Speaking as a Colonial State: Mass Broadcasting and the Language of Development in Northern Rhodesia, 1941–1963

Neel Thakkar
Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, USA

ABSTRACT
This article analyses the production and circulation of a discourse of development via a new medium – African-language radio broadcasting – to a mass listening public by the British colonial state in Northern Rhodesia. During a period of intense urbanisation, social change, and labour organising on the Copperbelt, broadcasting furnished the means and development provided the ideological basis for a state communications strategy that sought to legitimate the colonial order. The state’s attempt to exert ideological hegemony over the public sphere relied on its articulation of a particular conception of African development, one which held out the promise of progress, but not equality, for Africans. Through an examination of the programming and activities of the Central African Broadcasting Station (CABS) from 1941 to 1963, this article shows how colonial broadcasting worked to portray the state as a necessary agent of progress while, at the same time, rhetorically placing the burden of creating development on Africans, particularly the educated urban elite. While the CABS benefitted, for a time, from its positioning as a progressive institution, its support for the white settler demand for the creation of the Central African Federation in 1953 put the limits of its gradualist politics into stark relief.

KEYWORDS
Development; colonialism; media; radio; British empire; Northern Rhodesia; Zambia; copperbelt; urbanisation

Introduction
I put another point to you. We want a happy and contented African people. Now what can the native do when he has finished his work, his own work or yours. He can get drunk if he has the money, or gamble or worse. If there’s a full moon he can dance. But most nights he can only go back to his hut, with no light and generally no ability to read even if he had light. There he can talk and think. And one of the things he can talk and think about, not very happily, is how much better off you are than he is, you with so many things he hasn’t got, including a radio to entertain you. The African...
loves music, plays, rhetoric argument – all the things that radio can put across so well. Let him have them.1

Harry Franklin, Northern Rhodesia Director of Information, in the text of a June 1949 radio broadcast.

On the weekly English-language programme of Northern Rhodesia’s Central African Broadcasting Station (CABS), Harry Franklin directly addressed the colony’s white settler population about their resistance to the state’s expanding efforts to broadcast in African languages. Repeatedly referencing the settlers’ fears of destabilising the existing white supremacist political, social, and economic order, Franklin, who was the colony’s Information Director from 1942 to 1951, sought to reassure them that state broadcasting would reinforce, not threaten, those hierarchies. It would do so by serving as a tool of social control. Not only did radio offer a source of regular distraction, Franklin argued, but it also presented a means for the state to play the role of enlightened, benevolent developer, by imparting to ‘the African’ ‘the right kind of knowledge’ on ‘the right lines – hygiene, agriculture, housing, sanitation, and so on’.2 To support his point, Franklin cited the enthusiastic reception of the CABS by those in power in places with even harsher systems of racialised labour control: by ‘Southern Rhodesian farmers and miners, who think we help to keep their labour happy’, ‘the Native Affairs branch of the Johannesburg municipality’, and ‘the Compound Manager of one of the biggest mines on the Rand’.3

Even though Franklin oversaw a variety of media projects, including the state-run newspaper and film-production unit, he believed that official broadcasting, which began in 1941, was the state’s most valuable communications channel, because of its potential to reach the largest possible audience. ‘Broadcasting is about the only way to get at them [Africans] in the mass. But surely we must get at the mass’, he argued.4 Since the landmark Copperbelt strikes of 1935 and 1940, the Northern Rhodesian state’s perception of African wage laborers had changed drastically, from quiescent and controllable by ”traditional” authorities to restive and threatening. Franklin amplified these fears in his address, which was filled with metaphors of transition: sleep to wakefulness, darkness to light, and idleness to activity. He darkly alluded to the ‘unpleasant consequences … in other parts of the world, where the native population consists of a handful of-intelligentsia and a completely ignorant black mass who can be so easily misled by a few agitators of the intelligentsia class’.5 Avoiding this outcome, Franklin indicated, required an ideologically activist state, one which intervened in people’s political consciousnesses at a fundamental level, through repeated, localised, dynamic, and culturally-specific messaging.

In a process begun in the mid-1930s and intensifying after World War II, the colonial state in Northern Rhodesia adopted an information strategy, with radio broadcasting eventually at its core, that sought to legitimate the colonial order. Through an examination of the content of colonial broadcasting in
Northern Rhodesia from 1941 to 1963, this article shows that this strategy had two key components: (1) to create and shape African publics in ways that sought to reinforce “traditional” identities and prevent the emergence of new ones, and (2) to set the boundaries of and steer public discourse in favourable or unthreatening directions. The state’s role in shaping public discourse involved the strategic withholding and mediation of information, to be sure, but it also meant articulating a wider ideological framework that aspired to hegemonic status. Broadcasting was especially crucial to this process because it was the most popular medium of information on the Copperbelt and because radio, as an infrastructure and material artifact, itself embodied the discourse of development it propagated.

The prospect of creating such a link with the colony’s African public presented, among other issues, a major challenge of self-definition for the colonial state. On what grounds did the colonial state – and the wider racial, political, social, and economic orders it protected – attempt to justify its existence to colonised people? How did officials think about structuring such a public, which, in addition to the fact of racial segregation, varied in terms of location (rural vs urban), class, language, gender, age, and politics? Moreover, how could the state bring such a public into being and address it in such a way as to hold its attention while adhering to its ideological and political commitments to a structurally unequal society? For an empire committed to effecting ‘hegemony on a shoestring’ through the policy of indirect rule in Africa through the early twentieth century, these were relatively new, but urgent, questions from the 1930s onward, given the speed of social change in Africa as well as the growing global perception of European colonialism as illegitimate. They were perhaps nowhere more acutely felt in British colonial Africa than in Northern Rhodesia, where urbanisation was most rapid, labour organising and actions furthest-reaching, and mass media widespread.

“Development” was the central concept underpinning the colonial state’s information strategy. Earlier scholarship has shown how development became the dominant legitimating ideology for the late colonial state, even as the concept’s meanings remained ambiguous and inchoate. This article approaches colonial development from a different perspective: its propagation to mass audiences. Specifically, it focuses on the CABS’s role in producing and circulating a discourse of “developmentalism”, which required the station to interpret, improvise, and translate the concept of development into a coherent ideology comprehensible to a mass public. The article further argues that colonial developmental ideology, as it was translated to African audiences, did not put forward a path where the social life and living standards of the colony would necessarily converge with those of the metropole. Rather, it offered a vision of progress without equality: one in which African people would largely continue to occupy a distinct, subordinated role in the social, economic, and political order, and in which gains would be slow, limited, and reliant
mainly on “self-help”, not state intervention. Especially during its early years of mass popularity, from 1948 to 1952, the CABS was able to capitalise on the perception that colonial rule could perhaps be flexible enough to accommodate significant social, economic, and political changes. By late 1952, however, this was no longer the case. Forced to advocate for the white settler demand for the creation of the Central African Federation (1953–1963) against strong African opposition, the CABS lost whatever credibility it had earned with its listeners during the preceding decade.10

These arguments intervene in a number of linked historiographical literatures. While histories of twentieth-century development have boomed in the last two decades, they have so far remained focused on high politics, international institutions, or academic knowledge production.11 Moreover, given much of the field’s roots in the history of American foreign relations, the emergence and operation of “development” within European empires has often been overlooked in favour of a Washington-centric, Cold War genealogy. By contrast, historians of the British colonial state have identified the centrality of the development idea as the justification for empire from the late 1930s onward, but have focused on its elaboration and contestation within the colonial bureaucracy, not its propagation to colonial subjects.12 Meanwhile, earlier scholarship on the struggle between African workers and metropolitan capital as well as the colonial state on the Copperbelt has concentrated on specific forms of labour organisation and mobilisation as means to map the emergence of a working-class consciousness, paying less attention to wider social dynamics like media consumption, even though these were also important ideological tools for colonial interests.13 Finally, several studies of media and information policy in late colonial Africa have, with some exceptions, focused more on radio as an infrastructure rather than a transmitter of content with particular ideological aims, communicated in often surprising and flexible ways.14 Still others have paid attention to the content of colonial broadcasting, but do not go far enough beyond labelling it “propaganda” – an accurate but analytically limiting category – to examine its specific ideological contours and its relationship to its social, spatial, and political context.15

The Labour Question, Urbanisation, and the Emergence of Colonial Information Policy

The Copperbelt’s meteoric economic rise, beginning in the mid-1920s, was fundamental in driving transformations in African society that, in turn, forced the colonial state into new strategies of cultivating ideological support for its regime. Among these strategies was state intervention in the production and distribution of information. The colonial state understood growing African resistance to poor working and living conditions on the Copperbelt as signs of misunderstanding, irrationality, lack of knowledge, and manipulation
rather than responses to exploitation. It carried these assumptions about Africans on the Copperbelt into its thinking about the structure, forms, and content of African-language media. These media efforts, begun in the aftermath of the 1935 strike, were in the vanguard of a larger imperial project, which picked up steam elsewhere with the onset of World War II, of recasting the colonial state’s relationship to African society.

The growth of the Copperbelt was rapid. Mining companies began construction on the Copperbelt in 1926, with the first mines going into production in 1931.16 People from across central Africa came to work on the mines in large numbers.17 In 1930, there were almost 22,000 African workers on the Copperbelt, in addition to a total European population of about 4000.18 Even after a precipitous drop during the Great Depression, by 1939 there were 87,000 Africans living in the five major mining towns, a number that rose to more than 172,000 ten years later.19 During this early period, the state left governance of these new mines and townships mostly to the corporations that owned them. Especially before 1935, the colonial government confined its interventions to Copperbelt living and working conditions to the legal sphere, on one hand setting some ‘minimal standards for the [mining] compounds … which the mines had little difficulty meeting’, and, on the other hand, passing legislation that attempted, with limited success, to restrict the mobility of African workers.20

Urban life fostered significant and broad-based social changes among Africans on the Copperbelt. A new language, CiCopperbelti, developed from Bemba roots and was used to communicate across linguistic groups.21 The common subordination of Africans to whites fostered the emergence of a shared political consciousness and identity.22 The millenarian Watchtower movement combined resistance to colonial exploitation with spiritual struggle, competing for a leadership role in urban African society against institutions like the Native Welfare Society, which took a more collaborationist approach to the agencies of the colonial state and to European missionaries.23 Despite the colonial state’s opposition to the presence of women on the Copperbelt – which it expected would lead to permanently-urban African populations – keeping a high proportion of married workers was a ‘pillar of corporate labour strategy’, because companies presumed that married women had a conservative influence on their husbands’ behaviour.24 While women who migrated to the towns largely depended on the support of employed men for housing, their ability to change partners and earn money allowed them a considerable amount of autonomy.25

In this rapidly changing social context, the labour strikes of 1935 and 1940 exposed the vast gaps that had emerged between corporate and state methods of control and African worker consciousness. Though the character of the two strikes differed, both marked the Copperbelt as a site of racial tension that threatened the prevailing political economic system. In 1935, the state raised taxes in an attempt to reduce the number of laborers on the
Copperbelt. This measure resulted in coordinated but informally-organised strikes and work stoppages lasting almost a week at Nkana, Mufulira, and Luan-shya, shocking both the government and the mining companies.26 In 1940, the corporations and the state were caught off guard again, this time by an organised strike with ‘a coherent set of demands, an effective direction, and a wide consensus on the tactics to be pursued’.27 These strikers dismissed the company-appointed “tribal elders”, who had been installed in the 1930s in an effort to administer African workers according to colonial ideas about traditional authority, and instead elevated a small set of leaders to speak on their behalf.28

In each case, however, the government emerged confused – wilfully or not – about the causes of African unrest. Despite ample evidence that the strikers were largely motivated by material grievances, the commission appointed to investigate the 1935 strike suggested that ‘disintegrating influences’ and ‘subversive doctrines’, such as those of the Watchtower movement, coming to bear upon an ideologically susceptible African population increasingly comprised of ‘gamblers, thieves, and the like’ were the most important conditioning factors for what occurred.29 In the case of 1940, another investigatory commission argued that Africans ‘withdrew their labour’ without advancing ‘any concrete demands’, while denying the legitimacy of the negotiating bodies created by the miners, such as the Committee of Seventeen at Mufulira.30 In fact, the emergence of leaders among African workers alarmed colonial observers, who saw them as figures who could ‘control the mob, instruct it in its demands, publish grievances so that they were on everyone’s lips’.31

In other words, the colonial state understood the strikes in the Copperbelt primarily as a failure on its part of information control and mediation. In response, it began to take steps to assert itself as an intermediary between Africans and the material they read, heard, and saw. A 1939 Colonial Office report read:

Native labour in the Copperbelt represents the most important field of publicity. It will be most important to obviate the unrest which tends to occur through ignorant misunderstanding of emergency regulations and the spread of panic rumours and false reports.32

The castigation of ‘misunderstanding’, ‘panic rumours’, and ‘false reports’ was a persistent theme in official responses to unrest in Northern Rhodesia, reflecting the colonial state’s need to preserve a sense of its essential beneficence. In this view, African resistance, however organised, was the product of misunderstanding and misinformation rather than legitimate grievances. Immediately following the 1935 strike, the government founded Mutende, a newspaper printed in English, Bemba, Tonga, Lozi, and Nyanja, and began an African Literature Committee, which published religious texts intended to counter the influence of Watchtower.33
Yet, even if the colonial state established new information outlets out of a desire to suppress what it perceived as “misinformation”, these new outlets could not play a purely negative, censorial role. They also had to articulate their own ideological agenda, whether explicitly or implicitly. The colonial state had come to this conclusion as early as 1937, with the release of the report of the Plymouth Committee on broadcasting. The report, emphasising the value of ‘repeated projection…of British culture and ideas’ in addition to ‘enlightenment and education’ on topics like health and agriculture, put forward mass colonial broadcasting as desirable policy objective for the first time.34 When Northern Rhodesia became the first African colony in the British empire to achieve the goal of mass broadcasting, it was celebrated by figures like J. Grenfell Williams, the head of the BBC’s Colonial Service, who called it ‘a basis for a discussion of a broadcasting service for fundamental education’.35 Appealing as the rhetoric of ‘repeated projection … of British culture and ideas’ and of ‘fundamental education’ appeared, however, Northern Rhodesia also showed radio broadcasting could not be the one-way transmission administrators in London envisioned it to be. The project of “educating” Africans in the purported ideas and culture of the empire was always in tension with its stark structural inequalities.

From Radio Lusaka to the ‘Saucepan Special’

Following the 1935 strike, Copperbelt mine operators pushed the state to install broadcasting links between Lusaka and the mines in order to preserve communications with the capital in the event of further unrest.36 Though the two sides could not agree on financial terms at the time, the lingering fear of strikes and the approach of war prompted the government to begin building its first broadcasting station in Lusaka, which opened in 1941. Part of the imperial effort to ensure colonial support in the war, Radio Lusaka broadcasted a half hour of war news in different African languages each evening, provided equipment did not malfunction and the power supply did not fail.

A large capital infusion from the 1945 Colonial Development and Welfare Act enabled the expansion of Northern Rhodesian broadcasting after the war.37 To suit its new role – broadcasting to African listeners in Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland – the station in Lusaka was renamed the Central African Broadcasting Station.38 Broadcasts were to be made for two-and-a-half hours daily – rotating between Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, Lozi, Ndebele, Shona, and English, depending on the day – on a powerful transmitter.39 But the lack of listening infrastructure, which had been the basic stumbling block of all previous colonial African-language broadcasting efforts, remained a fundamental problem.40 The cheapest receivers available in Lusaka at the time cost £45 – more than almost any African could afford to pay – while Franklin deemed community loudspeakers impractical.41
On leave in Britain, Franklin spent his time evangelising about the potential benefits of producing a cheap, durable radio set for use in Britain’s colonies to a succession of manufacturing firms. He found a partner in July 1948, who created a set, nicknamed the ‘Saucepan Special’, which could be sold for £6 5s: about one-and-a-half month’s salary for a miner. Thus we pioneered African broadcasting, in the same way, though with a different objective, that others before us had pioneered the continent itself, Franklin wrote, invoking the glory of imperial conquest even as he tried to distance himself from its intentions. An initial run of 3500 sets was a runaway success, and an estimated 20,000 sets had been issued by 1950. A shortage persisted well into 1952, by which point the Northern Rhodesian Information Department estimated the CABS’s total audience at more than 90,000.

The arrival of the Saucepan Special made radio by far the most consumed form of media on the Copperbelt. Though its earliest adopters were clerks, teachers, and others in the educated elite, it spread quickly in urban society. By 1954, ‘[w]ireless ownership was spreading rapidly down the social pyramid. … Radio was becoming a “must,” a coveted symbol of status among a wide range of people’. The popularity of the Saucepan Special receiver increased interest in broadcasting in other parts of the British empire as well. Franklin received visitors in Lusaka from as far afield as ‘Paris and the Polynesian islands’, as well as from BBC administrators and broadcasters who reported on the Northern Rhodesian ‘experiment’ to audiences in Britain. Concurrently, ministers in Whitehall discussed how to increase production of the device for export to ‘almost every British colony and to most of the countries of the Middle East’.

Audiences, Programming, and Ideology

Through its investment in the production, transmission, and reception of radio, the colonial state in Northern Rhodesia created a space for itself to exercise influence on the dynamic processes of change on the Copperbelt. The state’s control of key decisions about the form of broadcasting, such as the languages used, types of programmes aired, and the personalities given airtime, enabled it to exercise significant power to structure radio audiences along its preferred lines. Meanwhile, the content of broadcasting reflected the state’s broader shift towards an ideology of rule based on development. The material broadcasted on the CABS is richly documented, especially in its magazine, The African Listener, yet this archive has not been explored by earlier scholarship. Drawing on these and other archival and published materials, this section focuses on the content of broadcasting to analyse how the state deployed particular strategies to attempt to define the scope and the terms of acceptable politics through the framework of development.

Four strategies stood out. First, the CABS sought above all to portray British rule as legitimate. It did so by presenting an idealised view of colonial rule that...
compared favourably to other existing political systems and regimes. Second, through its decisions about the form and content of broadcasting, the CABS worked against the de-linking of urban and rural identities by bringing in elements of “rural” culture into the city in order to reinforce essentialised “tribal” identities. By emphasising cultural and linguistic divides among urban Africans and focusing on Africans’ rural “roots”, the CABS sought to place these aspects of identity at the centre of Africans’ political consciousness and worldview. Third, the CABS worked to define the scope of development and public debate in a way that excluded questions of structural inequality. While, for a time, the CABS largely avoided explicit endorsements of white supremacy on its airwaves, it implicitly supported that hierarchy through its narrow focus on “apolitical” developmental issues specifically within African communities, such as education and hygiene, while avoiding discussion of structural social inequalities. And finally, the CABS sought to appeal particularly to the increasingly prominent class of African urban elites, rhetorically investing them with moral responsibility for the welfare of other African people while also diminishing their status relative to whites. In doing so, the CABS promoted a hierarchical conception of society that worked to create another layer of intermediation between the colonial state and the mass of society.

In spite of its status as a state-owned media channel, the CABS sought to create a perception of distance from the state as well as from the white settler community in order to also portray itself as an advocate for African interests. This triangulation was difficult to achieve in the best of circumstances, but it was not unique. It mirrored the contradictory situation of white liberals on the Copperbelt, who were concentrated in parts of the civil service (including the Information Department) and in bodies like the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, as well as that of the colonial developmentalist project as a whole. This colonial liberal perspective retained racial hierarchy as a core principle, but it framed “whiteness” at least partly in terms of attributes like Western education, culture, and lifestyles. Despite the racism and condescension inherent in this approach, the liberal-colonialist worldview, when fused with the developmentalist promise of the early postwar period, offered a degree of ideological coherence that also had space for some limited kinds of African advancement and claims-making.

**Imagining Publics**

By the late 1940s, after two decades of insisting otherwise, the Northern Rhodesian government came to accept the reality of a permanent urban African population on the Copperbelt. This recognition had a mix of practical and strategic roots: settlement on the Copperbelt had been increasing for years despite official protests, a sizable African urban elite sought to create a “respectable” and legitimate place for itself in the towns, and rising demand for copper
during and after the war led colonial administrators to recognise the value of a stabilised skilled workforce. Yet accepting the fact of African urbanisation did not resolve colonial fears about seeing Africans outside of the “traditional” structures of authority that had been made to comprise the foundation of British colonialism in Africa. In fact, given the colonial acceptance of what James Ferguson has labelled a ‘metanarrative of transition’, or the idea that the permanent settlement of Africans in cities necessarily implied a movement from the “tribal” and rural to the “modern” and urban, the recognition that urbanisation was a permanent and indeed accelerating process forced officials to think seriously about the potential perils of ‘transition’.

Radio broadcasting was a key channel for the colonial state’s attempts to establish structures of authority that could function in the urban environments of the Copperbelt. As such, programming on the CABS had an urban bias, in the prescriptive sense that it reflected broadcasting officials’ ideas about what their imagined urban audience needed to hear. To colonial broadcasters in the postwar period, the prototypical listener of the CABS was someone who had migrated to a Copperbelt town from a rural area, had achieved a measure of security and stability, and was at risk of becoming “de-tribalised” because of his or her assimilation into the culture and society of the city. These were members of the industrial working class in higher-paid, skilled positions as well as mission-educated Africans working as teachers, clerks, or nurses. Not only were they better able to afford radios, but they also constituted an emerging “elite” urban class that the colonial state sought to co-opt to try to ward off more radical reforms based on racial unity in favour of a gradualist, developmentalist politics. As Parpart notes, ‘By the end of the war, the demands and aspirations of the settled African working population, especially the elite, had moved to center stage on the colonial agenda. Indeed, they were seen as the key to Africa’s postwar development’.

Past scholarship has emphasised the legal and material dimensions of the colonial state’s postwar efforts at “stabilising” a proportion of African workers, focusing, for example, on the state’s increasing investment in urban housing for Africans and its decision to certify urban marriages. But stabilisation was also an ideological and cultural project. An account published on the editorial page of The African Listener in March 1953, reflecting on a recent visit by CABS staff to the Copperbelt, offered a revealing discussion of how the station imagined its audience. Describing the region as ‘a busy and progressive piece of the country’ whose ‘four towns are like one great town, joined by thirty or forty miles of tarmac’, the magazine asked:

What do the people who come from their villages to the Copperbelt and to other towns think of it all? We know that some of them wish they could go back, but stay to earn money. Some do go back and many send their children home. Some get used to it and like it, and stay, and their children grow up there. Such children have no knowledge of village life: are they missing something essential? This, and other questions dealing with
town life have often been the subject of discussions and debates. One thing we are sure of: people need some sort of a “background”. This is a difficult word, but it is an important one. It means, not only the way in which we have been brought up, but also our parents and our grandparents, and those who lived before them, their way of living, their customs and their culture. Children who grow up in towns or countries that are far from their real homes – the homes of their parents – do not realise what they lack, but they lack it just the same, and it is a valuable thing.56

Without steady and repeated exposure to the culture and practices of their ‘real homes’ – the homes of their parents’, urban residents were told, they were psychologically adrift, lacking in something ‘essential’ to being human, whether they realised it or not.

One of the important functions of broadcasting, the editorial continued, was to link urban listeners with their rural origins.

While [broadcasting] gives us information on what is happening in the world and instruction on better ways of living and looking after the land it also provides a lot to remind listeners who are a long way from home that they are members if a tribe and have a personality of their own. Village and district news, some of the material used in “African Forum”… tribal songs and dance music, talks recorded in the village, and even the exchange of news and greetings in “Zimene Mwatifuns’a” help to remind people – whether they realize it or not – that they belong to a tribe with a character of its own; something to be proud and pleased about. This is one of the many things that we can thank broadcasting for.57

Far from embracing the kinds of “cosmopolitan” identities that became signatures of urban life on the Copperbelt, then, the CABS took the position that true sources of ‘personality’ and ‘character’ for urban Africans was to be found within their own ‘tribe’ and ‘village’, no matter how far removed they were from them. As shown in more detail below, this understanding of the relationship between village and town was reproduced in the CABS’s programming, with the village taken to be the producer of “authentic” culture and the town to be its consumer.

Another indication of the kind of audience the CABS worked to cultivate and mould can be found by looking at the cover images of its listener magazines. The cover images spotlighted African men, women, and children in Northern Rhodesia, and, later, the Federation, looking happy and engaged in typical middle-class urban pastimes, domestic activities, and occupations, often with a Saucepan Special prominently displayed in the frame. During the eighty-issue, six-year print run of The African Listener, all but sixteen of the covers fit this pattern, featuring, for example, African radio personalities, Africans employed in higher-status professions such as nursing, teaching, policing, or the military, African children at well-equipped schools, or in scenes of middle-class domesticity and pursuits, such as ballroom dancing, rugby, or celebrating Christmas dressed up in a Santa Claus costume.58 All except a handful of cover images showed urban residents or urban areas, and white people were
The point was not to reflect African society in Northern Rhodesia as it really was, but to provide what the CABS considered an aspirational vision for society. Peter Fraenkel, an early European employee of the CABS who spent more than a decade at the station, recorded a conversation to this effect with Father Ritter, a German Catholic missionary. ‘You could hold up the good life by example, by bringing people worth imitating to the microphone’, Ritter said. ‘You can influence the minds of people enormously’. The cover of the October 1952 issue of the magazine offered a representative example of the social, cultural, and economic sensibility the CABS sought to realise in its audience. The photo depicted an affectionate family of three – a man, a woman, and a child, all dressed in Western clothing – gathered around their Saucepan Special in the evening, smiling in the direction of the radio, which stood upon a shelf that held a bundle of notebooks, pens, and newspapers. Some teacups and a men’s suit, hung on a rod in the wall, completed the scene.

Fraenkel chose this image as one of a handful to reproduce in his memoir, with the caption: ‘Listening family: “With a Saucepan Special radio I have all
the world in my hut’’. Actual African listening audiences did not mirror this vision of domesticity. Listening was often a communal event, with each family-owned radio usually reaching at least one person outside the household. But, as Debra Spitulnik has written, the image communicated a ‘particular understanding of domestic life and bourgeois respectability’. In this sense, it offered a powerful visualisation of the promises of development the station articulated verbally. At the same time, Fraenkel’s choice of the word ‘hut’, with its connotations of primitivism, to describe the family’s residence undercut the aspirational qualities of the photo. Africans, no matter their social class or ways of life, needed to be tied to their “tribal” roots. In the CABS’s own vision of its project, the radio stood as a marker of a particular, subordinate African modernity: one with scope for progress, but not equality.

Produce the News

Fear over Africans’ access to news was the chief cause of opposition to the CABS among settlers and some colonial officials. These anxieties were heightened by Franklin’s refusal to restrict Saucepan Specials to the CABS’s wavelength alone, which he argued would cause listeners to doubt the CABS’s broadcasts. ‘Many of Franklin’s superiors looked upon his schemes with disapproval’, Fraenkel wrote. ‘They knew the African … and the African would never want such a set or understand what was broadcast, or if he did he would listen to Moscow.’ While these arguments did not prevail, the station did treat news programming with special caution: news items were always composed by European employees before being translated by their African counterparts, and, at Southern Rhodesia’s insistence, an inter-territorial board reviewed programmes in advance to advise whether their distribution should be limited to particular areas or scrapped altogether. Against the hard-line opponents to African broadcasting, officials at the CABS argued that a broadcasting channel that was perceived as legitimate would do more to enhance the reputation of the state than complete censorship or unvarnished propaganda. But the legitimacy of the CABS had to coexist with the station’s commitment to the legitimation of the state. In pursuing these often-opposed objectives, the CABS focused on creating a broader narrative framework of colonial development that would enable the station to leave listeners with the sense of continual progress and minimise shameful or scandalous events as aberrant.

The CABS was not shy in discussing its approach to framing the news, at least in its broad outlines. In two editorials, published in April 1952 and September 1955, the station laid out its reasoning to the public. In the first editorial, which began by noting the occurrence of a recent arts festival and the openings of a hospital and a medical dispensary, the author admitted that ‘as far as important news of the last few weeks is concerned’ these events ‘are very
small things compared with some of our recent front-page news, which has often been unpleasant and sometimes alarming’. Yet the editorialist argued that while ‘Such events are big news at the time … in a short time we find it hard to remember what all the excitement was about. But good news has a habit of continuing in the mind, especially if we have a permanent reminder. It might be a good thing to concentrate on the good news that we read about and hear about (and it is very plentiful) a little more’. Similarly, the 1955 editorial announcing that the magazine would re-print some items from the month’s news broadcasts stated that:

> We shall only try to select, or ‘spotlight’ news that may be useful to remember. Some items may seem small in relation to others. Why include news of a successful coffee-grower and a progressive African minister with plans made by experts for enlarging a university, or the building of a new dam? We suppose it is because they are all doing good and lasting work. Perhaps we shall be inclined to pick out the good news rather than the bad. This is because we believe that the good things that make the good news have a more lasting effect.

Such statements made it clear that the CABS viewed news broadcasts as opportunities for morally instructing the public rather than informing it. In its rhetoric, it marginalised the significance of important political developments that contradicted the state’s narrative of progress by labelling them as fleeting and forgettable, whereas a new government building or a new agricultural technique implemented represented lasting impacts.

As much as some might have liked the station to linger over the steady drip of news about progress, officials at the CABS, particularly in its most ideologically liberal phase prior to Federation, felt they had to provide enough sufficiently “objective” news to retain their audience. For a short period, from 1952 to 1953, this included offering daily, ten-minute relays of BBC news broadcasts, as well as independently reporting on regional news. Quoting Michael Kittermaster, who was Broadcasting Officer from 1948 onward, Fraenkel wrote:

> What makes our listeners pleased that we now relay the BBC news? The same listeners often admit that they only understand a small part of the English, but although they’re unsophisticated, they can see that the BBC is independent and outside the African political squabbles. We must strive to get such a reputation too.

Kittermaster enlisted himself in this work directly in 1953, when he travelled to Kenya to cover the Mau Mau rebellion. While the CABS again faced calls to ignore the uprising, Kittermaster argued that his reporting could serve to displace the ‘distorted versions’ of events that ‘filter[ed] down to the illiterates’ from reports printed in English-language newspapers. In a February 1953 broadcast reproduced in the next month’s *The African Listener*, Kittermaster described the Mau Mau rebellion as an irrational, self-harming spectacle, whose roots defied analysis. ‘The murders and atrocities which have been,
and are being, committed among the Kikuyu are ghastly and brutal beyond
description’, he said, ‘and the greatest sufferers are the Kikuyu themselves’.
In contrast to this violence, Kittermaster pointed to others, ‘both African and
European’, who ‘were reasonable and tolerant – shall I say, men of goodwill?’
In concluding his report, Kittermaster cast these men, who supported the colo-
nial state, or at worst disagreed civilly, as the best hope for Africa to escape the
‘mess’ it was in. After this brief dispatch, the issue of Mau Mau disappeared,
receiving no reference in any articles or listener letters in The African Listener
through at least the end of 1953.

In occasionally covering such world events of exceptional importance, the
CABS hoped to demonstrate to its audience its capacity to act at least somewhat
independently from the interests of the colonial state and of the settlers.
However, such departures were rare. In general, the CABS ‘tried to keep politics
(and until now that had simply meant white politics) out of broadcasting as
much as possible. … The time came when we had to try to keep out African
politics too’, Franklin wrote in his memoir, in a reference to the turmoil in
the run up to and after the creation of the Central African Federation.
Indeed, judging by the station’s listener magazine, the space for public
comment on the CABS was extremely circumscribed. With a handful of excep-
tions, every letter published in The African Listener in 1953, for example, related
to one of just four themes: (1) proposed changes to programming schedules; (2)
requests to broadcast in more languages; (3) the technical needs of radio-listen-
ing; and (4) letters of appreciation. In reality, as Fraenkel documented, many of
the letters the station received sharply criticised colonial economic and racial
domination. To quote just two of the letters, which were not printed: “Why
is it that in some shops Africans are not allowed inside to see the goods but
are served through a hatch? If we are dirty, is not our money also dirty?”
“Why are our African politicians not made ministers of the government?”

If such editorial omissions or elisions about high-political issues formed a
(very visible) minority of news coverage, much of the rest bolstered the town-
country connection the station worked to inscribe into its audience. For
example, the CABS’s most popular programme was Zimene Mwatifunsa
(‘Yours for the Asking’), which served as a broadcasted community bulletin
board: a venue for listeners to write in to announce news of births, deaths,
marriages, and changes of address. Labelling this programming ‘parish-
pump news’, Kittermaster nonetheless noted that ‘[f]or many of our listeners
in the towns it provides an important link to the tribal areas from which
they’ve come’. As the African broadcaster A.S. Masiye described, the
station ‘constantly’ sent recording teams to remote rural areas because the col-
lected material served as ‘a meaningful feedback between villagers and the
urban people; between the mass of the population and the officials whose
work it is to channel national efforts into desired and productive social
activities’.
Additionally, by weaving local and global news into a single thread, the CABS conveyed a sense of Northern Rhodesians’ active participation – of bustle and progress – in the larger world context. As one urban listener told Hortense Powdermaker, an American anthropologist:

I bought a radio so that I could listen and hear all that is being said in Bemba from the different parts of the world, and especially from my home. I like to hear of things which have been improved or new things in my country such as dams, schools, and hospitals. Without any time wasted, the whole world becomes aware of such news.75

The listener’s evident pride in belonging to a linguistic community, as well as his or her emphasis on relaying news of Northern Rhodesia’s development to the world, indicated how the ideological function of news broadcast extended beyond simple information control. Radio’s ability to project a country’s narrative of progress beyond its borders indicated a level of development that could serve to validate the state’s purported mission to lead Africans along a path of self-governance and increased prosperity.

Teaching “Progress”

In addition to the ‘Saucepan’ and the wayaleshi, radio sometimes went by the nickname of the ‘Great Teacher’ in letters to the CABS, to the delight of the station’s administrators.76 In contrast to the indirect nature of influence exercised by news or musical programming, “educational” programmes were more explicit attempts at inculcating the ideology of development in the station’s audience. The process of designing these programmes could be elaborate, involving both European and African employees, and including multiple kinds of research, such as the distribution of printed surveys to listeners as well as smaller group testing.77

Educational programmes could be classified into two categories. The first category spoke in a global, social-scientific register and elaborated a framework for interpreting the world around the idea of progress. African listeners were encouraged to locate themselves within this framework, relating their modes of living and conditions of rule both to an early stage in a linear, Western narrative of development as well as to present-day communist societies, which were depicted as particularly autocratic and unfree. These kinds of programmes tried to depict European colonial rule as a natural and beneficent condition for less-developed places. The second category of educational programming focused on reforming individual and local practices of living, discussing topics like hygiene, the education of girls, and agricultural practices. The station pushed Africans to internalise development as an ideal that depended on their actions as individuals for its progressive realisation. In doing so, the CABS de-politicised development by minimising the state’s role in improving material conditions.
The historical and social scientific analysis aired on the CABS depicted the prevailing order as the product of processes of evolution that were still ongoing, with the colonial state as the chief engine of progress. Indeed, colonial ideologues argued these processes had stalled out in Africa prior to the arrival of European rule. Talks on history and politics emphasised the persistence of “tribalism” in Africa and its “backwardness” relative to the modernity of Europe. For example, when introducing the CABS’s 1950 ‘Broadcast Series on Bantu Tribes’, Kittermaster began the talks in this way: ‘Now before we begin talking about individual tribes we should ask “Who are the Bantu?” “Where do they live?” “Where do they come from?” In other words, “Who are you?” and “Where do you come from?”’ In other words, “Who are you?” and “Where do you come from?” In other words, “Who are you?” and “Where do you come from?” In other words, “Who are you?” and “Where do you come from?” In other words, “Who are you?” and “Where do you come from?” In other words, “Who are you?” and “Where do you come from?”

In other broadcasts, focusing on Africa’s relation to the world, the station sought to induce listeners to look past the injustices of the recent past and present in order to see the larger historical arc of progress purportedly underlying them. For instance, during the mid-1950s, Fraenkel wrote a series of talks targeted at the ‘intelligentsia’ about the ‘mysteries of constitutional history’. But the story was not told in a conventional way:

I started, not with the Greek city states, but with African tribal councils at which every adult may speak, moved on to the more centralized tyrannies of the Zulu and Ndebele, and then switched to the Britain of the Tudors and the Stuarts and the way parliament came to be dominant, and how the franchise was gradually extended as education became more widespread. … I tried to show how only an educated and wideawake electorate could preserve its liberties and finally, how local and tribal government in Africa was the training-ground for proper democracy.

By placing an ahistorical narrative of the development of government in Africa in a historical framework, the CABS appropriated African “tradition” for the purposes of justifying colonial rule.

The second variety of educational programming brought the station’s macroscopic presentation of the world and of the past into the realm of bodily practices and daily behaviour. Campaigns aiming to “modernise” African society in areas like hygiene, girls’ education, and agricultural practices, such as the five-year effort the Information Department launched in 1950, also allowed broadcasters to mentally suspend, if only partly and temporarily, the contradictions of their own commitments to an unjust colonial-racial power structure in favour of a clearer sense of moral purpose. These programmes were aimed in particular at the African educated elite, whom the colonial state hoped to deputise as a developmental class. In a 1949 broadcast on ‘Land and Native Development’, for example, the official J.S. Moffat emphasised that the state’s stationing of European subject-matter experts on topics like health, education, and agriculture in Northern Rhodesia was ‘not to develop the Africans but to help the Africans develop in their own way’:

I want educated Africans in particular to study our plans and to understand them fully. I want them to keep in touch with the Development Teams and to tell them
the things the people in the villages are ready to do. ... I want them to explain to the rural African why he needs better gardens; better cattle, sheep, and fowls; proper sanitation, good houses, practical education, and what he must do to get them.81

Moffat urged listeners not only to act as intermediaries between the state and the population at large, but also to become the first adopters of the practices preached by the "experts" in order to have credibility as promoters of these ideas to others. Claiming that Northern Rhodesia would ‘develop and change more in the next ten years than it has done in the past hundred’, Moffat stated that, ‘[i]n that time, the African will occupy the place he has earned for himself’.82 In the vision of development he depicted, the colonial state was both essential as a source of instruction and yet marginal in terms of the extent of its material commitments or its responsibility in attaining developmental outcomes.

The Federation Backlash and the Breakdown of Colonial Developmentalism

The Central African Federation became imaginable in 1948, when Roy Welensky, leader of Northern Rhodesia’s settler community, proposed that federation, rather than amalgamation, serve as the starting point of negotiations.83 More semantic than substantial, this concession held out the illusory promise of continuing to shield Africans in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland from the especially abusive “native policies” of Southern Rhodesia while sating settler demands to expand their political and economic power across central Africa. By 1951, the concept of federation – packaged with promises to protect African interests – had won acceptance within the British government.84 Subsequent negotiations, however, eroded such protections almost completely.

The state’s embrace of the federation proposal cast the limits of developmentalism as a legitimating ideology for colonial rule into sharp relief. The notions of African “progress”, however slow-moving, and the state as a “progressive” agent, however flawed, that state media, including the CABS, had promoted were cast aside to meet the perceived demands of a greater geopolitical and economic strategy. The abandonment of these ideals, readily apparent by 1952, had significant consequences for the CABS’s work.85 For the CABS’s liberal European staff, it was no longer easy to understand their work as essentially sympathetic to African development. For the station’s African employees, the changed political circumstances resulted not only in a loss of personal conviction about their work, but also in a new sense of danger from the public’s anger.

Protesting the growing political pressure on the station from settlers and the state, Franklin resigned as Director of Information in November 1951. He wrote: ‘By the end of the 1940s our instructions were to assure them that Federation would never happen without their consent. But it began to look as
though it would. If it did we would presumably have to tell them what a splen-
did thing it was. … What would they think of us?  Franklin wondered. ‘A great deal had been happening in the last year or two that we had not reported either from the broadcasting station or *Mutende*’.  Unable to report on the political situation, *Mutende* was shut in 1952, while the daily relay of the BBC news was dropped in 1953, ostensibly because it was ‘open to misinterpretation’ on account of the ‘speed at which it was read’. Ten minutes of African news, ‘read at a slower speed’, took its place. Meanwhile, ‘African Forum’, a weekly programme that featured white and black panellists debating social issues, also came to an abrupt end in December 1952.

As a decision on federation loomed, the station was pressured into propa-
gandising in favour of it. Some of the harbingers of unrest that had first prompted the creation of the Information Department reappeared, including rumours, terror, and superstition – in particular, accusations of vampirism – focused on Africans serving the colonial state. ‘Then the whole vast terror found a new focus: us!’ Fraenkel wrote. ‘How could the announcers broadcast “bad news,” news which displeased Africans, unless they had lost all their will-
power? How else could they be made to read pro-Federation propaganda on the air?’  African broadcasters, who were the most visible representatives of the CABS, bore the brunt of public anger. ‘Why us?’ Fraenkel quoted Pepe Zulu, a Nyanja announcer, as asking. ‘I know they’ve mistrusted other departments … But we, we’ve always been popular. We bring them education and entertain-
ment and we don’t even ask a license-fee. Why pick on us now?’

Angry anonymous letters sent to the station provided some reasons. One writer accused African broadcasters of ‘selling your brothers to Yengwe’, a European rumoured to catch and sell Africans. Another wrote: ‘you wanted to kill Nkumbula you even received revolvers from your Master the General Prisendent of Capricornists. … But mind out We are still on the meeting, you shall see one of you he will be killed you are nine in number you are all civil servants here is your names …’. Linking CABS broadcasters to the Capricornists, a multi-racial group distrusted by many for its support of federa-
tion, the writer expressed a widely-shared sense that African broadcasters like Edward Kateka and Alick Nkhata, who enjoyed great public respect, had betrayed Africans. ‘The faith that our audience once had in our broadcasting station had collapsed completely’, Fraenkel wrote. ‘Our recording-vans had their tyres punctured in remote villages. People refused to record for us. If they could be persuaded to do so, many of their songs had the refrain, ‘We don’t want Federation’.

In the immediate run-up to and wake of federation, the CABS found it much harder to retain the same ideologically hegemonic aspirations that it held during the early postwar years. At the same time, the Federation government continued to invest heavily in African broadcasting: the staff headcount increased from
36 in 1953 to 55 in 1960; weekly programming hours rose from 49 to 109 and two new languages were added in a six-year span; a second channel was installed, allowing the station to broadcast in multiple languages simultaneously; and ‘regular’ listenership grew to more than 500,000 by 1958. According to Franklin, the Federation government saw radio as ‘an “excellent propaganda instrument” with which to hammer the virtues of federation into African ears.’ No amount of propaganda, however, could overcome the basic incommensurability between settler and African aspirations. Nor did it help that the leaders of the Federation were apt to make insulting statements – broadcast to Africans – comparing, for example, the relationship between Europeans and Africans in the Federation to that between the ‘rider and the horse’.

Hence, despite pressure from above to usefully “instrumentalize” radio as a means of driving African public opinion, the CABS’s programming during the Federation era spoke with an ambivalent and contradictory voice. On the one hand, the station continued to emphasise the idea of the state as a developmental agent. Thus, for example, the radio listener magazine *Nshila*, which succeeded *The African Listener*, contained a regular feature titled ‘Meet Interesting People’, which claimed to spotlight ‘an almost random cross-section’ of the ‘new African middle class’ who had achieved success through individual ‘enterprise and initiative’.

A booklet collecting more than a dozen of these features, *Success in Northern Rhodesia*, included stories titled ‘Ambitious Anne – the Girl Who Went to Dar-es-Salaam’, ‘From Underground to Ground-nuts’, ‘Top Postmaster’, and ‘Three Firsts – John Mwanakatwe, B.A.’. Indeed, to the extent that proponents of federation sought to earn African support at all, their arguments centred on the idea that federation would bring about greater economic development that would benefit all races.

On the other hand, this positive portrayal of the state as working on behalf of Africans’ best interests came under increasing fire from both the CABS’s audience as well as some of its own broadcasters. As Robert Heinze has highlighted, African broadcasters, whose educational and occupational status made them part of the same urban elite that was the focus of postwar colonial developmentalist discourse, ‘shared many colonial ideas about Zambian society and culture and Zambia’s political and social future’. After federation, however, many of these broadcasters increasingly began to feel that Zambian nationalism was a better representative of those ideas than the colonial state.

In the new political environment, some African broadcasters chose to disrupt the government’s agenda through their work, for example by communicating subversive messages on cultural and musical programmes, over which African broadcasters had the most control. Masiye offered several examples of this phenomenon in action, such as a Watchtower song that spoke of ‘the wickedness of man who had exalted himself to a high position … trampling on the rights of others, bringing untold misery and suffering’. This song was much requested by listeners, for reasons that were ‘obvious to both African broadcasters and
listeners’, who understood it to refer to their own political situation, ‘but not to our European colleague and supervisors’. 105 When officials discovered such songs’ true meanings, the songs were banned; however, as Masiye wrote, ‘we were not dismayed. There were many other songs in the record library which could be politicized’. 106 For several reasons, the Federation government in Salisbury could not control all aspects of the CABS’s work: it had to rely on the station’s experienced African staff to produce content; African broadcasting was not yet a federally managed programme, and it remained headquartered in Lusaka; and the station’s leadership attempted to retain some of its liberal tradition. 107 For instance, broadcasters were permitted to attend political gatherings under the assumption – not always valid in practice – that their participation would not affect their work. 108 Upheld by the older guard of CABS officials, this liberal attitude lasted at the station until the mid-1950s, when the federation government began to police African broadcasters’ politics more aggressively. 109 As a whole, however, the project of colonial broadcasting, like the particular, limited ideology of development it promoted, increasingly lost its sense of prestige in African society over the course of the 1950s.

Conclusion

In a process beginning in the mid-1930s and intensifying after 1945, the British colonial state in Northern Rhodesia sought to communicate an ideology of development as a basis for legitimating its rule. At a moment when older ideas and forms of rule were falling apart and African society was undergoing significant transformations – changes most powerfully evidenced by the 1935 and 1940 strikes on the Copperbelt – African-language radio broadcasting became an important tool of colonial statecraft in Northern Rhodesia. Colonial officials believed that radio could play a significant role in “tribalising” the political consciousness of Africans, especially in urban areas. Through its news and “educational” programming, the CABS worked to portray the colonial state as an agent of progress for Africans while, at the same time, rhetorically placing the burden of creating development on Africans, in particular the educated urban elite.

Under the colonial state, “development” came to signify a slow, gradualist brand of politics that strenuously sought to avoid questions of structural inequality. Nonetheless, developmentalism was also new. It gestured towards new possibilities at a time of increasing prosperity and rapid social change. The CABS benefitted from its perceived role as a progressive institution at a time when many in Africa were considering new political possibilities within the framework of empire, rather than outside of it. 110 As the experience of the CABS showed, it was not until the debate over federation that the limits of reform within the imperial context became clearly visible.

While scholars have traced the emergence of developmentalism as the primary justification for colonial rule at the upper reaches of international and imperial
politics, or within academic and bureaucratic contexts, few have focused on how and under what conditions the colonial state conveyed developmental ideas to mass publics. By contrast, this article has emphasised the value of examining ideology not in its most abstract forms, but in its concrete manifestations, as essential to understanding its political appeal, its connection to the prevailing social order, and its relationship to alternative political possibilities. Fundamentally, colonial developmentalism was a particular project that aimed to relate the masses to the state and broader socio-economic order. Through an exploration of this attempted relationship, it becomes possible to understand developmentalism as a socially-specific and contingent project, with many possible manifestations. After all, while the idea of the colonial state as the handmaiden of development rang hollow by the end of the 1950s, the resonance of developmentalism only deepened in subsequent decades.

Notes

1. H. Franklin, 'Development of Broadcasting in Central Africa,' Central African Broadcasting Station, 12 June 1949, 4. Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, South African Institute of Race Relations Papers (hereafter HPRA SAIRRP), AD1715 36.3.2.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. Emphasis in original.
5. Ibid.
6. Powdermaker, Copper Town, 342.
7. This point has been made by several scholars, including Brian Larkin, Debra Spitulnik, and Mhoze Chikowero. See Larkin, Signal and Noise; Spitulnik, “Mediated Modernities,” 63–84; and Chikowero, “Is Propaganda Modernity?,” 112–35.
8. Berry, No Condition Is Permanent, chapters 1–2.
9. This argument has been made most notably by Frederick Cooper. See Cooper, Decolonization and African Society.
10. The Central African Federation brought the British colonies of Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland under a single, white settler-dominated administration. Though still under the authority of British colonial rule, the Federation marked the fulfilment of the decades-long desire of the white settler minority, particularly in Southern Rhodesia, to extend its economic and political dominance over the region. Despite wide opposition by Africans – and despite a long history of Colonial Office promises to protect African interests in Northern Rhodesia – the Federation came into being in September 1953. Its creation intensified African anti-colonialism and nationalism, eventually leading to its dissolution in 1963 and Zambian independence in 1964.
11. See, for example, Latham, Modernization as Ideology, Gilman, Mandarins of the Future, Lorenzini, Global Development, Unger, International Development, Manela and Macekura, The Development Century, Cooper and Packard, International Development and the Social Sciences.
12. See Cooper, Decolonization and African Society, and Lewis, Empire State-Building.
13. See, for example, Parpart, Labor and Capital on the African Copperbelt, Perrings, Black Mineworkers in Central Africa, Henderson, "Early African Leadership," 83–97.
14. For example, Larkin, Signal and Noise, and Spitulnik, “Mediated Modernities.”
15. See, for example, Chikowero, “Is Propaganda Modernity?”; and Symth, “Film as an Instrument of Modernization and Social Change in Africa,” 65–88.
16. Parpart, Labor and Capital, 32 and Roberts, “Notes Towards a Financial History of Copper Mining in Northern Rhodesia,” 347–59. Roberts’ article is the most concise account of the early economic history of the Copperbelt.
17. Workers were both “pulled” by relatively high wages on the mines and “pushed” by Colonial Office policies in Northern Rhodesia, which had forced Africans out of the most agriculturally productive land. See Roberts, A History of Zambia, 182–3.
18. Ibid., 186–7.
19. Steel, “The Copperbelt of Northern Rhodesia,” 86.
20. Parpart, Labor and Capital, 38, 44. The legal restrictions included a pass law on Africans outside “native reserve” territories, and making contract-breaking a criminally prosecutable offense.
21. Epstein, Scenes from African Urban Life, 115.
22. Perrings, “Conflict, Consciousness, and Proletarianization,” 31–51.
23. Gordon, Invisible Agents, 69–88.
24. Parpart, “The Household and the Mine Shaft,” 46. As early as 1931, 30 percent of African mine employees were married, according to the mining companies’ loose definition, allowing them to live in married housing. Parpart, “Where Is Your Mother?” 248.
25. Parpart, “Where Is Your Mother?” 247–57.
26. Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Disturbances on the Copperbelt, Northern Rhodesia, 1935.
27. Perrings, Black Mineworkers in Central Africa, 219.
28. Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Disturbances on the Copperbelt, Northern Rhodesia, 1940, 20.
29. Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Disturbances on the Copperbelt, Northern Rhodesia, 1935, 61. Originating in 1907 and continuing through the end of World War II, the millenarian Watchtower movement in Central Africa predicted the imminent collapse of all forms of worldly authority, including colonial rule. Though it began as a rural phenomenon, Watchtower was most powerful in urban areas during the 1930s and 1940s. See Gordon, chapter 3.
30. Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Disturbances on the Copperbelt, Northern Rhodesia, 1940, 25.
31. Moore, These African Copper Miners, 84.
32. CO 323/1663/6282/1B, Memo No. 341, ‘Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland’, 21 September 1939. Quoted in Smyth, “War Propaganda during the Second World War,” 348.
33. Smyth, “War Propaganda During the Second World War,” 347.
34. Colonial Office, Interim Report of a Committee on Broadcasting Services in the Colonies, 2, 6.
35. Grenfell Williams, Radio in Fundamental Education in Undeveloped Areas, 125. Services like the CABS began to appear in large numbers during the late 1940s and early 1950s. More than forty broadcasting systems were established in twenty-seven British colonial territories between 1948 and 1953. See Briggs, The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, IV, 470.
36. National Archives of Zambia (hereafter NAZ) SEC 3/85 Vol. 1., 1/8, letter from Frank Ayer to Provincial Commissioner, Ndola, 25 September 1935.
37. NAZ SEC 2/1136, 256, telegram from Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor of Northern Rhodesia, 16 March 1948. The amount was enough to cover the station’s full capital costs and half of its recurrent costs for eight years. A second grant of 42,360 pounds was approved in March 1950. See UK National Archives (hereafter UK NA) CO/875/66/4, 19, letter from E.N. Fitzgerald, Colonial Office, to E.L. Sharp, Treasury, 18 February 1952.
38. A parallel station for Europeans in the three territories was installed in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia.
39. Powdermaker, Copper Town, 234.
40. Mytton, Mass Communication in Africa (London, 1983), 3.
41. Franklin, The Flag-Wagger, 181–2.
42. Spitulnik, "Radio Culture in Zambia," 97. As Chikowero notes, the state also made credit facilities available to Africans to purchase radio sets. Chikowero, “Is Propaganda Modernity?” 128.
43. Franklin, The Flag-Wagger, 186.
44. Chikowero, "Is Propaganda Modernity?" 128.
45. The African Listener, November 1952; Colonial Office, Report on Northern Rhodesia for the Year 1952.
46. A 1953 study by Hortense Powdermaker, an American anthropologist, found 50 percent of Copperbelt residents listened to the radio regularly, as opposed to 39 percent who went to watch films and 35 percent who read a newspaper or magazine. Powdermaker, Copper Town, 342.
47. Fraenkel, Wayaleshi, 137.
48. Ibid., 26.
49. Franklin, “The Saucepan Special,” August 1950, UK NA, CO 875/60/1, 93.
50. See Ferguson, Expectations of Modernity, chapter 1.
51. Parpart, “Where Is Your Mother?” 265.
52. Ibid., 265–7.
53. Ferguson, 33.
54. Parpart, “Where Is Your Mother?”, 266.
55. Ibid., 265.
56. 'The “African Listener” Visits the Copperbelt', The African Listener, March 1953, 3.
57. Ibid.
58. Author’s analysis.
59. Fraenkel, Wayaleshi, 62.
60. Fraenkel, Wayaleshi, 64 facing.
61. Powdermaker, Copper Town, 232.
62. Spitulnik, “Radio Culture in Zambia,” 98.
63. Franklin, Report on the Development of Broadcasting to Africans in Central Africa, 3.
64. Fraenkel, Wayaleshi, 18.
65. Memo by M. Slade, ‘African Broadcast Advisory Board,’ 17 September 1949, UK NA, CO 875/36/3, 124–5. The new board, Franklin wrote, allayed Salisbury’s anxieties that African-language broadcasting would spread ‘Colonial Office propaganda’. See Franklin, “Broadcasting to Central Africans from Lusaka,” 10 January 1949, UK NA, CO 875/36/3, 255.
66. ‘Good News,’ The African Listener, April 1952, 3.
67. ‘News,’ The African Listener, September 1955, 3.
68. Fraenkel, Wayaleshi, 31.
69. Ibid., 32.
70. Michael Kittermaster, ‘Impressions of East Africa’, The African Listener, March 1953, 5.
71. Franklin, The Flag-Wagger, 193.
72. Quoted in Fraenkel, Wayaleshi, 147–8. As the magazine itself admitted, it received about ‘four times as many letters as can be published’. ‘Readers’ Correspondence’, The African Listener, May 1953, 16.
73. Fraenkel, Wayaleshi, 30.
74. Masiye, Singing for Freedom, 1.
75. Powdemaker, Copper Town, 243.
76. For examples of the term’s use in letters, see ‘Readers’ Correspondence’, The African Listener, October 1952, 19, or ‘Readers’ Correspondence’, The African Listener, November 1952, 14. For administrators’ reactions, see Fraenkel, Wayaleshi, 146.
77. Northern Rhodesia Information Department, Annual Report for the Year 1947 (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1948), 5.
78. Kittermaster, ‘Broadcast Series on Bantu Tribes, No 1: Introductory Talk’, Central African Broadcasting Station, February 7, 1950, 1. HPRA SAIRRP, AD1715 36.3.3.
79. Fraenkel, Wayaleshi, 143. While Fraenkel does not provide specific dates for these talks, he mentions that they took place during the Soviet Union’s crushing of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. 
80. Smyth, “The Development of Government Propaganda,” 333.
81. J.S. Moffat, ‘Land and Native Development, Pt. 2’, Central African Broadcasting Station, March 15, 1949, 1. HPRA SAIRRP, AD1715 36.3.16.
82. Ibid., 2.
83. Hyam, “The Geopolitical Origins of the Central African Federation,” 169. ‘Amalga-mation’ had been the term for the settler demand to unify Northern and Southern Rhodesia into a single, settler-dominated state.
84. Ibid.
85. Cohen, The Politics and Economics of Decolonization in Africa, 44–5.
86. Franklin, The Flag-Wagger, 201.
87. Ibid.
88. Colonial Office, Report on Northern Rhodesia for the Year 1953, 63.
89. Fraenkel, ‘African Forum Comes to an End’, The African Listener, November 1952, 8–9.
90. Fraenkel, Wayaleshi, 202.
91. Ibid.
92. Quoted in Musambachime, “The Impact of Rumor,” 212.
93. Fraenkel, Wayaleshi, 203.
94. Ibid., 207.
95. Of course, even during this period, this attempted hegemony was heavily contested, as Chikowero describes. See Chikowero, “Is Propaganda Modernity?”
96. Colonial Office, Report on Northern Rhodesia for the Year 1953, 62; Heinze, “Men Between”,’ 626.
97. Fraenkel, Wayaleshi, 216.
98. Colonial Office, Report on Northern Rhodesia for the Year 1958 (Lusaka, 1959), 67.
99. Franklin, Unholy Wedlock, 174.
100. Ibid., 176.
101. Northern Rhodesia Information Department, Success in Northern Rhodesia (Lusaka, n.d. 1960[?]), 1.
102. Ibid., 10, 12, 20, 23.
103. Phiri, A Political History of Zambia, chapter 2.
104. Heinze, “Men Between,” 631. Not all African broadcasters felt this way: a few spied on behalf of the government to identify subversive colleagues, while others adapted to the new circumstances or resigned. See Heinze, “Men Between,” 627.

105. Masiye, Singing, 24–5.

106. Ibid., 25.

107. Heinze, “Men Between,” 627.

108. Masiye, 31.

109. Masiye recalls the 1956 firing of Isaac Siyakulima, an African broadcaster who aired a banned song, as a turning point in the station’s attitude towards the broadcasting of subversive music. Masiye, 27.

110. See, among others, Cooper, Citizenship between Empire and Nation; Englund, “Anti Anti-Colonialism,” 221–47, and Phiri, A Political History of Zambia.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Richard Roberts for his generous engagement with this project from the beginning. Sincere thanks also to Priya Satia, who read many drafts of this work and provided invaluable advice from an early stage. The piece was much enriched by conversations with Aishwary Kumar, Emmanuel Kreike, Gyan Prakash, Jeremy Adelman, Jacob Dlamini, Robert Yee, Shreya Thakkar, and Yidi Wu, who read drafts and offered their perceptive comments. The anonymous referees of this journal offered detailed and helpful feedback. Finally, I appreciate the assistance of the staff at the National Archives of Zambia, the UK National Archives, and Historical Papers Research Archive at the University of Witwatersrand.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

Stanford University provided the research funding necessary for the project. The Princeton University Library’s support enabled the open access publication of this article.

ORCID

Neel Thakkar http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6561-0270

References

Berry, Sara. No Condition Is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993.

Briggs, Asa. The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Volume IV: Sound and Vision. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Chikowero, Mhoze. “Is Propaganda Modernity? Press and Radio for “Africans” in Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi During World War II and Its Aftermath.” In Modernization as Spectacle in Africa, edited by P. Bloom, S. Miescher, and T. Manuh, 112–135. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014.
Cohen, Andrew. *The Politics and Economics of Decolonization in Africa: The Failed Experiment of the Central African Federation*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2017.

Colonial Office. *Interim Report of a Committee on Broadcasting Services in the Colonies*. London: HMSO, 1937.

Colonial Office. *Report on Northern Rhodesia for the Year 1952*. Lusaka: Government Printer, 1953.

Colonial Office. *Report on Northern Rhodesia for the Year 1953*. Lusaka: Government Printer, 1954.

Colonial Office. *Report on Northern Rhodesia for the Year 1958*. Lusaka: Government Printer, 1959.

Cooper, Frederick. *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.

Cooper, Frederick. *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Cooper, Frederick, and Randall Packard, eds. *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Englund, Harri. “Anti Anti-Colonialism: Vernacular Press and Emergent Possibilities in Colonial Zambia.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 57, no. 1 (2015): 221–247.

Epstein, A. L. *Scenes from African Urban Life: Collected Copperbelt Papers*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992.

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

Fraenkel, Peter. *No Fixed Abode: A Jewish Odyssey to Africa*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2005.

Fraenkel, Peter. *Wayaleshi*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1959.

Franklin, Harry. *Report on the Development of Broadcasting to Africans in Central Africa*. Lusaka: Government Printer, 1950.

Franklin, Harry. *Report on “the Saucepan Special,” the Poor Man’s Radio for Rural Populations*. Lusaka: Government Printer, 1950.

Franklin, Harry. *The Flag-Waggar*. London: Shepheard-Walwyn, 1974.

Franklin, Harry. *Unholy Wedlock: The Failure of the Central African Federation*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1963.

Gordon, David. *Invisible Agents: Spirits in a Central African History*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2012.

Grenfell Williams, J. “Broadcasting in the African Colonies.” *BBC Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (Winter 1951/1952): 219–221.

Grenfell Williams, J. *Radio in Fundamental Education in Undeveloped Areas*. Paris: UNESCO, 1950.

Heinze, Robert. ““Men Between”: The Role of Zambian Broadcasters in Decolonization.” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40, no. 3 (2014): 623–640.

Henderson, Ian. “Early African Leadership: The Copperbelt Disturbances of 1935 and 1940.” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 2, no. 1 (Oct., 1975): 83–97.

Hyam, Ronald. “The Geopolitical Origins of the Central African Federation: Britain, Rhodesia and South Africa, 1948–1953.” *The Historical Journal* 30, no. 1 (1987): 145–172.

Latham, Michael. *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and ‘Nation Building’ in the Kennedy Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Larkin, Brian. *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

Lewis, Joanna. *Empire State-Building: War and Welfare in Kenya, 1925–1952*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000.
Lorenzini, Sara. *Global Development: A Cold War History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019.

Masiye, Andrea Sylvester. *Singing for Freedom: Zambia’s Struggle for African Government*. Lusaka: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Moore, R. J. B. *These African Copper Miners: A Study of the Industrial Revolution in Northern Rhodesia, with Principal Reference to the Copper Mining Industry*. London: Livingstone Press, 1948.

Musambachime, Mwelwa. “The Impact of Rumor: The Case of the Banyama (Vampire Men) Scare in Northern Rhodesia, 1930–1964.” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 21, no. 2 (1988): 201–215.

Mytton, Graham. *Mass Communication in Africa*. London: Edward Arnold, 1983.

Northern Rhodesia Information Department. *Success in Northern Rhodesia*. Lusaka: Government Printer, n.d. [1960?].

Parpart, Jane. *Labor and Capital on the African Copperbelt*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983.

Parpart, Jane. “The Household and the Mine Shaft: Gender and Class Struggles on the Zambian Copperbelt, 1926–1964.” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 13, no. 1 (1986): 36–56.

Parpart, Jane. “‘Where is Your Mother?’: Gender, Urban Marriage, and Colonial Discourse on the Zambian Copperbelt, 1925–1945.” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 27, no. 2 (1994): 241–271.

Perrings, Charles. *Black Mineworkers in Central Africa: Industrial Strategies and the Evolution of an African Proletariat in the Copperbelt, 1911–1941*. New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1979.

Perrings, Charles. “Conflict, Consciousness, and Proletarianization: An Assessment of the 1935 Mineworkers’ Strike on the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt.” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 4, no. 1 (1977): 31–51.

Phiri, B. J. *A Political History of Zambia: From Colonial Rule to Third Republic, 1890–2001*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2006.

Powdermaker, Hortense. *Copper Town: Changing Africa, the Human Situation on the Rhodesian Copperbelt*. New York: Harper & Row, 1962.

*Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Disturbances on the Copperbelt, Northern Rhodesia, 1935*. London: HMSO, 1935.

*Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Disturbances on the Copperbelt, Northern Rhodesia, 1940*. Lusaka: Government Printer, 1940.

Roberts, Andrew. *A History of Zambia*. New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1976.

Roberts, Andrew. “Notes towards a Financial History of Copper Mining in Northern Rhodesia.” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 16, no. 2 (1982): 347–359.

Smyth, Rosaleen. “Film as an Instrument of Modernization and Social Change in Africa: The Long View.” In *Modernization as Spectacle in Africa*, edited by P. Bloom, S. Miescher, and T. Manuh, 65–88. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008.

Smyth, Rosaleen. “The Development of Government Propaganda in Northern Rhodesia.” PhD diss., University of London, 1983.

Smyth, Rosaleen. “War Propaganda during the Second World War in Northern Rhodesia.” *African Affairs* 83, no. 332 (1984): 345–358.

Spitulnik, Debra. “Mediated Modernities: Encounters with the Electronic in Zambia.” *Visual Anthropology Review* 14, no. 2 (Fall-Winter 1998): 63–84.

Spitulnik, Debra. “Radio Culture in Zambia: Audiences, Public Words, and the Nation-State.” PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1994.

Steel, R. W. “The Copperbelt of Northern Rhodesia.” *Geography* 42, no. 2 (1957): 83–92.

Unger, Corinna. *International Development: A Postwar History*. London: Bloomsbury, 2018.