

## Introduction

# Things Fall Apart

In his postcolonial classic, *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe (2001) tells the story of Okonkwo, an Igbo clansman in eastern Nigeria at the turn of the twentieth century. Achebe sketches out a dystopian vision evolving from his lead character's fallibility as a human being during the onset of British colonialism. Okonkwo failed to defend the social order that had initially produced him as a respected member of Igbo society from the Christian mission and colonial government. In the end, Achebe lets Okonkwo commit suicide in an apocalyptic moment reminiscent of W.B. Yeats's poem 'The Second Coming'. Its third line provided the title for Achebe's novel. The reader is left with Okonkwo dead, his world having fallen apart.

I thought about Achebe's novel many times before, during and after my fieldwork in Zambia; in fact, it accompanied me throughout the writing process. When I first read Ferguson's *Expectations of Modernity* (1999), I saw Okonkwo in the mineworkers faced with rural retirement after living for years in the Copperbelt's mining towns. I saw Okonkwo in the Lamba chiefs who had been forced into agreements with the British South Africa Company (BSAC), ceding their rights to the land to industrial exploitation. I saw Okonkwo in the Bemba chiefs confronted with the exodus of men from their villages and the collapse of the rural economy. I saw Okonkwo in the mineworkers who were made redundant and retrenched in the early 2000s after the state-owned copper mining company had been broken up. I saw Okonkwo in the residents of Luanshya's former mine township of Mpatamatu faced with the decaying material remains of four decades of corporate paternalism.

## 2 *After Corporate Paternalism*

I literally observed how ‘things fall apart’ in Mpatamatu. This ruinous process expressed itself most prominently in the crumbling infrastructures of the township. There were the run-down mine houses lining the pot-holed streets with broken street lights above them. The rusting headgear of two shafts towered over Mpatamatu. Then there were the township’s former social welfare buildings, which became the starting point for my enquiry into people’s living conditions. Taverns, clubs, clinics, community centres and sports facilities – everything had been built by the mine, but now they had been left to rot. Mining companies refocused on mines as sites of mineral extraction and abandoned their social facilities. The corporate paternalism of the colonial and post-independence era that had shaped the lives of the mineworkers and their dependants had been replaced by a neoliberal corporate policy characterized by ‘millennial capitalism’ (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000).

However, I quickly learned that things left behind were reassembled, that is, repaired, reused and reappropriated. Mine clubs were maintained as social centres, a youth centre was turned into a carpenter’s shop, a mine clinic became the headquarters of a local non-governmental organization (NGO), and a tavern and the township’s sports complex were turned into churches. A local football club continued to use the stadium. Fans cheered from the broken stands, which on other days were used as an auditorium. Former mine houses, now the property of private individuals, were repainted and extended, accommodating car repair shops, grocery stores, barbers, house churches and guest houses. The mine’s presence in Mpatamatu had dissolved into numerous individual projects.

Over the decade leading up to my own fieldwork, Stoler (2008b, 2013, 2016: 336–79) had been developing and revisiting the concept of ‘ruination’ in her academic work on the aftermath of colonialism. Shifting from the material leftovers of ‘the ruin’, she draws attention to ‘ruin’ as an active process, to its material and social ramifications. She turns to ‘what people are “left with”’: to what remains, to the aftershocks of empire, to the material and social afterlife of structures, sensibilities, and things’. To talk of ruins is to focus not on ‘inert remains’ but on their ‘vital refiguration’ (Stoler 2008b: 194). Ruins have to be studied as ‘epicenters of renewed claims, as history in a spirited voice, as sites that animate new possibilities, bids for entitlement, and unexpected political projects’ (Stoler 2008b: 198). It was the temporal and spatial extension from a material site to a socio-material process that caught my interest.

Ruination as a socio-material process rooted in colonial and neoliberal dispossession reverberated with Cane’s reading of Mitchell’s (2002: 1–2) idea that ‘landscape is part of the operation of power’ and ‘should be considered a verb’ (Cane 2019: 3, 173). In Mpatamatu, power operated through the absence of corporate and the inadequacy of municipal ‘landscaping’. This gap was filled by private initiative. On a practical ethnographic level, I did not encounter the township’s former social welfare buildings as ruins but as sites of creative oppor-

tunity. I came to understand their potency and people's interaction with them through what P. Gupta (2019: 133–35) conceptualized as practices of 'renovation' based on her fieldwork in Beira.

In this book, I seek to understand how Mpatamatu's residents accommodated the ruinous structural changes in their living environment from the perspective of post-industrial, and more concretely post-paternalistic, ruination and renovation. How did processes of ruination unfold in Mpatamatu, and what were their local characteristics? These characteristics prompt my central question: What did people do about what they were left with? This question is related to two more issues that concern Mpatamatu as a material living environment: How was the abandoned corporate materiality brought back into unison with the changing social life of the township? And how was Mpatamatu repositioned in relation to the outside world?

I offer an analysis of how Mpatamatu's residents refigured the township's corporate remains and how the relationships between certain social groups changed in the face of the reappropriations of the former social welfare buildings. I retrace the material dimension of social relations in Mpatamatu's corporate past and relate it to the social realities that unfold the buildings' material present. In contrast to many other mining sites on Zambia's Copperbelt and elsewhere in southern Africa, in Mpatamatu practices of corporate paternalism were not succeeded by practices of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

The context of my central argument is the complete dissolution of a central corporate structure into individual private projects. The former social welfare buildings became sites of relocation, renovation, reintegration and reconnection. Contrary to the disappearance of corporate paternalism from the township, these sites were used to formulate a normativity that was reminiscent of a paternalist past in the face of a neoliberal present. Theoretically, I seek to contribute to the conceptualization of the interrelatedness between corporate paternalism, post-paternalist ruination and human agency in processes of renovation. I show how paternalist dependence was reinvented by the residents of Mpatamatu as a response to the absence of CSR practices by the local mining company. Ultimately, this ethnography pushes the conceptual boundaries of 'ruination' further and engages with the question of structural bias in the analysis of human action.

The concept of 'ruination' made it possible for me to capture the social experiences that were related to Mpatamatu's social welfare buildings, the township's material decay and its residents' loss of social status. The processual character of this concept was able to recognize the durability of the corporate-paternalist dimension in the living environment of Mpatamatu's residents. During my training as a historian of China, I was taught to be critical of dynastic watersheds and their supposed discontinuities.<sup>1</sup> 'Ruination' allowed me to follow up Macmillan's (2012: 548) question of 'what happens *after mining*' without detaching it from Mpatamatu's history as a corporate mine township. What people did about the



**Figure 0.1.** The signposts and metal arch welcoming the visitor to Luanshya. Photo by the author.

corporate remains they were left with had something to do with how they had lived under corporate paternalism. To me, the answers to my questions were to be found in the social dependencies that were inscribed in the material buildings when the township was first established; in the buildings’ materiality, which remained a part of the residents’ living environment after the copper sector was reprivatized; in the projects of renovation that took place in the township’s former social welfare buildings; and in a neoliberal policy that had failed to integrate Mpatamatu into the CSR measures being implemented elsewhere in today’s extractive industries (Rajak 2011: 8).

### Entering Luanshya

Labelled a ‘ghost town’ after the privatization of Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM) in 1997 and the ensuing mass retrenchments in the early 2000s (Arndt 2010; Kaunda 1999), Luanshya in 2015/2016 did not present itself to me at all as an empty town. Interested in China–Africa relations, I first approached the mining town in Zambia’s Copperbelt Province as a site of Chinese overseas investment.

In 2009, the Chinese state-owned company China Nonferrous Metal Mining (Group) Corporation (CNMC), listed under the State-owned Assets Supervision



and Administration Commission of the State Council of the People's Republic of China (SASAC),<sup>2</sup> took over the local copper mine in what was the latter's third change of ownership since the sector was reprivatized (Katasefa 2009; Shacinda 2009). CNMC Luanshya Copper Mines (CLM) was the state corporation's third major investment after the mine in Chambishi run by Non-Ferrous China-Africa (NFCA) and the Zambia–China Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone (ZCCZ), which included a newly constructed copper smelter (CNMC 2011).

CNMC's holding companies on the Copperbelt are part of a larger picture of Chinese investments in Zambia. Since the 2000s, a steady flow of Chinese individuals has arrived in the country (Guo Chatelard 2011; Postel 2017). As economic actors, these individuals have entered almost all sectors of the Zambian economy, from mining to logistics, construction, agriculture and tourism. A 2015 list compiled by China's Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) comprised more than five hundred Chinese companies in Zambia, while a list compiled by Zambia's National Council for Construction of the same year is dominated by Chinese companies in the infrastructure sector.<sup>3</sup> The presence of 'China in Zambia' has been a public and political issue since Michael Sata's anti-Chinese election campaign in 2006.<sup>4</sup>

When I entered Luanshya from the north through its iconic metal arch (see Figure 0.1), at first I could not find any CLM signs in the parade of billboards welcoming me to the town. On the contrary, I immediately became immersed in Luanshya's history as a place of industrial copper mining before and after Zam-

bia's independence. On top of the metal arch rested the town's coat of arms. It showed a serpent in the claws of an eagle and two roan antelopes supporting a shield. All the animals wore an *ankh* necklace. Also depicted were two golden crowns on a blue background above red scales on a golden background, and a golden pick on a red background. Below it was written in Latin *aes erat in pretio*, 'copper was prized then'.<sup>5</sup>

In an instant, the history of Luanshya as a mining town built under British colonialism in Central Africa was unfolded in front of me (see Chapter 1). The city 'came into being to serve Roan Antelope [Copper Mining]' (Gann 1964: 211). It was no 'isolated colonial mining outpost' but part of 'a belt of towns with heavy industry' (Potts 2005: 584). The serpent alluded to the 'Luanshya snake story', a story about the high death toll due to tropical disease and Lamba opposition to the sinking of a mine during the early days of the town as a mining camp. There was the narrative of a roan antelope being shot to 'discover' the riches of the ground, represented by the Egyptian hieroglyph symbolizing copper. The antelope subsequently lent its name to the mine. The scales and pick stood for the twin character of Luanshya, consisting of the corporate-mining and government-municipal parts of the town (Smith 1985: 1490–92). Luanshya was born when 'copper was prized' in the late 1920s and, so it seemed, could only thrive in times of demand for the metal.

The *chitenge*, a fabric usually worn and used by women, waving beneath the coat of arms brought me back to Zambia's political present. It bore the colours of the ruling party, the Patriotic Front (PF), and also carried a portrait of the late president, Michael Sata (1937–2014). In 2015/2016, his successor Edgar Lungu was still reliant on Sata's agenda and reputation as a charismatic, sharp-tongued leader nicknamed 'King Cobra'. Luanshya's two constituencies were in the hands of PF candidates Steven Chungu and Chishimba Kambwili. The town's green decoration before the August 2016 elections made a claim to the PF's dominance. It turned out to be a tight race for the presidency between the incumbent, President Lungu, and his United Party for National Development (UPND) opponent Hakainde Hichilema (ECZ 2016). The election campaign had been overshadowed by violence and ever-changing political alliances (Branson 2016; Laterza and Mususa 2015).

Among the signboards, a guest house and a lodge welcomed the visitor to Luanshya. A distributor of second-hand Japanese spare parts and cars, omnipresent on Zambia's roads, also sought attention. South African banks were looking for potential customers. Metal Fabricators of Zambia (ZAMEFA), representing one of the few forward linkages extending from copper extraction into manufacturing, marked its plant's location in town.<sup>6</sup> The billboard of the Electoral Commission of Zambia and the uncountable election posters hiding the ruinous state of the former checkpoint shelters joined the *chitenge* above in pointing to the political significance of 2016 as an election year.

On the back of one of the shelters below the metal arch, amidst the election posters of the PF, UPND, Rainbow Party and independents, stood the letters 'CNMC LUANSHYA'. At last I had found a trace of the Chinese company's presence in Luanshya. It was common on the Copperbelt for mining companies to sponsor checkpoints and bus shelters. After CLM placed its underground operations into maintenance in September 2015 (Wangwe 2015), the company's reputation had been damaged. It was politics that increased its local presence, from PF's dominance in campaigning to Hichilema's appearance in the Luanshya court right after the elections.<sup>7</sup>

A metal structure commemorating Zambia's 42nd anniversary of independence in 2006, covered with the remains of a burnt banner celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2014, and a signboard to the city's outdated website pointed to the financial constraints of the Luanshya municipality. Changing mine operators meant unstable municipal revenues. A project sign of the Ministry of Local Government and Housing revealed that the town's water supply and sanitation remained a problem since their infrastructures had been passed on from the corporation to the municipal authorities, as was underlined by the defunct street lights.

The Rotary Club's signboard in turn was indicative of the fact that many previously corporate and government responsibilities had been handed over to private charity initiatives. Burnt grass on the roadside hinted at the heat of Zambia's dry season. Dust and garbage occasionally crossed the tarmac road, which had seen better days. A lorry driver was taking a break before moving on and joining the fleet on Zambia's roads that kept the country's economy alive.

Mpatamatu is situated far from the main arteries of the copper industry (see Map 0.2): off the national highway T3 that extends T2, connecting the capital Lusaka with major Copperbelt towns like Ndola, Kitwe and Chingola, off the main road running from T3 southwards through Luanshya towards Mpongwe and beyond the former mine township of Roan. Detached from the sometimes heated atmosphere of Luanshya on the outskirts of town lay 'the place where the boats got stuck' (see Figure 0.2; RMMTMB 1978).<sup>8</sup>

Mpatamatu was located in a three-fold periphery off the beaten track. The township marked Luanshya's final outpost on the edge of the Muliashi open pit mine. Beyond it was the Miombo forest, indigenous savannah woodlands. On a windy day at the end of the dry season, dust rose over the township as high as the spray of the Mosi-oa-Tunya in Livingstone during the rainy season. In contrast to the country's number one national monument and World Heritage Site, few people visited Mpatamatu. Whenever President Lungu visited, roads needed to be fixed, and ultimately he did not stay long.<sup>9</sup>

The more I learned about Mpatamatu and its residents, the more it emerged that this particular place was related to my own biography. It turned out that the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology that supported my research proj-



**Map 0.2.** Zambia’s Copperbelt with its most important towns and mines on both sides of its border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Jutta Turner (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale).

ect on the Copperbelt was itself located fifty kilometres east of a former copper mining area, known as *Mansfelder Land* (Spilker 2010). I came to understand that the copper mining areas of the world formed what Anderson (2006: 33–36) called an ‘imagined community’.<sup>10</sup> Mines actively related to each other, for example, by writing about other mines in their company magazines. To my great astonishment, a 1959 article in Roan Antelope Copper Mines’ (RACM) company magazine *Horizon* on ‘Copper and the Postage Stamp’ included stamps from the German Democratic Republic (GDR) celebrating the 750th anniversary of *Mansfelder Kupfer*, copper from Mansfeld (Rhodian 1959: 16).

The Max Planck Institute was also fifteen kilometres north of the chemical plant formerly known as 'Buna' in Schkopau.<sup>11</sup> The plant had been founded by the Interessen-Gemeinschaft Farbenindustrie, a German chemical conglomerate known as IG Farben, in the second half of the 1930s. After the Second World War, Buna became the backbone of the GDR's plastics industry. The paternalistic care of this 'people's enterprise' – in German, *Volkseigener Betrieb* (VEB) – formed the basis for the lives of tens of thousands of workers. Among them was my maternal grandfather, who joined Buna as a chemist in 1959 and was allocated a house in the *Doktorsiedlung*, the 'doctors' quarters'. Irrespective of the GDR's ideological claims, Buna had taken over the spatial segregation of different parts of the labour force from its predecessor, a phenomenon common in Copperbelt mining towns.

A peculiarity of corporate paternalism in socialist countries like the GDR was one type of social welfare building: the *Kulturhaus* (Hain and Stroux 1996; Hartung 1997). These 'culture houses' offered a variety of cultural programmes to workers and their dependants. They reminded me of the community centres in Mpatamatu. Hence, like many of my research participants, my mother grew up in the shadow of a large corporate enterprise that set the boundaries for what was



**Figure 0.3.** The author's mother in an arts class at Buna's *Haus der Freundschaft*, 1968. Photo provided by the author's mother.



**Figure 0.2.** Roan Mpatamatu Mine Township Management Board's coat of arms. ZCCM-IH Archives, Ndola.

attainable and what was not, what was possible and what remained impossible (see Figure 0.3).

Reprivatization, corporate abandonment, ruination and renovation since 1995/1997 changed the living environments in Schkopau and Mpatamatu respectively.<sup>12</sup> In both places, corporate housing was sold to its existing tenants. In Schkopau this resulted in a renovation boom that relegated houses that had become grey from carbide sediments to the past. People in Mpatamatu started private businesses in the former mine houses. However, Buna's *Kulturhaus* deteriorated into a state of a ruin, having

been closed by the authorities and fenced off. In contrast, there was not a single former social welfare building in Mpatamatu that remained unused in this township of twenty thousand people when I conducted fieldwork there in 2016.

## Engaging Relations

When Burawoy revisited his fieldwork on African advancement in Zambia's copper industry, he came to realize that his methods violated the principles of what he termed 'positive science' (Burawoy 1998: 10). His reflections followed earlier interventions positioning ethnography against the hypothesis-testing sciences (Agar 1996: 113–31). On the Copperbelt, Burawoy disregarded 'reactivity' because he did nothing to avoid affecting his field site and based his fieldwork on social engagement instead. He also violated the principle of 'reliability' in the selection of his data. The practices of everyday life he wanted to observe kept on changing, making the 'replicability' of his data impossible, as his findings were mainly dependent on him being an engaged ethnographer. Finally, he was left with the question of whether his particular observations were in any sense 'representative' of the phenomenon under scrutiny, namely African industrial advancement, whether in his own case or beyond it (Burawoy 1998: 10–11).

Burawoy (1998: 14–16) concluded that he had been working under a different model of science, not 'positive' but 'reflexive', and therefore defined by different principles. Burawoy's engagement with a social phenomenon in a particular field site led to an 'intervention'. My interaction with the residents of Mpatamatu formed the basis for my understanding of the role the former social welfare buildings had played in people's lives and how the buildings were being used at the time of my fieldwork. Burawoy had followed his participants in space and time, aggregating social situations into a social 'process'. My investigation included observations of Mpatamatu's material and social present and a restructuring of the township's past. I participated in and witnessed different situations in and around the former social welfare buildings. This enabled me to identify different aspects of a process of social change in Mpatamatu. The process included the recent reappropriation of the buildings after Mpatamatu had been abandoned by the mine.

Burawoy realized that the local was shaped by forces external to his field site and vice versa, that is, that there was a reciprocal constitutive relationship between the 'local' and the 'global' (Massey 2012: 101). He needed to look at the everyday world from the perspective of its 'structuration'. The access difficulties I encountered in the first half of my fieldwork had already revealed the complexity of my field site's structuration as a site of copper extraction (Straube 2020), a town still reliant on its mine, a part of the country's most important industrial hub, the home of numerous urban voters, and a site of Chinese state-corporate overseas investment in Africa.

Finally, Burawoy saw the contribution of a particular case not in its representativeness, but in how far it contributed to the ‘reconstruction’ of theory. Processes of material and social ruination may look different in other former mine townships on the Copperbelt or other post-industrial places around the world. However, my data from Mpatamatu entered a dialogue with existing theorizations of corrosive processes of ruination and of the translations of corporate paternalist practices into CSR measures. Specifically, the case of Mpatamatu allowed me to conceptually unpack the penetration of ruination with projects of creative renovation and the relationship between corporate paternalism and private reappropriation from the perspective of human agency.

Burawoy (1998: 16–22) closed his treatise on reflexive science with a return to a method previously developed in the discipline of social anthropology by the scholars of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (RLI) and the Manchester School, ‘the extended case method’.<sup>13</sup> This method extended social situations into social processes, and located them in power relations through the latter’s operation in the former two. Consequently, social processes allowed the researcher to extend out to the forces that originated outside the field site where the social situations had been observed. However, fieldwork in general and the method in particular included a practical intrusion: an engaged ethnographer was an object in the local operation of power relations, too. This fact constituted a constraint in fieldwork. ‘Power effects’, that is, domination, silencing, objectification and normalization, required awareness and reflection (Burawoy 1998: 22–25).

Extending out, in my understanding, resulted in an explanatory proposal in order to comprehend social phenomena and the forces that gave rise to them. It denominated a process of interpretation which Reed (2011: 7–10, 89–121), based on Geertz (2006: 412–54), suggested was a separate ‘epistemic mode’ of theory-making in the human sciences.<sup>14</sup> My investigation of material and social ruination and renovation in Mpatamatu examined ‘arrangements of signification and representation, the layers of social meaning, the shape of human experience’ (Reed 2011: 10). These arrangements had to be observed in concrete social situations. Among the questions that guided me through interviews were: What did the collapse of corporate paternalism mean to mineworker families? What did the social welfare buildings represent for government, company and residents? How did residents experience corporate paternalism and abandonment? What motivated them in their renovative practices?

Burawoy’s and Reed’s thoughts on epistemology offered an entry point to how I reflected upon my positionality in the field. I pursued a variety of methods around a core of ethnographic fieldwork. This included participant observation in the former social welfare buildings, sometimes crystallizing in moments of what Rosaldo termed ‘deep hanging out’ (Clifford 1997: 188, endnote 2, 219). I engaged in conversations and conducted interviews, open, biographical and semi-structured, with the sitting tenants of former social welfare buildings and

Mpatamatu's residents. Both conversations and interviews always remained 'informal' in Agar's (1996: 140) sense, leaving situations negotiable on my research participants' terms. Usually, informal encounters were scheduled in instances of 'ethnography by appointment' (Desjarlais 2003: 18). These instances and my presence during a day's fieldwork always resulted in continuous follow-up situations of ethnographic enquiry. My main field site was the township of Mpatamatu in the city of Luanshya, which I explored on foot. I also conducted complementary interviews in the neighbouring Roan township, downtown Luanshya, Baluba, Kitwe, the provincial capital Ndola and the national capital Lusaka.

I divided my research participants into four 'experience cohorts'.<sup>15</sup> In following P. Gupta (2019: 130), I realized that the residents of Mpatamatu lived in a material environment and experienced social time as linked to different periods of the mine's history: colonial (1900–1964), corporate-paternalist (1927–1997), state-socialist (1970–1991) and neoliberal (since 1997). I came to understand Mpatamatu in the context of its inhabitants' experiences through de Certeau's (1988: 201) concept of a 'stratified place' that represented a 'whole made up of pieces that are not contemporary and still linked to totalities that have fallen to ruins'.

My first cohort of research participants comprised men who had been former mineworkers in Luanshya as early as the late 1960s. Some of them dropped out of ZCCM before 1997, and many were retrenched after Roan Antelope Mining Corporation of Zambia (RAMCOZ) became bankrupt in 2000. A minority managed to remain in the service of the successive mine operators up to CLM or one of its subcontractors such as China 15th Metallurgical Construction Group Corporation (15MCC). This cohort provided the most intricate knowledge of mine township life under corporate paternalism, needless to say from a male insider's perspective, and against the backdrop of corporate abandonment and, quite often, personal social ruination after the mine's reprivatization.

The second cohort was made up of women who came to Luanshya to accompany their husbands in the first cohort or to find work themselves. These women arrived as early as the 1970s and provided the gender counterpart to the first cohort's body of knowledge. They recalled the kinds of positions the mining company envisaged for women under corporate paternalism and explained to me what positions they actually occupied at the time of my fieldwork in contrast to that era.

The third cohort consisted of men who grew up as sons or dependants in mineworker families headed by the first and second cohort in Mpatamatu in the late 1980s and early 1990s. They experienced corporate paternalism in the form of after-school leisure facilities, but most prominently the absence of these facilities after ZCCM's privatization.

Finally, the fourth cohort comprised men who worked in Mpatamatu before and after ZCCM's privatization, however not as mineworkers, but as teachers. These men provided an occupational counterpart to the men of the first cohort.

They had been marked by their subaltern status as government employees in a mine township built for mineworkers under corporate paternalism. At the time of my fieldwork, this cohort was characterized by social promotion and increased economic action within the residential community of Mpatamatu.

I extended my biographical approach towards my research participants to the social welfare buildings. I tried to identify traces of different periods of social experience inscribed in them. This biographical interrogation of the buildings was based on an approach proposed by Kopytoff (2011: 64) in Appadurai's seminal volume *The Social Life of Things*. In following Dawdy (2010: 768–69), I recognized that '[ruins] and dilapidated, adaptively reused buildings [were] architectural equivalents of Benjamin's outmoded commodities', merchandise he had come to see as 'semiotic vessels' during his famous observations at the arcades (Benjamin 2002: 466). The social welfare buildings were such vessels with regard to the mining company's presence in Mpatamatu, the relationship of particular social groups, and the role the buildings played in residents' lives.

The people of Mpatamatu and the social welfare buildings formed a community that I was only to understand through their 'inter-relationality', the changing linkages producing the community that both comprised material and social relations of meaning (Studdert and Walkerdine 2016: 19, 28, footnote 1). Following Myhre's revisit of 'Strathern's idea . . . that the relation simultaneously connects and divides', the social welfare buildings constitute the 'things where connections are severed and networks cut' (Myhre 2016: 2). The changing relations between Mpatamatu's residents and the buildings as well as their meaning for the relations between the experience cohorts introduced above reset the entire community. Social change interacted directly with material change.

I supplemented my fieldwork with tours to Mpatamatu's former social welfare buildings guided by my interlocutors. These visits centred on the buildings themselves. They often triggered social knowledge through the fact of my own presence at the building with my research participants: looking at a building, its construction materials and surrounding environment from the outside, and getting an impression of the rooms and spatial dimensions from the inside. I documented these tours with drawings and photography.

Over time, I grasped the township in its spatial extensiveness and infrastructural condition. I systematically collected geographical data on the location of the former social welfare buildings and the spatial arrangements of the township's sections using a global positioning system (GPS) device. This included data on the course of streets and footpaths, surface materials, streams and buildings. I compared this information with historical maps I found in the archives. The product of this mapping process is openly accessible online. Map 0.1 is a graphically enhanced township map based on OpenStreetMap (2016).

My investigation into the history of Mpatamatu and its former social welfare buildings included research in several archives. I started this process by looking

at the records stored at the RAMCOZ Receiver's Office in Luanshya. The main part of my archival work took place in the ZCCM-IH Archives in Ndola. Eventually, the corporate history of the Roan Selection Trust (RST) led me to the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) Library Archives. I supplemented my work in the archives with online research, for example to track down the development agreements sealing ZCCM's privatization, the careers of Collings and Schaerer as town planners and the history of the contractors who built Mpatamatu.

## Researching Luanshya

Conducting fieldwork on foot enabled me to move around Mpatamatu in the way its residents did. Most of them had no car, and few possessed a bicycle. Some time into my fieldwork I heard *muzungu bele*, literally 'not a real White person',<sup>16</sup> being shouted at me in Mpatamatu. My research participants disagreed on how to interpret this characterization. Some suggested that it had to do with my dark hair, while others pointed to the fact that I walked on foot in the township, something a 'real' *muzungu*, a cross-Bantu term for White persons, never did.

The ethnographic practice of walking around the township on foot helped me to cut across ensuing power hierarchies. It created moments of encounter that led to so many conversations and insights. However, it did not change the fact that I was in a 'dominating' position (Burawoy 1998: 22–23), a position I was not used to and was anxious about. I was living at a higher socio-economic level than most of the people around me. I came from and would return to a country that was considered wealthy, a country that was at the centre of international attention in the wake of the 2015/2016 refugee migration crisis from Syria to Europe. Consequently, I was regarded as being fortunate or, as one of the workers on the farm where I lived with my family put it, '*Mwakulaenda na malāki!*' 'wherever you go, you will find luck'.

My experience confirmed Schumaker's conclusion that fieldwork itself was 'politicized' and that the field was 'a constructed and negotiated space for the production of knowledge' (Schumaker 2001: 187, 227). My original research proposal had been an enquiry into Chinese–Zambian social encounters in the context of copper mining. After six months networking with CLM's management through Zambian ministries, their departments and two embassies without success, I realigned my research topic. Fieldwork access and its denial were a recurring topic in Copperbelt research (Straube 2020).

I arrived in Zambia thirty years after Ferguson (1999: xv) had conducted his fieldwork in 1985/1986. Research in and on the city of Luanshya had been conducted before and since, covering a range of classic anthropological issues, from social change to labour and women. Table 0.1 provides an overview of anthropologists who chose Luanshya as a field site.<sup>17</sup> Their contributions raised

**Table 0.1.** Luanshya as an ethnographic field site.

Years	Researcher	Main research focus
1953–1954	Epstein	Social change and the political representation of labour migrants
	Powdermaker	Social change and mass media
1963–1965	Harries-Jones	Social change and marital disputes, UNIP's rise in corporate mine townships
1978	Chauncey	Social change and women's labour
1982–1983	Mijere	Unionism and nationalism on the Copperbelt
1991–1992	Schumaker	RLI research and fieldwork
2001–2002		Corporate town planning and medical history
2007–2010	Mususa	Social change on the post-reprivatization Copperbelt

my interest and were instrumental in my own understanding of the place and of social life in Mpatamatu.

Next to these anthropological studies, all based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork in Luanshya, other research projects included field visits to the town and interviews with its residents. They helped me reconstruct the history of Luanshya and identify the structural changes in people's lives before and after the copper industry's reprivatization in 1997. Among these are Mitchell (1954) on urbanization in 1951, Perrings (1979) on Zambian labour history in 1975, Parpart (1983, 1986a, 1986b) on women in 1976, Larmer (2004) on mineworker unionism and historical research in 2002/2003, Kazimbaya-Senkwe, Mwila and Guy (2007) on water domestication in 2005, Tembo (2009) on health care and Smart (2014) on urban agriculture in 2011.

My interest in the history of Luanshya led me to realize that written accounts of the former mining town were still in the hands of the industry, namely the receivership of the first post-reprivatization mine operator RAMCOZ in Luanshya and ZCCM-IH's Archives in Ndola. Employees at the receiver's office helped me to understand the process of separating mining-related assets from so-called 'non-core social assets'. It was here that I obtained a list of the Luanshya Municipal Council (LMC), which directed my attention to the former social welfare buildings of Mpatamatu (LMC 1991). At a time when I was forced to accept CLM's denial of research permission, I got to know a resident of Mpatamatu by the name of Felix Chanda. He had grown up in the township and introduced me to its inhabitants.

From April to October 2016, I carried out fieldwork in Mpatamatu. In retrospect, with the confident feeling of having a story to tell about the township, its former social welfare buildings and its residents, I often asked myself why I did not abandon my initial project earlier and why I was so persistent in trying

to gain fieldwork access to one of CNMC's mines. I came to realize that my work in Mpatamatu was only possible because of this initial idea. The path dependency of my research project became even clearer when I looked at the time I was acquainted with the person who introduced me to Mpatamatu. In short, my research chronology substantiated the 'item of folklore' that Agar (1986: 15) pointed to when reflecting on ethnography: 'anthropologists are (in)famous at granting agencies for proposing one study and returning with another'.

## **Structuring a Book**

In this book, I seek to answer the question of what people in Mpatamatu did with the corporate remains that were left by the mine when ZCCM was broken up in 1997. This question touches upon the material environment of the township, the changing social relations inhabiting it, and the relationship between the material and the social. In this sense, I consider the former social welfare buildings to be material aspects of social life in Mpatamatu. The following chapters focus on particular social relations of agonism that serve as entry points to my study of how the former social welfare buildings were reappropriated. They make visible which particular connections between the social and the material were cut and reset. I retrace how these relations of agonism changed over time and how this transition interacted with the buildings. From being integral parts of corporate paternalism, the social welfare buildings became sites of independent social projects restructuring social life in Mpatamatu.

In Chapter 1, 'Of Company and Government', I retrace the history of Luanshya as a mining town and Mpatamatu as a mine township. The chapter follows the practices performed by corporate capital and colonial government in seeking to create a 'stable' industrial setting. This was an environment in which the company could exploit the territory's natural and human resources. The government supplied the legal framework and otherwise absorbed some of the mining companies' revenues. I attempt to establish how the social welfare buildings first came into existence and how they were used by the township residents under corporate paternalism. The chapter ends by describing the disintegration of this paternalistic setting in a process of corporate abandonment. Mpatamatu's former social welfare buildings were left to fall into ruin.

Chapter 2, 'Of Men and Women', follows the establishment of the mine township as a miners' place ruled by domestic patriarchy and corporate paternalism. I look at how a specific class of social welfare building, the community centres, were intended to shape the relationship between mining men and dependent women. I investigate how women both complied with and challenged this socio-economic hierarchy and material environment. I show how the mass retrenchments of the early 2000s affected mineworkers' lives and how women replaced men as the main economic contributors to the family household.

In the third chapter, ‘Of Miners and Teachers’, I address the exclusiveness of Mpatamatu as a corporate mine township in relation to teachers working at the township’s government schools. Starting with the case of Mpatamatu’s first clinic for government workers, I show how the township started to dissolve as an exclusive company town. I revisit the community centres where teachers had become the main sitting tenants after ZCCM’s privatization. I retrace how teachers replaced mineworkers in the social welfare buildings, protected these buildings in the face of economic decline, and reintegrated them into the community of Mpatamatu.

In Chapter 4, ‘Of Miners and Preachers’, I examine the history of leisure in Mpatamatu. I look at beer halls, clubs and the township’s sports facilities as corporate provisions for mineworkers. I introduce churches as opposing locations where residents went after work. I follow Pentecostal congregations in their conversion of former leisure facilities into houses of prayer. Moreover, I tell the story of how some mineworkers themselves became preachers. The chapter completes my investigation of how Mpatamatu’s social welfare buildings turned from a centrally controlled part of corporate infrastructure into independent private social projects.

In the concluding chapter, ‘Things Reassembled’, I revisit the findings of each chapter and relate them to my central question of how ruination and renovation in Mpatamatu unfolded. By identifying four socio-material processes in Mpatamatu, namely relocation, renovation, reintegration and reconnection, I propose an answer to what people did about what they were left with and how material reappropriation and social change were related to each other in the absence of CSR practices and government support. I show how processes of ruination converge with processes of renovation in the interaction between materiality and human agency.

## Notes

1. For the classic study of China’s ‘watershed’ year of 1949, see Cohen (2003).
2. CNMC’s name in Chinese is *Zhongguo youse kuangye jituan youxian gongsi* 中国有色矿业集团有限公司. See SASAC (2020).
3. See MOFCOM (2015) and National Council for Construction (2015). The MOFCOM list is no longer online. I suspect, in fact, that it was an internal list that was put online by mistake. It included manager names and phone numbers.
4. See Sautman (2013), Larmer and Fraser (2007) and Schatz (2006).
5. The full verse from Ovid’s *Fasti* reads *aes erat in pretio, chalybeia massa latebat*, ‘copper was prized then, iron was still hidden’. See Kline (2004).
6. ZAMEFA was owned by the US company General Cable at the time of my fieldwork. In late 2016 it was taken over by Circuit Breaker Industries Electric, owned by Reunert Limited from South Africa.
7. Hichilema and his deputy were charged with ‘seditious practices and unlawful assembly’. See *Lusaka Times* (2016).

8. The name 'Mpatamatu' is from Lamba, one of the many Bantu languages spoken in Zambia: *m-* signifies a location, *-pata* means 'to stick' and *amato* is the plural form of *ubwato*, 'ship'. The name points to the Mpata Hills west of the township with its many little seasonal streams, tributaries of the Kafue river on which people travelled by boat in the past.
9. During a 2017 visit, Lungu allotted twenty-five minutes for the entire city of Luanshya. He only drove through the townships of Roan and Mpatamatu. See Chileshe (2017).
10. Anderson (2006: 33–36) considered the 'mass ceremony' of reading newspapers to be the crux of the link between one's own everyday practices and a wider 'imagined community'. Corporate magazines fulfilled this task for mining companies and their labour force. See also Rajak (2011: 47).
11. 'Buna' is composed of *butadiene* and sodium, lat. *natrium*, and is a synonym for synthetic rubber, the plant's main product.
12. Buna was sold to the US company Dow Chemicals in 1998; see Dow (2018).
13. See Handelman (2006), with reference to Gluckman's (1940) paradigmatic article based on an extended case study.
14. Reed (2011) calls the other two of the total three epistemic modes 'realist' (Chapter 2: Reality) and 'normative' (Chapter 3: Utopia).
15. On 'experience cohorts' in the context of mining in southern Africa, see Jønsson and Bryceson (2014: 33).
16. I follow Arndt and Hornscheidt (2009: 13–14) by capitalizing both 'Black' and 'White' in order to identify them as political concepts. They refer primarily not to skin colour but to positions within uneven relations of power that need to be both reflected on and changed.
17. See Epstein (1958), Powdermaker (1962), Harries-Jones (1964, 1975), Chauncey (1981), Mijere (1985), Schumaker (2001, 2008) and Mususa (2014).