

# **A Marxian–Senian Critique of Zambia’s Political Economy of Labour:**

## **Chinese-State Capital in Zambia’s Copper Mining Industry**

**by**  
***Busiswa Sobahle***

*Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in International Studies in the faculty of Arts and Social  
Sciences at Stellenbosch University*



Supervisor: Professor Scarlett Cornelissen

December 2021

## **DECLARATION**

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third-party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

## **Acknowledgments**

This research project has taken a life of its own; thrusting me into a profound reckoning of myself in the world. The deep waters did not drown me, they brought me home to myself in ways I could have not by my own making.

Professor Cornelissen, thank you for treating me with grace and tenderness. You allowed me room to contend with both the personal and the academic. Your patience encouraged me to trust my intentions and courageously face the winding path. I could give nothing less of myself in this work – thank you for inspiring that.

Dr. Anita Jonker, Mrs Hannhen Louw and JC Rademeyer, thank you for caring so deeply about me. Your support enabled me to forge forward in truth and in hope. My gratitude for each of you knows no bounds.

To my mother, thank you for loving me during this arduous journey I undertook. Thank you for always believing in me. I appreciate you deeply.

To my friends whom I journeyed with in the past two years, thank you to you all for being beacons of light and wells of unending love. Thank you for holding a girl down.

To the Political Science Department, I am thankful for the space I had to expand my intellectual capabilities and to see myself in a new light.

## Abstract

It is commonplace to observe China in Africa in realist and liberal IR/IPE state-centric terms. Rather, this thesis espouses a critical political economy approach to Chinese state-owned capital in Zambia's copper mining industry. It is a critical qualitative study that examines the interplay between the Zambian state, Chinese capital and mining labour. With a critical focus on Zambia's mining labour's experiences and encounters with the Chinese state capital, the study employs Karl Marx's theory of Alienated Labour and Amartya Sen's Capability approach as a lens to focus and consider the bearing of Chinese capital on Zambia's mining labour class. To study China in Zambia from a critical political economy perspective, the study draws on Robert Cox's critical theory to hegemony as a contrast to mainstream IR theory which reduces hegemony to the domain of economic and military capabilities. The Coxian approach expands purview to include as part of hegemony social relations of production. In this way, I situate China's engagement with Zambia's political economy in the context of global capitalism, not as a state seeking a place in the sun, but as a social formation expressing the logic of capitalist social relations in Zambia. The findings of the study show that because mineworkers are alienated in their labour and that the bearing of the Chinese state capital on its Zambian labouring class limits its developmental potential. The analysis shows that there are two opposing political economies in Zambia – that of capital and that of the working class. To this end, I argue that labourers' existential possibilities are conditioned by their position in society.

*When I'm writing, I am trying to find out who I am, who we are, what we're capable of, how we feel, how we lose and stand up, and go on from darkness into darkness. I am trying for that. But I am also writing for the language. I'm trying to see how it can really sound. I really love language. I love it for what it does for us, how it allows us to explain the pain and the glory, the nuances and the delicacies of our existence.*

*Maya Angelou*

*Table of Contents*

<b>Chapter 1 - Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Researching China and labour in Africa .....	7
The capitalist labour process .....	9
Contextualising Chinese capital in the Zambian Copperbelt.....	10
Methodology .....	12
Researcher Positionality.....	15
Thesis outline .....	16
<b>Chapter 2 – Theoretical framework.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Chapter 3 – Historical considerations .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Charting the development of an African working-class on the Copperbelt .....	22
Labour’s role in political change .....	26
Transforming class interests into political agenda .....	30
<b>Chapter 4 – Literature Review.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Chapter 5 – Findings and Analysis .....</b>	<b>46</b>
Political economy of capital.....	47
Political economy of working-class struggle .....	52
<b>Concluding Remarks .....</b>	<b>56</b>
Implications and recommendations.....	56
Limitations.....	57
<b>Reference List .....</b>	<b>59</b>

## Chapter 1 - Introduction

### Researching China and labour in Africa

Over the past two decades, China has spread its wings over the breadths and horizons of African terrains with colossal volumes of capital investments in resource-rich industries. Its expansive engagement with African industries has been dubbed as the “*new scramble for Africa*” by Melber and Southhall (2009) and Carmody (2011) in a bid to encapsulate continued historical dynamics of capitalist accumulation on the continent. A great deal of scholarly appraisal, however, tends towards arguing China’s immersion into African political economies in rather simplistic terms – that China in Africa is ‘competitive’, ‘opportunistic’ and ‘extractive’ (See Alden, 2009; Broadman, 2007; Karumbidza, 2007; Keenan, 2008; Rocha, 2007; Rotberg, 2008; Mohan and Power, 2008). In comparison, Western capital in Africa’s resource-rich industries is discussed in relatively benign terms of ‘investment’, ‘development’, and ‘employment creation’ (See Guerrero and Manji, 2008, Melber, 2009; Mawdsley, 2008). This line of analysis reads China in Africa in realist and liberal IR/IPE state-centric terms, which underscores geopolitical competition between the US and China. Presently, this method of analysis offers insufficient analytical value for enriching a critical awareness of the historical capitalist structure upon which ‘rising powers’ like China emerge; reflecting IPE’s neglect of “epochal implications and conjunctural dynamics of capitalist development” (Teschke and Lacher, 2007:566). To abstract from such a set of complexities is to place the possibilities of normative understanding outside of reach, tacitly obscuring relations of oppression and exploitation, and maintaining a system of knowledge production that does not, on the whole, observe how historical and contemporary processes of global capitalism determine how life is lived and felt by those who are at the mercy of its dictates. Under the guise of this analytical weakness, what is studied are not areas of human social realities, with relevant theoretical underpinnings, but shifts in geopolitical power alliances undergirded by IR and IPE assumptions that (a) the world is readily comprehensible through objective scholarly inquiry; (b) phenomena can be understood by separating social reality (‘state’, ‘market’, ‘labour’, ‘power’, ‘cooperation’) into fixed categories; and (c) coherent understanding can be achieved by drawing connections between these artificially separated social realities (Burnham, 2006: 94). In the main, these assumptions eschew the political, that is, the role of the state in national and internationally constituted capitalist social relations of production (Selwyn, 2015:518). By the standards of mainstream IPE, capitalism remains a pristine non-object of analysis.

Conversely, a Marxian-inspired political economy as a perspective and method of inquiry into phenomena treats capitalism as its object of critique.

The present thesis espouses a Marxian-inspired perspective and method of political economy to perceive the interplay between the Zambian state, Chinese-state capital and copper mining labour. Here, China's reach is not observed simply as a state seeking a place in the sun, but as a social formation, whose ascendancy into the Zambian political economy is read within the context of broader changes in the historical and structural conditions of global capitalism (Stephen, 2014:917). Zambia's copper mining industry is a classic exemplar of capitalist expansion in Africa. Changes that occur in global capitalism are absorbed in as part of its reality and thus constitute the material basis of its capitalist social relations. The emergence of the Copperbelt as a mining region depended on the mobilisation of African labour by colonial capitalism. As a social force against colonial domination in the workplace, African labour played a vital role in Zambia's Independence struggle. In post-colonial copper mono-economy Zambia, mining labour continues to play a critical role in the economy (Larmer, 2017). Lee (2010:128) argues that the instrumentality of African labour to capitalist accumulation suggests that African labour is also "the fulcrum of Chinese capitalism today". The thesis aims to extend the analytical focus on mine labourers' experiences and encounters with the Chinese-state capital within the framework of the Zambian state.

A critical political economy perspective intends to grasp society in its totality, linking normative questions to the analysis of phenomena. The centrality of Zambia's mining labour to historical and contemporary capitalist accumulation begs the Marxist normative question of "*What possibilities exist in different structures of production and reproduction that workers can seize to make themselves into something more than anonymous sellers of labour-power?*" (Marx in Cooper, 1996:32). Integrating Marx's theory of *Alienated Labour* as an *unveiling of 'being' in the world* with Amartya Sen's *Capability Approach* as an *unveiling of consciousness for collective action and progressive change for human development*, I develop a *structural-ethical critique* (in Chapter II) as a lens to focus and consider the bearing of the Chinese-state capital on Zambia's mining labour.

A labour-oriented study in Africa has to, at first, reckon with the Marxist proletarianization meta-narrative, which holds that the working-class will transform itself into a revolutionary force to overthrow owners of capital. During the decolonial era, colonial administrations



commissioned academically-led studies of labour. In Zambia for example, the Rhodes – Livingstone Institute was established as a site of mining labour studies in an attempt to uncover insights on class resistance (Freund, 1984:4). However, by the 1970s, the fear of a working-class revolution lost ground in the wake of widespread African worker disillusionment with African nationalist regimes that co-opted the critical echelon of labour movements into the state apparatus; effectively weakening the revolutionary power of labour movements (Schler, Bethlehem and Sabar, 2009:287). This marked a major historical shift away from a Marxian political economy perspective, as Sewell (in Silver 2003:1) notes, “because the organized working-class seems less and less likely to perform the liberating role assigned to it [...] the study of working-class has lost some of its urgency”. In place of a Marxian political economy, post-colonial and post-structural studies of labour gained prominence, supplanting ‘old’ categories of class, productivity, materiality and accumulation with an analytical saliency towards discourse, culture, identity and agency, as part of the broader epistemological challenge to Marxism (See Mbembe, 2001; Bayart, 1993). While these are undoubtedly ways through which African working classes negotiate their place in the labour market, concerns over culture, discourse and identity, although they appear to be outside of the political economy, cannot be understood in abstraction from it. For instance, in arguing for post-colonial subjects and structurally autonomous identities, it is vital to not lose sight of the historical reality and the material conditions upon which African labourers contend with in becoming something other than historical categories (Zeilig and Seddon, 2005:13-16). Rather, a ‘both/and’ approach has to be embraced to emphasise the centrality of materiality in questions of African labour. The glaring material disparities between classes in society suggests that post-structural approaches should serve to deepen and enrich critique. The Marxian-Senian framework in Chapter II engages with these constitutive categories intersecting both the immaterial and the material, the self and the social, in which work comes to be lived.

#### The capitalist labour process

Marx (1977:342) cogently explicates that capital force that exploits labourers by virtue of its principal drive to “valorise itself” or to create surplus-value:

Our capitalist has two objectives: in the first place, he wants to produce a use-value which has exchange-value, i.e. an article destined to be sold, a commodity; and secondly he want to produce a commodity greater in value than the sum of the values of the commodities used to produce it (Marx, 1977:342).

The worker sells his ability to perform labour, his labour-power, and the worker works under the control of the capitalist to whom [his] labour belongs.” The product produced is “the property of the capitalist and not of the worker” since “from the instant the [worker] steps into [work], the use-value of [his] labour-power, and therefore also its use belongs to the capitalist” (Marx, 1977:252). In other words, capital represents a process by which capitalists, who own a certain portion of society’s labour, obtain a claim on *more* of that labour. Its drive to self-volarise does not distinguish the labour-power of human beings from other commodities. It does not recognise that “labour-power exists in the living body of the worker”; it simply wants the use-value of a human being’s labour-power (Marx,1977:272). This means that within the capitalist labour process, commodities are produced, surplus value is generated, and most importantly, class relations are reproduced:

On the one hand, the production process incessantly converts material wealth into capital, into the capitalist’s means of enjoyment and his means of valorization. On the other hand, the worker always leaves the process in the same state as he entered it – a personal source of wealth [for the capitalist], but deprived of any means of making that wealth a reality for himself . . . *in short, the capitalist produces the worker as a wage-labourer*. This incessant reproduction, this perpetuation of the worker, is the absolutely necessary condition for capitalist production (Marx, 1977:272).

#### Contextualising Chinese capital in the Zambian Copperbelt

In investigating Chinese-state capital in Zambia’s mining labour, a preliminary point of departure is to review the political economy from which it emerges. At this point, it has to be stated that although neoliberalism (the current phase of global capitalism) encompasses a complex range of ideational facets (respect for the rule of law, sovereignty, upholding human rights and improving the human condition), in its essence, it is capitalist restructuring designed to hold sacrosanct the interests of capital accumulation (Harvey, 2007:19). As a global regime, it seeks to make “much of our lives as possible conform to the economist’s idea of a free market” (Crouch, 2017:8). This phase of global capitalism is marked by increasing international exchange conducted through multinational corporations operating across state boundaries, forging a production process that integrates the vast majority of the world’s population under one global capitalist system (Stephen, 2014:922; McNally, 2020:284). Critically, the presence of these transnational enterprises goes beyond the sphere of production and trade into the very crevice of social existence (Dowd, 2002:2) – into how politics are

organised, into how human creativity and culture is expressed and into how we think and feel about ourselves, as they must if they are ideas that preside over our lives:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class that has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations, the dominant material relations grasped as ideas (Marx and Engels, 1970:39).

Neoliberal capitalism has an important conditioning effect in how newly emerged powers like China organise their national economies and behave in the global system. Harvey (2007) holds that China's economic reforms were deeply influenced by the Western neoliberal project, albeit manipulated for its socio-historical conditions. With a socialist legacy, markets were rapidly constructed and opened to foreign capital, effectively establishing a market-liberal system of state capitalism. McNally (2012, 2019, 2020) argues that China's state-influenced market economy is unlike any other the liberal order has accommodated. China's state capitalism weds neoliberalism's emphasis on capital accumulation with a neo-statist approach in managing its economic affairs. It combines a top-down state-centric governance style with bottom-up entrepreneurship networks. Its state-capitalism jettisons liberal democracy in favour of a more authoritarian but market-friendly rule; suppressing labour movements and bolstering the capital-holding class - all the while still espousing socialist rhetoric. Outbound Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) are organized as "pyramidal business groups" with the state retaining majority ownership at the apex of the pyramid, and the lower-tier subsidiaries turned into publicly listed companies, allowing the state to leverage market capital and competition without losing corporate control. This allows the central government to have control over the state enterprise system nationally and internationally. While these features inform a rather controlled corporate culture among Chinese expatriates, there is no homogenous way in which Chinese SOEs behave in foreign countries. Because it is State business, Chinese SOEs are aware that in part the success of an enterprise is dependent upon negotiating their interests with African political economies and other local social pressures that may exist (Lee, 2017: 6 -7).

Out of all the major foreign investors in Zambia's copper mining industry, China Nonferrous Metal Mining Company (CNMC) is the only state-owned enterprise in the industry. Its

subsidiary, Non-Ferrous Metal China – Africa (NFCA) has run the *Chambishi Mine* since 1998<sup>1</sup>. As an SOE, NFCA in Zambia is a part of China’s economic diplomacy in response to a need for mobilising resource commodities that are in short supply in China such as copper, aluminium, iron and of course, oil (Lee, 2017). China’s resource seeking objective is discussed openly by Chinese representatives. This objective is often discussed alongside historical allegory and statistical figures as laid out by the chairman of CNMC on China’s strategic interest in Zambia’s copper mining industry:

Zambia and China are separated by 12,000 kilometers of water and mountains, but our countries’ friendship was long established through the personal friendship of Chairman Mao, Premier Zhou En- lai, and President Kaunda. Then Chairman Mao decided to construct Tazara, which is still in use today. China– Zambia’s friendship has blossomed and endured, benefiting our countries and peoples [...] CNMC is the first Chinese SOE entering Africa, and ranks 432nd among the Fortune 500. It has fourteen subsidiaries in Zambia with a total of US\$1 billion investment. It is a significant symbol of China– Zambia’s all- weather friendship [...] China is a major country in this industry, but it is not a strong country in this industry. We have three limitations: first, we lack resources; second, we lack technology; and third, we have great environmental challenges. The Chinese government encourages us to adjust industrial structure and innovate. Zambia is a big mining country, and you have very rich resources. Your copper reserve accounts for 15 percent of the world total. Our two countries have complementary strengths, and we can cooperate to achieve common development (in Lee, 2017:33-34).

### Methodology

This section of the chapter presents the methodology followed in the study to situate its research design, data collection and analysis, and consequently the epistemological orientation of the study. This is a critical qualitative research study, concerned with what Crotty (1998:133) describes as research that reads to not merely understand phenomena within its status quo, but research that reads phenomena in terms of oppression and exploitation. Critical qualitative research, then, engages research in terms of power – who has it, how it is negotiated, what structures in society reinforce the current distribution of power and whose interests are being served, to better uncover, explore and contend with transformative possibilities (Merriam, 2009:35).

---

<sup>1</sup> In 2009 NFCA acquired Luanshya Copper Mine. NFCA also runs a Collum Coal mine in Zambia.

I draw on Robert Cox's critical theory to hegemony as a complementary lens to the Marxian perspective to political economy to fashion the study's research questions. I draw upon Cox's (1981,1987) critical theory to hegemony because it directs attention to the particular processes arising from the dialectic possibilities of change within production and the exploitative nature of social relations, not as unchanging ahistorical reality but as a continuing process of new forms (Cox, 1981:132). In contrast to traditional IR theory which reduces hegemony to the domain of economic and military capabilities, Cox's perspective to hegemony expands purview to include historical structures as constituted by three spheres of activity namely *social relations of production, forms of state, and world orders*.

### *Social relations of production*

Social relations encompass the sum total of social relations in material, institutional and discursive forms that give rise to certain social forces (Cox,1987:103). Here, patterns of production relations are the starting point for analysing the processes and mechanisms of hegemony. According to Cox (1987:103), these patterns reveal how changing relations of production give rise to particular social forces that form bases of power within and across states and within a specific world order, and what might explain how these patterns transform. Social relations of production must be considered within the social ontology of historical structures, as they concern the "persistent social practices made by collective human activity and transformed through collective human activity" (Cox, 1987:4). In other words, observing social relations of production is an attempt to capture the reciprocal relationship between structures and actors (Cox, 1995:33). Bieler and Morton (2006:13) thus advance that hegemony is to be understood as a form of class rule, with social forces as the core collective actor that are engendered by the social relations of production.

Following this critical insight on social relations of production, in conjunction with the Marxian-Senian theoretical framework of the study presented in Chapter II, the study's primary research question is:

*In what ways does the mining labour class overcome its alienated labour capability deprivations?*

### *Forms of state*

Cox (1987:409) articulates that changes in social relations of production give rise to new configurations of social forces. State power rests on these configurations. Therefore, rather than treating the state as an unchanging institutional category, it is seen as a historical bloc to consider the historical construction of various forms of states and most saliently, the social context of political struggle within which states come to be (Cox, 1987:409). The notion of a historical bloc enables us to explore the historical ‘content’ of a given state and what social forces may exist within a bloc and what potential might exist for the formation of a rival historical bloc that may transform a particular form of state (Cox, 1987; 1983:167). In this case, a state is then a form of social relations through which capitalism and hegemony are expressed. Bieler and Morton (2006:14) postulate that from the critical theory to hegemony perspective, foreign capital is simply not an autonomous force beyond the power of the state, but is instead represented by certain fractions of classes within the constitution of the state apparatus. That is to say that there are contradictory relations internal to the state, which are produced by “class antagonisms between nationally and transnationally based capital and labour” (Bieler and Morton, 2006:14).

From this insight, the second research question of the study emerges:

*What is the relationship between the Zambian state and Chinese state-owned capital?*

#### *Hegemony and world orders*

Once hegemony has been consolidated domestically, it has the propensity to expand beyond a particular social order and manifests as an international phenomenon, insofar as it represents the development of a particular form of the social relations of production (Cox, 1983:171; 1987:150). “A world hegemony is thus in its beginnings an outward expansion of the internal hegemony established by a social class” (Cox, 1983:171) and how “such classes *nationalise* themselves through historically specific and peculiar socio-economic and political structures” (Gramsci, 1971: 241 in Bieler and Morton, 2006:14-15). Hegemony, therefore, operates on two connected levels. That is, by forging a historical bloc within a form of state and by expanding a mode of production internationally and projecting hegemony at the level of world order (Bieler and Morton, 2006:15).

The third question of the study that emanates from this insight is:

*In what ways does Chinese state-owned capital appropriate surplus value from the labouring class in Zambia?*

I must state that the secondary research questions are instrumental in offering the context upon which I explore the primary research question of the study.

*Data collection and Data Analysis – A hermeneutical narrative analysis.*

Due to time and resource constraints, this thesis is a desktop study, which marks its major limitation. The study could have been better enriched by generating primary ethnographic data on mine labourers' experiences and encounters with the Chinese state-owned capital within the framework of the Zambian state. As a desktop study, I identified leading scholars on Zambia's political economy of labour and I draw particularly invaluable data from scholars who have conducted ethnographic work on the subject matter.

For data analysis, I employ a hermeneutical narrative analysis approach. The purpose of the hermeneutical analysis is to “develop a form of cultural criticism revealing power dynamics within social and cultural texts” (Merriam, 2009:35). It is an interpretive process and holds that the inherent structure of all understanding is “always-understanding-differently” (Brockmeier and Meretoja, 2014: 2). As consequence, our interpretations are reinterpretations; interpretations of previous interpretations to which we add, from a different point of view in time and space a new variant version. The hermeneutic condition, therefore, is underscored by historicity as an inherent feature of our strategies to understanding. The feature of historicity is imperative for recognising that interpretations are not merely views we hold, they have real, material, world constituting implications (Brockmeier and Meretoja, 2014: 5). Interpretations not only constitute a framework of intelligibility, but they are also actions and interventions in and of themselves that hold the potential to change the world we live in. Another feature of the hermeneutical analysis is that of meaning-making, not simply as reasoning, comprehension, or awareness, but as living life in a cultural world. The hermeneutical narrative analysis goes beyond the meaning of texts to grapple with ontological issues and to deal with human subjectivity in the world as a historical, social and cultural condition, rather than simply understanding human subjectivity only at an epistemological level. It is an analysis of the human condition itself (Brockmeier and Meretoja, 2014:6).

**Researcher Positionality**

I apply the hermeneutical narrative analysis approach to the study by projecting a considered reflexive existential stance. In this approach to analysis, interpretation and meaning-making can “bind the [interpreter] into a cultural world while binding the cultural world into [the

interpreter's] mind" (Brockmeier and Meretoja, 2014:6). Cousin (2010:17) characterises research as being much about our textual experience as it is about our social positioning. I am black and from a working-class background. I find resonance with the biographies and narratives shared by the Zambian mineworkers in the ethnographic scholarship explored in the study. A characteristic of the hermeneutical analysis approach is interpretation and meaning-making as living life in a cultural world. This approach invites me to 'get others to see what I see', but most importantly to give voice to Zambian mineworkers in naming their reality with the reverential understanding that their lived significance can never be reduced to simple statements. This holds me accountable for my own self-referential bias.

#### Thesis outline

Chapter II – This chapter develops a Marxian-Senian structural-ethical framework for investigating the bearing of Chinese state capital on Zambia's mining labour. It presents Marx's theory of Alienated Labour and Amartya Sen's Capability Approach.

Chapter III – This chapter is a historical review of Zambia's political economy. It uncovers Zambia's political and democratic history to better understand its existing social relations.

Chapter IV – This empirical chapter reviews the question of how Chinese capital appropriates capital from its labour class, as well as the relationship between Chinese state-capital and the Zambian state.

Chapter V - This is the findings and analysis chapter. It engages the primary research question of the study.



## Chapter 2 – Theoretical framework

### A Marxian–Senian theoretical framework

The chapter presents the theoretical framework of this study. The first part of the chapter expands on Karl Marx’s theory of Alienated labour as an unveiling of ‘being’ in the world. The second part engages with Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach as an unveiling of consciousness for collective action and progressive change.

Marx’s theory of Alienated Labour rests on his treatment of labour as “the ontological determination and affirmation of humanness.” He observes labour as a “purposive productive activity” through which human subjects self-actualise and assume their place in the world (Meszaros, 1970:64). In this light, Marx conceptually tenders labour as the objectification of human productive powers. The objectification congeals an appropriative connection between the human subject’s inner world and external world wherein, the world ceases to be *alien* and in turn, human subjects can reckon with themselves in a world they actively create (Meszaros, 1970:64; Sayers, 2011:17; Jaeggi, 2014:86).

Man brings himself before himself by *practical* activity, since he has the impulse, in whatever is given to him, in what is present to him externally, to produce himself and therein equally to recognise himself. This aim he achieves by altering external things whereon he impresses the seal of his own inner-being. Man does this in order, as a free subject to strip the external world of its inflexible foreignness and to enjoy in the shape of things only an external realisation of himself (Hegel in Sayers 2011:17).

In contrast, under conditions of alienated labour, precipitated by capitalist relations of production, labour as “affirmation of humanness” loses semblance with the human subject’s inner-being. Human subjects cease to freely experience their labour as recognition of themselves, and as consequence, struggle with appropriating the world as their own. Therefore, human subjects are confronted by their labour as:

[...] external, i.e., it does not belong to his essential being; that in his work he does not affirm himself but denies himself [...] The worker therefore only feels himself at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home. His labour is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is forced labour. It is therefore not the satisfaction of [an ontological] need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it (Marx, 1844:274).

Marx categorises labour experienced as “external” as wage-labour:

He sells his labour to another person in order to secure the necessary means to enable him to exist. He works in order to live [and] does not even reckon labour as part of his life, it is rather a sacrifice [wherein] life begins for him where this activity ceases [...] Labour has no meaning but as earnings. (Marx, 1978:205).

Marx further reveals that under wage-labour human subjects endure alienation in their labour on four counts: from (i) the product of labour; (ii) from labour itself; (iii) from one's essence; and (iv) from other human beings (Marx, 1844:276). This means that not only is the human subject alienated in a world he produces, he is also alienated from other human subjects to the extent to that he cannot reconcile with his labour as part of a meaningful whole to self-realisation.

Marx speaks of wage-labour as “appearing only as a means to life”; “sustaining life only while stunting it” (Marx, 1978:73). In this diagnosis, wage-labour signifies the simultaneous existence and subordination of the labourer – where his labour, as productive activity, exploits his desire for existence. In other words, what the human subject is alienated from is at once alien and his own (Jaeggi, 2012:104). Hereupon, the theory of Alienated Labour reveals that under capitalism, the labourer's existence belongs to capital; constituting alienation as an unfreedom that labourers bear. Their productive activity is that of vulnerable subjects labouring in and through their vulnerability.

Marx's theory of Alienated Labour – a critique of wage-labour, admittedly leaves the possibilities of resistance from the labouring class unstated; thus, not bringing into view labour's agency in struggling for the “affirmation of humanness” under capitalism. At this juncture, a Senian approach to political economy offers conceptual space for considering the agency of the labouring class to transform; “to impress upon the seal of their inner-being” (Hegel in Sayers 2011:17) in shaping their developmental possibilities under capitalism. Sen (1999: xii) posits that human development “consists of the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency.” Sen's Capability Approach is a multidimensional space for evaluating what Sen imagines as “a life worth living” based on the categories of *functionings, capabilities, freedom and agency*. These are ontological and descriptive categories, constituting various aspects of human well-being.

Functionings are the various things a person may value doing or being and is able to achieve. These valuable activities or states of being generate a person's well-being (e.g. having a good job, not suffering from a lack of self-respect, taking part in community life) (Sen, 1999:75).

Capabilities are the substantive freedoms that a person enjoys, and reflect the different functionings a person may achieve. They represent the opportunities and freedoms to live the life that one has reason to choose and value (Sen, 1999:87).

Freedom is a two-stage opportunity and process aspect.

The opportunity aspect of freedom concerns the opportunities available for people to achieve various functionings. The process aspect of freedom relates to the processes that make possible the various functionings that people may value becoming or doing. Both the opportunity and process aspects congeal into an instrumental freedom that Sen recognises as political freedom (Sen, 1999:38).

Political freedoms are the opportunities that people have to participate, influence and appropriate meaning in their environments (e.g. voting, protesting, freedom of expression etc.) (Sen, 1999:38).

Sen suggests a need for reckoning with democracy as part of the culture through which people express struggle and forge strategies for change (Sen, 1999:53).

Agency follows as the exercise of functionings, capabilities and political freedoms. Sen conveys the concept of agency as “well-being freedom” relating to the freedom to be and achieve what one values (Sen, 1992:57).

Given the categories, Sen’s framework suggests an ontology of a relational society within which human subjects are empowered members interacting with the processes and opportunities to influence and shape the lives they lead. Because freedom is a causal power in this approach, we can thus read capabilities as causal mechanisms and functionings as structures. Here, structures reveal the conditions that expand or contract human subjects’ ability to “exercise their reasoned agency” to alter and/or organise structures for their well-being. Mechanisms are the instrumental freedoms through which human subjects can appropriate capabilities. Further, they reveal the nature of those structures and how they continue to exist (Martins, 2006:6). Therefore, freedom as a causal power “is not only an ethical goal, but also an ontologically constituted reality” (Martins, 2007:52), as indicated by Sen (1999:31):

Individual freedom is a two-way relation between (1) social arrangements to expand individual freedoms and (2) the use of individual freedoms not only

to improve the respective lives but also to make the social arrangements more appropriate and effective.

Human subjects experience their social arrangements as an objective reality that either expand or contract their freedoms to be what one values (well-being freedom). Sen (1999: xiii) posits that social arrangements are to be evaluated in terms of their *contributions* to expanding human freedoms. But if (a) human freedoms are “quintessentially a social product” and (b) the normative goal of human development “consists of the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency” (Sen, 1999: xii) then there is a need to evaluate social arrangements not only in terms of their contribution to expanding human freedoms but also on *how* and *why* expansions or contractions occur. Particularly, there is a need to focus not only on the ends of human subjects but also on the possibilities that exist to effectively realise those ends, concerning what people are truly able to be and become in actual circumstances under those social arrangements in which human subjects are a part of.

To consider social arrangements in this way, I draw on Deneulin’s concepts of structures of living together and socio-historical agency to fashion a more focused social ontology of capabilities.

Structures of living together are structures that belong to a particular historical community. They hold the conditions for whether human lives flourish or flounder. Constituting an integral part of self-actualising and conditioning human agency, human subjects conceive of their valued ends within the particular historical community they are a part of (Deneulin, 2006:58). If human freedoms are a social product (Sen,1999), structures are no longer instruments that expand or contract human capabilities, they become the very conditions of human subjects’ ability to choose particular functionings. In other words, their choices are dependent upon the structures that exist. Therefore, the capability to choose and achieve valued ends is itself a collective capability of a community to do or be certain things. A capability is thus a capability of what is possible insofar as the environment constitutes what is possible within the historical community in which human subjects exists (Deneulin, 2006:69).

When a collective of human subjects exercise their collective capability towards doing certain things and becoming what they may value in a given socio-historical reality, the collective is not only transforming their world, they are also shaping the course over which future choices

shall be taken by future generations. Therefore, the agency to become what one values is a socio-historical agency of what is possible in a particular historical community (Deneulin, 2006:72).

Integrated Marx's theory of Alienated Labour and Sen's Capability Approach with the added dimension of Deneulin forms a structural-ethical lens to observe mining labour in Zambia within the social ontology of its historical structures to locate, contextually, the "persistent social practices made by collective human activity and transformed through collective human activity" (Cox, 1987:4) at the Chinese state-owned mine.

This is the theoretical foundation upon which the primary research question as indicated in Chapter I originates:

*In what ways does the mining labour class overcome its alienated labour capability deprivations?*

## *Chapter 3 – Historical considerations*

### Socio-historical agency in the Copperbelt

Deneulin's concepts of structures of living together and socio-historical agency reveal that man's becoming is historical. The purpose of the present chapter is to understand the Zambian mine labourer who works at the Chinese state-owned enterprise in his historical community. To consider the labourer in a historical community is to gain insight into the power structures that prevail in Zambia; its political and democratic history.

In this three-part chapter, the first part charts the historical emergence of an African working-class in Zambia. The second part considers labour's role in Zambia's Independence struggle and its subsequent disillusionment in a post-colonial Zambia. The last part of the chapter reviews how mining labour transformed its class interests into a democratic political agenda. Admittedly, it is impossible in the space available to do justice to Zambia's long and complex labour history, let alone represent the experiences of African workers beyond a succession of facts.

#### Charting the development of an African working-class on the Copperbelt

The advent of European capital in the 1920s developed and organised Zambia's Copperbelt region into a fast advancing copper mining centre, launching an era of capitalist penetration in Southern Africa such that its immensity demanded labour-power of vast proportions. A white labour force was sourced from South Africa and absorbed in via high-wages, whilst an African labour force was procured through a migrant labour system and presented with low-wages on-premise that once a dispensed contracted expired on the Copperbelt, the Africa worker was to return to his rural homeland (Larmer, 2009; 2017; Parpart, 1983; Eckert, 2019). Single-mindedly conceiving of the Copperbelt as a site for labour, Africans, seen primarily in tribal terms, were prohibited from permanent settlement in the Copperbelt to diminish any possibility of 'detrabalizing' the African man into an 'urban' one (Larmer, 2009; 2017; Parpart, 1983; Eckert, 2019). In reality, the 'tribal/de-tribal' colonial assertion was hardly about the recognition of the social structures that a generation of African men were a part of, rather the assertion was cause for inculcating a capitalist production regime in which African workers too, would relate to the Copperbelt simply as their site of labour. Parpart (1983) asserts that the migrant labour system was deliberately designed to transfer the costs of production onto rural African societies serving to impress upon a people the expendability of their life, bodies and labour. Many African labourers however contravened 'migrating back home'; revolving

employment around the mines and turning themselves into de facto urban residents (Larmer, 2009; 2017). The creative response of African labourers had important consequences for capitalist expansion in the region. The de facto urban residents provoked voluntary inflows of migrant labourers into the Copperbelt, attracted to wages and the burgeoning urbanism. In critical terms, the influx of migrant labourers demonstrates a perceived shift from previously practised relations of production. Following the immense expansion of the copper mining industry, colonial administrators grew watchful over a formation of collective working-class identity and sought to fasten control over all aspects of workers' lives both in the workplace and in the living compounds that they provided (Larmer, 2017; Seddon, 2009; Parpart, 1983).

The first accents of a working-class identity became manifest in a 1935 African worker-led strike action, typified by work stoppages, in response to a poll tax increment that the Copperbelt de facto residents had to pay (Henderson, 1973; 1975; Larmer, 2009). Grippled by surprise, a British compound manager remarked, "these people form a definite social group quite shorn of anything tribal, they live in a world entirely different to the other natives" (in Larmer, 2009:159). The need to treat African workers as 'Africans' and not as workers lent itself to perceiving African workers, not as conscious beings capable of engaging with their experiences in the world. Perrings (1979) for example argues that the migrant labour system made it impossible for workers to garner a working-class identity, and in turn qualifies the 1935 strike action simply in terms of a 'riot', in contrast to the term 'strike action' which signifies an attempt to challenge the status-quo than mere destructive action. Parpart (1983) however shows that although the poll tax increment was the proximate cause of the strike, there were deep-seated issues that had informed collective grievances. She reveals that one miner told a Commission following the strike action that "a strike would have occurred even if the tax had not been increased, because the hearts of the people were not right [...] [there were] a lot of complaints about conditions of employment, about poor wages, about poor housing, and things" (in Parpart, 1983:59). Therefore, contrary to Perrings' (1979) argument, the strike action was characteristic of how the experiences of workers had led to a shared understanding of their common interests in the Copperbelt, despite the standing directive for them to return to their rural homelands. In the event where worker consciousness was acknowledged, this consciousness remained expressed and understood in racial terms. A British mine manager's response to the strike action elucidated: "I have noticed a growing class-consciousness among the more educated and progressive natives during the last year. It is merely something one

observes and cannot explain. It is an atmosphere. There are certain classes of natives who are proud of being Africans” (in Henderson,1975:294).

The event of 1935 reinforced for British colonialists that a settled African labour force on the Copperbelt was unwelcome. To maintain industrial order, a policy of *Stabilisation Without Urbanisation* was adopted. The new policy programme as an extension of the migrant system permitted African mineworkers to settle temporarily on the Copperbelt until their retirement (Parpart, 1983; Cooper,1996). To accommodate the temporary settlements, the stabilisation programme rolled out a housing and welfare system where wives could join their husbands on the Copperbelt (Parpart, 1983; Cooper, 1996; Brown, 2000). Cooper (1996) argues that although this seemed akin to a recognition of African workers as ‘industrial men’, the stabilisation programme was premised upon British working-class sensibilities of a male-headed nuclear family. Cooper (1996:2) critically contends that a critical outcome of the policy programme was the social reproduction of the labour force: “that a new generation be brought up adequately nourished and familiarised with urban and industrial environments so that its members would be more productive and predictable than their fathers.”

When white labourers joined mining in the Copperbelt, following the tradition of South African racially exclusive trade unions, they established a whites-only Northern Rhodesian Mineworkers’ Union that led an effective 1940 strike action for higher wages. The success of their protest action was a rallying point for African miners to also mobilise and bring forth their demands (Larmer, 2009). The African workers’ 1940 strike action, led by a ‘class’ of African workers referred to as the boss-boys, was most notably indicative of an increasingly maturing African working-class identity and consciousness. The boss-boys were a select few who received further training and skills development on the mines to assist white supervisors (Larmer, 2009). Brown (2000) and Parpart (1983) posit that the ‘class’ of boss-boys was created for mediating African worker resistance since they could appeal to fellow African miners both linguistically and culturally. As the mining industry continued to expand, racial hierarchy within the workplace became deeply limiting; effectively barring African workers from workplace advancement. The boss-boys, although slightly better off than ‘unskilled’ labourers, felt the force of the racial bar the most as they could not advance beyond that level despite their managerial skills. While the strike action was orchestrated by the boss-boys, grievances and demands put forward included those of ‘unskilled’ miners too. As a collective, African workers demanded higher wages and more elaborate welfare services concerning their



standards of living and family security. The boss-boys specifically demanded not only equal remuneration with their white counterparts but also access to posts reserved for white miners (Larmer, 2009; Parpart, 1983; Brown, 2000). African workers justified their demands by relating them in context to how the industry was flourishing and to the disjuncture between the quantity of work done by Africans and the quality of wages received by white workers; protesting that even “the highest paid African labourer did not get the recognition it should” (Parpart, 1983:86). The high-level execution of the 1940 African workers’ strike action prompted a response from a British labour expert that observed: “On the whole [the leaders] behaviour clearly showed that they are fumbling after the techniques of collective bargaining, and that with suitable guidance they would adopt it with advantage to themselves and their employers alike” (in Parpart, 1983:87). On the ground, however, a white manager critiqued: “It is from the higher-grade natives that we may expect labour troubles; they are the people who measure their wages against those of the Europeans, and it is mainly this class which we will have to satisfy if we hope to keep free of industrial upheavals” (in Larmer, 2009:160).

The source of the 1940 industrial event was racial capitalism on the Copperbelt. The critique levied by the white manager of skilled natives as *trouble* for industry obfuscates racial capitalism and the fact that the life of the African worker had become a new frontier for capital accumulation. Borrowing from Mbembe’s (2004) study on racialized biopolitics in Johannesburg’s mining camps under the South African apartheid regime, Mbembe (2004) poignantly argues:

Racism was not only a way of maintaining biological differences among persons, even as mining capitalism, migrant labour, and black urbanisation established new connections between people and things. More fundamentally, racism’s function was to institute a contradictory relation between the instrumentality of black life in the market sphere, on the one hand, and the constant depreciation of its value and quality (Mbembe, 2004: 380)

What British colonial reformers were not addressing were the less savoury aspects of colonial mining, that is, the impact of racism on the Copperbelt and the formation of an African working-class. The continued resistance against the racial bar and the activism over African workers’ needs thrust the colonial regime into an industrial impasse to which the British ameliorated by encouraging African workers to organise and channel demands in ways that they could perceive and potentially control. An African Mineworkers’ Union (AMWU, later

renamed Mineworkers' Union of Zambia at the eve of Independence) was established in 1949, and a Trade Union Congress in 1951, with the boss-boys as leading officials, who did not always maintain the same interests as the majority of African workers (Larmer, 2009). Cooper (1996:2) cogently posits that with the establishment of AMWU, the colonial regime sought to reproduce a legal institution that dealt with labour problems as they were managed in Britain, in the hope that "treating African males as if they were industrial men would create the kind of predictable, known being who could make Africa into the orderly, productive, controllable society that seemed so vital for the empire."

While the colonial regime may have deemed the *Stabilisation Programme* and an African trade union as their social engineering on the Copperbelt, the fact of the matter is that the initiatives were in response to African workers' agency. By this feat, the African worker had effectively challenged the colonial conception of the African worker as a 'tribal creature' at risk of being 'taken out of its natural habitat', to an African worker granted some industrial privileges (Cooper, 1966; Brown, 2000). Yet despite these developments, this generation of men was still seen not as industrial workers but as 'African workers'; an imagined category read off from imperial arrogance (Cooper, 1966; Brown, 2000). Fraser (2000) argues that the tendency to 'create' the 'other' is deeply deliberate; it serves to marginalize and displace, to simplify and reify a categorical construct that makes capitalist production possible. In an equally compelling fashion, Mbembe (2004:382) articulates this as a kind of "doubleness" that "transformed the native into something more than the object he was [into] a thing that always seemed slightly human and a human being that always seemed slightly thing-like."

The concrete reality that emerged for African workers from the experiences of dislocation, becoming a wage-labourer and new material struggles was *class* as a living category; and class consciousness as an awareness of their deprivations – and thus class interests. To be sure, Cox (1987:355) expounds that class is a historical category that emerges within and through historical processes of economic exploitation.

#### Labour's role in political change

At the height of the 1950s, parallel to worker activism for economic advancement on the Copperbelt, a Zambian nationalist movement had also taken root. The United National Independence Party (UNIP) led by Kenneth Kaunda sought AMWU the African labour

movement to align itself with African nationalism (Freund, 1984). Kaunda pursued this political end by articulating working-class struggles in radical nationalist terms, encouraging workers to relate their working conditions to their political status as colonial subjects; guaranteeing redress of their plight at liberation (Freund, 1984; Larmer, 2005, 2006a). Lending credence to UNIP's call for the labour movement to merge as one with the nationalist struggle, Hodgkin (1956) and Woddis (1961) contextualise:

The fact that British African unions are concerned less with equality of rights, and more with the rights of African workers as such, necessarily gives their demands a strongly nationalist flavour, and makes it natural that they should seek to ally themselves with nationalist political parties and congresses (Hodgkin, 1956:132).

Each attempt by the African workers to organise and to secure better conditions has inevitably turned in an anti-imperialist direction, assuming the pattern of a national protest... everywhere it has been the mass actions of the African workers which have helped pave the way for the upsurge of the national struggles and the growth of the national political parties and organisations (Woddis, 1961:35).

In the event in which the labour movement surrenders to the nationalist call subsuming class struggle under a single nationalist narrative, it was not lost to the leadership of AMWU that these two struggles, although not unconnected, their objectives were not entirely the same. A branch official argued: "those in politics have their responsibility to the nation, but we in the trade union movement have our responsibility to the cause of the workers. Surrendering our responsibility because of political misdirection means sacrificing that cause to the hungry capitalists" (in Larmer, 2005:322). Granted this recognition, liberation fever was sweeping across the stretch of Zambia. On the eve of independence, AMWU changed its name to a more authoritative expression – the Zambia Mineworkers' Union (ZMU). The then acting President, Patson Kamfambwile reflected optimism in proclaiming, "the moment our country moves into independence our people shall be entitled for other benefits as is the case in other countries which have already attained independence" (in Larmer, 2005:323).

At the dawn of independence in 1964, without much delay, the new state became at odds with the interests of the labour movement. In a study where Larmer (2005) asks rhetorically – are mineworkers expectations unrealistic? he expounds that studies that have attempted to make sense of the conflict at independence typically read it in terms of the "*great expectations – minimal capabilities paradox*", that is, "the newly elected leaders had to contend with popular

expectations that the fruits of independence, most notably higher wages and better living conditions, would be quickly and widely shared . . . however, the former colonial state did not have the capabilities to satisfy public demands” (Larmer, 2003:319). Larmer (2005) contends that while this line of reasoning may seem accurate, it understates how the policy direction of the new dispensation neglected the basis of such expectations. The 1964 United Nations Seers report whilst acknowledging the need to diversify the economy, projected that Zambia’s copper revenue with greater production would fuel growth and development. The caveat however was the need for wage control. The Seers report promulgated:

The wage and salary question is perhaps the most serious problem facing the Government; its decisions on the wages and salaries it pays itself, and the way it exercises its influence on wages and salaries in the private sector, may be decisive in determining whether Zambia will become during this century a modern developed country (in Larmer, 2005:323).

In translation, the post-colonial government responded to the wage flagging in ways that incapacitated ZMU’s ability to raise the bargaining power of workers. Bates (1971) reveals that the Minister of Labour, dismissing the immediate call for higher wages by workers contested: “in future there is not going to be quid without plenty of pro quo. I am not going to tolerate behaviour from workers crying ‘give, give’ without them giving in return.” In consonance, Kaunda’s presidency immediately passed a bill to establish the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), with significant powers to create and dissolve member unions, alter their rules, and approve or reject strike ballots and industrial action – in effect threatening the autonomy of ZMU and positioning UNIP as the protector of workers against foreign capital (Larmer, 2005). In this instance, President Kaunda delivered a public warning:

We will not allow the industry that gives us money for development to be paralysed [. . .] is that Zambian? I do not accept this. We do not forbid strikes. It is the right of every worker to strike, but they must have some basis [...] We demand discipline in the Army, the school, the party, industry (in Larmer, 2005:327).

Disillusioned by the turn of events at independence, ZMU under increasing pressure by workers to secure a post-independence wage increase with mining companies, argued:

African Workers contribute more than 80% of the Companies’ labour force and by this contribute, and indeed have contributed greatly to the country’s economy . . . paying Africans 75 to 80% of the expatriate earnings [will] . . . increase . . . African purchasing power to the advantage of the industries

which will create local markets for perishable products (in Larmer, 2005:328).

But things soon took a further disquieting turn for workers. At an election for ZCTU's structural leadership, the ZMU unexpectedly accepted a wage agreement far less than their original demands to mining companies; declaring to its workers that it would not press for any further claims for the next two years. Following this announcement mineworkers tussled to organise themselves outside of ZMU and staged the first post-independence mineworkers' strike action. The 1966 industrial strike, a violent confrontation targeting the ZMU officials associated with the unpopular pay deal engulfed the Copperbelt (Daniel, 1979; Larmer, 2005). Daniel (1979) posits that the extent of mineworkers' disgruntlement could be pacified only by a radical offer. As such, a subsequent Brown Pay Commission recommended a 22% wage increase for all African miners, and that African wages should eventually be raised to two-thirds of expatriate wages. It also recommended a single wage scale for all mineworkers, and for mining townships to be renovated accordingly. The 1966 industrial action and its outcomes signalled to the government how necessary it was for it to heed to the Seers' report findings. While for the workers, the industrial action strengthened their awareness of depending on their own local militant strategies. A miner, Timothy Walamba explains in Larmer (2005:332):

22% increment . . . It came as a result of a general strike that had taken place . . . if you don't protest, if you don't go on strike . . . you don't expect to get an increment at all . . . That is how we paralysed the mining industry, we went on strike . . . It didn't come on a silver plate, it didn't come from the Government at all.

In seeking to secure hegemonic control over the industry, Kaunda administered a series of political developments. The Ministry of Labour launched a new labour union – the Mineworkers' Union of Zambia (MUZ) made up of an educated elite of mineworkers that were intended to exercise a dispassionate influence over workers, unlike the generally 'uneducated' 'radical' ZMU. The MUZ Supreme Council committed that "the Union shall co-operate with the Government, the Ruling Party (UNIP) and Zambia Congress of Trade Unions" (Larmer, 2005). Moreover, in 1969 Kaunda banned industrial strikes and announced a 51% nationalisation of the copper mining industry, claiming that this would create a "classless society" that would allow all Zambians to gain control of their economy. In other words, a "classless society" would be a society where workers lost the power to pursue narrow economic interests against capital (Larmer, 2005). To this, Burawoy (1982:150) argued that "the

proposed nationalisation cemented [the companies'] cooperation and identification with the Zambian government, giving them much greater security if faced with opposition from their black labour force." In simple words, the issue at hand was not ownership of mines by the Zambian state, but rather the control of human resources vital to the industry. In 1972 Kaunda inaugurated Zambia as a one-party state. The introduction of the one-party state was followed by international economic developments over which UNIP had no control, but which had a decisive impact on Zambia. From 1973, a rise in global oil prices led to a worldwide recession; suspending the flow of revenue in which Zambia's development expectations had rested. The decline in foreign exchange earnings harshly affected the mines' capacity to run profitably. The Zambian state substituted its lost copper revenue through borrowing from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World (Larmer, 2005). In addition to incurring international debt, UNIP attempted to compensate for the lack of revenue generation in the mining industry with an interventionist approach, fully nationalising the mines in 1982 and establishing the state-owned Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM) enterprise (Larmer, 2006b). The organisational objective of the establishment, however, became riddle by corruption politics by UNIP leaders, inciting an intensified widespread discontentment that led mineworkers to believe that the removal of the state from their industry would improve their lot (Larmer, 2006b). As the crisis worsened, industrial action proved for the first time insufficient to prevent a decline in their living standards. The emergent state capitalist class as identified by Baylies and Szeftel (1975) became increasingly criticised by ZCTU's leadership members (the congress that was legislated at independence) namely Newstead Zimba and Frederick Chiluba who rapidly distanced Congress from UNIP. These leaders reflected the discontent of workers and consistently criticised the timidity and moderation of MUZ in the face of worker struggles (Larmer, 2005; 2006b).

#### Transforming class interests into political agenda

By 1989, in the context of escalating foreign debts, Zambia resumed its engagement with the IMF and the World Bank, and as such, the government had to begin restructuring the economy. The leadership of ZCTU expressed disapproval of structural adjustment measures. Zambia's political economy became a simmering bed of popular discontent seeing society-wide militancy over economic reforms (Rackner, 1999, 2000; Larmer, 2006b). President Kaunda condemned nationwide strikes and riots in fear that it would impact negatively on prospective foreign investors. But the political climate was already volatile, ZCTU consistently demanded

compensatory pay demands to match inflation, placing the labour movement in conflict with the demands of international financial institutions (Larmer, 2006b). The labour movement had thus become a de facto political opposition to UNIP. Whilst Kaunda called on labour leaders to ‘educate’ mineworkers on why it is important to maintain industrial stability, ZCTU called for a wage increase to be fixed against the US dollar. Fredrick Chiluba condemned the IMF for putting African governments on a collision course with their citizens (Rakner, 2003), and Newstead Zimba criticised the government’s cooperation with the IMF:

“The workers and their leaders are not prepared to take bitter pills on the I.M.F. again. The conditions so offered made people’s lives difficult to sustain [...] We should not sell our Independence to the International financial institutions” (in Larmer, 2006b:229).

The labour movement translated the escalating economic dissatisfaction into demands for a return to multiparty politics and a new government, as mineworkers reckoned that their plight could only be addressed by political change (Rakner, 2003). The ZCTU leadership declared its intentions, calling upon the greater part of civil society to join forces with them. Kaunda conceded a referendum for multi-party politics, and a multi-party movement was formed which included mineworkers as its core base, intellectuals, the business community and UNIP’s party backbenchers with Chiluba and Zimba as the prominent speakers of the movement. In 1990 the movement launched itself as a political party, the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) led by Chiluba as its President (Rakner, 2003; Larmer, 2006b). The winds of change that blew, meant that scant priority was given to public deliberations over MMD’s policies. In the latter part of 1990 leading up to the October 1991 national elections, Larmer (2006b:306) reveals that one of the MMD leaders, Arthur Wina in an interview, privately shared that “Chiluba’s background in the labour movement enabled him to advocate economic adjustment policies without union opposition.” Further, Wina also shared that Chiluba assured World Bank officials that an MMD government would honour Zambia’s debt obligations. MMD’s manifesto proposed that the role of government is to facilitate rather than participate in a social market economy. In 1991 after the national election victory of the MMD, Chiluba publicly reversed his position. Supporting privatization, he argued that it was Zambia’s political environment rather than its economic policies that caused industrial unrest (Larmer, 2006b).

As per MMD’s position, ZCTU declared that in principle it was no longer opposed to structural adjustment policies. Its Head of Research Ages Mukupa approvingly cited the Scandinavian system in which capital accumulation was used to create social and material prosperity for all.

He argued that in a genuine democracy, capitalist development could be pursued without worrying about creating extreme inequality (Larmer, 2006b). In the first few years of MMD rule, Zambians seemed willing to accept what was then perceived to be short term austerity measures for the promise of future economic stability and growth. Public goodwill enabled the implementation of a sweeping programme of “shock therapy” reform. Between 1991 – 2001 more than 250 parastatals including all state-owned mines, representing around 85 per cent of the Zambian economy were listed for privatisation. The government made significant cuts to tariffs, withdrew agricultural and industrial subsidies, and removed exchange controls (Rakner, 2003). At the height of reform in 1998, China Nonferrous Metal Mining Company (CNMC) purchased the Chambishi Mine.

The structural adjustments were marked by a sharp decline in living standards, soaring unemployment and a mineworker’s pension crisis as the MMD was forced to choose between maintaining its popular support base, the workers, and meeting donor conditions (Rakner, 2003). After 27 years of Kaunda’s personality cult rule, Rakner (2003) argues that the MMD’s adoption of a neo-liberal economic agenda in 1991 was because much of its financing came from the business sector, even though mining labour was its organisational base. Added to this was the post-Cold War international context, which fabricated a new consensus around the principles of international financial institutions and a unity with the donor community. Zambia’s dire economic situation made large scale financial assistance a prerequisite of the new government’s political survival.

To consider man in his historical community is to recognise what Marx (1978:473) argued, “the history of all existing society is the history of class struggle”. Deneulin’s concept of structures of living together underscores that the choices taken by human subjects are dependent upon the structures that exist. And when a collective of human subjects exercise their collective capability towards a certain becoming in a given socio-historical reality, the collective is not only transforming their world, they are also shaping the course over which future choices shall be taken by future generations. Once again, this quintessentially echoes Marx (1978:595):

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.



## *Chapter 4 – Literature Review*

### Chinese state capital in Zambian Copperbelt

Let us therefore, in company with the owner of money and the owner of labour-power, leave this noisy sphere, where everything takes place on the surface and in full view of everyone, and follow them into the hidden abode of production, on whose threshold there hangs the notice ‘No admittance except on business.’ Here we shall see, not only how capital produces, but how capital itself is produced. The secret of profit-making must at last be laid bare (Marx, 1977: 280).

Derek Chanda, a mineworker at NFCA, shares a vivid account of the harsh and daunting working conditions that workers are exposed to:

The underground is very risky and hostile, full of dangerous elements. At any moment, you face death, like from a rock fall. I’ve seen many accidents. Previously, almost every week, someone would be injured in the arm, legs, or shoulders. Hard hats are of no use when huge rocks fall [...] It’s so hot that it is like a grill, an oven. The ventilation is very poor; people feel weak because they cannot breathe well, like someone has run a long distance. Fainting is common. Air is saturated with gases from the rocks, exhaust air from the trucks, and the dust from the boomers. For facing so many risks every day, we only get peanuts at the end of the month (in Lee, 2017:58).

In tantamount fashion, another mineworker conveyed:

Many people don’t eat underground because the air is too bad. You’ll get a stomach ache if you eat in all the foul air. I either eat before I go down or after I come up. I feel hungry but I am used to it. A few people eat underground, but you have to find your own time. There is no official lunch break. Hygiene is generally bad underground because people urinate anywhere [...] The cotton masks they give us are not good enough for filtering the shoots. They are always black when you take them off at the end of the shift. It’s so hot underground that when supervisors are not around miners look for places where there is a bit of cool air or cool water dripping from the rocks (in Lee, 2017:59).

The present chapter reviews the ways in which Chinese capital appropriates surplus value from its Zambian labouring class. To do this, the chapter draws substantially from Ching Kwan Lee’s (2010, 2017) ethnographic work on Chinese capital in Zambia’s copper mining industry.

A preliminary point to state is that Chinese-state capital in Zambia's mining industry is driven by a logic of "encompassing accumulation". This means that while profit remains an important imperative for the Chinese SOE, good political ties with the Zambian state is of equal importance and interest, as expressed by the leadership of NFCA in Lee (2017:32):

We don't need to maximize profit, but we need to make some profit. The Chinese government gave CNMC<sup>2</sup> the initial capital but the company has to survive and expand by reinvesting its profit into production. Other mines can apply for bankruptcy when financial crises hit, but we cannot easily declare bankruptcy because it will hurt the state's image. On the other hand, we cannot withstand long-term losses.

In an alternative formulation, a senior NFCA executive explicated:

A SOE is about the nation's strategic, lifeline, security interests. Its goals, aside from profit, include employment, environment, welfare [...] But it is still an enterprise and the government is the largest stockholder. It seeks 'feasible' profit: not to maximize profit, and profit is only one of the goals.

From this vantage point, NFCA negotiates its profit margins referentially to Zambia's political economy. The logic of its encompassing accumulation is observable in the economic events of 2008 namely, the *Global Financial Crisis* and *Zambia's Profit Tax Regime*. Before bringing these events into view, the sketching of the political context leading up to the 2008 economic year is necessary.

In April 2005, an explosion at an NFCA site killed approximately fifty-two Zambian workers. This industrial disaster set off a belligerent wave of protest action against the presence of Chinese capital in Zambia, with mineworkers and citizens alike imploring on the state to forcefully act against the Chinese (Larmer and Fraser, 2007). In the national elections that followed in 2006, opposition leader Michael Sata of the Patriotic Front (PF) emerged with an electoral discourse founded on mineworkers' grievances around the casualization of work, low wages and safety issues in the Chinese SOE (Larmer and Fraser, 2007; Hess and Aidoo, 2013). Harnessing mineworkers' labour discontents, Sata spearheaded an anti-Chinese populism in Zambia, drawing parallels between British colonialism and Chinese exploitation; arguing that the government is welcoming of Chinese investments at the expense of the Zambian people's well-being:

---

<sup>2</sup> China Non-ferrous Metals Company, parent of NFCA.

Zambia's failure to curb the violation of industrial and labour laws can be attributed to the overbearing influence of the Chinese government on its Zambian counterpart, through provision of generous gifts to the ruling MMD and the powers that be [...] European colonial exploitation in comparison to Chinese exploitation appear more benign, because even though the commercial exploitation was just as bad, the colonial agents also invested in social and economic infrastructure and services [...] Just as the Africans rejected European exploitation, oppression, and dehumanization, there is no doubt that Chinese exploitation and domination will be rejected too (in Lee, 2017:37).

In addition to being critical towards Chinese-state capital in Zambia, Sata's electoral campaign also underscored the impact of economic liberalisation, positing that the structural adjustment programme had not benefited Zambian workers:

The main beneficiaries of the MMD regime, apart from relatives and friends, are mostly foreigners. [The MMD's] leaders seem to have no conscience, because they have not been moved by the plight and suffering of the Zambian workers, who have been reduced to daily casual employees in their own land, while foreign firms and consultants feast on their sweat and diminishing natural resources (in Larmer and Fraser, 2007:626)

With an anti-Chinese electoral campaign, Sata succeeded in articulating a set of arguments that coalesced workers' frustrations with the widespread disillusionment of economic liberalization in Zambia positioning the PF as a radical force on the Copperbelt; one which former and current mineworkers could align themselves with (Larmer and Fraser, 2007; Hess and Aidoo, 2013). Larmer and Fraser (2007) point out that whilst Sata positioned himself as the voice of the people, he has had a long political career holding prominent positions in both UNIP and MMD governments. But a mineworker explains the appeal of the PF:

If you remember in 1990 there was a general reaction of people. You know the economy was very biting. So many people wanted change in order to have a better kind of life. So this is why the MMD came in. And it's the same reaction towards PF. People have been waiting for changes to be done by MMD but there wasn't anything (in Larmer and Fraser, 2007:628).

In the end, the PF lost the 2006 national elections, but claimed victory over the Copperbelt region, leading the region with a continued anti-Chinese populism such that when China's former President Hu Jintao paid Zambia a diplomatic visit, he was cautioned not to visit NFCA because of how politically radicalised the region had become (Larmer and Fraser, 2007).

With this political context in view, in early 2008 world copper prices reached a peak that supported the mounting pressure from the opposition PF and civil society over the spoils of liberalisation (Adam and Simpasa, 2010). Taking both the price boom of copper and popular frustration into account, the Zambian government was forced to renegotiate the terms of mine agreements set at privatisation. In practice, this meant correcting a tax regime that was coercively imposed on Zambia by international financial institutions that tended to benefit foreign investors over Zambian taxpayers (Hess and Aidoo, 2013). As expressed by Sata “Zambians are paying high taxes while the mines pay little tax” (in Larmer and Fraser, 2007:627). This disgruntled the foreign privately-owned mining houses in the industry, except for NFCA. It accepted the new tax regime without any objections demonstrating its encompassing accumulation agenda. Right at the height of legislating the new tax regime, the Zambian government, unfortunately, had to rescind the legislation in the wake of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (Lee, 2017). The Financial Crisis precipitated industry-wide retrenchments in all the major mining houses, with NFCA as the only mining house that did not retrench its workers. As part of its strategy to maintain good political ties with the Zambia state, NFCA invoked the “*China all-weather friend*” political maxim and announced a “*no retrenchment, no production reduction, and no salary cuts*” policy (Li, 2010). A Chinese manager stated:

Facing the global crisis and the slump in the price of copper, NFCA policymakers decided to employ a policy that committed the company not to cut production levels, not to reduce the workforce, not to reduce investment, and not to delay the development of projects under construction. As state-owned company, we shouldn't just care about profit and loss; we should also shoulder the political and social responsibility involved. If we cut production like other private companies do, what will the Zambian people think of us? That's the reason why NFCA has promised the Zambian government that it will not cut financial support and is ready to face the economic crisis side by side with the Zambian government (in Li, 2010:8).

The NFCA received praise from the Zambian government. During this time, as some smaller mining houses closed, CNMC purchased a new mine called Luanshya Copper Mine (Lee, 2017). Li (2010) reports that CNMC purchased the mine at a price much lower than the price initially set. A CNMC official asserted that the “Zambian government understands that we, as a state-owned company, are long-term strategic investors, not short-term speculators” (in Li, 2010:8) Lee (2017) observes that China's encompassing accumulation is both political and

economic. China demonstrated to the Zambian government its willingness to help sustain and create employment in the industry, while scoring a profitable investment opportunity.

Baah and Jauch (2009) assert that since the turn of neoliberalism in Zambia's political economy, there has been a further collapse in the quality of employment available to mineworkers. Mining companies in the industry have tended towards hiring workers on ongoing contracts with substantially fewer benefits and protections. Since NFCA assumed ownership of Chambishi mine in 1998, the Chinese-state owned mine became notorious for hiring workers on contractual and casual terms. To illustrate, Lee (2010) reports that out of approximately 2 063 workers, only 56 held permanent positions. Further, Lee (2010) reveals that the 979 mineworkers performing underground mining work were subcontracted to a company called Mining One. The vast majority of about 1 028 workers in the smelter or foundry and other mechanical work were either casual labourers or employed on six months to three-year fixed-term contracts. Alike with Baah and Jauch (2009), scholars like Fraser and Lungu (2007) argue that the casualisation of work is creating amongst mineworkers a category of the 'working poor' who are faced with much lower wages and insecure terms of employment.

As mineworkers at NFCA grew aware of the wages offered at privately owned foreign mines, they bitterly resisted the low wages that accompanied contract and casual terms of employment offered by the Chinese state-owned mine. In addition, the transparency of global copper trade prices from the London Metal Exchange aided NFCA mineworkers in knowing exactly the value of the commodity they were producing and used that knowledge to lay claim for improved wages. A Mineworker at NFCA expressed:

We are lowly paid compared to other mines. Even when you compare our wages with Chambishi Metals which is in the Chambishi area, we are paid less. If you compare with other mines like KCM, Kansanshi Mines and Lumwana Mines, the disparity is even greater. It is like we are just paid to get some strength to work in the plant, and not to live. At Kansanshi Mines, workers are getting about five million Kwacha per month, and what about us, we only get one million (in Lee, 2010:141).

As mineworkers argued for higher wages and more stable terms of employment, NFCA became widely known as the lowest paying of all mining companies. Workers even referred to their wages as 'slave wages' ranging from US\$250 (R3 600) to US\$500 (R7000) a month (Lee,

2010). NFCA mineworkers deeply convicted about improving their lot, led a 2006 strike action of vast proportions since the turn of democracy in Zambia that terrified the Chinese management. Workers' wives and children were present too, gathering at the main gates of NFCA in revolutionary spirits (Lee, 2010). A mineworker elucidated,

Most of us are not happy because why should my friends with similar qualifications and doing the same job get double my salary [...] After we hear that the management had refused to give in to our demands, we didn't even wait for a report from the union representatives. We started the strike right away. The corrupt union [Mineworkers' Union of Zambia] was able to convince us to go back to work and I guess they were just bought off by management (in Lee, 2010:142).

The strike action took place as negotiations were underway between two unions and the Chinese management. A branch union representative who participated in the collective bargaining with the Chinese stated that "it was this strike that has put fear among the Chinese. It was illegal but it was necessary because it was the quickest way to achieve our goal" (in Lee, 2010:142). It was union members on request by the Chinese who diffused the situation as there were plans to blast the shaft. Union members assured workers that Chinese management has agreed to a meeting for later that evening to fix things. A union representative recalls the events of the day after the announcement that they will further hold a meeting in the evening:

Upon hearing this they started cheering as a way of congratulating us but the head of the security thought the noise indicated a riotous mob, and that the workers wanted to beat up or manhandle the union leaders. They started firing tear gases to disperse the workers [...] Workers had stones in their hands so they reacted and caused lots of damages with the stones. Workers burned the trucks loaded with copper, trashing paper documents in the offices, and even attacked the China House on the edge of Chambishi township. The Zambian police used rubber bullets and one miner was shot in his leg. Workers also blocked the main road going to Chingola and set logs on fire to prevent passage. Twenty-four hours later everyone went home, and two weeks later, management signed the new agreement (in Lee, 2010:143).

In 2007 NFCA agreed to a pay raise of 23% with additional improvements in medical, housing and educational benefits which amounted to a total of a 65% increment offered. Posts that were previously on six months to three-year contracts were phased in through a gradual permanency programme, while casual workers were offered fixed contracts of one to three years with the promise that these too would be turned into permanent posts in the near future (Lee, 2010). Lee

(2017) reveals that in 2012 the majority of workers in Chinese state-owned mines (Chambishi, Luanshya) were still subcontracted workers. She explicates that the Chinese pursued a subcontracting labour regime not to particularly cut costs, but because they took on mine houses that had organisational constraints and needs. The subcontracting regime would ensure the fulfilment of production targets. Lee (2017) posits that in pushing for production targets, NFCA is remiss about the well-being of its labourers. The ‘value’ analysed in their *Mineral Value Chain Monitoring Report* overlooked the producers of value – the workers. To this end, Lee (2017) argues that once we orient our gaze upon the workers and their class struggles, the Chinese encompassing accumulation is no kinder to workers than private foreign capital in the industry.

The pervasiveness of subcontracting in the industry as a whole has meant that mineworkers have accumulated comparative insights on how different mining houses treat their workers. Mineworkers have noted NFCA as offering low wages with comparatively stable contractual terms of employment, and other private foreign-owned mines as offering higher wages with the far greater casualisation of labour (Lee, 2017). A mineworker who had been at NFCA since 2003 noted, “it’s small money but there is no pruning, no redundancy. The only people who are fired are those who drink. They pay us on time” (in Lee, 2017:76). What is important to emphasise here is that the more secure employment for both direct and contracted employees at NFCA is the result of worker struggles in 2011 that forcefully paralyzed production. The workers’ protests of 2011 suspended production for up to three weeks. It was at this point that Chinese management yielded and agreed anew to a phased standardisation of employment for all after completing a three-year contract (Lee, 2017).

In 2011, Sata’s Patriotic Front (PF) won the national elections with a landslide victory (Uzar, 2017). Mineworkers, zealous about how they showed up at the polls, expressed, “we changed the government, this government has been put in power by the miners” (in Uzar, 2017:298). Mineworkers and union officials vocally condemned the MDD government for its implicit alliance with foreign investors, citing that state leaders allowed low wages and poor working conditions because of bribes and donations. The Mineworkers Union of Zambia (MUZ) president criticising the imposition of wage ceilings by the outgoing government stated:

For a long time, miners were subjected to oppression under the MMD government. They were never given a free bargaining atmosphere because the government always protected the corporations. The corporations were

advised many times by the government not to go beyond a certain threshold (in Uzar, 2017:297).

In addition, the MMD government had interfered in union politics, in fear, according to Uzar (2017), of the labour movement mobilising its capabilities against it. A leading figure of MUZ, Mr Mbulu, upon his resignation from the union leadership, campaigned openly for opposition, expressing that “workers should participate effectively in the change that we desire [...] We’ve had enough of MMD [...] This is why we want Sata to govern our country” (in Uzar, 2017:297). At the annual collective bargaining, held shortly after Sata’s inauguration, mineworkers were confident that the new government would ensure the delivery of their demands and the protection of all those who had legal charges from the 2011 strike action at NFCA. Even the unions were certain that under the new government workers would now have expanded bargaining power over corporations, with the MUZ president stating: “We have already started negotiating with the mines, and if they do not take heed then there is ground for a legal strike” (in Uzar, 2017:298). While the two previous rounds of bargaining had brought about an 11-12% wage increase at NFCA, in this round, unions expected between 20-50% wage increases (Uzar, 2017). At the end of the collective bargaining, Sata told unions that they should accept a 17% increase. This precipitated almost an industry-wide disgruntlement, with the first strike action occurring at NFCA. The strikers were supported by the former MUZ leader Mr. Mbulu, who Sata had appointed as his Labour Deputy Minister. Mr Mbulu directed Chinese management to raise their wages by at least US\$380 (R5 5000) in the same fashion that the Konkola, a foreign private-owned mine had done (Simuusa, 2011). At this point, the Chinese were only prepared to extend a US\$38 (R550) increase, which sent workers back on strike (Simuusa, 2011).

To the unions’ surprise, President Sata was displeased with his Deputy Labour Minister, Mr Mbulu and the unions at large, directing mine houses to limit salary increases to 7% (Simuusa, 2011) and commanding a more diplomatic stance than during both his 2006 and 2011 electoral campaign:

As a government, we have to be level-headed and not be seen to be inciting the public. I expect ministers to discourage strikes and lockouts. Strikes or industrial unrests have a very negative effect on a fragile economy like ours. (The Post, February 5, 2012 quoted in Simuusa, 2011).

Workers continued agitation at NFCA and staged an unprecedented twenty-day strike which resulted in a very generous concession of a 22 % wage increment from Chinese management,



the highest in the industry (Uzar, 2017). The CEO of NFCA explained that “because it was a new government, we thought a higher increment would be a good gesture from us” (in Lee, 2017:83). Lee (2017) contends that the Chinese state capital is as antagonistic as other foreign private capital is, yielding to labour’s demands only under extraordinary pressure. Uzar (2017) elucidates that while Sata’s Patriotic Front had taken office with a radical leftist, resource nationalist agenda, it stumbled at the state’s limited actual ability to regulate the activities of transnational corporations. Despite these setbacks for the labouring class, the government kept a few promises, it exempted low-wage workers from paying personal income tax (on monthly wages of less than US\$570 [R8300] in 2013) and, by the end of 2015, the PF issued a statutory instrument to discourage casual employment. At the time of writing, Uzar (2017) remarked that the effects of the statutory instrument were yet to be seen. At present, there is still no literature available in this respect.

The change from MMD to the Patriotic Front government brought no greater bargaining power for labour unions. Following Sata’s victory in 2011, all three mining labour unions (MUZ, NUMAW and UMUZ) became starkly aware that the labour movement was in effect *de facto* and not able to represent and meet the needs of workers. They perceived their role to be the management of workers’ discontents and to ‘educate’ mineworkers to work and make ‘reasonable’ wage claims (Uzar, 2017). Mineworkers alike had been aware that they had to lead their own resistance for their own needs. The bargaining season of 2011 saw frequent work stoppages in Chinese mines, with workers expressing that the unions were “useless”, “did nothing but exploit them and steal their money”, “allowed meagre bargaining results”, and “lied about companies’ financial position.” They also perceived union officials to be in cahoots with national officials “driving fancy cars, building big houses, buying farms, and earning four times as much as their union members” (in Uzar, 2017:303).

Mineworkers’ distrust and moral disapproval of unions co-existed with an imbalance of power that unions were subjected to at the bargaining table. Lee (2017) explains that negotiations typically take place on a “battlefield of knowledge” with sessions considerably dominated by Chinese management who hold the monopoly over the company’s financial information. The unions, on the other hand, do not possess an elaborate understanding of financial literacy to contend with actuarial reports that “prevent the company from simply dividing up the profit to share with workers”, and thus always portraying themselves as hardly surviving (Uzar, 2017; Lee, 2017). Lee (2017:82) further illuminates that unions would argue revenue numbers with

inside information they receive from workers: “you did not include revenue from cobalt [a side product of copper mining and smelting], and toll treat of ores from other mines. We know this from our members in the frontline of production.” Unions also exclaimed that “when copper prices are low, you say you cannot pay us more. When prices are high, you say you reinvest and cannot pay us more!” (Lee, 2017:82). Certainly, reasonable discussion of economic facts would work to the advantage of those who hold strategic financial data, over those bargaining for higher wages and social securities.

There are salient organisational and cultural manifestations at NFCA that Lee (2017) shares in her ethnographic work. One particular case is that of an only Zambian worker who assumed a high-ranking position as leader of a human resource portfolio at NFCA. Lee (2017) details an account of the Zambian worker being excluded from weekly senior management meetings and organisational roundtables which are critical to his portfolio position. Rather, what is expected of him is to liaise with the Zambian government and be a representative of workers at ceremonial functions. In this sense, he was not only alienated from the Chinese senior management which his portfolio forms a part of but also alienated from Zambian mineworkers because of his perceived proximity to the Chinese. The Chinese treatment of the Zambian worker as an ‘other who is a part of’ is also how it engages with their mineworkers as a collective. The Chinese lead a labouring regime that they call “*eating bitterness*”, which is deeply connected to their national history. Lee (2017:94) translates this regime using Max Weber’s concept of *inner-worldly asceticism* as “the ability of mental concentration, as well as the absolutely essential feeling of obligation to one’s job [...] most often combined with a strict economy which calculates the possibility of high earnings, and a cool self-control and frugality which enormously increase performance.” To explain, the cadre of Chinese managers at NFCA is a generation that comes from working-class backgrounds and their careers in the mining sector have afforded them a degree of financial security. Lee puts forward that her conversations with the Chinese at NFCA were almost always tied to memories of the poverty levels that China overcame, and how it was the Chinese workers’ capacity to *eat bitterness* that aided the process of economic growth. In an exchange with Mr Cheng, a Human Relations Manager at NFCA, he lamented; “Zambia will never develop because of the laziness of the people, their inability to eat bitterness [...] We are so different from our Zambian workers. They are lazy but want an increase every year” (in Lee, 2017:96).

Another Human Relations manager, Bo Cheng, in similar terms underscored Zambian laziness and their inability to *eat bitterness*:

Zambians are lazy and unmotivated to break out of poverty. They don't strive to do anything, to improve their lives like us Chinese [...] Zambians don't take initiative, and you have to give them the most detailed step- by- step instruction for the simplest tasks because they are incapable of thinking... It's in their blood and mind, you cannot change it. Maybe the country is too rich [in natural resources]: they can pick a mango from the tree and that's their meal. They seem to be so easily satisfied and content, even though they are very poor (in Lee, 2017:97).

In one discussion, a deputy CEO at NFCA, opined that during reform in China, Chinese workers were also unmotivated and lazy, but it was the reform itself that incentivized people to work hard through the principle of “efficiency wage”, he vented:

Zambian workers do not want to work more even if we give them higher wages for more production. In China, reform meant giving more money to those who work harder and produce more. Here, from day one, we wanted to peg wages to productivity, but the unions fought us tooth and nail to reject it, and the government said the efficiency wage system was illegal. You tell me, how can this country ever develop? (in Lee, 2017:97).

The apparent paternalistic narrative of ‘overcoming poverty by eating bitterness’ by the Chinese management seems to suggest a failure on the part of Zambians akin to a collective character flaw, or a trait of moral inferiority, which explains Zambian mineworkers’ state of deprivation and Zambia’s underdevelopment. To Zambians however, the cause of ‘laziness’ was not to be found in what a people are, but in the quality of the jobs they expend themselves in. A union member at NFCA explained,

For the Chinese who have no families here or other things to do, they are here only to work. The sooner they finish their project, they get to go home. For Zambians, as soon as they finish their work, they think they will be out of work. The other reason is Zambians are not paid well. With minimum income, you are not taking good care of your family. You have to worry every day whether there is food on the table for your kids and wife, so you clock off early, or you take leave to look after them, or take on extra jobs. It's not that Zambians are lazy by nature (in Lee, 2017:98).

Here, a critical fact to recognise is that discourse about ‘African laziness’ is not new with the Chinese, it is steeped in a history of violence dating back to colonial times, where forced labour was often justified by colonial regimes as a way of imparting virtues of hard work to a people regarded as lazy and undisciplined, to a post-independent Zambia in which Kaunda’s administration often lambasted mineworkers about ‘loafing’, ‘laziness’ and ‘self-centeredness’ in the industry (Cohen, 1974). To illustrate, under Kuanda’s administration a Labour Minister emphasising the role of mineworkers to Zambia’s economic growth asserted, “when workers fail to work hard, they are refusing to assume their proper role in the nation and become saboteurs [...] the worker’s self-indulgence represents a betrayal; to redeem themselves and to assume an honourable place in the system, employees must vindicate themselves by working hard” (in Bates, 1971:320). Under his one-party state on May Day of 1972, Kaunda charismatically orated:

This day, therefore, provides the workers with an important opportunity to ponder over the real significance of work in our lives, the very high place which work occupies in the life of our Nation. No man, no nation can exist without work. All growth depends on work. In our environment there can be no development, no progress without effort. Effort means work. So work is not a curse; indeed, among human beings it is the most cardinal of the means to manhood and a key factor to the development of our civilisation. The defence of our liberty, freedom and independence means work. The furtherance of the aims of freedom and independence, the realisation of our economic, social and cultural goals, demands hard work. The greatest asset of any nation is its working force; and the greatest danger that can menace any nation is the breakdown of the will to work, the will to succeed and the courage and determination to work relentlessly towards greater victories (quoted in Kanu, 2018).

The colonial masters, the post-colonial government and the Chinese managers share one common goal for the worker - that he serves capitalist production and submits himself to overwork. The assertion of laziness exists in the context of capitalist discipline for capital accumulation. The cadre of Chinese managers convinced by a ‘hardworking’ China and an indolent African workforce is missing a critical perspective of their own home country, that is, the working-class struggle in China. Labour unrest has become a prevalent feature of the Chinese political economy. Over the past two decades, a spate of mass protests has engulfed the nation raising numbers from 10 000 cases of protest action in 1993 to 60 000 in 2003 and 90 000 incidents by 2009 of more than three million protestors across industries (Silver and

Zhang, 2009). Whilst repression has been the primary response of the Chinese state, the unprecedented levels of labour unrest necessitated a more considered response from the Chinese state:

Between 2003 and 2005, the central government and the Chinese Communist Party began to move away from a single-minded emphasis on attracting foreign capital and fostering economic growth at all costs to promoting the idea of a ‘new development model’ aimed at reducing inequalities among classes and regions as part of the pursuit of a ‘harmonious society’ [...] Likewise [...] the [state run] All China Federation of Trade Unions, amended its constitution to ‘make the protection of workers’ rights a priority in 2003 (Chan and Kwan 2003, in Silver & Zhang, 2009:180).

Given the above response by the Chinese state, Harvey (2007) argues that there is doubt to be held regarding the extent to which the Chinese state may pursue pro-labour reforms. He argues that it is rather unlikely that the Chinese state will fulfil its socialist “revolutionary mandate” of defending workers against capitalist exploitation. This is because China achieved its unprecedented levels of economic growth precisely by turning its workforce into wage-labourers, removing social protections and creating a flexible labour market.

In reviewing the literature to the question of how Chinese capital appropriates surplus value from its Zambian labouring class, the dynamics between the Chinese state-capital, mining labour and the Zambian state were revealed. The next chapter discusses the findings drawn from this literature review to reflect upon the primary research question of the study: In what ways does the mining labour class overcome its alienated labour capability deprivations?

## Chapter 5 – Findings and Analysis

### Political Economy of Working-Class Struggle

To rise above the level of political economy means to understand that man in the full sense of the word is not an economic animal, but a practical, hence free, universal, creative and self-creative social being. What distinguishes him from every other being is his special way of Being – praxis (Gajo Petrovic, 1967:112).

In the Introduction Chapter of the study, I presented the method followed in the study to orient the reader to the methodological persuasions and epistemologies underlying the study. The study follows a hermeneutical narrative analysis approach. To recap, a hermeneutical narrative analysis aims to develop cultural criticisms that reveal the power dynamics implicit in social and cultural texts (Merriam, 2009:35). It sets out to grapple with ontological issues related to human subjectivity in the world as a historical, social and cultural condition. In this way, a hermeneutical narrative analysis goes beyond understanding human subjectivity only at an epistemological level – it is an analysis of the human condition itself (Brockmeier and Meretoja, 2014: 6).

The present chapter reflects on the primary research question of the study – *In what ways does the mining labour class overcome its alienated labour capability deprivations?* The study found that the labouring class confronts its deprivations through *class struggle*. The implication is two-fold. In Zambia, two political economies that oppose each other exist, the *political economy of capital* and the *political economy of working-class struggle*. Their co-existence signifies that the capitalist labour process, as a form of life for wage-labourers reveals opposing norms about the nature of human social relations in relation to capitalist social relations. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part considers the political economy of capital as the logic of Chinese capital in Zambia's copper mining industry. The second part brings into view the political economy of working-class struggle to highlight how the labouring class attempts to extract developmental gains from both Chinese capital and the Zambian state. Lastly, the third part of the chapter concludes the study.

### Political economy of capital

The logic of the Chinese state capital tends towards the creation of a fragmented class structure arising from a tendency for raising productivity, in other words, the rate of surplus-value. The Chinese state-capital appropriates surplus-value from its labouring class through (a) the market advantage of offering relatively stable employment for lower wages and (b) organising its production through a subcontracting regime. The tendency to increase the rate of surplus-value has the corollary effect of fostering a competitive relationship among workers, as can be noted when mineworkers at NFCA grumbled:

Most of us are not happy because why should my friends with similar qualifications and doing the same job get double my salary (in Lee, 2017:136).

We are lowly paid compared to other mines [...] If you compare with other mines like KCM, Kansanshi Mines and Lumwana Mines, the disparity is even greater (in Lee, 2010:141).

Marx (1977:689) asserts that competition between sellers of labour-power “allows the capitalist to force down the prices of labour and brings with it an increase in the intensity of the workday, forcing them to submit to overwork.” The work ethic of ‘eating bitterness’ that the Chinese managers wish to advance at NFCA is the inner tendency of capital to increase the rate of surplus-value but “deprive the worker of means of making wealth a reality for himself” (Marx, 1990:716):

It is like we are just paid to get some strength to work in the plant, and not to live [...] At Kansanshi Mines, workers are getting about five million Kwacha per month, and what about us, we only get one million (in Lee, 2010:141).

Lebowitz (2003:83) posits that when wage-labourers perceive each other as competitors over wages, they are essentially serving the interests of capital, “*they are pressing in the same direction as capital*”, towards the tendency to increase the rate of surplus-value. Chinese state capital also expresses its logic through its preference for a subcontracting labour regime. This is the tendency to separate workers via a hierarchy of contractors and permanent workers as necessary for capital to achieve its goals. The subsequent differentiated labouring identities give rise not only to a fragmented workforce but one in which wage inequalities exist. A fragmented working-class structure has the effect of restraining workers from organising for a

collective cause. The efforts required for organising in a fragmented structure are far greater than the efforts of organising within a homogenous group.

When workers pressed against casual labour/precarious employment at NFCA, they were pressing against a monumental tendency of capital. The logic of Chinese state capital reveals a deeper malaise of global capital. Global capital necessitates not only a fragmented labour force, but a flexible labour force that accepts precarious labour and by virtue consents to continuously shifting between low-wage labour. In this way, transnational corporations transfer corporate risks to human beings (Burgmann,2016:135). Burgmann (2016:135) contends that the casual labourer is an increasingly desired worker by global capitalism. Labouring in vulnerability is integral to capital accumulation. In this light, Standing (2011) submits that we can begin to think of those who labour under precarity not as the *proletariat*, but as the *precariat*. He *conceives* of the *precariat* as a new class that is emerging from global neo-liberal restructuring; a *class-in-the-making* consisting of a multitude of insecure people, “living bits-and-pieces lives, in and out of short-term jobs, without a narrative of occupational development.” Standing (2011) leaves us to consider the possibility of a precarious class consciousness borne of affective struggle.

In society, the labourer’s inability to become what he wants does not appear as capital mediating within his labour. Rather, it appears as his inadequacy, an inadequacy that is expressed as the absence of *money*. “Money is the estranged essence of man’s work and man’s existence, and this alien essence dominates him and he worships it” (Lebowitz, 2003:123). Marx argues that capital separates the labourer from the product of his labour, to ensure his dependence on wage-labour. For the wage-labourer, his labour has no value for him but as earnings:

He sells his labour to another person in order to secure the necessary means to enable him to exist. He works in order to live [and] does not even reckon labour as part of his life, it is rather a sacrifice [wherein] life begins for him where this activity ceases [...] Labour has no meaning but as earnings (Marx, 1978:205).

Therefore, in seeking to increase the rate of surplus-value, capital must seek to suspend the realisation of the wage-labourer’s goal which is the need to bring himself before himself by practical activity [...] to produce himself and therein equally recognise himself” (Hegel in Sayers 2011:17). Chinese capitalists have branded their modality of seeking surplus-value as



encompassing accumulation proclaiming that they don't need to maximise profit, but need to make some profit. This does not necessarily mean that the Chinese capitalists are substantively concerned with satisfying workers' needs for their own development. It is simply a political relation the Chinese state has with the Zambian state, a point that will be further explained in the subsequent section. Even the phasing in of workers on standard terms after completing a three-year contract continues to reflect capital's drive for extracting surplus-value. Lebowitz (2003:123) explicates that capital may make some alterations in the mode of production, but only to the extent that capital remains effective in retaining a level of division among workers. Alike with the point raised by Burgmann (2016) on the desirability of the casual worker by capital accumulation, Lebowitz (2003:123) asserts that global capitalism is driven by the desire to disunite and disorganise workers.

The progression towards phasing in workers on more stable terms of employment as well as the increases in wages that have occurred was not an imperative of Chinese capital itself. Rather, it was a response to workers' resistance. Marx (1977:793) puts forward that workers prevent capital from reducing "wages to their physical minimum and the workday to its physical maximum" only by negating competition and engaging in planned cooperation. In other words, only when wage-labourers negate their disunity as competing sellers of their labour-power do they negate the negation that seeks to limit their developmental potential. In reflecting upon how workers manifest the tendencies of wage-labour, or more concretely, how labour realises its own political economy. Marx (1977) explains that capital has the unintended tendency of creating a collective worker. He explicates that "*any cooperation and combination of labour in production generates a combined, social productivity of labour that exceeds the sum of individual, isolated productivities*" (Marx, 1977:443). Their combined social labour results in the "creation of a new productive power, which is intrinsically a collective one" (Marx, 1977:443). Their common interest – the need for satisfying their needs propels them to forge a new social relation among themselves based on resisting the domination and barriers of capital. In becoming a collective worker, Marx (1977:1069) advanced that trade unions play a central role in going up against the tendencies of capital: "through the formation of trade unions workers attempt to obviate or weaken the ruinous effects of this natural law of capitalist production on their class."

In Zambia, Marx's trade union assertion for countering capital's tendencies does not hold. Neoliberal restructuring has severely undermined the ability of trade unions to raise the

standard of workers' lives and effectively bargain for their progressive interests. All the three major mining unions have surrendered to the dominant narrative that protest actions and higher wages destabilises the economy and has the long-term effect of diminishing the chances of investment and employment (Uzar, 2017:294). Trade unions have thus emerged as an added barrier in the process of worker's struggles for satisfying their needs. Lebowitz (2003:96) asserts that capital's power supersedes the capabilities of labour unions to represent the workers. Moreover, as part of capital accumulation, capital needs labour unions in so far as they are capable of controlling labour, but not strong enough to threaten it.

As the collective worker struggles against capital in production, they simultaneously struggle politically against capital within society. In other words, the collective worker tends to go beyond "a purely economic moment" to act politically as a "socially coercive force" (Marx, 1977:443). When wage-labourers act politically to assert their needs, they struggle for their interests through the State (Lebowitz, 2003:99). Therefore, the political economy of labour includes more than capital as a mediator, but the state too. Lebowitz (2003:201) further argues that in this political economy, man's labour and the products of his labour ought to be recognised as moments in the process of producing not the reproduction of capitalist class relations, but rather *human beings* – "this is what the productive organism comprised of the collective worker yields as its real result."

When mineworkers in Zambia act democratically for their development, they are consistently betrayed by those they elect. Moments after being a 'socially coercive force' for change in society, the state restrains labour's impulse to contest capital. Former President Sata, who drew parallels between British colonialism and Chinese exploitation, who underscored the impact of structural adjustments on Zambians and consistently argued against Chinese investment, is the same statesman who praised capital investments and discouraged industrial unrests. In the cogent words of Kaufman (1973:212):

It is ridiculous to imagine that the wage-workers can be slaves in employment and yet achieve control of the polls. There never yet existed coincident with each, autocracy in the shop and democracy in political life.

Selwyn (2014:186) critically elucidates that the established capitalist social relations are an outcome of the ruling class struggles from above which have become institutionalised within state agencies. The Zambian state's need for economic growth consistently relegates the

mining labouring class to the status of human capital. The state overlooks the impacts of its policies on the mineworkers, and when they do acknowledge the human costs of policies, these costs are always put forwards as crucial but transitional and between the ‘tough choices’ of today and the developmental benefits of tomorrow. Capitalist development policy in Zambia exemplifies the advocacy of exploiting and limiting the human development of the labouring class for the benefits of capital.

During the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, Chinese state capital responded differently from private foreign capital in the copper mining industry as part of its encompassing accumulation. When other mining houses were retrenching its workers, it insisted that:

As state-owned companies, we shouldn’t just care about profit and loss; we should also shoulder the political and social responsibility involved. If we cut production like other private companies do, what will the Zambian people think of us? That’s the reason why NFCA has promised the Zambian government that it will not cut financial support and is ready to face the economic crisis side by side with the Zambian government (in Li, 2010:8).

When CNMC, NFCA’s parent company, purchased its second Coppermine in Zambia at a lower than set price during that time of the crisis, a CNMC official remarked “Zambian government understands that we, as a state-owned company, are long-term strategic investors, not short-term speculators” (in Li, 2010:8). I raise these points to underscore that the *only* difference between other global capital and Chinese state capital is the Chinese state’s need to maintain favourable ties with African countries as part of its economic diplomacy which is founded on the south-south cooperation (SSC) political movement rhetoric. SSC is a historical project, originating from the Asian-African Bandung Conference of 1955 of newly decolonised Asian states at a time when African countries were mobilising for Independence. As a concept, SSC is a vision of solidarity and mutual benefit; it holds the hope that development may be achieved outside the hegemony of the global North (See Gray and Gills, 2016). This is the heritage of the often-cited maxim of “*China all-weather friend*” by both Chinese and African elites. By this standard, the Chinese state capital is simultaneously politically charged and thoroughly capitalist in its logic.

What is illuminated by the tendencies of wage-labour, or rather, what is revealed by the political economy of capital is that Chinese state capital and the Zambian state’s strategies to control labour in Silver’s (1978) words, “*lie hopelessly tangled in contradiction.*” Capital with the state as part of its logic and wage-labour stand and act in an antagonistic opposition over

the share of surplus-value. Workers' struggle against capital in production and politically against capital in society constitute a dynamic relationship – *a class struggle*.

#### Political economy of working-class struggle

The primary research question study, 'In what ways does the mining labour class overcome alienated labour capability deprivations' is connected to the Marxist normative concern over "what possibilities exist in structures of production and reproduction that workers can seize to make themselves into something more than anonymous sellers of labour power?" (Cooper, 1996:32).

For those who labour merely for wages, who labour in order to live, but live in order to labour (Marx, 1978), whose labour is only a means to life, "sustaining it only while stunting it" (Marx, 1978:73) are labouring in and through their vulnerability, and are as such alienated from their labour. They are not free, they are only free to sell their labour to whom they choose. Marx contends that the "free" wage-labourer is a prerequisite of capitalist production:

Within the capitalist system all methods for raising the social productivity of labour are put into effect at the cost of the individual worker; that all means for the development of production undergo an inversion so that they become means of domination and exploitation of the producers [...] *undermining the original sources of all wealth – the soil and the worker* (Marx, 1977:638 & 799)

The alienated labourer engages in working-class struggles as a means to reclaim the alienated parts of his labour in order to appropriate a reality in which he can at least become something other than a seller of his labour-power, even when he remains a *thing* to the impulses of capital. Lebowitz (2003:179) thus argues that the working-class struggles produced by capitalism are compatible with the continued hegemony of capital. For workers to expend themselves in struggles against capital is to recognise the realities of their inhumane existence. It is this recognition that incites the workers' need to constantly alter this conditioning in order to become new conceptions of themselves (Lebowitz, 2003:206). Here, workers seek to recognise themselves and their existence in categories and terms that are not of their own making. To belong to the category of working-class in society is to seek the sign of one's own existence outside oneself, in a discourse that is at once one of subordination and existence (Butler, 1997:20). The category signifies a subjectivity that exploits labourers' desire for existence:

The desire to persist in one's own being requires submitting to a world of others that is fundamentally not one's own. Only by persisting in alterity does one persist in one's "own being." Vulnerable to terms that one never made, one persists always, to some degree, through categories, names, terms, and classifications that mark a primary and inaugurative alienation in sociality (Butler, 1997:20).

In attempting to transform themselves into other than capital's products is to persist in alterity as a condition for persisting in one's own being. Wage-labourers persist in alterity because they are not merely wage-labourers, but human beings. The worker "strives not to remain something he has become, but is in the absolute movement of his becoming" (Marx, 1973:488). The antagonism between capital and wage-labour is that between wage-labour and man's essential being – his becoming in the world. In other words, what underlies working-class struggles is man's inability to reckon with himself in a world he produces. Because man brings himself before himself by his productive activity, class struggles against capital are a lived negation. A negation of transforming an imagined reality into possibility. Yet, as argued by Lebowitz (2003:208), to go against capital is also to preserve it because (a) "as far as wage-labour is only wage-labour, it is identical with capital" and (b) the historical limits of structures in which labourers exist. The point not to be overlooked is that when workers project themselves towards a possibility of an altered reality, they are revealing to us the unfreedoms of their existence, they reveal them through acts of protest action. The political economy of the working-class is one in which workers attempt to overcome their class conditioning, whilst that class reality is reproduced by the very act of transgressing against it (Sartre, 1963:101). To project themselves towards the realisation of what is possible within capitalist structures, workers must produce an event in the world. Therefore, that objectification of the self to negate a negation reflects the workers' alienation.

For the working-class there is not a present reality, but always a future to be appropriated because in the present they exist only to "strip [the] external world of its inflexible foreignness" for the realisations of themselves in the world (Hegel, 1971 in Sayers, 2011:17). For the working-class, protest action is both an emancipating and an emancipatory act. It is their language of expressing their lived unfreedoms. Their object of concern, although posed as wages is their becoming in the world. Therefore, to protest is to be concerned with one's own destiny because labour must of "necessity produce a field of instrumental possibilities" for man to become (Sartre, 1963:112). Those instrumental possibilities however condition workers' objectification because of the "product of certain development techniques which express class

and conditions class” (Sartre, 1963:112). Thus, protest action is already the objectification of class, a reflection of struggles with capital and the manifestations of alienations generated by it.

The Class struggle against capital as a lived negation means that class is a living category. Human subjects exist inside this class, inside a field of what is possible for him to become. Since the instruments of this field alienated labourers from their labour and thus, from the world they produce, when workers go up against capital, that very field of possibility controls the meaning of their actions. Therefore, under capitalism, the objectification of his productive powers is his alienation. In persisting in alienation, workers transform themselves into historical agents, wherein what workers are alienated from is at once and both the product of their alienation as historical agents who “can under no circumstances be taken as a [complete] product [of their own making]” (Sartre, 1963:91).

The main feature of critical political economy is praxis through which human subjects try to transform the social structures in which they exist. Thus, through class struggle man makes history; he objectifies himself in it and is alienated in it. Therefore, the class struggle can only alter the conditions of alienation, but not transform its reality wholly:

The human act cutting across the social milieu while still holding on to its determinants, and which transforms the world on the basis of given conditions. Man is characterised by above all by his going beyond and by what he succeeds in making of what he has been made (Sartre, 1963:91).

In the theory of Alienated Labour, Marx underscores that man’s objectification would allow him to produce himself meaningfully in a world which he actively creates. Alienation, therefore, is more than an unfreedom endured by workers, it is the real history of the working-class:

In the social production of their existence, men enter into relations which are determined, necessarily independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a given stage of development of their material productive forces. The totality of these relations of production constitute the real foundation upon which a legal and political superstructure arises and to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond (Marx, 1859:52-53).

It is because alienation arises as a result of productive forces that it is a historical reality in which “man is defined simultaneously by his need for self-development, by the material conditions of his existence and by the nature of his work” (Sartre, 1963:91). We can thus understand that capital mediates both man’s *being* and *consciousness* – that is how he is a subject under capital, and as a result, how he participates and negotiates himself in social structures. The theoretical framework of the study in Chapter II frames a structural-ethical critique to critique how in a capitalist world-system the appropriation of surplus-value requires a class of human beings to give up their desire to be what they value becoming and surrender to the existential possibilities permitted by capital.

Under capitalism, the working class is deprived of the real opportunity to participate in decisions that are fundamental to who they are and what they want to be, and what form of life would be valuable to them. Sen’s Capability Approach underscores democratic processes as an integral part of a human being’s becoming, but capitalism undermines not only democratic ends in society but also workers’ collective capability as active agents of their own development, whereby they are afforded the *processes* and *opportunities* to shape their futures and take charge of sustaining both their individual and collective well-being (Sen, 1999). Fraser and Jaeggi (2018:325) argue that capitalism “treats what should be major political matters as *economic* and hands them over to *market forces*.” In this sense, capitalism is not only a system of exploitation, it is also a system of political injustice (Fraser and Jaeggi, 2018:325).

What the structural-ethical critique reveals is what Fraser and Jaeggi (2018:325) explicate:

“capital is nothing but congealed past labour, which has been transformed into a hostile power that dominates living labour. Living human beings are the producers not only of commodities, but also of capital itself, the very force by which they are subjugated. And that means that the past dominates the present.”

What is true about the tendencies of capital from a Marxian standpoint, is what is true about Chinese state-owned capital in Zambia’s copper mining industry. Chinese state capital is not simply ‘competitive’, ‘opportunistic’ and ‘extractive’ – it expresses the dynamics of global capitalism.

### Concluding Remarks

In this study, I explored the Marxian normative concern of “what possibilities exist in different structures of production and reproduction that workers can seize to make themselves into something more than anonymous sellers of labour power?” (Cooper, 1996:32). To explore this concern, I asked the primary research question of the study: *In what ways does the mining labour class overcome its alienated labour capability deprivations?* I did this along side two secondary research questions of the study that provided context to explore the primary research question of the study. I asked:

- What is the relationship between the Zambian state and Chinese-state capital?
- In what ways does Chinese state-owned capital appropriate surplus value from the labouring class?

The study found that both the Zambian state and Chinese state-owned capital limit the developmental potential of the mining labouring class. The labouring class attempts to overcome its deprivations, that is, to extract developmental gains in society through political class struggle. But the labouring class cannot transcend capitalist social relations to ultimately become what it imagines of itself. A critical insight that emanates from the study is that class is not simply an economic category, it is by its very nature an existential category. The wage-labourer has to continuously go beyond the condition of his subjectivity in order to attain some semblance with his *self – his being*. The ability of wage-labourers to constantly produce themselves in this way is both an act of ontology and history – their praxis. The rationale of their actions is based on their *need* for existing meaningfully in the world. In this sense, the wage-labourer’s needs and praxis are intimately connected; for he can only survive by renewing himself and he can only live by existing in his vulnerability.

### Implications and recommendations

As I indicated in the Introduction Chapter of the study, to read China in Africa in realist and liberal IR/IPE state-rivalry terms, offers insufficient analytical value for enriching a critical awareness of the historical capitalist structure and the subsequent dynamics of capitalist development today, and how these dynamics have a direct impact on how life is lived and felt by those who are at the mercy of its dictates. Mainstream IR and IPE’s assumptions that phenomena can be understood by separating social reality (‘state’, ‘market’, ‘labour’, ‘power’, ‘cooperation’) into fixed categories places the possibilities of normative understanding outside of reach. China’s rise and the “new scramble for Africa” are deeply implicated in global



economic transformations, and to continue understanding the global economy in elitist terms is to lose sight of the real people who constitute what we call the global economy. All states are formations of capitalism, it is how it is institutionalised. Rather than simply accepting that there are inequalities and poverty in the world, in IPE we have to grapple with the questions of why is it that only a few can lead stable lives and have a sense of well-being? Why do others live bits and pieces of lives and labour in precarity? Why has democracy yielded to market forces?

In recent years world governments both in the South and North have been witness to financial crises, working-class uprisings and intersectional social movements signalling crises of capitalism. The future challenge of IPE is to increasingly incorporate social human struggle as important to its epistemology. There is an urgent need for political-intellectual engagement about the capitalist society to generate diverse and rich political economy perspectives that reflect and reveal that the myriad ways in which capitalist social processes dominate and exploit.

#### Limitations

Although I have explored how *Zambian* mineworkers attempt to make themselves other than capital's products, the major limitation of the study is that it is a desktop study as indicated in Chapter I. The inability to have led an ethnographic research study means that other insights that could have enriched the study are outside of reach.

I employed a hermeneutical narrative approach to analysis that has to a limited extent allowed me to bring into view ontological issues around human subjectivity and to be able to advance the argument that labourers' existential possibilities are conditioned by their position in society. I would like to acknowledge that the experiences of mine labourers at the Chinese state-owned mine escape knowledge to the extent that it is lived. My intention has not been to reduce their lived significance to simple statements. My comprehension and reasoning have been contemplative and a moment in my own praxis. With that, I wish to extend the statement below as a final ode, as I have, following the hermeneutical narrative approach come to bind my world into their world while binding their world into my mind (Brockmeier and Meretoja, 2014: 6):

We live our of lives, both individually and in our relationship with each other, in the light of certain conceptions of a possible shared future in which certain possibilities beckon us forward and others repel us, some seem already foreclosed and others perhaps inevitable. There is no present which is not informed by some image of some future, and an image of the future

which always presents itself in the form of a telos – or of a variety of ends or goals – towards which we are either moving or failing to move in the present [...] if the narrative of our individual lives is to continue intelligibly – and either type of narrative may lapse into unintelligibility – it is always the case that there are constraints on how the story can continue and that within those constraints there are indefinitely many ways in which it can continue.

- MacIntyre, A. in *After Virtue*

### Reference List

Adam, S & Simpasa, A.M. 2010. The Economics of the Copper Price Boom in Zambia, in A. Alden, C. 2009. *China in Africa: Partner, Competitor or Hegemon?* New York: Zed Books.

Baah, A.Y. & Jauch, H. 2009. *Chinese Investment in Africa: A Labour Perspective*. Accra: African Labour Research Network.

Baah, A.Y. & Jauch, H. 2009. *Chinese Investments in Africa: A Labour Perspective*. African Labour Research Network.

Bates, R.H. 1971. *Unions, Parties and Political Development: A Study of Mineworkers in Zambia*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Bayart, J.F. 1993. *Rethinking Third World Politics*. London: Longman.

Baylies, C. & Szeftel, M. 1984. *The Dynamics of the One-Party State in Zambia*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Bieler, W. & Morton, A.D. 2006. Neo-Gramscian Perspectives in International Relations. In A. Bieler, W. Bonefeld, A.D.Morton (eds.). *Global Restructuring, State, Capital and Labour*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 9-27.

Broadman, H. 2007. *Africa's Silk Road: China and India's New Economic Frontier*. Washington DC: The World Bank.

Brockmeier, J. & Meretoja, H. 2014. Understanding Narrative Hermeneutics. *University of Nebraska Press*, 6(2):1-27.

Brown, C. A. 2000. Becoming Men, Becoming Workers: Race, Gender and Workplace Struggle in Nigerian Coal Industry, 1937 – 49, in P. Alexander & R.Halpern (eds.). *Racializing Class, Classifying Race: Labour and Differences in Britain, the USA and Africa*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 168-193.

Burawoy, M. 1982. The Hidden Abode of Under-Development: Labour Process and the State in Zambia. *Politics and Society*, 11(2): 123-166.

Burgmann, V. 2016. *Globalisation and Labour in the Twenty-First Century*. Oxon: Routledge.

Burnham, P. 2006. The Politic of Economic Management in the 1990s. In A. Bieler, W. Bonefeld, A.D.Morton (eds.). *Global Restructuring, State, Capital and Labour*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 91-110.

Butler, J. 1997. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. California: Stanford University Press.

Carmody, P. 2011. *The New Scramble for Africa*. Cambridge: Polity.

Cohen, R. 1974. *Labour and Politics in Nigeria 1945-71*. London: Heinemann.

Cooper, F. 1996. *Decolonization and African Society: The labour question in French and British Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cousin, G. 2010. Positioning positionality. In M.Savin Baden, C.H. Major (eds.). *New Approaches to Qualitative Research: Wisdom and Uncertainty*. New York: Routledge. 9-19.

Cox, R.1981. Social forces, states and world orders: Beyond international relations theory. *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 10(2):126-155.

Cox, R.1987. *Production, Power and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Crotty, M. 1998. *The foundations of social research*. London: Sage.

Crouch, C. 2017. *Can neoliberalism be saved from itself?* London: Social Europe Edition.

Daniel, P. 1979. *Africanisation, Nationalisation and Inequality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Deneulin, S. 2006. *The Capability Approach and the Praxis of Development*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dowd, D. 2002. *Understanding Capitalism: Critical Analysis for Karl Marx to Amartya Sen*. London: Pluto Press.

Eckert, A. 2019. From Poverty to Informality? The Social Question in African in a Historical Perspective. In J. Breman, K. Harris. Lee, C.K and M. van der Linden (eds.). *The Social Question in the Twenty-First Century*. California: University of California Press.153-170.

Fraser & M. Larmer (eds.). *Zambia, Mining and Neoliberalism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 59-91

Fraser, N. & Jaeggi, R. 2018. *Capitalism: A Conversation in Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Fraser, N. Rethinking Recognition. *New Left Review*, 3:107-118.

Freund, B. 1984. Labour and Labour History in Africa: A Review of the Literature. *African Studies Review*, 27(2):1-58.

Gray, K. & Gills, K. 2016. South-South cooperation and the rise of Global South. *Third World Quarterly*, 37(4):557-574.

Guerrero, D.G. & Manji, F. 2008. *China's New Role in Africa and the South*. Nairobi: Fahamu.

Harvey, D. 2007. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Henderson, I. 1973. Wage-Earners and Political Protest in Colonial Africa: The Case of the Copperbelt. *African Affairs*, 72(288):288-299.

Henderson, I. 1975. Early African Leadership: The Copperbelt Disturbances of 1935 and 1940. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 2(1):83-97.

Hess, S. & Aidoo, R. 2013. Charting the Roots of Anti-Chinese Populism in Africa: A Comparison of Zambia and Ghana. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 1-19.

Hodgkin, T. 1956. *Nationalism in Colonial Africa*. London: Fredrick Muller.

Jaeggi, R. 2014. *Alienation: New Directions in Critical Theory*. New York: Colombia University Press.

Kanu, I.A. 2018. *A Study in African Socio-Political Philosophy*. Bloomington: Author House.

Karumbidza, J. R. 2007. Win-Win Economic Cooperation: Can China Save Zimbabwe's Economy? In F. Manji & S. Marks (eds.). *African Perspectives on China in Africa*. Nairobi: Fahamu. 85-105.

Kaufman, S. 1973. *Gompers and the Origins of the American Federation of Labour*. Westport: Greenwood Press.

Keenan, P. 2008. Curse or Cure? China, Africa, and the Effects of Unconditional Wealth. *Berkely Journal of International Law*, 27(1):83-125.

Larmer, L. & Fraser, A. 2007. Of Cabbages and King Cobra: Populist Politics and Zambia's 2006 Election. *African Affairs*, 106(425):611-637.

Larmer, L. & Fraser, A. 2007. Of Cabbages and King Cobra: Populist Politics and Zambia's 2006 Election. *African Affairs*, 106(425):611-637.

Larmer, M. 2005. Unrealistic Expectations? Zambia's Mineworkers from Independence to One-Party State. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 18(4):318-352.

Larmer, M. 2006a. Zambia's Mineworkers and the Labour Movement's Resistance to the One-Party State, 1973 - 1981. *South African Historical Journal*, 56(1):154-176.

Larmer, M. 2006b. The Hour Has Come at the Pit': The Mineworkers' Union of Zambia and the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy, 1982 – 1991. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32(2):293-312.

Larmer, M. 2009. Resisting the State: The Trade Union Movement and Working-Class Politics in Zambia, 1964-91, in L. Zeilig (ed.). *Class Struggle and Resistance in Africa*. Chicago: Haymarket Books. 157-177.

Larmer, M. 2017. Permanent precarity: capital and labour in the Central African Copperbelt. *Labor History*, 58(2):170-184.

Lebowitz, M.A. 2003. *Beyond Capital: Marx's Political Economy of the Working Class*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lee, C.K. 2010. Raw Encounters: Chinese Managers, African Workers, and the Politics of Casualisation in Africa's Chinese Enclaves, in A. Fraser & M. Larmer (eds.). *Zambia, Mining and Neoliberalism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 127-155.

Lee, C.K. 2017. *The Spectre of Global China*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

Li, P. 2010. The Myth and Reality of Chinese Investors: A Case Study of Chinese Investment in Zambia's Copper Industry. *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 62: 4-17.

Martins, N. 2006. Capabilities as causal powers. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 30(5):671-685.

Martins, N. 2007. Ethics, Ontology and Capabilities. *Review of Political Economy*, 19(1):37-53.

Marx, K. 1844. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in Marx and Engels 1975, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3.

Marx, K. 1859. A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. In H. Selsam, D. Goldway and H. Martel (eds.). *Dynamics of Social Change: A Reader in Marxist Social Science*. New York: International Publishers. 52-53.

Marx, K. 1977. *Capital*, Vol. I. New York: Vintage Books.

Marx, K. 1978. Wage Labour and Capital. In R.C. Tucker (ed.). *The Marx-Engels Reader*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Marx, K. 1973. *Grundrisse*. New York: Vintage Books.

Mawdsley, E. 2008. Fu Manchu versus Dr. Livingston in the Dark Continent? Representing China, Africa and the West in British Broadsheet Newspapers. *Political Geography*, 27:509-529.

Mbembe, A., 2004. Aesthetics of superfluity. *Public culture*, 16(3):373-405.

McNally, C. 2012. Sino-capitalism: China's reemergence and the international political economy. *World Politics*, 64(4): 741-776.

McNally, C. 2019. Theorizing Sino-capitalism: Implications for the study of comparative capitalisms. *Contemporary Politics*, 25(3):313-333.

McNally, C. 2020. Chaotic mélange: neo-liberalism and neo-statism in the age of Sino-capitalism. *Review of International Political Economy*, 27(2):281-301.

Melber, H. 2009. Global Trade Regimes and Multi-Polarity: The US and Chinese Scramble for Africa. In R. Southhall & H. Melber (eds.) *A New Scramble for Africa? Imperialism, investment and Development*. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu Natal Press. 56-82.

Merriam, S.B. 2009. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Meszaros, I. 1970. *Marx's Theory of Alienation*. London: Merlin Press.



Mohan, G. & Power, M. 2008. New African Choices? The Politics of Chinese Engagement. *Review of African Political Economy*, 35(115):23-42.

Parpart, J.L. 1983. *Labour and Capital on the African Copperbelt*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Perrings, C. 1979. *Black Mineworkers in Central Africa*. New York. Africana Publishing.

Petrovic, G. 1967. *Marx in the Mid-Twentieth Century*. New York: Anchor Books.

Rakner, L. 1999. *Aid and Reform in Zambia*. Country Case Study Report. Michigan State University.

Rakner, L. 2000. *The Pluralist Paradox: The Decline of Economic Interest Groups in Zambia in the 1990s*. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute: Norway.

Rakner, L. 2003. *Political and Economic Liberalisation in Zambia 1991 -2001*. Stockholm: The Nordic Africa Institute.

Rocha, J. 2007. A New Frontier in the Exploitation of Africa's Natural Resources: The Emergence of China. In F. Manji & S. Marks (eds.) *African Perspectives on China in Africa*. Nairobi: Fahamu. 15-34.

Rotberg, R. 2008. *China into Africa: Trade, Aid and Influence*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution.

Sartre, J.P. 1963. *Search for a Method*. New York: Alfred A Knopf.

Sayers, S. 2011. *Marx and Alienation: Essays on Hegelian Themes*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Schler, L. Bethlehem, L. & Sabar, G. 2009. Rethinking labour in Africa, past and present. *African identities*, 7(3):287-298.

Seddon, D. 2009. Popular Protest and Class Struggle in Africa, in L. Zeilig (ed.). *Class Struggle and Resistance in Africa*. Chicago: Haymarket Books. 57-86.

Selwyn, B. 2014. *The Global Development Crisis*. Cambridge Polity Press.

Sen, A.K. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Silver, B. & Zhang, L. 2009. China as an Emerging Epicentre of World Labour Unrest, in H. F. Hung (ed.). *China and the Transformation of Global Capitalism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press. 174-188.

Silver, B.J., 2003. *Forces of labor: workers' movements and globalization since 1870*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Simuusa, W. 2011. Ministerial Statement on the Industrial Unrest and Termination of Employment for Workers at Chambishi Copper Mines on the Copperbelt. National Assembly of Zambia, November 2, 2011. <http://www.parliament.gov.zm/node/1273>.

Southall, R. & Melber, H. 2009. *A New Scramble for Africa? Imperialism, investment and Development*. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu Natal Press.

Standing, G. 2011. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Stephen, M.D. 2014. Rising powers, global capitalism and liberal global governance: A historical materialist account of the BRICs challenge. *European Journal of International Relations*, 20(4):912-938.

Teschke, B. & Lacher, H. 2007. The changing 'logics' of capitalist competition. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 20(4):565-580.

Uzar, E. 2017. Contested labour and political leadership: three mineworkers' unions after the opposition victory in Zambia. *Review of African Political Economy*, 44(152):292-311.

Woddis, J. 1961. *Africa: the lion awakes*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Zeilig, L. & Seddon, D. 2005. Class & protest in Africa: New waves. *Review of African Political Economy*, 32(103):9-27.