962 had opened a bar and general store in Rufunsa, is a typical example, but *Nshila* also sometimes singled out initiatives of a much smaller scale, featuring, for instance, a disabled man who earned his living from knitting, or, on another occasion, a shoe-repairer. The following is an

²¹ For example, they included: a self-taught baker, a storekeeper, a forester, a newspaper seller in a leprosy colony, a church minister, a bricklayer, a tailor-instructor, a sculptor, a miner rewarded for courage, a game guard who was also a dancer, a chieftainess, a 12-year-old tobacco grower, a musician who worked as a mechanic, and many more.

excerpt from the piece on the shoe-repairer, Mr. Zubelo, which illustrates the upbeat rhetoric employed in these articles.

Making a great reputation in Fort Jameson is that familiar figure at Kando-do store – Amisi Zubelo the shoe-repairer. For Mr. Zubelo, the hours of the day are better calculated by the pairs of shoes lying next to his wooden box, on which he spends his time stitching and hammering nails into the would-be worn out shoes. [...] For this keen worker, the day starts when he takes his three big boxes out of the shop. [...] With another look, he starts his needle work, which is only interrupted by the careful hammering of nails into the heels. Mr. Zubelo is very industrious and only on rare and very serious repairs will his customers complain that the job is taking a long time. (*Nshila* No. 126, 1962: 19)

‘Interesting’ people were thus diligent, productive, and efficient. Besides a certain level of material success, what made them noteworthy could also be the fact that they had a rare job, had been loyal employees for a long time, or simply “loved” their work (*Nshila*, No. 69, 1960: 14). Sometimes their life stories had the flavour of rags-to-riches tales, and they regularly emphasised certain recurring character traits that were constructed as the secret to their success. An incomplete list of these traits, which I collected and cite verbatim from the articles, is found in Table 1 below.

Qualities of an interesting person

hard-working, hard work*	respect for officers and fellow workers
spirit of enterprise*	thriftiness, financial foresight
initiative*	resourcefulness and industriousness
serenity	determination and patience
efficiency and integrity	private study
tolerance	thriving, wealthy
patience and perseverance	cheerfulness, honesty
purpose	quietly spoken and unassuming
integrity and a high sense of duty	a natural bent for commerce
loyalty (in civil service)	always thinking about improving your efficiency
ambition	helping family (mentioned only once!)
earnestness	
integrity and patience	

Table 1 (*the most commonly mentioned attributes in *Nshila*)

What emerges from this combination of qualities is a portrait of an ideal colonial subject who was hardworking, selfreliant, and enterprising, but also loyal and humble. This portrait stands somewhat in tension with the ideal of the *educated* colonial subject with professional ambitions that *Nshila* spotlighted in some of its other sections. Despite the section's celebration of work ethics and discipline, this portrait also differs significantly from another imaginable kind of ideal colonial subject—that of a *worker* (or, see below, a labour migrant). As noted, *Nshila* usually profiled the 'interesting' individuals at a time when they were running independent ventures, and not as wage labourers in farms, mines, or other companies, a livelihood path many of them had pursued earlier on in their 'careers', and, needless to say, a position many others were in at the time *Nshila* was being published.

Both the educated and enterprising ideal colonial subjects emerging from *Nshila*'s profiles can be read as essentially 'modern' (or 'modernising') rational *economic* subjects, a variation of the self-regulating, self-improving subject described by Michel Foucault (Foucault 1982, 2008; Frederiksen 2014: 1276; Carpenter 2020). Frederiksen's Foucault-inspired analysis of the Northern

Rhodesian colonial state’s techniques of rule and governance (2014) can safely be extended here to help characterise not only the ‘interesting person’ trope but also *Nshila*’s entire ideological thrust, which was fully in service of the colonial state’s subject formation goals. Whereas Frederiksen investigates how certain institutional policies of the colonial state contributed to stimulating a “new rationality of progress and self-improvement” (2014: 1283), *Nshila* could be seen as part of the discursive pole of this effort. *Nshila* was one of the channels through which the late colonial state sought to encourage (rather than coerce) desired behaviours and aspirations among the African population, a central pursuit of which was to be individual economic gain. These behaviours and aspirations were necessary for the proper functioning of (European) capital in Northern Rhodesia. However, owing to the ultimately indeterminate nature of all processes of subject formation, and as the material from *Nshila* makes it clear, they needed to be managed in case they undermined (as they were already doing) the political stability and racialized social order that colonial state institutions had been trying to preserve even as they were promoting new forms of subjectivity (Frederiksen 2014).

To return to the “Meet interesting people” stories, the propaganda goals underpinning them are further revealed not only in their content, but in what they chose to omit. As in the case of the stories about educational successes, the interesting people profiles are incomplete, the people themselves seldom speak directly, and the column’s almost formulaic narratives reveal as much about the magazine’s ideological agenda as about the individuals involved¹. We rarely learn anything more about the persons presented beyond their career and mobility trajectories, business ventures, and material possessions. Their political and religious affiliations are mostly left out of the picture, as are the ways in which they used their wealth beyond the most visible status symbols, perhaps to meet customary social obligations and shore up family ties. Even their material possessions seem to have been limited to wealth created in the colonial economy

¹ Nonetheless, the sheer variety of people portrayed suggests that their selection at least must sometimes have reflected the interests of the African writers, who seem to have been attracted by rare and curious occupations. At the same time, the series offers a window into the high degree of differentiation and inequality among the Africans under colonial rule *Nshila* considered worthy of its attention and whom I tentatively describe as an ‘aspirational class’. Another way of sketching the boundaries of this group is by pointing out whom it did not include: subsistence farmers, poor and unemployed township dwellers, domestic workers, manual labourers of all kinds, beer brewers, shop assistants, underground miners, traditional healers... the list goes on. It is not that these Africans did not aspire or work to improve their livelihoods, but that their experiences and lifestyles did not fit easily into *Nshila*’s vision of Northern Rhodesia as an increasingly modernising and prosperous country. Ultimately, the “prestige magazine” (as referred to in Colonial Office 1962: 67) that was *Nshila* ended up excluding or not speaking to the majority of the country’s population.

and to Westernstyle goods. Almost no mention is made of cattle, land, or social relationships, which were important markers of wealth and status among Africans at the time and remain so to this day (Peša 2019; Guyer 1995).

As an illustration, Hinfelaar's account (2013) of the business ventures of Robynson Nabulyato, a prominent rural businessman and politician of the late colonial period in Namwala district, Southern Province, reveals that his thriving shop and transport business were, in fact, side interests to his main source of wealth. This was the trade in cattle, then a backbone of the economy of the Ila people in Southern Province. It is imaginable that in their enthusiasm for private enterprise, some of *Nshila's* profiles may have exaggerated the centrality of the businesses showcased, neglecting other potentially important sources and signs of prosperity as well as the extent to which wealth had to be "socialised" through sharing (Peša 2019). Regarding the latter, only in a single instance does the magazine shower praise on a teacher for helping family members beyond his own children: "When John looked round after standard VI he saw scores of brothers, sisters, cousins and nephews. All these looked to him for support. He had no alternative but to go into the world and work" (*Nshila* No. 73, 1960: 12). This must have happened regularly, but *Nshila* stories preferred to turn their subjects into examples of individual achievement and the domestic ideal of the nuclear family rather than do justice to their actual attachments and relationships.

Just as Thakkar (2021: 12) observed regarding the Central African Broadcasting Station in Northern Rhodesia, *Nshila's* rendering of individuals and of late colonial Zambian society was thus not a realistic image, but "an aspirational vision" with a didactic bent. This vision was to a large extent purged of any traces of African indigenous cultural practices and claims to social status² (based on age or lineage or the above-mentioned forms of wealth) that did not fit in with the magazine's idea of 'progress'. The only ways in which African practices and hierarchies occasionally surfaced was through curiosity photographs of dancers and native authorities in tribal dress, articles praising chiefs committed to the colonial brand of development, mentions of traditional instruments and ancient crafts that needed preserving, and as a topic of discussion in the letters section. But ultimately most of these practices were treated as calcified, residual forms belonging to the dustbin of tradition, and not as dynamic, adaptive institutions and interpretative frames, able to incorporate new meanings and provide some sense of stability and continuity at a time of change.

² See Powdermaker 1962, Meier zu Selhausen et al. 2018.

Last but not least, in spite of the emphasis on entrepreneurship, *Nshila* did not discuss the significant legislative limitations Africans faced as to where and how they could do business in Northern Rhodesia.³ To summarise evidence to this effect by Beveridge and Oberschall (1979), Africans were mostly relegated to market trading and small-scale hawking, or long-distance fish trade, and, contrary to what *Nshila* suggests, only rarely ran or owned retail stores. They were legally allowed to operate stores only in native reserves in the rural areas (“which were always located outside the administrative centres” or bomas, as per Hinfelaar 2013: 237) and the African neighbourhoods or “locations” in the urban areas. The most profitable parts of the Northern Rhodesian market were thus effectively closed to them. Because of such legal restrictions⁴ and fierce competition from European and Asian traders, Africans in the 1940s accounted for only 5 per cent of the total trade in Northern Rhodesia. By the end of Federation, their share, although growing, remained small in comparison (Beveridge/Oberschall 1979). Once again, the success stories in *Nshila* left out this telling context and, if anything, understated the extraordinariness of the achievements of the interesting individuals that came to stand for the magazine’s alternative route to social mobility—that of individual enterprise.

The role of spatial mobility

Another source of wealth and social advancement that emerges from these stories, albeit unacknowledged as such in the stories themselves, is geographical mobility. This is not surprising, for in the early decades of colonial rule the Northern Rhodesian economy played the role of “labour reserve” for mining, industrial, and farming interests in Southern Rhodesia, the Belgian Congo, Tanganyika, and the Union of South Africa. Many labour migrants from all over the territory (the majority were men, and at the outset their migration was propelled by the imposition of hut and poll taxes) made the journey south or north. From the late 1920s onwards, when the first mines were established on the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt, a lot of the movement turned to that direction, and other major urban centres like Lusaka attracted their share of migrants

³ I am grateful to Marja Hinfelaar for bringing this important point to my attention (personal communication, 16 March 2022).

⁴ Furthermore, there were restrictions on the kind of goods African could sell – for instance, basic foodstuffs like grains, sugar, coffee, and tea could not be sold by hawkers or in African marketplaces. The sale of beer was also legal only in European-owned beer halls, albeit illegal beer brewing continued unabated. Africans had no access to credit and had to pay the same fees for trading and hawking licenses as Europeans and Asians, even though their capital was much more limited. Finally, even under Federation, Africans “could not register companies or own land in most parts of the country” and they could not legally own or run beerhalls until 1959, or bars until 1961 (Beveridge/Oberschall 1979: 39).

(Heisler 1974; Cliffe 1978; Ferguson 1999). Education spawned additional mobility routes as schools were few and far between. Mobility essentially created the towns on the urbanised ‘line of rail’, and during the time of the Federation also connected the three constituent territories of Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland. The movement of people between the three territories was registered by *Nshila*, which occasionally introduced Africans from Southern Rhodesia or Nyasaland living and working in Northern Rhodesia.

A high degree of geographical mobility stands out as a notable feature of the life stories of virtually all the wellto-do individuals who appeared in the “Meet interesting people” series. They had all travelled widely, sometimes for schooling, and most often as labour migrants working for the colonial administration or mining companies before they could amass capital and start their urban or rural ventures. Their labour migration itineraries often involved multiple, even repeated, stays of various duration at different destinations within and beyond Northern Rhodesia. According to Guthrie (2018), a methodological framework emphasising labour *mobility* is better suited to do justice to such complex trajectories than the migration-centred framing that has been dominant in southern African labour history.

For some of the “interesting people” it was literally rare mobility-related skills (and resources) that had fuelled their socioeconomic advance. Luka Mumba from this article’s introduction started his career driving a truck and his ability to stay mobile also helped ensure the continued success of his business. When a few of his buses were stranded across the Luapula Province during the rainy season, he “flew in and out of the isolated area by charter plane”, inspiring the unnamed author to wonder “what is he like, this amazing man who sat in the silver ‘*ndeke*’ [airplane in Bemba] and looked down on the bush that had harboured his forebears for generations”. The height and speed from which Luka Mumba was able to observe his home region, using state-of-the-art means of transport, stood for the progress he had made and the social distance he had achieved from his milieu of origin (*Nshila* No. 1, 1958: 31).⁵ Another man who made a living from his driving skills was Joseph Robert Chileshe, who in 1960 was running a driving school in Kasama. He was born in rural Chinsali, educat-

⁵ Interestingly, quite late in the process of writing this article I found out that this is not Luka Mumba’s first appearance in a scholarly text. He is the only businessman mentioned by name in Beveridge and Oberschall’s chapter (1979) on African entrepreneurship before independence. They refer to him as a “fabled” exception to the otherwise modest performance of African entrepreneurs owing to the many legislative and other inhibitions that they faced. He is also mentioned in Gann 1969, where his story is cited from the booklet *Success in Northern Rhodesia*, which collected over “a dozen” of the “Meet interesting people” stories from *Nshila* and was published by the Northern Rhodesia Information Department around 1960 (Thakkar 2021: 20).

ed in Ndola, and learned to drive in the army where he worked as a despatch driver and travelled as far as Kenya and Ethiopia. After the war he trained as a mechanic in Ndola, and then worked as a mechanic and driver in Barotseland, Southern Rhodesia, Livingstone, and Kasama, where he finally started his driving school. In *Nshila*'s words, “once a rolling stone”, he was now “making money rolling on four wheels” (*Nshila* No. 72, 1960: 18).



Image 2: The “fabled” Luka Mumba, *Nshila* No. 1 © British Library Board C.S.D.315/45 4 February 1958, 30.

Some of the other individuals who had built prosperous livelihoods with the help of spatial mobility were traders. Trade-related mobility could involve risktaking and even physical dangers, as in the story of Sachipango Lumeta from Balovale District in North-Western Province. He started his trading business in 1946, initially selling fish on the Copperbelt and importing second-hand clothing from the Congo. Afterwards he switched to a more lucrative hawking venture, buying goods in Livingstone and selling them in his home district. The journey to and from Livingstone had to be made on foot and the goods transported with the help of carriers. *Nshila* quotes him saying: “We had a very tough time during

those early days. The journeys were long and tedious. On several occasions we had to spend sleepless nights in uninhabited forests, and we usually encountered dangerous animals." After three years of hawking, Mr. Lumeta opened a shop in his home area. He was planning to open one more store and to purchase "a brand-new lorry" to expand his business (*Nshila* No. 84, 1961: 10).

At the time, owning a vehicle gave the owner a rare competitive advantage and could make all the difference in a trading venture's success. Milia Kateba, one of the few businesswomen profiled in "Woman's World", for instance, ran a prosperous fishing and trading business greatly enabled by the possession of a motor boat (*Nshila* No. 84, 1961: 24–25). In addition, vehicles were coveted status symbols. If a person owned one or more, *Nshila* was sure to mention them as a convincing wealth credential.

In some cases, spatial mobility fully replaced formal education in the success formula. An example is Eastern Province-born Samson Chulu, who in 1960 owned two grocery stores and a tearoom in Matero African Suburb in Lusaka. He had never been to school but had still managed to work his way to an independent business and ownership of "a 1957 Plymouth car, having spent years as a labour migrant in Southern Rhodesia before starting a business in Lusaka" (*Nshila* No. 54, 1960: 10). Two photos show a smartly dressed Mr. Chulu "cheerfully" serving customers in his spotless tearoom and shop. In the same year, another tearoom in Matero was run by a former labour migrant with no formal education and a rich mobility history. B. M. Phiri, a Chewa from Nyasaland, could not "read or write" (*Nshila* No. 59, 1960: 19), but had been a mine mechanic in Southern Rhodesia and had trekked on foot all the way to Johannesburg to spend months living on the streets and then work at a coal mine there. He had managed to learn tailoring in his spare time, so some years later he worked as a tailor in Gwelo town, Southern Rhodesia, and eventually found his way back to Lusaka.

This simultaneous promotion and disavowal of schooling as *the* path to prosperity formed part of *Nshila's* work of managing the social mobility aspirations of Africans in view of the limited educational and job opportunities available to them. At bottom lay the emphasis on individual responsibility for personal and collective well-being, encapsulated in the ideology of 'self-help'. Under this premise, both those who climbed the educational ladder *and* those who had achieved prosperity by other means deserved praise, lest the dearth of schooling opportunities became an excuse for not taking initiative and not working to improve one's situation. It is important to note, however, that it was hard work and self-initiative that the magazine interpreted as being able to compensate for

the lack of education, not spatial mobility. Spatial mobility becomes important in our reading of the profiles; the writers of *Nshila* never name it directly as the cause or at least *a* mechanism of success.

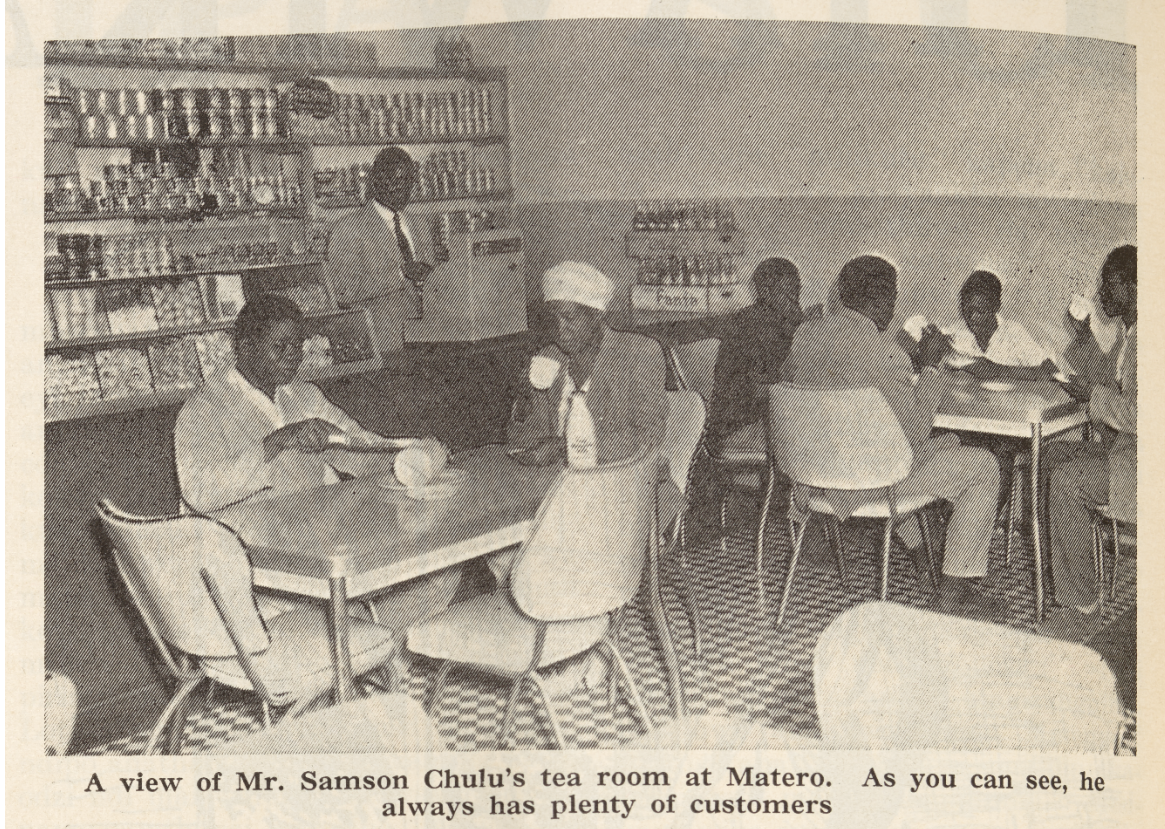


Image 3: Photo showing Samson Chulu's tea room, *Nshila* No. 54 © British Library Board C.S.D.315/45 16 February 1960, 10.

This is not to say that spatial mobility alone could guarantee prosperity; many other ingredients inevitably came into the mix. However, it is worth noticing that spatial mobility, in the form of educational mobility, repeated labour mobility across and within borders, shorter-term 'businessdriven' mobility, or all three⁶, was a shared component in the life histories of virtually all the inspiring individuals who appeared in *Nshila*. I therefore argue that spatial mobility must be seen as a catalyst and channel of social mobility. A wealth of stories in the magazine offers insight into the im/mobility routes and rhythms, chequered career trajectories, intermediate stops, and final spatio-social destinations of some of the labour migrants who had left their villages in previous decades and had gravitated

⁶ And, surely, other kinds of differently motivated mobility that were not captured in *Nshila*.

towards urban centres in Southern Rhodesia, South Africa, and the Copperbelt. It is striking that almost without exception the wealthiest among them, like Luka Mumba, had made their fortunes not only through their own mobility, but by facilitating the mobility of others, both people and goods. Being able to control mobility capital⁷ and to command speed was both a source and a symbol of their wealth and social status.

Managing spatial im/mobility

Nshila's attitude towards spatial mobility was deeply ambivalent. While certain kinds of mobility, like educational mobility abroad, were endowed with high symbolic capital (after Bourdieu 1986), other types were persistently discouraged and condemned. As we have seen, upon closer reading *Nshila's* profile pieces reveal the 'upwardly' socially mobile as spatially mobile subjects, showing, for instance, that the successful social journeys of an older generation of now affluent men had usually started with an initial move in a rural-urban direction. Yet, in other sections the magazine regularly tried to rhetorically deny similar⁸ exploratory ruralurban moves to other men and women coming to town in the early 1960s (admittedly, in ever higher numbers), even though living conditions in the rural areas had not changed in any meaningful way, and in some cases had deteriorated. Multiple editorials and articles were dedicated to sending explicit warnings that urban jobs, and by association housing, were scarce for those with little or no education. A July 1960 issue ran a long feature about the dire effects of "loafing" – "men wandering aimlessly about the African suburbs" – and urged jobless men crowding the townships to return to their village homes that were in far greater need of their energies (*Nshila* No. 64, 1960: 4–5). The article took pity on employed urban residents who were being "eaten alive" by "as many as five to ten" unemployed relatives they had to host and support for long periods of time. It even suggested that men should be allowed

⁷ Mobility capital has been the most extensively theorised by Kaufmann and colleagues as *motility*, which they define as "the capacity of entities (e.g. goods, information or persons) to be mobile in social and geographic space" (Kaufmann et al. 2004: 750). They have argued convincingly that motility, which may also be conceived of as the potential for movement, can be considered as another form of capital akin to Bourdieu's economic, social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986). Here I use mobility capital as a shorthand for mobility-related resources (in this case, centrally, means of transport in the form of motor vehicles) and skills (such as driving).

⁸ Heisler suggests a potentially important distinction here, however, at least from the point of view of the colonial authorities. A sizeable proportion of the labour migrants from the earlier period of labour migration were directly recruited for specific jobs, whereas after Copperbelt mining companies stopped domestic recruitment in 1931, migrants to towns "moved in hope rather than in response to actual job opportunities" (1974: 46). However, even before 1931, following an initial work stint arranged by a labour recruiter, many migrants subsequently preferred to make the journeys and look for work on their own (Heisler 1974).

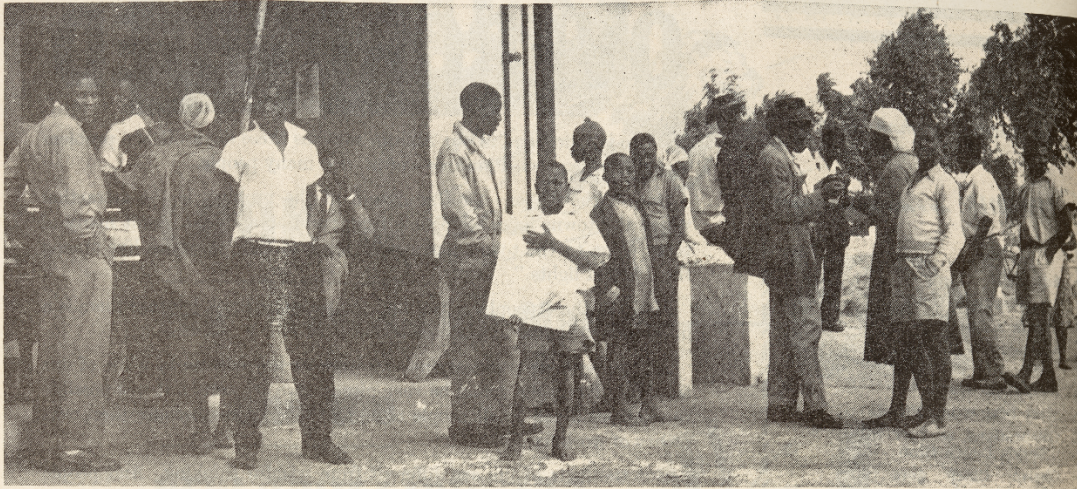
into town only if they had already secured a job there.⁹ Only job-tied mobility with a clear goal was acceptable. Other moves to urban centres that represented a vague purpose, a leap in the dark, or were motivated by family attachments and social obligations were to be discouraged.

Such discussions in *Nshila* echoed long-standing colonial anxieties around mobility that perceived an unemployed urban population as a political ticking bomb. These anxieties gained new currency in the late 1950s and early 1960s owing to an economic downturn’s adverse effect on urban employment (Heisler 1974; Hansen 1989)¹⁰. They reflected an extensive history of colonial state attempts to turn mobility into an issue of social and household reproduction at the rural level, and to contain urban aspirations and new social identities among the rural population after having tied its survival to participation in the cash economy (Moore/ Vaughan 1994). Beyond measures to directly control movement that were routinely undermined, the aim of curbing ruralurban migration had also underpinned the colonial administration’s post-war efforts to foster social and economic development in the rural areas (Moore/ Vaughan 1994; Von Oppen 2006) and remained an important government concern until the very end of colonial rule.

⁹ The rural-urban mobility of young, single women (a perennial concern) was also discouraged, but men were the main target of this campaign.

¹⁰ Around the same time the campaign against rural-urban migration was underway in *Nshila*, this same topic, often framed as a “problem of loafers” in towns, was regularly flagged by other print media in the Federation (such as *The Northern News* and *Central African Post*), as well as discussed at various levels of colonial government and at meetings between government and mining companies’ officials (NAZ/MLSS1/33/13 1950–55; NAZ/MLSS1/33/39 1960–61). This testifies to a broader, ongoing discourse around rural-urban mobility, which did not disappear in the wake of political independence either.

THE WORKLESS ONES



STREET SCENE AT 10 A.M.

Every weekday, whilst most of us are working, hundreds of men are to be seen wandering aimlessly about the African suburbs of our towns or sitting in the beerhalls. They are the workless ones—people who have come to the towns from the rural areas attracted by the gay town life. But when they reach the towns they find that jobs are not easy to get. But their friends and relatives are generous and life is pleasant.

The workless ones do not care about the overcrowding they help to cause and they are heedless of the dangers of having too much time in which to do nothing. And all the while the rural areas are crying out for manpower to help them develop.

Read on this and succeeding pages what “Nshila” has to say about this problem.

Image 4: Part of feature on rural-urban mobility entitled “The towns are overcrowded”, *Nshila* No. 64 © British Library Board C.S.D.315/45 5 July 1960, 4.

It therefore comes as no surprise that *Nshila's* spatial mobility concerns overlapped with its commitment to promoting the state's rural development initiatives and with its overall “long-term goal” of encouraging “selfhelp in many fields”¹¹ (Colonial Office 1962: 67). The magazine invested a lot of discursive energy into presenting the rural areas as attractive places to live. Articles lamenting the “exodus” from the rural areas (*Nshila* No. 120, 1962: 13) advised young people with lower educational qualifications (including Standard VI) to make use of available opportunities there instead of becoming “malcontents” in

¹¹ ‘Self-help’ was the idea that people could bring about development through their own actions. Instead of waiting for the government to provide schools, hospitals, roads and other infrastructure, the people could put their resources and energies together to build these themselves. *Nshila* reported on many new schools, roads and houses constructed by such aspirational and driven communities, and its emphasis on self-help became even more pronounced in its postindependence edition.

town (*Nshila* No. 86, 1961: 3)¹². Stories in the “Meet interesting people” section demonstrated that success could be found in urban *and* rural areas alike and praised individuals who had returned to their villages to pursue promising rural livelihoods. One such article concludes:

All these stories [...] show that our rural areas are no longer the dull, futureless places they used to be. They are ALIVE and they are PROGRESSING. There is great future there for all who are willing to take the opportunity (*Nshila* No. 68, 1960: 3, emphasis in original).

Like in the cases of education and private enterprise, this enthusiasm belied the fact that the resources allocated to rural development were vastly inadequate and the programmes largely ineffective. Histories of different regions in present-day Zambia have shown that in the 1950s successful rural ventures were mostly run by returnee migrants and built on capital earned from urban occupations (Kanduza 1992; Moore/Vaughan 1994; Von Oppen 2006; Peša 2019), just as the ‘interesting people’ profiles in *Nshila* inadvertently demonstrated. Generating capital from agricultural production alone was next to impossible, including for farmers who had joined the colonial government’s agricultural schemes. Moreover, these schemes, which were frequently publicised in *Nshila*, routinely involved extensive reconfiguration of settlement patterns and for that reason often met with political resistance from peasants and chiefly authorities (Kanduza 1992; Von Oppen 2006). *Nshila* had only praise for rural communities that submitted to such resettlement plans and agreed to relocate or, alternatively, decided to build permanent homes where they had previously customarily moved village location upon the death of a chief, for example. This further demonstrates *Nshila*’s selective treatment of spatial im/mobility. As throughout colonial rule, the im/mobility of the population was expected to follow a logic prescribed by colonial administrators, native authorities, and the owners of capital, and not people’s own inclinations, aspirations, and cultural practices.

This adds another layer to *Nshila*’s propagandistic aims. Besides holding up paths to success and educating readers about what it meant to live ‘progressively’, the “Meet interesting people” stories sought to indirectly

¹² “What is wrong with a Standard VI youth living a good and prosperous life at his own home and in his own village? There is no reason why an educated person should not become a prosperous fisherman or farmer at his own village, and persons leading such a life will find years of schooling of great value to them,” this particular editorial contended (*Nshila* No. 86, 1961: 3). Note the didactic attempt to decouple schooling from aspirations to urban jobs without diminishing the former’s importance—a farmer can also benefit from “education”.

promote government development schemes and, as already suggested, to carefully manage aspirations of social and spatial mobility. Since the most prestigious avenues of advancement were open to only a small minority of Africans due to legislation, social class background, insufficient educational resources, urban jobs, and housing, it was paramount to direct the reading public towards other possible trajectories, which all seemed to converge around the qualities of diligence, enterprise, and personal initiative. And although in the language of *Nshila* progress was often described through metaphors of movement (“There is terrific progress in my area. We have been *moving* almost at a breakneck speed,” Chief Tungati was quoted reporting in *Nshila* No. 77, 1961: 13), spatial mobility, especially of a kind that frustrated authorities’ designs, did not seem to have an ‘official’ place in its social mobility narrative. “Overcrowded towns” (*Nshila* No. 64, 1960: 4) had no room for rural Africans’ social and spatial mobility aspirations, and *Nshila* made sure its readers were aware of this.

Conclusion

On the example of the government-sponsored magazine for Africans *Nshila*, this article has argued that state media in late colonial Zambia co-produced a public colonial discourse that communicated ambivalent messages about Africans’ social and spatial mobility. On the face of it, this discourse sought to empower Africans, presenting them with growing possibilities for distinction and new measures of individual and collective improvement while emphasizing their equal abilities to perform to (almost) the highest standards established by the colonial economy of the time. At the same time, as Thakkar (2021) has proposed, this discourse employed an ideology of ‘self-help’ to shift responsibility for personal and national ‘progress’ or development onto the educated African elite and Africans in general, exempting the colonial state from any substantial role in ensuring African welfare. The state had been there to show the way (like *Nshila*, which invited readers to *move*, already with its title), and provide technical advice and moral guidance, but it was up to the people to work hard for the goals being held up to them. More than in providing opportunities for Africans, colonial authorities were interested in keeping them contained, socially, spatially, and politically. Africans were invited to perform self-reliance, hard work, enterprise, in sum a distinct kind of economic subjectivity (Frederiksen 2014), along lines defined by the colonial masters.

As a result, *Nshila*’s vision of African society in Northern Rhodesia was highly reductive. Its conception of what constituted social mobility (or in its language, ‘progressiveness’), how social space was structured (in the form of a ladder),

and what the markers of success and worthy goals were, was restricted to models supplied by Western social imaginaries. These left almost no room for the dynamic influences of African idioms and the changing, hybrid forms of actual social hierarchies that reflected the friction (Tsing 2011) underpinning the multiple, unequal encounters of this late colonial context. And even though the magazine attempted to trace several paths to upward social mobility and appeal to a larger aspirational class, it conveyed an unmistakable sense of hierarchy, where the top (of the necessarily subordinate African ladder) was occupied by educated Africans with high-ranking jobs in the civil service and mining companies, and by a handful of wealthy entrepreneurs. Thus, its social mobility narrative accorded the most prestige and visibility to a few highly competitive social positions and associated ‘modern’ capitalist lifestyles, thereby working to reconfigure notions of success in powerful and contradictory ways. While this could have had a beneficial effect on the self-esteem of those ‘on the rise’, it likely contributed to devaluing an array of ‘less progressive’ African livelihoods and practices, which nonetheless proved remarkably resilient and long outlived the ephemeral, heavily curated media space that was *Nshila*. In addition, *Nshila*, just like the colonial state at large, was ultimately unprepared to deal with the full implications of Africans adopting the behaviours and aspirations it advocated, which eventually (or, rather, simultaneously with *Nshila*’s publication) led to claims not only for economic, but also for political and social equality (Frederiksen 2014).

The Africans portrayed in *Nshila* on the eve of independence embodied new aspirations and emerging lines of socioeconomic differentiation in African society that were based on achievement (facilitated by spatial mobility) in formal education and the colonial economy and competed, or combined, with older, indigenous claims to social status (Smyth 1983). *Nshila*’s preindependence edition testifies to the new aspirational class’s exposure to tropes like the ‘ladder of success’ and to colonial educational, mobility, and development discourses that continued to play into the nature of inequality in independent Zambia. By taking advantage of new opportunities, aspirational Africans were coproducing a particular understanding of success which would continue to have an impact on Zambian social structures and imaginations for decades to come.

Bibliography

Archival Documents

- Colonial Office (1959): Report on Northern Rhodesia for the Year 1958. Lusaka: Government Printer. Accessed online, 29 November 2022: https://books.google.at/books?id=HKMmAQAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=de&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Colonial Office (1962): Report on Northern Rhodesia for the Year 1961. Lusaka: Government Printer. Accessed online, 29 November 2022: https://invenio.unidep.org/invenio//record/24774/files/ZMB_S5064_16.pdf
- NAZ/MLSS1/33/13, Urbanisation and Stabilisation of African Labour 1950–55, Ministry of Labour and Social Services, National Archives of Zambia.
- NAZ/MLSS1/33/39, Urbanisation and Stabilisation of African Labour 1960–61, Ministry of Labour and Social Services, National Archives of Zambia.

Newspaper Articles

- Chiwaya, David, 11 April 1961, *Nshila* No. 84, p. 10, “Meet interesting people: Mr. and Ms. S. Lumeta”, archived at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart.
- Editor, 25 October 1960, *Nshila* No. 72, p. 33, “Favouritism in Balovale makes him melancholy”, archived at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart.
- Editor, 14 February 1961, *Nshila* No. 80, p. 42, “Back page gossip – in which the Editor has the last word”, archived at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart.
- Jiri, A. B., 25 October 1960, *Nshila* No. 72, p. 18, “Meet interesting people: Now he’s making money rolling on four wheels”, archived at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart.
- Kaemba, L. F., 8 November 1960, *Nshila* No. 73, p. 12, “He became a teacher to help his relatives”, archived at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart.
- Kunda, A. M., 3 January 1961, *Nshila* No. 77, p. 13, “Terrific progress in Chief Tungati’s Area”, archived at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart.
- Sariley, Chisenga, 13 February 1962, *Nshila* No. 106, p. 6, “Nshila is not moderate”, archived at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart.
- Unsigned, 4 February 1958, *Nshila* No. 1, p. 30–31, “Meet interesting people: Big businessman of the bush”, archived at the British Library.
- Unsigned, 16 February 1960, *Nshila* No. 54, p. 10, “Personalities: He’s always cheerful to customers”, archived at the British Library.
- Unsigned, 26 April 1960, *Nshila* No. 59, p. 19, “Meet interesting people: He cannot read or write – but he can count the cash”, archived at the British Library.
- Unsigned, 5 July 1960, *Nshila* No. 64, p. 3, “The towns are overcrowded”, archived at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart.

- Unsigned, 5 July 1960, *Nshila* No. 64, p. 4–5, “They live on kindness”, archived at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart.
- Unsigned, 30 August 1960, *Nshila* No. 68, p. 3, “Seven men go home”, archived at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart.
- Unsigned, 30 August 1960, *Nshila* No. 68, p. 15, “They’ll never go back to the towns”, archived at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart.
- Unsigned, 13 September 1960, *Nshila* No. 69, p. 14, “Meet interesting people: Game guard – and a dancer”, archived at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart.
- Unsigned, 11 April 1961, *Nshila* No. 84, p. 24–25, “The fisherwoman of Isokwe Island: She wants to show the men”, archived at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart.
- Unsigned, 9 May 1961, *Nshila* No. 86, p. 3, “The future for the Standard Six man”, archived at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart.
- Unsigned, 13 February 1962, *Nshila* No. 106, p. 6, “Woman on top of the ladder of success”, archived at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart.
- Unsigned, 28 August 1962, *Nshila* No. 120, p. 13, “Exodus from rural areas to the towns”, archived at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart.
- Unsigned, 28 August 1962, *Nshila* No. 120, p. 26, “N. R. G. employs 51 African graduates”, archived at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart.
- Unsigned, 20 November 1962, *Nshila* No. 126, p. 19, “Meet interesting people: Amisi Zubelo – the Fort Jameson shoe surgeon”, archived at the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart.
- Unsigned, 1 January 1965, *Nshila* No. 181, p. 42, “Mr. Mwakanatwe warns students: ‘Discipline is essential’”, archived at the University Library Johann Christian Senckenberg of the Goethe University Frankfurt am Main.
- Unsigned, 15 January 1965, *Nshila* No. 182, p. 44, “Progressive People read NSHILA” archived at the University Library Johann Christian Senckenberg of the Goethe University Frankfurt am Main.

Research Literature

- Beveridge, Andrew A. (1974): Economic Independence, Indigenization, and the African Businessman: Some Effects of Zambia’s Economic Reforms. In: *African Studies Review* 17/3, 477–490.
- Beveridge, Andrew A. /Oberschall, Anthony R. (1979): *African Businessmen and Development in Zambia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1986): The Forms of Capital. In: Richardson, J. G. (ed.): *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood, 241–258.

- Burawoy, Michael (1972): *The Colour of Class on the Copper Mines, from African Advancement to Zambianization*. Vol. 7. Manchester: Manchester University Press [for] the Institute for African Studies, University of Zambia.
- Burton, Eric (2020): Decolonization, the Cold War, and Africans' Routes to Higher Education Overseas, 1957–65. In: *Journal of Global History* 15/1, 169–191.
- Carmody, Brendan (2004): *The Evolution of Education in Zambia*. Lusaka: Gadsden Publishers.
- Carpenter, Carol (2020): *Power in Conservation: Environmental Anthropology beyond Political Ecology*. London: Routledge.
- Chikowero, Mhoze (2014): Is Propaganda Modernity? Press and Radio for Africans in Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi during World War II and its Aftermath. In: Bloom, Peter J./ Miescher, Stephan/ Manuh, Takyiwaa (eds.): *Modernization as Spectacle in Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 112–135.
- Cliffe, Lionel (1978): Labour Migration and Peasant Differentiation: Zambian Experiences. In: *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 5/3, 326–346.
- Cooper, Frederick (2005): *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- de Bruijn, Mirjam/ Foeken, Dick/ Van Dijk, Rijk (eds., 2001): *Mobile Africa: Changing Patterns of Movement in Africa and Beyond*. Leiden: Brill Academic Press.
- Englund, Harri (2015): Anti Anti-colonialism: Vernacular Press and Emergent Possibilities in Colonial Zambia. In: *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 57/1, 221–247.
- Ferguson, James (1999): *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Foucault, Michel (2008): *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Foucault, Michel (1982): The Subject and Power. In: *Critical Inquiry* 8(4), 777–795.
- Frederiksen, Tomas (2014): "Authorizing the "Natives": Governmentality, Dispossession, and the Contradictions of Rule in Colonial Zambia. In: *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 104/6, 1273–1290.
- Gann, Lewis H. (1969): *A History of Northern Rhodesia: Early Days to 1953*. New York: Humanities Press.
- Guthrie, Zachary Kagan (2018): *Bound for Work: Labor, Mobility, and Colonial Rule in Central Mozambique, 1940–1965*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
- Guyer, Jane I. (1995): Wealth in People, Wealth in Things—Introduction. In: *The Journal of African History*, 36/1, 83–90.
- Hansen, Karen T. (1989): *Distant Companions: Servants and Employers in Zambia, 1900–1985*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

- Heinze, Robert (2016): “The African Listener”: State-Controlled Radio, Subjectivity, and Agency in Colonial and Post-Colonial Zambia. In: Mano, Winston /Willems, Wendy (eds.): *Everyday Media Culture in Africa*. New York/ London: Routledge, 61–84.
- Heisler, Helmuth (1974): *Urbanisation and the Government of Migration: The Interrelation of Urban and Rural Life in Zambia*. London: Hurst.
- Hinfelaar, Marja (2013): *Business, Consumption and Politics: Robinson Nabulyato’s Banamwaze Store, 1949–1969*. In: Kalusa, Walima T./ Peša, Iva/ Ross, Robert/ Hinfelaar, Marja (eds.): *The Objects of Life in Central Africa*. Leiden: Brill, 237–257.
- Kallmann, Deborah (1999): *Projected Moralities, Engaged Anxieties: Northern Rhodesia’s Reading Publics, 1953-1964*. In: *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 32/1, 71–117.
- Kalusa, Walima T. (2013): *Advertising, Consuming Manufactured Goods and Contracting Colonial Hegemony on the Zambian Copperbelt, 1945–1964*. In: Kalusa, Walima T/ Peša, Iva/ Ross, Robert/ Hinfelaar, Marja (eds.): *The Objects of Life in Central Africa*. Leiden: Brill, 141–165.
- Kanduza, Ackson M. (1992): *Land and Peasant Politics in Chipata District, 1890s – 1980*. In: Kanduza, Ackson M (ed.): *Socio-economic Change in Eastern Zambia: Precolonial to the 1980s*. Lusaka: Historical Association of Zambia, 48–68.
- Kaufmann, Vincent/ Bergman, Manfred M./ Joye, Dominique (2004): *Motility: Mobility as Capital*. In: *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 28/4, 745–756.
- Maine, Katongo Mulenga (2018): *The Life and Journey of an Entrepreneur*. Lusaka: Gadsden Publishers.
- Meier zu Selhausen, Felix/ Van Leeuwen, Marco HD/ Weisdorf, Jacob L. (2018): *Social Mobility among Christian Africans: Evidence from Anglican Marriage Registers in Uganda, 1895–2011*. In: *The Economic History Review* 71/4, 1291–1321.
- Moore, Henrietta/ Vaughan, Megan (1994): *Cutting down Trees: Gender, Nutrition, and Agricultural Change in the Northern Province of Zambia, 1890-1990*. London: James Currey.
- Parker, Franklin (1961): *Education in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland*. In: *The Journal of Negro Education* 30/3, 286–293.
- Peša, Iva (2019): *Roads through Mwinilunga: A History of Social Change in Northwest Zambia*. Leiden: Brill.
- Powdermaker, Hortense (1962): *Copper Town: Changing Africa: The Human Situation on the Rhodesian Copperbelt*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Ross, Robert/ Hinfelaar, Marja/ Peša, Iva (2013): *Introduction: Material Culture and Consumption Patterns: A Southern African Revolution*. In: Kalusa, Walima T./

- Peša, Iva/ Ross, Robert/ Hinfelaar, Marja (eds.): *The Objects of Life in Central Africa*. Leiden: Brill, 1–13.
- Schenck, Marcia C./ Harisch, Immanuel R./ Dietrich, Anne/ Burton, Eric (2021): Introduction: Moorings and (Dis) Entanglements between Africa and East Germany during the Cold War. In: Burton, Eric/ Dietrich, Anne/ Harisch, Immanuel R./ Schenck, Marcia C. (eds.): *Navigating Socialist Encounters: Moorings and (Dis) Entanglements between Africa and East Germany during the Cold War*. Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 1–58.
- Serpell, Robert (1993): *The Significance of Schooling: Life-Journeys in an African Society*. Cambridge/ New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Smyth, Rosaleen (1983): *The Development of Government Propaganda in Northern Rhodesia*. Doctoral dissertation, University of London.
- Spitulnik, Debra Anne (1998): *Mediated Modernities: Encounters with the Electronic in Zambia*. In: *Visual Anthropology Review* 14/2, 63-84.
- Spitulnik, Debra Anne (1994): *Radio Culture in Zambia: Audiences, Public Words and the Nation-State*. PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago.
- Thakkar, Neel (2021): *Speaking as a Colonial State: Mass Broadcasting and the Language of Development in Northern Rhodesia, 1941–1963*. In: *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 1–28.
- Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt (2011): *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Von Oppen, Achim (2006): *The Village as Territory: Enclosing Locality in Northwest Zambia, 1950s to 1990s*. In: *The Journal of African History* 47/1, 57–75.