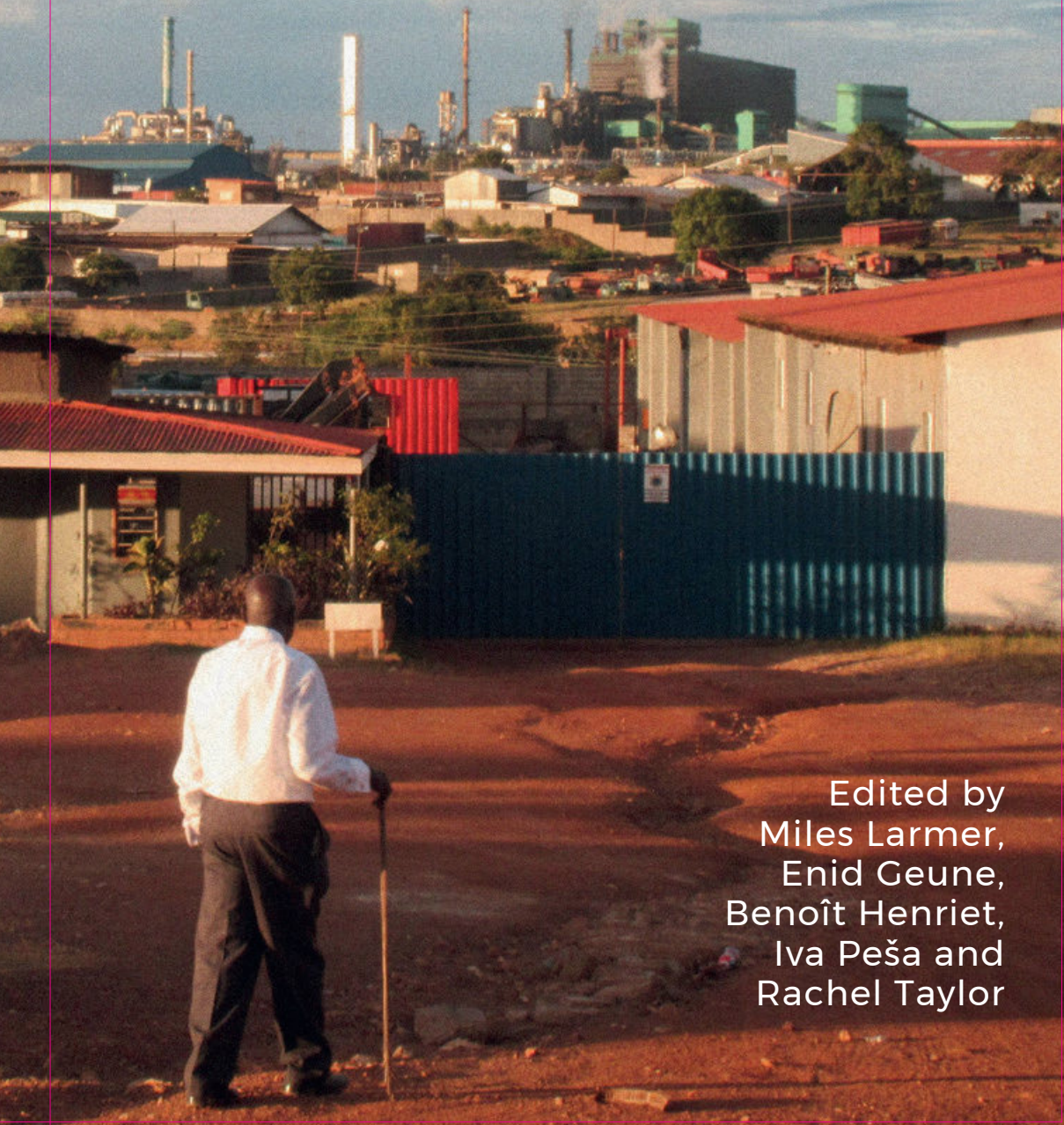


ACROSS THE COPPERBELT

Urban & Social Change
in Central Africa's
Borderland Communities



Edited by
Miles Larmer,
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(Stephanie Lämmert)

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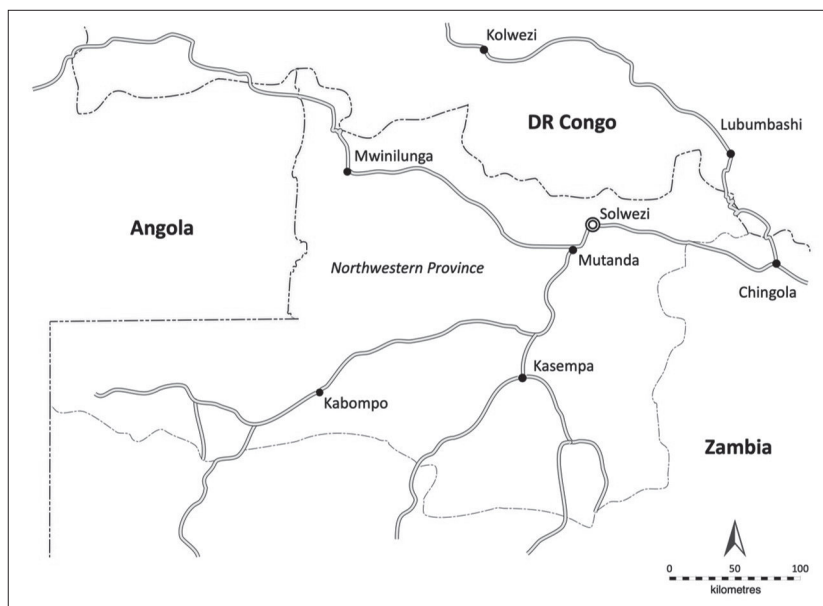
Beware the Mineral Narrative: The Histories of Solwezi Town and Kansanshi Mine, North-Western Zambia, c. 1899–2020

RITA KESSELRING

Introduction

The most recent global commodity boom starting in the mid-2000s came a few years after the reprivatization of Zambia's mining industry. Through massive foreign investment, Kansanshi mine in Zambia's North-Western Province outpaced the mines in DR Congo and Zambia and quickly grew into the largest copper mine by output in Africa. Kansanshi mine lies ten kilometres north of Solwezi, the administrative centre, known as the *boma* (see Map 5.2). Solwezi town is the provincial capital and host to approximately 266,000 residents.¹ Shaped by cycles of global metal prices and the evolution of mining techniques over the past 120 years, Kansanshi mine – contrary to the often-used description of it as a 'dormant mine' – was almost continuously developed and invested in throughout the twentieth century. However, it only took off as a reliably productive mine since 2005. As a result, Kansanshi mine is rarely considered in histories of the Zambian and Katangese Copperbelts. If at all, it is mentioned as the first mine in Northern Rhodesia that started commercial production in 1905. The history of Kansanshi and the adjacent town of Solwezi from the 1920s, when the Katangese mines took off, or the 1930s, when the Zambian Copperbelt started industrialising and urbanising, and the mine's redevelopment in 2005, is not widely known.

¹ Lena Preuss and Daniel Schmidt-Eisenlohr, 'Final Report Solwezi Urban Baseline Study' (Lusaka: GIZ, 2016).

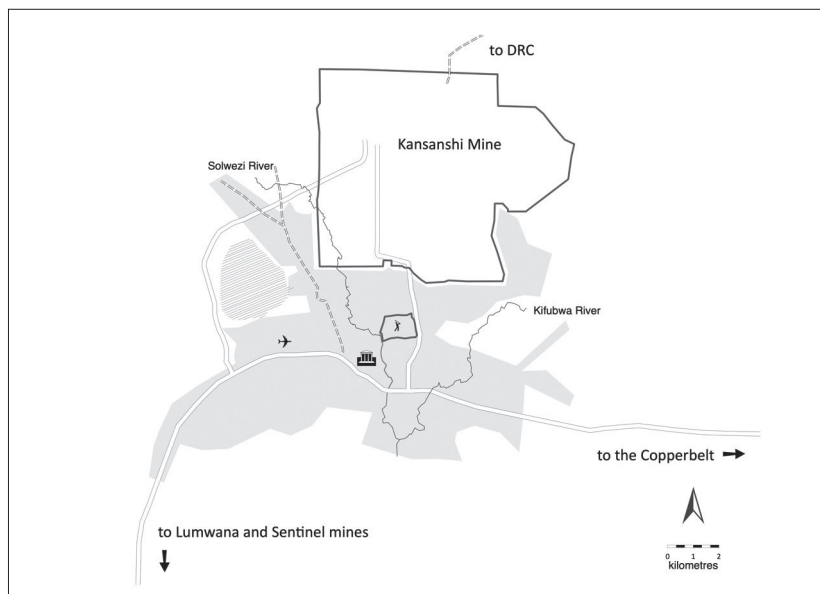


Map 5.1 Zambia's North-Western Province. Map drawn by the author.

Solwezi town has not gained much attention either. Starting as a small administrative centre overseeing mining activity, the town never stopped growing throughout the twentieth century. While the most impressive spike in demographic development happened in the past fifteen years, Solwezi had continuously grown throughout the twentieth century due to regional, inter-regional and rural-urban migration to this easternmost urban centre of the North-Western Province and its proximity to the Zambian and Congolese Copperbelts (see Map 5.1).

In this chapter, which is based on archival and published sources and on 18 months of ethnographic and oral history research between 2013 and 2018, I present the history of Solwezi and the history of Kansanshi mine as clearly interconnected, but still as separate in principle and shaped by sometimes overlapping, sometimes diverging forces. Solwezi town and Kansanshi mine have always been seen as peripheral in terms of geographic location, with no connection via 'line-of-rail',² in geological terms (relatively low-grade copper), politically (as an opposition region) and scholarly

² The line-of-rail is the region along Zambia's railway linking the Copperbelt with Lusaka and Livingstone.



Map 5.2 Solwezi Town and Kansanshi Mine today. Grey areas indicate populated area. Map drawn by author.

(the Copperbelt towns have received the bulk of scholarly attention since the 1940s). Writing their history seems particularly important against a renewed interest in the province's mining industry, which increases the risk of ignoring the area's particular history and imposing a historical narrative on it that is shaped both by the dominant, mine-centred history of the Copperbelts and by the latest resource boom of the early 2000s.

My contribution presents an analysis along the nexus of mining, urban development and demography over 120 years. It responds to a renewal and reinforcement of a narrative that has been prevalent since the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute's scholars focused on the interrelation between mining and urbanisation processes. In this narrative, towns and urban life developing close to a mine appear as strictly dominated by the mine, and they are described and analysed as mining towns alone. Facets of their urban life not dominated by mining tend to disappear from view. Examining the current impact of global mineral production cycles and commodity chains on urbanisation processes, Deborah Bryceson and

Danny MacKinnon for example use the term ‘mineralised urbanisation’.³ They observe a new wave where urban growth and settlement coalesce and where mining has direct catalytic and fluctuating effects on migration and urban growth.

Some scholars of the Central African mining towns have tended to be more careful in this regard. For Kolwezi, for example, Kristien Geenen⁴ does not see such a correlation. Kolwezi town, an urban centre across the border from Solwezi into DR Congo, was founded in the 1930s. Between 1965 and the post-2000 commodity boom, Kamoto mine and the nearby Mutanda mine lay dormant. Geenen argues that ‘regardless of the rhythm of production by UMHK/Gécamines, the city has always continued to grow at steady pace’. Even if urban growth in demographic terms happens more or less independently from the mineral world, Geenen relates urban development to mining cycles. For instance, the fact that the town literally sits on minerals has resulted in a situation where profits are put above human presence whenever commodity prices are high; a situation she calls ‘urbanised minerals’. Making a similar point albeit for housing compounds, a typical mining infrastructure, Benjamin Rubbers shows how mining companies in Katangese towns responded to local constraints and historical changes in their spatial governance.⁵

My contribution pushes in a similar direction, seeking to differentiate the two – population growth and urban development – more explicitly. I start on the premise that we must leave open the possibility that urban centres even in mining areas grow, change and develop independently from global mining cycles. Local agency does not only show at moments of mining booms and busts. If we ignore that fact, we have succumbed to the grand mineral narrative. With a few exceptions, notably Emmanuel Mutale⁶ and this volume, the Copperbelt towns on either side of the border have mostly been viewed through the ‘mining lens’ where changes of demographic, political, infrastructural and economic nature have hardly been looked at in their own right. To a certain extent, Kansanshi mine

3 Deborah Bryceson and Danny MacKinnon, ‘Eureka and beyond: Mining’s Impact on African Urbanisation’, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 30, 4 (2012), pp. 513–37.

4 Kristien Geenen, ‘Dealing with Urbanised Mineral Deposits in DR Congo: The City of Kolwezi and its Pending Removal’, unpublished paper presented at the 2018 European Social Science History Conference conference in Belfast.

5 Benjamin Rubbers, ‘Mining Towns, Enclaves and Spaces: A Genealogy of Worker Camps in the Congolese Copperbelt’, *Geoforum* 98 (2019), pp. 88–96.

6 Emmanuel Mutale, *The Management of Urban Development in Zambia* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004).

and Solwezi town have already fallen victim to this ‘mineral narrative’ in scholarly work. The region is typically described as the ‘New Copperbelt’ or as ‘an extension of the Copperbelt’.⁷ Yet Solwezi, throughout much of the twentieth century, has shown little infrastructure development directly linked to the mining industry and, due to its intermittent productivity, the mine plays a less dominant role for Solwezi’s urban development. This opens up a space for us to ask ‘what happened in town?’ in times when the mine was not producing. Migrants have partly been attracted by the mine’s presence, but most of them have contributed to ordinary urbanisation processes, developing a specific form of urbanism as does every city across the globe.⁸ The urbanisation process of Solwezi town shows how a mining town is much more than a mine’s compounds: it is the outcome of the interaction of the global mining economy, national politics of rent distribution, regional histories and the urban communities living in it. While my analysis is restricted to Solwezi, I suspect that these dynamics can also be found in other towns in the Copperbelts, where they are easily hidden from view by the overpowering presence of the mines.

My aim here is threefold. First, by decentring the mine, I will show that mining towns have always been more than simply a workplace or a town of residence for mineworkers. Second, examining demographic and infrastructural developments across the town’s 120-year history, I aim to show that urban centres portray regional trajectories which are only indirectly related to the mining industry. Finally, narrating the increasingly entangled histories of Kansanshi mine and Solwezi town will enable me to lay out the impact on urban communities of the mine’s recent formidable rise and thereby suggest a nuanced conceptualisation of the currently dominant form of resource extraction in the Central African region.

7 Hugh Macmillan, ‘Mining, Housing and Welfare in South Africa and Zambia: An Historical Perspective’, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 30, 4 (2012), pp. 539–50, p. 545. For this reason, I do not use the term the ‘New Copperbelt’ extensively.

8 Jennifer Robinson, *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development* (London: Routledge, 2006). Independently of recruited labour, migration from the North-Western Province to the Copperbelt may have been underrated, see Iva Peša, *Roads Through Mwinilunga: A History of Social Change in Northwest Zambia* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), p. 217, fn. 355.

Early Mining at Kansanshi and the Beginnings of Solwezi Town

Most of the mining sites that were pegged in Southern and Central Africa from the late nineteenth century onwards by European prospectors had been exploited by local miners long before. Excavations revealed that exploitation and smelting at the Kansanshi site and its associated smelting area were carried out at different times from the fourth to the nineteenth century.⁹ Sir Robert Williams, a friend and associate of Cecil Rhodes, founded the London-based Tanganyika Concessions Limited (Tanks) in 1899, obtained concessions from the British South Africa Company (BSAC) and King Léopold in Katanga, and charged his friend George Grey to lead a party to today's Kansanshi mine.¹⁰ There are at least two different explanations for how he found the Kansanshi deposits: he either relied on the help of the Kaonde Chief Kapijimpanga, or his group noticed the ancient workings of the Kansanshi copper mine with pits over a hundred feet deep.¹¹ Either way, the commercial exploration of the Kansanshi deposits depended on local actors rather than on Grey's own mineralogical acumen.

With the railway running as far as Broken Hill (today Kabwe) in 1906, Grey had transported a small blast furnace by steam traction engine to start smelting high-grade oxide ores on the spot. In December 1908, the traction engine took back the first 50 tons of copper to Broken Hill. The ore's high grade soon decreased, though. Nevertheless, by 1914, about 3,256 tons of high-grade copper had been produced at Kansanshi.¹² Under poor working conditions and with short contracts, Africans did the hard work, like shaft

⁹ Michael Bisson, 'Pre-Historic Archeology of North-Western Province, Zambia' in David S. Johnson (ed.), *North-Western Province*, Regional Handbook Series No. 8 (Lusaka: Zambia Geographical Association, 1980), pp. 61–3; Mwelwa C. Musambachime, *Wealth from the Rocks: Mining and Smelting of Metals in Pre-Colonial Zambia* (Bloomington: Xlibris Corporation, 2016), ch. 3.

¹⁰ Francis L. Coleman, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt, 1899–1962: Technological Development up to the End of the Central African Federation* (Manchester: University of Manchester, 1971), pp. 7–8, 11–15; Lewis H. Gann, *A History of Northern Rhodesia; Early Days to 1953* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964), pp. 121–2.

¹¹ J. Austen Bancroft, *Mining in Northern Rhodesia: A Chronicle of Mineral Exploration and Mining Development* (Salisbury: British South Africa Company, 1961), p. 106; Timo Särkkä, 'The Lure of Katanga Copper: Tanganyika Concessions Limited and the Anatomy of Mining and Mine Exploration 1899–1906', *South African Historical Journal* 68, 3 (2016), p. 325.

¹² Bancroft, *Mining in Northern Rhodesia*, pp. 107–8; Jan-Bart Gewald, *The Speed of Change: Motor Vehicles and People in Africa, 1890–2000* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), p. 32.

sinking, clearing vegetation and wood-cutting, building bridges and anti-malaria drainage projects. Taxation, which was introduced in 1907, was one attempt to secure a steady flow of labour.¹³ In 1913, Kansanshi employed 85 so-called 'local' Kaonde and 788 so-called 'imported' labourers, who were originally Ndebele, a fact indicating early labour migration between mining areas within the territory.¹⁴ At Kansanshi, the problem of 'desertion' persisted during these early years and at least one case of an 'anti-European movement' was recorded.¹⁵

While Kansanshi's deposits had been interesting, they were soon overshadowed by the discovery of deposits in Congo's Katanga, for whose exploitation the Union Minière du Haut-Katanga (UMHK) was formed in 1906. A combination of reasons led Tanks to focus on the Katanga deposits rather than Kansanshi's: few and poor roads and high costs of steam-powered traction engines¹⁶ (meaning that transport had to be done by human porters), tsetse flies, the lack of food supply for African workers,¹⁷ the failure to negotiate the quick advance of the railway to Kansanshi, BSAC's high interest in any profits coming from the Kansanshi concession, the outbreak of war, the low value of Kansanshi's ore, and the high costs of treating oxide ores in general.

To transport copper to the harbours, the Rhodesian Railway was extended from Bulawayo to the Congo border, for whose construction Tanks formed a new company, the Rhodesia-Katanga Junction Railway and Mineral Company. The latter took control of Kansanshi mine in 1909, which relieved Tanks from major interests in Northern Rhodesia and allowed it to fully concentrate on the Katanga deposits.¹⁸ Kansanshi remained a base for subsequent exploration into the Congo. Against a shortage of porters and labour for construction and development work at the Katanga mines, Kansanshi also served as a 'minor collection and distribution point of Kaonde workers' for UMHK's Katangese mines in which Tanks held a

13 P. G. D. Clark, 'Kasempa: 1901–1951', *The Northern Rhodesia Journal* 2, 5 (1954), p. 64.

14 Gann, *A History of Northern Rhodesia*, pp. 123–4; Brian Siegel, 'Bomas, Missions, and Mines: The Making of Centers on the Zambian Copperbelt', *African Studies Review* 31, 3 (1988), pp. 61–84, p. 70.

15 Gann, *A History of Northern Rhodesia*, p. 124.

16 Gewald, *The Speed of Change*.

17 Tomas Frederiksen, 'Unearthing Rule: Mining, Power and Political Ecology of Extraction in Colonial Zambia' (PhD dissertation, University of Manchester, 2010), pp. 95–7.

18 Bancroft, *Mining in Northern Rhodesia*, p. 108.

40% share between 1911 and 1931.¹⁹ Kansanshi mine's closure during the Second World War is counter-intuitive given the rise of the London Metal Exchange copper price from a low of £52 in 1914 to a high of £171 in 1916. Williams was, however, focused on the Katangese mines, 'determined to go for a quick return on capital, abandoning all exploratory work on unknown deposits and going instead for the rapid extraction of known high-grade deposits'.²⁰ The mine was left abandoned until 1927.

While Kansanshi's deposits started to be explored and mined, ten kilometres south of Kansanshi mine, Solwezi was established as an administrative centre overseeing mining activities in what was then Kasempa District. Its history differs from the concurrent establishment of administrative and police camps in Kasempa and Mwinilunga. In Solwezi, prospectors, miners and administrators settled, and men in charge of the mine simultaneously served as representatives of BSAC. In 1905, a police post was opened in Shilenda, west of Solwezi.²¹ By 1908, Kansanshi was the base for sixteen white miners and four labour recruiters, a medical doctor, a shopkeeper and three white farmers.²² The number of farmers was reported at eighteen in 1910, but two years later, their cattle succumbed to tsetse flies and the farms were abandoned.²³

The arrival of Western missionaries in the province followed rather than preceded urban development.²⁴ The interdenominational group South African General Missionaries, later renamed the Africa Evangelical Fellowship, opened Chisalala mission in 1910, a day's walk south-west of Kansanshi mine, 'in Kaondeland, where it would also have a captive audience of mine laborers'.²⁵ In 1929, the thinly staffed mission moved to where it still is today,

19 Charles Perrings, *Black Mineworkers in Central Africa: Industrial Strategies and the Evolution of an African Proletariat in the Copperbelt, 1911–41* (London: Heinemann, 1979), pp. 14, 34, 55, 72.

20 Ibid., p. 33.

21 Clark, 'Kasempa: 1901–1951', p. 63.

22 Siegel, 'Bomas, Missions, and Mines', p. 70.

23 Frank H. Melland, *In Witch-Bound Africa: An Account of the Primitive Kaonde Tribe and Their Beliefs* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967), p. 23.

24 M.M. Maimbolwa, 'Urban Growth in North-Western Province' in David S. Johnson (ed.), *North-Western Province*, Regional Handbook Series No. 8 (Lusaka: Zambia Geographical Association, 1980), p. 175.

25 Robert I. Rotberg, *Christian Missionaries and the Creation of Northern Rhodesia 1880–1924* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 77.

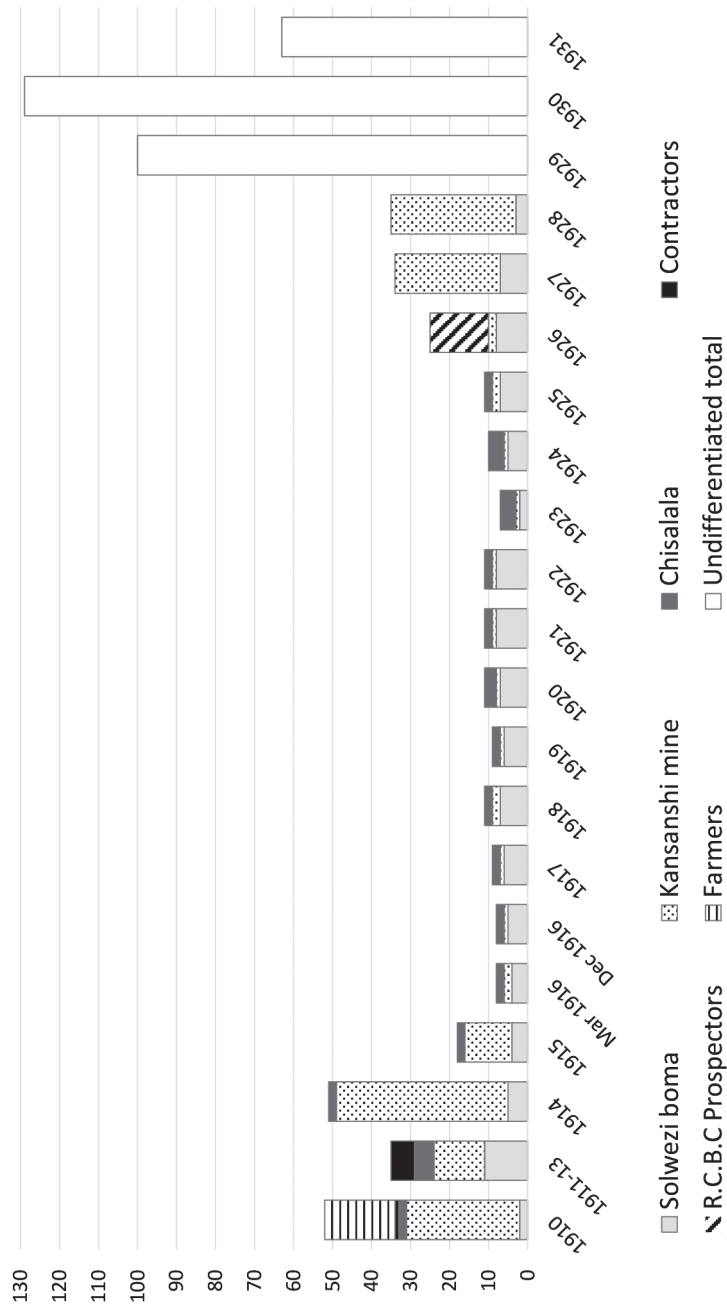


Figure 5.1 European residents in Solwezi Boma and Kansanshi Mine 1910–1931

to Mutanda, and the mission started to offer an educational programme.²⁶ Until the beginning of the First World War, Wilhelm Frykberg, a Swedish former sergeant-major turned trader, operated a store (shop) at Kansanshi.²⁷

Figure 5.1 shows the number of European residents living either at Kansanshi mine or in the Solwezi area. Unsurprisingly, the number of those Europeans connected to the mining operations immediately declined with the closure of the mine in 1914, leaving less than eleven colonial officers and missionaries and their families (including children, both in Solwezi and Kansanshi), and a few individuals presumably charged with minimal maintenance of the mine. The only constant European presence was the colonial administration. The officials, often only two or three men, were in charge of the entire district.

Indeed, the administration only gradually developed a presence in the region. From 1909, Kansanshi was a sub-district of Kasempa District and was renamed Solwezi Sub-District in 1912, when officials moved from the Shilenda post to present-day Solwezi.²⁸ In 1912, Solwezi *boma* was small. It comprised the houses and compounds of the District Commissioner, the Native Commissioner and Assistant Native Commissioner, government offices and a store, the Native Clerk's, Messengers' and 'Visiting Natives' compounds, the Medical Officer's house and office, the Gaol (jail) and a Native Hospital.²⁹ Most of the time, government did not directly interfere with the running of the privately owned mine.³⁰

The numbers of Africans living in the district are more difficult to ascertain. Figure 5.2 shows a steady increase in Solwezi (Sub-)District between 1916 and 1929. The trend is clear: a move to the district and an increase of the African population, despite the mine's inactivity throughout. The majority did not live in the *boma* but spread across the district, with likely some increased density in peri-urban areas.

Kansanshi's and Solwezi's early development shows that commercial exploration and mining were dependent on local labour and expertise, making

²⁶ Paul David Wilkin, *To the Bottom of the Heap: Educational Deprivation and Its Social Implications in the Northwestern Province of Zambia, 1906–1945* (PhD thesis, Syracuse University, 1983), pp. 112–19, 137, 222.

²⁷ S. Grimstedt, 'The "Swedish Settlement" in the Kasempa District', *The Northern Rhodesia Journal* 3, 1 (1956), pp. 34–43, pp. 34–5.

²⁸ African Affairs Northern Rhodesia, 'Annual Report for the Year 1952' (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1953), p. 17.

²⁹ NAZ KTB 3/1, Solwezi District Notebooks.

³⁰ Gann, *A History of Northern Rhodesia*, p. 124; Maimbolwa, 'Urban Growth in North-Western Province', p. 178.

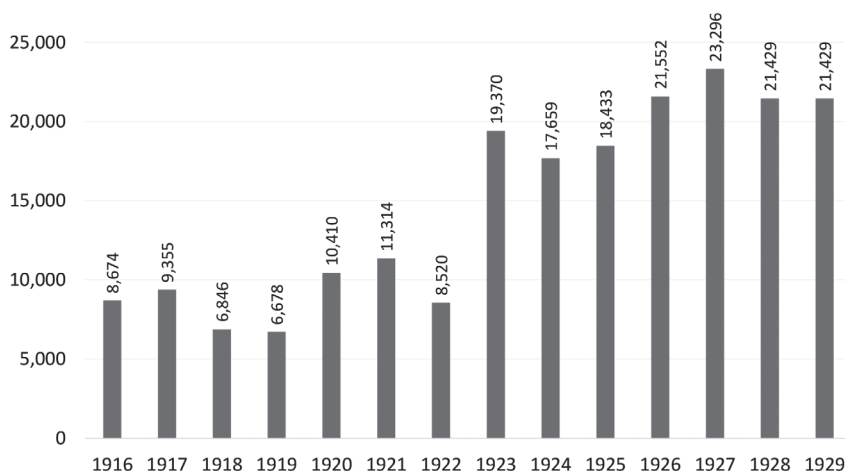


Figure 5.2 Number of African residents, Solwezi, 1916–1929

mining locally embedded rather than exogenous. The first phase of mining at Kansanshi (1905–14) – albeit brief and minimal compared with the subsequent developments in the Katangese Copperbelt – did have a political and demographic impact in the region.³¹ Apart from the fact that territorial European control of this part of Northern Rhodesia began to be established through the combat of slave raiding³² and the introduction of taxation, Kansanshi contributed to the beginning of a regional African labour regime. Solwezi town was first founded due to the minerals at Kansanshi but it soon began to grow more or less independently from the mine's status, by attracting Africans from the province, missionaries, traders and shop owners.

A Slumbering Town and Mine

Between the world wars, there was some limited activity at Kansanshi, such as underground development and exploration and the sinking of the north and south shafts.³³ Nevertheless, for the year 1930, the considerable

³¹ Jan-Bart Gewald, *Forged in the Great War: People, Transport, and Labour, the Establishment of Colonial Rule in Zambia, 1890–1920* (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2015).

³² Frederiksen, 'Unearthing Rule', pp. 204–10.

³³ A. Findlay, 'Kansanshi Mine', in David S. Johnson (ed.), *North-Western Province, Regional Handbook Series No. 8* (Lusaka: Zambia Geographical Association, 1980), p. 192.

workforce of 1,925 'Africans' and 96 'Europeans' was recorded, and included prospectors working for the Rhodesian Congo Border Concession Limited at the mine and across the province.³⁴ The Depression forced the mine to close down again in 1932.³⁵ In 1937 and 1938, prospectors tried to understand the complex structure of the ore bodies through drilling. The outbreak of the Second World War created an unprecedented demand for copper by the British Government, and companies in Northern Rhodesia responded to this. Kansanshi, however, was once more not part of this development, only reopening after its acquisition by Anglo American in 1951.

During these inter-war years, Solwezi *boma* became increasingly attractive for shop owners and traders, among others serving the many prospectors. The Robinson family opened a shop between Solwezi *boma* and Kansanshi mine³⁶ and in 1921, Solwezi *boma* was expanded to include the Mailmen's, the Warders and Witnesses' and the Medical Patient's compounds.³⁷ Solwezi lost regional importance when, between 1936 and 1947, the government's regional office was moved back to Kasempa. Solwezi Sub-District was incorporated into Kasempa District and Solwezi *boma* was closed down. Through the auspices of an African clerk, the District Commissioner of Kasempa was the local authority for Solwezi. The Kasempa District formed part of the newly created Kaonde-Lunda Province, which only existed between 1939 and 1946. Solwezi's offices were reported to be maintained, but the houses for Europeans fell into 'despair'.³⁸ In 1947, the district boundaries were once again reconstructed and Solwezi Sub-District was reactivated.³⁹ However, between 1946 and 1952, the Kaonde-Lunda Province, together with today's Copperbelt Province, was incorporated into the vast Western Province, which focused administrative development elsewhere and indicated the marginal interest in the area.

³⁴ Bancroft, *Mining in Northern Rhodesia*, p. 109.

³⁵ J. W. Brigden, 'Trade and Economic Conditions in Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland' (London: Department of Overseas Trade, 1933), p. 40.

³⁶ Wilkin, *To the Bottom of the Heap*, p. 70.

³⁷ NAZ KTB 3/1, Solwezi District Notebooks, p. 200.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

³⁹ J. C. Stone, 'Some Reflections on the History of Administrative Division in North-west Zambia', in David S. Johnson (ed.), *North-Western Province*, Regional Handbook Series No. 8 (Lusaka: Zambia Geographical Association, 1980), p. 70.

Urban Development and a Mine 'Springing Out of the Bush'

Economic growth in the Copperbelt was rapid in the post-war years and the creation of a separate province for the Copperbelt towns and its environs came to be seen as a necessity. Subsequently, a number of administrative and economic changes pulled Solwezi out of its slumber. In 1951 and 1952, the north-western region was first run under the name of North-Western 'Area' and eventually reorganised as North-Western Province, with provincial status in 1953. The Solwezi Native Authority was officially established in 1952,⁴⁰ and Solwezi town finally became the province's headquarters. It was now relatively easily accessible by road from the line-of-rail as the province's most eastern urban centre and promised to be increasingly important economically with Kansanshi mine nearby.

Solwezi's ascension to provincial headquarters and the acquisition of Kansanshi mine by Anglo American (see below) resulted in a construction boom by the administration. Key infrastructure was completed in 1955, namely the aerodrome and police station.⁴¹ In the *boma*, the decaying old offices were replaced in 1948. A new African dispensary and an education office were built, and by 1949 a number of additional segregated structures were completed: the African latrines at the offices, a carpenter's shop, the African recreation hall, permanent African staff quarters and some public works buildings. In 1950, fourteen messengers' houses and one clerk's house were finished and in 1951, the already existing rest house received an extension in the form of a dining-room block.⁴² Additional African staff houses were built in 1955 and six new houses for Europeans were completed in 1957. In the early 1960s, more residential houses and the new *boma* block were finished.⁴³ All these structures first and foremost served the governance of the province; they did not provide housing for African labour at the mine.

The mine's acquisition by Anglo American Corporation through its subsidiary Kansanshi Copper Mining Company Ltd in 1951 surely boosted

⁴⁰ Northern Rhodesia, 'Annual Report for the Year 1952', pp. 17–18.

⁴¹ Colonial Office, *Annual Report on Northern Rhodesia for the Year 1955* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1956), pp. 44, 51.

⁴² African Affairs Northern Rhodesia, 'Annual Report for the Year 1951' (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1952), p. 98.

⁴³ NAZ, KTB 3/1, Solwezi District Notebooks, pp. 201–4.

the importance of the urban centre.⁴⁴ The mine was placed under the direction and guidance of Rhokana Corporation.⁴⁵ The following year, a number of drill holes were put down, hitting veins of sulphide ores.⁴⁶ Exploratory work was however soon suspended due to a large inflow of water, and again had to be stopped in 1954 due to a shortage of funds.⁴⁷ When exploratory and development work was resumed during the first half of 1955, substantial veins of sulphide ore were found. Encouraged by these finds, a power plant was set up and a concentrator constructed. Apart from the high water levels, one of the ongoing difficulties remained the treating of the low-grade oxide ores.⁴⁸ The skilled underground workers mainly came from the Copperbelt: 'the local Kaonde are not considered to be well adapted to underground work, and the other tribes of the Province have not offered themselves'.⁴⁹ There was, allegedly, no 'friction' due to the 'influx of alien tribes' reported.⁵⁰

The Provincial Commissioner was greatly impressed by the progress at Kansanshi where 'a new copper mine with its attendant townships was visibly springing out to the bush'.⁵¹ Indeed, Anglo American also invested in solid housing structures which are still in use today, the 'Kansanshi village'. Between 1952 and 1957, 23 houses for mine officials were built about one kilometre west of the mine. A recreational club provided amenities for 54 (1956) or 62 (1957) Europeans.⁵² The Provincial Commissioner was convinced that the mine 'will be a considerable pocket of industrialism'.⁵³

44 Minority owners of Kansanshi Copper Mining Company Ltd were the AAC Group, the RTS Group (10%), the Tanganyika Concessions Group and the British South African Company. Richard L. Sklar, *Corporate Power in an African State: The Political Impact of Multinational Mining Companies in Zambia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 30.

45 Rhodesian Congo Border Corporation, N'Changa and Bwana M'Kubwa merged into the Rhokana Corporation in 1931, majority owned by Rhodesian Anglo American Corporation, the Rhodesian branch of Anglo American.

46 Bancroft, *Mining in Northern Rhodesia*, pp. 110–11.

47 African Affairs Northern Rhodesia, 'Annual Report for the Year 1954' (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1955), p. 17.

48 Coleman, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt*, p. 148.

49 In the years 1955, 1956 and 1957, 500, 567 and 540 Africans, respectively, were employed. Findlay, 'Kansanshi Mine', p. 195; African Affairs Northern Rhodesia, 'Annual Report for the Year 1955' (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1956), p. 18.

50 Northern Rhodesia, 'Annual Report for the Year 1955', p. 18.

51 Ibid., p. 9.

52 Findlay, 'Kansanshi Mine', p. 195.

53 Northern Rhodesia, 'Annual Report for the Year 1955', p. 9.

In those years, employees at the mine and BSAC officials would meet at the *muzungu* (white person) club or at one of the two trading stores in town⁵⁴ and purchase general merchandise. If one continued westwards from Andrew Sardanis' *Mwaiseni* store,⁵⁵ the government buildings housed the offices of the District Commissioner, the Provincial Commissioner and the Education officer. Further west, 'it was nothing more but bush'.⁵⁶ Visitors stayed at the European Rest House close to Solwezi river. Solwezi *boma* in the 1950s was a separate entity from Kansanshi whose labour force was housed at Kansanshi mine in a temporary compound.⁵⁷

The heavy investment in housing and mining infrastructure testifies to Anglo American's optimism when taking over Kansanshi mine. But then, on 1 November 1957, an ingress of water overwhelmed the pumping station and the mine was put on care and maintenance.⁵⁸

Independence, Optimism and Nationalisation

While Kansanshi mine remained under care and maintenance in the 1960s, some infrastructural development took place in Solwezi town. In 1960, the Solwezi Secondary School was opened.⁵⁹ Shortly after independence in 1964, two rural electricity generating units were installed in Solwezi⁶⁰ and the telephone lines reached the town. Traffic increased to the extent that national representatives complained in parliament about the little funds allocated in the national budget for their upgrade.⁶¹

This increase in activity in Solwezi needs to be explained at the provincial level. North-Western Province is the third largest province by surface in Zambia, but had (until the creation of the new Muchinga Province in 2011)

⁵⁴ Northern Rhodesia, 'Annual Report for the Year 1952', p. 25.

⁵⁵ Andrew Sardanis, *Africa, Another Side of the Coin: Northern Rhodesia's Final Years and Zambia's Nationhood* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), pp. 71–4.

⁵⁶ Interview, Andrew Sardanis, Lusaka, 16 September 2017.

⁵⁷ Northern Rhodesia, 'Annual Report for the Year 1955', p. 20.

⁵⁸ Chamber of Mines Northern Rhodesia, *Chamber of Mines Yearbook Northern Rhodesia 1957* (Kitwe: Parow Works 1958), p. 89.

⁵⁹ Wilkin, *To the Bottom of the Heap*.

⁶⁰ Republic of Zambia, *An Outline of the Transitional Development Plan* (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1965).

⁶¹ Republic of Zambia, 'Official Verbatim Report of the Parliamentary Debates of the National Assembly' (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1967).

the smallest population.⁶² Starting at independence, though, population growth increased more rapidly than in other provinces not served by the line-of-rail. To understand population increase in Solwezi District, migration patterns within and out of the province need to be considered. Residents from the province's districts have migrated to the Katangese or the Rhodesian mining hubs, the latter competing with the former throughout the century. Work seekers from Mwinilunga District in the west, for instance, 'weigh[ed] working conditions on both sides of the border, choosing those that seemed most favourable to their specific aims and aspirations'.⁶³ Similarly to other districts, the percentage of tax-paying males 'away at work' were reported in Solwezi District as 45% (3,950 out of 8,799) in 1951⁶⁴ and at 50% in 1952.⁶⁵ These figures must of course be questioned,⁶⁶ but they show that there was temporary or permanent out-migration from the province. This out-migration from areas such as Mwinilunga also resulted in an increase of population in Solwezi District. Migrants first settled in what Johnson calls 'nucleations' across the province, moving from villages to small urban centres, 'before making the much more ambitious and formidable move east to Solwezi or the Copperbelt'.⁶⁷ Solwezi District, situated at the eastern end of the province, acted 'as a buffer between the more rural parts of the Province and the Copperbelt' and thereby tended 'to receive migrants from the western districts of the Province en route to the Copperbelt'.⁶⁸ The fact that Solwezi attracted this population was due to its urban and administrative status, not primarily to the mine.

The post-independence years saw massive reforms, among them the nationalisation of the mining sector. The state's Nchanga Consolidated Copper Mines (NCCM) acquired a 51% interest in Kansanshi Copper Mining Company and had it managed by NCCM's Konkola Division.⁶⁹ The mine was turned into an opencast mine in 1973 and a leach-solvent plant was constructed

62 David S. Johnson, 'A Note on the Population of North-Western Province', in *Ibid.* (ed.), *North-Western Province*, Regional Handbook Series No. 8 (Lusaka: Zambia Geographical Association, 1980), p. 73.

63 Peša, *Roads Through Mwinilunga*, p. 219.

64 Northern Rhodesia, 'Annual Report for the Year 1951', p. 102.

65 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

66 Peša, *Roads Through Mwinilunga*, p. 243.

67 Johnson, 'A Note on the Population of North-Western Province', p. 81.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

69 Zambia Copper Investments Ltd (ZCI), incorporated in Bermuda and controlled by Anglo American (27.3%), Roan Selection Trust (6.9%) and public shareholders in the United States and the United Kingdom acquired the remaining 49%. Sklar, *Corporate Power in an African State*, p. 42.

in 1974. It produced 16,000 tonnes of copper per annum out of 700,000 tonnes in total in Zambia. The following year, due to the slump in global copper prices in the context of the global economic recession, production at Kansanshi was halted again. Nevertheless, NCCM kept to its plans, invested heavily in the mine and continued with the construction of 120 houses for workers as part of 'Kansanshi Township', a small residential area five kilometres south-west of the pit. The township had a population of 500, and included a government primary school, a mine clinic, a United National Independence Party (UNIP) office, a social centre and two temporary churches, football, netball and volleyball clubs, and a small market.⁷⁰

Between the two oil crises of 1974 and 1979, Zambia's copper production peaked in 1976 with a total output of 712,000 tonnes, which represented about 11% of the world's total copper production. At Kansanshi, limited mining – now opencast – was resumed in 1977. The workforce was small: 13 white supervisors and 95 Zambians. The latter were divided into 'skilled Zambians' with Copperbelt mining experience and 'labourers' from 'local rural origin'.⁷¹ As later in the revamped mine in the 2000s, skilled labour came from the Copperbelt and unskilled labour from the region. With no processing facility on-site, ore was treated in Chingola at Konkola mine.⁷²

After the merger of NCCM and Roan Consolidated Mines (RCM) into Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM) in 1982, the government remained Kansanshi's majority shareholder with a 60.3% share. Zambia's copper production continuously declined in the 1980s and 1990s. Between 1986 and 1988, Kansanshi mine closed due to economic conditions. In 1988, ZCCM resumed mining operations and constructed a small sulphide flotation plant for the supply of concentrate to an offsite smelter (Mufulira). Ten years later, in 1998, ZCCM formally ceased operations at the mine site and initiated closure and reclamation activities.⁷³ At the turn of the millennium, copper production in Zambia hit an all-time low of 250,000 tonnes per annum.

⁷⁰ Findlay, 'Kansanshi Mine', p. 195.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 194.

⁷² Roan Consolidated Mines, *Zambia's Mining Industry: The First 50 Years* (Ndola: Roan Consolidated Mines Ltd, 1978), pp. 65–6.

⁷³ First Quantum Minerals Ltd, 'Kansanshi Operations: North West Province, Zambia, NI 43-101 Technical Report' (West Perth, Australia: First Quantum Minerals Ltd, 2015), p. 34.

Solwezi, the Neglected Town

In the 1970s, Zambia felt the closure of the southern transport route due to the sanctions against Southern Rhodesia, and it was difficult to get basic supplies into the stores. The town's elite would nevertheless find entertainment at the Kansanshi Mine Social Club at Kansanshi village, dancing with the mine's management. To get there one needed a car and quite likely an invitation. Movies were shown and the club had the only swimming pool in the district.⁷⁴

Many local residents of the North-Western Province felt neglected or ignored by the UNIP government.⁷⁵ The so-called Mushala Rebellion, an internal armed rebellion against the postcolonial Zambian state led by Adamson Mushala between the mid-1970s and the early 1980s which put the North-Western Province on the map of national politics, is surely an expression of this shared sentiment. The rebellion pressed for a revived Lunda polity across national borders, 'fired by the increasingly manifest failure of the independent Zambian state to fulfil its people's expectations of national social and economic development', a feeling which is still expressed today.⁷⁶ The rebellion explicitly criticised unequal rent distribution when the profits from the province's mine industry were flowing out elsewhere: although the province was earning money, the population did not benefit from the taxes it was paying. As one of Mushala's lieutenants expressed it:

God help us to topple the UNIP government. Money from Kansanshi and Kalengwa mines is not spent on tarring Mutanda–Chavuma road. Instead the money has been used to build a railway line from Dar-es-Salaam to Kapiri Mposhi. All the revenue from these mines goes somewhere else. Why are we neglected?⁷⁷

Until the early 2000s, copper prices never really recovered from the global recession of the 1970s, nor did Zambia's mining industry or Kansanshi mine. In the 1970s, the independent Zambian state still used the revenue from the nationalised mines to provide public services across the country and to invest

⁷⁴ <https://davidwilkinwpzambia.com/davids-story-photographs/unza-in-nwp-1975-79> [n.d.] (accessed 10 May 2020)

⁷⁵ Peša, *Roads Through Mwinilunga*, pp. 194–9.

⁷⁶ Miles Larmer and Giacomo Macola, 'The Origins, Context, and Political Significance of the Mushala Rebellion Against the Zambian One-Party State', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 40, 3 (2007), pp. 471–96, p. 472.

⁷⁷ Patrick Wele, *Kaunda and Mushala Rebellion: The Untold Story* (Lusaka: Multimedia, 1987), p. 92.

in large infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and roads. Although these years are often referred to as a time of massive development, for Solwezi this did not materialise in substantial infrastructure with a few exceptions: the tarring of the road from Chingola to Solwezi and from Solwezi to Kansanshi finally took place in 1971,⁷⁸ and Solwezi General Hospital, which in a parliamentary debate in 1967 was described as 'rotten',⁷⁹ was upgraded to a 120-bed hospital in 1975,⁸⁰ including a nurses' hostel, staff housing and three ward blocks. The latter additions were only possible due to private financial support of Anglo American.⁸¹

The University of Zambia's Extra-Mural Department opened a centre for the North-Western Province in Solwezi in 1975. Other projects were started in the 1970s but, due to lack of funds, rarely completed. A building for the regional radio transmitter station was constructed. In 1975, the construction of the Solwezi Sports Stadium started, but by 1983 the stadium was still 'far from being completed'.⁸² A Zambia News Agency branch was established in 1976⁸³ and banking service became available in 1980.⁸⁴ In 1979, the first intake at Solwezi Teachers' College graduated⁸⁵ and, despite financial restrictions, Solwezi Day Secondary School opened in 1981, heavily relying on volunteer work. In addition to Solwezi Main Market, Kyawama (or Chawama) market, initially known as Mwinilunga market and today

⁷⁸ Findlay, 'Kansanshi Mine', p. 196.

⁷⁹ Republic of Zambia, 'Official Verbatim Report of the Parliamentary Debates of the National Assembly'.

⁸⁰ Republic of Zambia, 'North-Western Province Annual Report 1975' (Lusaka: Office of the Cabinet Minister for the North-Western Province, 1977).

⁸¹ Margaret O'Callaghan, 'Copperfields: A History of the Impact of the First Decade of a Mining Boom in North Western Province, Zambia, circa 2002–2015' (Canberra, 2019), p. 46: <https://margocall.wordpress.com/2020/03/28/copperfields-a-history-of-the-impact-of-the-first-decade-of-a-mining-boom-in-north-western-province-zambia-circa-2002-2015> (accessed 14 October 2020).

⁸² Republic of Zambia, 'Annual Report of the Provincial and Local Government Administration Division North-Western Province 1983' (Lusaka: Office of the Prime Minister, 1987), p. 7.

⁸³ Republic of Zambia, 'North-Western Province Annual Report 1980' (Lusaka: Office of the Member of the Central Committee for North-Western Province, 1982), p. 4.

⁸⁴ Maimbolwa, 'Urban Growth in North-Western Province', pp. 185–86.

⁸⁵ Republic of Zambia, 'Provincial and Local Government Administration Division, North-Western Province Annual Report 1979' (Lusaka: Office of the Prime Minister, 1980), p. 7.

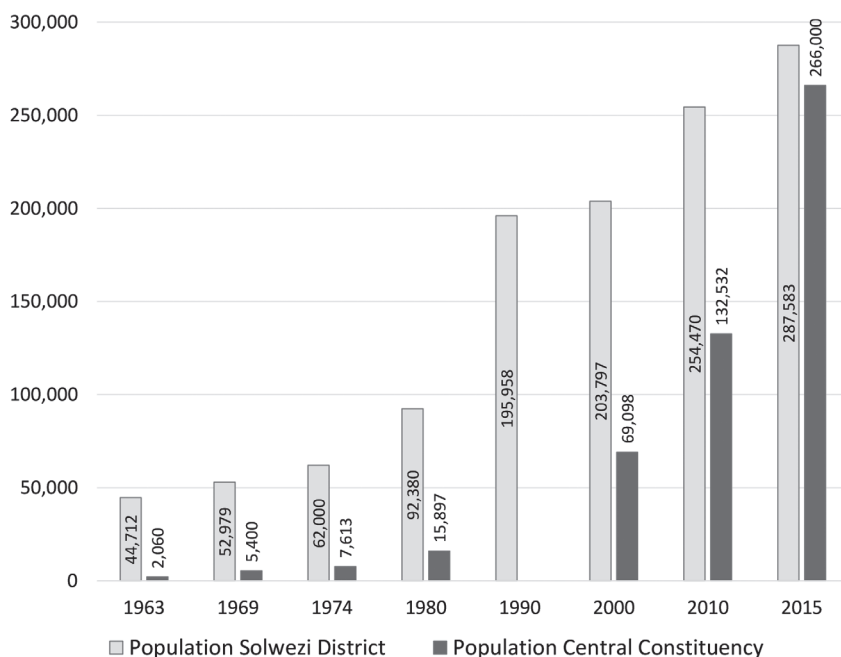


Figure 5.3 Population growth Solwezi District and Solwezi Central Constituency

the largest open-air market in the district, was built in 1983.⁸⁶ These investments could however not do justice to the rapid growth of the urban centre attracting the province's rural population, which resulted in 'urban unemployment, poverty and the expansion of shanty towns'.⁸⁷

Faced with increasing demand, the state, the largest employer, continued to have massive financial challenges in the 1980s. The fact that the library reported 8,458 books gone missing in 1981 alone, leaving 9,417 books only, is maybe a good indicator of the continuous downturn of Zambia's formal economy.⁸⁸ Informal economic practices thrived and 'the shortage of

⁸⁶ Mbaraka Matitu, 'Women and the Retailing of Secondhand Clothing in Urban Zambia: A Case Study of Kyawama Market, Solwezi', MA Thesis, University of Basel, 2018, pp. 25–6.

⁸⁷ Maimbolwa, 'Urban Growth in North-Western Province', p. 186.

⁸⁸ Republic of Zambia, 'Annual Report of the Office of the Cabinet Minister for the North-Western Province 1981' (Lusaka: Office of the Prime Minister, 1981), p. 4.

essential commodities continued to put people in hardships'.⁸⁹ The growth of Solwezi town's population has been subject of much guesswork, and figures 'are very hard to come by'.⁹⁰ Among the province's districts, Solwezi District did not always have the largest share of residents. By the time of the 1980 census it accounted for 30% of the provincial population, with 92,380 residents. This trend persists until today: in 2010, Solwezi District was host to 35% of the provincial population, followed by Mwinilunga and Kabompo.

Figure 5.3 differentiates the population growth of Solwezi District and Solwezi town (or Solwezi Central Constituency) from the 1960s until today, showing that the district's population has grown steadily over the past 50 years.⁹¹ Apart from the above-mentioned general trend of Solwezi 'catching' the province's urbanising population, the increase in population numbers in the 1970s and the 1980s points to the influx of people from Zaïre – where thousands fled the conflict in Shaba Province (now Katanga) – and specifically to Meheba refugee settlement in Solwezi West Constituency, rather than the growth of Solwezi town.⁹² The refugee settlement, about 70 kilometres west from Solwezi town, was founded in 1971 and has been extended five times since.

The figure suggests that, as a proportion of the district's residents, Solwezi town's population was comparatively small until the 1970s (approximately 9% in 1974). Despite continued, albeit fluctuating, activity at Kansanshi mine, Solwezi was not the drawing force of migration into the district until 1980, but it rapidly became so during the following decade. This new in-migration was not centred on Kansanshi mine and it no longer simply used Solwezi as a step to further destinations, given the difficulties of finding mine-related jobs in the Copperbelts. Instead, it is the expression of growing mobility and multilocality within households and extended families. In a situation in which lifestyles, consumption patterns and integration into social institutions increasingly necessitated access to cash income and urban infrastructure, while

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 6.

⁹⁰ Johnson, 'A Note on the Population of North-Western Province', p. 83.

⁹¹ The numbers are taken from a variety of sources, mainly provincial and district government reports, reconciled in the figure. Apart from incorrect citations, revised census methods and very poor data, authors typically conflate numbers for the district and the town. The District was, until recently, made up of three constituencies: East, Central and West. The town's boundaries roughly run along the boundaries of Solwezi Central Constituency. In some publications, this urban part is described as a 'township'.

⁹² Republic of Zambia, 'North-Western Province Statistical Handbook' (Lusaka: Provincial Planning Unit Solwezi, 1985).

economic decline and job scarcity made full-scale urban life more difficult to sustain, many families had members spread across different economic and social spheres. Relatives living in urbanised areas enabled rural family members access to urban infrastructure (from jobs and cash income, to schools and hospitals, to shops or churches) and sometimes provided access to markets for agricultural products, while agricultural production of rural relatives was an important source of food and security for urban dwellers. In this regard, as well, Solwezi does not stand alone. Urbanisation in Zambian mining towns has never been solely centred on mining, even though the mine's presence often hid other dynamics from view.⁹³

Urban Growth Despite Economic Downturn

In the 1990s, Solwezi's residents saw even less formal infrastructural development than before, and the fact that Zambia had a multi-party system since 1991 did not change residents' perception of a province neglected by national government. The Province and Solwezi District continued voting for the opposition, be it for the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) in the 1990s and 2000s or, more recently, the United Party for National Development (UPND). Although the council received some revenue from renting out its remaining assets, local taxes, or charges, most of the administration's plans were thwarted by the lack of funds, transport and fuel, as evidenced in the council's minutes. The growth of the district's population was such, though, that already in 1994, the Ministry of Local Government and Housing 'seriously' considered granting municipal status to Solwezi District Council, something which was again discussed twenty years later.⁹⁴

Here, Deborah Potts' argument that the Copperbelt's urban residents started to ruralise for the first time in history in the 1990s – due to the impact of International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural adjustment programmes and massive decline in real income for public sector workers –

⁹³ Kate Crehan, *The Fractured Community: Landscapes of Power and Gender in Rural Zambia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Henrietta Moore and Megan Vaughan, *Cutting Down Trees: Gender, Nutrition, and Agricultural Change in the Northern Province of Zambia, 1890–1990* (London: Heinemann, 1993); Johan Pottier, *Migrants No More: Settlement and Survival in Mambwe District, Zambia*, International African Library (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

⁹⁴ Minutes of the Proceedings of the Council and its Committees, Solwezi Municipal Council, 31 March 1995.

must also be considered for Solwezi.⁹⁵ Numbers are not precise enough to make a definitive case, but most likely Solwezi did not experience net out-migration and instead continued to grow, much like Lusaka.⁹⁶ Residents of urban centres in North-Western Province in general and in Solwezi in particular never had the kind of welfare capitalism that was established in the Copperbelt towns in the 1950s and collapsed in the late 1990s.⁹⁷ Similar to what Iva Peša shows for the Copperbelt towns from the 1950s until 2000 and Patience Mususa for the 2000s, food gardening has been part of urban life in Solwezi since the economic downturn of the 1970s (and before).⁹⁸ What is more, many Solwezi residents held farming land outside the urban boundaries with the consent of respective chiefs. This land only became scarce, overused and commercialised after the reopening of Kansanshi mine and the more rapid increase in population since 2005.

Kansanshi's Re-Privatisation, Mechanisation and Expansion

Zambia, like many countries in the Global South, has gone through, and suffered from, IMF-imposed structural adjustment programmes. The state was unfortunate enough to majority-own the mining industry in economically depressed years, and to be forced to sell its assets shortly before the next global metal boom. Soon after the lengthy process of privatisation of Zambia's mining sector was completed, global copper prices started to rise and Zambia experienced a revival of the mining sector and a construction boom.

In 1997 and in 1999, Cyprus Amax Minerals Corporations undertook some diamond drilling at the Kansanshi mine site. In 1998, Cyprus Amax acquired majority ownership of surface leases and selected assets at Kansanshi

⁹⁵ Deborah Potts, 'Counter-Urbanisation on the Zambian Copperbelt? Interpretations and Implications', *Urban Studies* 42, 4 (2005), pp. 583–609.

⁹⁶ Macmillan, 'Mining, Housing and Welfare'.

⁹⁷ Benjamin Rubbers, *Le paternalisme en question: Les anciens ouvriers de la Gécamines face à la libéralisation du secteur minier katangais* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013); Benjamin Rubbers, 'Towards a Life of Poverty and Uncertainty? The Livelihood Strategies of Gécamines Workers after Retrenchment in the DRC', *Review of African Political Economy* 44, 152 (2017), pp. 189–203.

⁹⁸ Patience Mususa, 'Mining, Welfare and Urbanisation: The Wavering Urban Character of Zambia's Copperbelt', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 30, 4 (2012), pp. 571–87; Iva Peša, 'Crops and Copper: Agriculture and Urbanism on the Central African Copperbelt, 1950–2000', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 46, 3 (2020), pp. 527–45.

mine and the mine was thus re-privatised.⁹⁹ In 2001, the current owner of Kansanshi mine, Canada-based First Quantum Minerals (FQM) acquired Cyprus's 80% share in Kansanshi and ZCCM (now ZCCM Investment Holdings) retained its 20% share. The mine was reopened in 2005 with unprecedented, massive foreign investment – such as the construction of a new power line, the upgrading of the access road, the road between Chingola and Solwezi and the airport – and the mechanisation and expansion of the opencast mine. With new technology, low-grade ore ceased to be an unsurmountable obstacle; the ore structure merely posed a challenge (and sometimes a puzzle) to geologists. Kansanshi quickly grew into the largest copper mine by output in Africa. It employs a small operations workforce of 2,705 and a further 4,874 contract workers¹⁰⁰ and processes large quantities of low-grade copper ores at very low cost. The mine contributed 23.6% to total Zambian Government revenues in 2015.¹⁰¹ The FQM mine complex is registered in Canada but operates from Perth (Australia) and London (UK). In 2019, there were talks of a looming Chinese takeover after Jiangxi Mining's purchase of 9.9% of FQM. According to analysts, Western interest in the Copperbelt area was fading due to changing political conditions and growing scrutiny of international oil and mining companies. China in contrast would buy up assets in the Copperbelts to extend its control of supply chains in the high-tech sector.¹⁰²

Since FQM's purchase of the mining rights, Kansanshi has been continuously expanding. In 2014, the license area increased considerably with an expansion to the east. Kansanshi also occupies large pieces of land for its 'golf estate', housing approximately 200 expatriate employees and their families, a game reserve and corporate social responsibility offices close to Solwezi's *boma*. These infrastructures which primarily serve the management and senior and junior employees resulted in the resettlement of urban and peri-urban residents and the closure of commons on customary land.

With the reopening of Kansanshi mine and the continued growth of the urban population, Kansanshi mine and Solwezi town moved closer than they ever were, socially, economically, politically and geographically; a relationship that, notably, goes both ways. Residents started to build right up to the mine fence, on what was (and often still officially is) land under

⁹⁹ In 1999, Cyprus Amax was taken over by Phelps Dodge Corporations.

¹⁰⁰ First Quantum Minerals Ltd, 'Annual Information Form 2016' (Vancouver, 2017).

¹⁰¹ Zambia EITI, 'Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) Eighth Report for the Fiscal Year Ended 31 December 2015' (Lusaka: EITI, 2017), p. 18.

¹⁰² Africa Confidential, 'The China Price', *Africa Confidential*, 13 September 2019.

customary tenure. The compounds became more populated through the selling and sub-division of plots. Mine employees and contract workers live spread out in compounds, a majority of them in the densely populated western compounds. Workers from the Copperbelt usually maintain a home in a Copperbelt town and share a house (and sometimes a bed) in Solwezi's compounds. As it is for other mines which are close to urban areas, such as Mutanda and Kamoto mines near Kolwezi in the DR Congo,¹⁰³ the mine management relies on this housing infrastructure and the entrepreneurship of landowners to build cheap housing for migrant workers. In an attempt to counter criticism from the central government for not contributing to housing projects, to encourage miners to move and live with their families, and to remain attractive for Zambian members at the rank of junior management, the company built a suburb outside town and the first families moved there in 2014. The housing project Kabitaka never completely took off as a project. Houses are far away from the town centre and the shops, stand on land with tenure insecurity, are offered for rental only and considered substandard by potential tenants. Nevertheless, some one hundred houses are occupied. Most Kansanshi and contractors' employees prefer to live in town, share a house and commute to work.¹⁰⁴ The mine also heavily relies on workers' families, in Solwezi town or in the Copperbelt towns, to bolster the many externalities of mining and pay the daily costs of labour reproduction. It does not offer a social welfare system for workers' families, nor housing, schooling or other social services. Its contributions to the communities are voluntary through its social corporate responsibility programmes.

During the construction phase, some labourers, referred to as 'locals' (typically unskilled Kaonde, Lunda and Luvale people), were recruited from the area, in addition to Filipinos and Indonesians who were brought in on short-term contracts in 2013 and 2014 to build the smelter.¹⁰⁵ Once the mine operated, most Zambian workers came from the Copperbelt Province, equipped with grades and experience in mining, thereby 'dashing' expectations of local residents, producing collective grievances and ethnic tensions

¹⁰³ Rubbers, 'Mining Towns, Enclaves and Spaces', p. 93.

¹⁰⁴ Rita Kesselring, 'Disenclaving the Planners' Enclave: The Housing Project Kabitaka in Solwezi, Northwestern Zambia', *Comparing the Copperbelt* (blog), 21 August 2017, <http://copperbelt.history.ox.ac.uk/2017/08/21/disenclaving-the-planners-enclave-the-housing-project-kabitaka-in-solwezi-northwestern-zambia-rita-kesselring> (accessed 14 October 2020).

¹⁰⁵ O'Callaghan, 'Copperfields', p. 45.

and preventing strong unionisation and furthering intra-union accusations of tribalism.¹⁰⁶ Managerial and supervisory positions are mostly occupied by South Africans, Britons and Australians.

In addition to Kansanshi mine, Lumwana Mine in 2008, owned by Barrick Gold (acquired from Equinox in 2011), and Sentinel/Kalumbila Mine, fully owned by FQM, in 2015 opened further west. Unlike Kansanshi, Kalumbila and Lumwana were constructed as ‘greenfield’ projects in rural areas.¹⁰⁷ The reopening of Kansanshi mine and these two mines attracted tens of thousands of temporary and permanent migrants looking for opportunities. Again, Solwezi acts as a buffer, this time catching work and opportunity seekers from the Copperbelt, and areas to the east, rather than out-migrating north-westerners from the west as during the twentieth century. Importantly, Solwezi can only have this function due to its character as a long-established urban centre.

The new clientele, the miners and the mine, attracted suppliers and private investors in banking and retail services, and three malls sprung up in the course of ten years (Shoprite,¹⁰⁸ Solwezi City Mall and Kapiji Mall). Two high-end hotels (Kansanshi Hotel and Royal Solwezi) initially made up for the lack of housing before the construction of the golf estate. Although plans for new rail links between the Copperbelt, Angola and Solwezi, through Lubumbashi were discussed – in fact, have been discussed since 1913 – they never materialised.¹⁰⁹ Copper cathodes, anodes and concentrate leave Solwezi on trucks to ports in South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique or Tanzania.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Robby Kapesa, Jacob Mwitwa, and D. C. Chikumbi, ‘Social Conflict in the Context of Development of New Mining in Zambia 2014’, *Southern African Peace and Security Studies* 4, 2 (2014), pp. 41–62; Robby Kapesa and Thomas McNamara, “‘We Are Not Just a Union, We Are a Family’: Class, Kinship and Tribe in Zambia’s Mining Unions”, *Dialectical Anthropology* (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10624-019-09578-x>; Rohit Negi, ‘The Mining Boom, Capital and Chiefs in the “New Copperbelt”’ in Alastair Fraser and Miles Larmer (eds), *Zambia, Mining, and Neoliberalism: Boom and Bust on the Globalized Copperbelt* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 209–36.

¹⁰⁷ Rita Kesselring, ‘The Electricity Crisis in Zambia: Blackouts and Social Stratification in New Mining Towns’, *Energy Research & Social Science*, 30 (2017), pp. 94–102, pp. 98–9.

¹⁰⁸ Rohit Negi, “‘Solwezi Mabanga’: Ambivalent Developments on Zambia’s New Mining Frontier’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40, 5 (2014), pp. 999–1013.

¹⁰⁹ Peša, *Roads Through Muwini Lunga*, pp. 1–2.

¹¹⁰ Gregor Dobler and Rita Kesselring, ‘Swiss Extractivism: Switzerland’s Role in Zambia’s Copper Sector’, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 57, 2 (2019), pp. 223–45.

At Kansanshi, as in the Copperbelt, foreign-owned suppliers and service providers primarily benefitted from the investments with little impact on local value addition.¹¹¹ Despite the disconnect between foreign-driven investment and local elites, some families who are either part of the traditional authorities or have held political (opposition) positions in the provincial and local government managed to appropriate land and business opportunities and make the boom profitable for themselves. With direct access to state resources and information or, in the case of the traditional leadership, entry points for negotiations with the mine for land, they could seize the opportunities, offer their services and monopolise information and bids, and thereby help drive land commercialisation and elite land capture.¹¹²

Solwezi Today

Solwezi residents experience the direct consequences of mining through the mine's physical expansion and heavy vehicle frequency, and the indirect consequences through land encroachment, the increase of costs for goods and services and the impact of the municipality's lack of planning capacity.¹¹³ The local state's urban governance is often indirectly undermined by the mine's strong capacities to change the infrastructural situation according to its needs. The municipality sometimes hands over state functions to the mine in exchange for tax relief and it has become heavily dependent on the mine's local revenue, emanating primarily from land rates.¹¹⁴ In 2016, Solwezi District was subdivided into three districts – Mushindamo District, Solwezi District and Kalumbila District; leaving the urban and peri-urban areas and Kansanshi mine to the now much shrunk – in terms of area and local revenue (as Kalumbila and Lumwana mines now fell under Kalumbila District) – Solwezi District.

¹¹¹ Alexander Caramento, 'Cultivating Backward Linkages to Zambia's Copper Mines: Debating the Design of, and Obstacles to, Local Content', *The Extractive Industries and Society* 7, 2 (2020), pp. 310–20.

¹¹² Nicholas J. Sitko and T. S. Jayne, 'Structural Transformation or Elite Land Capture? The Growth of "Emergent" Farmers in Zambia', *Food Policy*, 48 (2014), pp. 194–202.

¹¹³ Kesselring, 'The Electricity Crisis in Zambia'; Rita Kesselring, 'At an Extractive Pace: Conflicting Temporalities in a Resettlement Process in Solwezi, Zambia', *The Extractive Industries and Society* 5, 2 (2018), pp. 237–44; Rita Kesselring, 'The Local State in a New Mining Area in Zambia's North-Western Province' in Jon Schubert, Ulf Engel and Elisio Macamo (eds), *Extractive Industries and Changing State Dynamics in Africa: Beyond the Resource Curse* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 129–47.

¹¹⁴ Kesselring, 'The Local State'.

The Solwezi Urban Baseline Study (SUBS), a comprehensive household survey conducted in 2015 with the financial and operational help of the German organisation Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), estimated about 266,000 residents in urban Solwezi in 2015.¹¹⁵ Despite the availability of this exceptionally thorough on-the-ground study, most government reports (and scholarly publications) still work with outdated numbers; the SUBS data has not yet penetrated planning processes. This undercounting contributes to even poorer service provision and the municipality's incapacity to plan ahead.

Today, Solwezi town's population is very young. What is maybe more surprising is the fact that in the past 50 years, all available official data show that gender ratios were more or less on par. The 2010 census even shows a slight skew towards females for Solwezi District (as for all districts in the province).¹¹⁶ This speaks to the fact that Solwezi has had a history independent of the mining industry. For much of the twentieth century, Zambian Copperbelt towns have had a skewed gender ratio due to male-dominated in-migration attracted by the mining industry. Because Copperbelt mines allowed miners to bring dependents to live in company compounds from the industry's inception in 1926, though, the gender ratios were less unbalanced than for instance in the South African mining centres.¹¹⁷

Certainly, many male employment seekers, mine employees and contractors move to Solwezi while leaving their families in the Copperbelt towns. They then straddle two households. These Solwezi male households are found in clusters in the densely populated western compounds. Kabitaka, the mine's housing rental scheme, is exclusively occupied by 'non-local' families.¹¹⁸ Today, all in all, Solwezi town is an ordinary town, in which mineworkers only make up a small percentage of the overall population. Skilled mineworkers have never constituted a permanent constituency in Solwezi; they continue to move between Solwezi and their (Copperbelt) homes depending on employment opportunities.

¹¹⁵ I participated in the study both as an observer and as an advisor to the interviewees.

¹¹⁶ Central Statistical Office Zambia, 'Zambia 2010 Census of Population and Housing: Report on Characteristics of Households and Housing' (Lusaka: Central Statistical Office, 2013), p. 40.

¹¹⁷ Jane L. Parpart, 'The Household and the Mine Shaft: Gender and Class Struggles on the Zambian Copperbelt, 1926–64', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 13, 1 (1986), pp. 36–56, p. 53; Hugh Macmillan, 'The Historiography of Transition on the Zambian Copperbelt – Another View', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 19, 4 (1993), pp. 686–7.

¹¹⁸ Kesselring, 'Disenclaving the Planners' Enclave'.

As throughout the twentieth century, boom and bust are never far away from each other. In 2015, and again in 2020, the Zambian economy felt the consequences of China's slowing demand. The slump in global copper prices triggered the closure of some mines (e.g. Luanshya) and the decision to put others on maintenance (e.g. Mopani Copper Mines). Against the trend, the three new mines in the North-Western Province remained open, not least due to the pressure to recover recent massive investments, and Kansanshi continued with the construction of a smelter, which started to process concentrate in 2015. Kansanshi mine also remained open when other mines were put on care and maintenance during the global Covid-19 pandemic which started in 2020.

Conclusion

Activity at Kansanshi mine has often been described as 'intermittent' over the twentieth century. I tried to draw a more nuanced picture of its history. There was hardly any year when there was no activity at all, such as processing or exploration. Interest in Kansanshi mine never vanished, and the ore bodies were always considered as potential, which, for a number of reasons could not be fulfilled: low-grade ore and harder access compared with the exceptionally high-grade ore at the Katangan and later Zambian mines, world wars, recessions, flooding, too little processing capacity, difficult connections to the line-of-rail, remoteness of the area as seen from the Copperbelt and so forth. In spite of all these challenges, though, investment never ceased. Solwezi has remained an entry point to a region interesting in terms of minerals. The mine has always been there, be it for planners on a global level or in the self-understanding of the town and its residents.

Looking at Solwezi town in relation to the mine's trajectory shows that, in terms of population numbers, the town has developed more or less independently from the mine. While the increase of residents since the mid-2000s is clearly noteworthy and extraordinary, it has to be seen in a historical context. Since its inception in the early twentieth century, the town has never stopped to grow, with higher growth rates since independence. The dynamics fostering this population increase cannot be understood as simply mirroring the development of the mine. Three factors were decisive: Solwezi's geographical location at the eastern boundary of a large province, turning it into a hub for people migrating to the Copperbelt and beyond; 'ordinary' urbanisation processes of secondary urban centres since Zambia's independence; and rural-urban migration within the province.

Solwezi's history shows what should be self-evident: mining towns have never been isolated from wider spatial and political processes. Since the mid-twentieth century, the Copperbelt mining towns, too, rapidly attracted a much wider urban population that cannot be explained by the mines alone – a population which certainly sought to benefit from the presence of the mine, but which also advanced the region's urbanisation in new ways. Towns were a space of relative autonomy and freedom from societal control by elders and 'tribal' hierarchies¹¹⁹; they were places of access to cash markets, both production and consumption, and they offered a number of informal economic opportunities; they were social and cultural hubs, as this volume shows, in which people could experiment with new forms of sociality. *Pace* Ferguson,¹²⁰ the 'modernity' of mining towns has never been restricted to the mining world, and it did not cease when mines stopped providing mass employment.

Unlike in the Copperbelt towns, throughout the twentieth century, the mining industry in Solwezi contributed very little to the town's development and its infrastructure; its main investments were undertaken on the mining license area. In many aspects, life in Solwezi is and has been like life in other secondary cities in Southern Africa. Since the 1980s, the majority of Solwezi residents are engaged in informal business activities, straddle rural connections – through ethnic affiliations, extended household integration and agricultural practices as a backup in economically harsh times – and integrate family and work life in one or two urban areas, continuously contributing to the growth of a secondary city through formal and informal planning and building processes. Most of the (residential) infrastructure in today's Solwezi has been built by residents or 'Copperbelt landlords', not by town authorities or the mine.

This context, however, has helped to produce a particularly uneven distribution of the benefits and externalities of the most recent mining boom. Solwezi continues to develop independent from the mine, and that allows the mine to feed on the town. The company, in line with global practices of neoliberalised extractivism, reopened the mine without the requirement of integrating urban communities. In fact, instead of providing for it, it heavily relies on urban infrastructure, most of all on housing and care structures. It is built on reproductive work done by the town's residents, the

¹¹⁹ Gregor Dobler, 'Umkämpfter Freiraum: Die Erfindung des Städtischen im Norden Namibias, 1950–1980', *Peripherie* 36, 141 (2016).

¹²⁰ James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

majority of which happens in the informal realm. It is only through this informal work of Solwezi's residents that the formal economy of extraction can exist and extract more or less unhindered. Unlike throughout the twentieth century, the mine cannot today untangle itself from urban life in its courtyard. This reliance results in a high degree of interference in residents' everyday lives – through infrastructure overuse, rising land and housing prices, often unchecked planning of the mine's own infrastructure resulting in resettlements and land loss. The unequal distribution of benefits is even more clearly visible in Solwezi than in the Copperbelt with its old, underground mines, where the required workforce is small and mostly comes in from outside the region.

Kansanshi's ebb and flow throughout the last century thus points to what we increasingly see elsewhere today: large-scale mining relies on competitive global investment and generates investment decisions informed by that point of view. Companies are quick in reacting to global changes, often leaving employees and contractors destitute (see Mopani's recent closure during the Covid-19 crisis). In such years or decades, urban life necessarily goes on. Booms and busts do exist and have huge consequences, but they happen against a continuity of urban life.

Finally, Solwezi's infrastructural and demographic history foreshadow the current form of resource extraction in the whole Central African region, where infrastructural and other benefits for the urban communities, if they exist, are limited and precarious. Investors do not feel historically responsible for the towns, nor are they held to account. The different phases of extraction and finance throughout the twentieth century have left traces in the urban environments across the Copperbelts (e.g. Mususa¹²¹ and Straube, Chapter 7 this volume) and, to a lesser degree, in Solwezi. Today, urban communities invariably bear the brunt of the externalities of the mining industry: they are exposed both to its environmental, societal and infrastructural legacies and the contemporary logics of disengaged capital.

¹²¹ Patience Mususa, "'Getting by': Life on the Copperbelt after the Privatisation of the Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines", *Social Dynamics* 36, 2 (2010), pp. 380–94.