

## What Price for Privatization?: Cultural Encounter with Development Policy on the Zambian Copperbelt

Elizabeth C. Parsons



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What Price for Privatization?: Cultural Encounter with Development Policy on the Zambian Copperbelt considers how one African community experienced the sale to foreign investors of its main industry, a group of state-owned copper mines. Everyday Zambians saw a series of uncertain, shifting interactions among individuals, corporations, immaterial forces, and material interests as running counter to hard facts about the state of the mines and the country's overall economy. Supernatural or spiritual forces played a powerful, negative role in what Zambians understood to be happening as a result of privatization. But there was no place within dominant development policy talk to account for this sort of knowledge.

Indeed, many of the disappointments and failures that have long characterized development activities can be traced to profound discrepancies existing when local knowledge infused with a particular worldview is overlooked by policymakers. The types of policies that have undergirded development interventions for almost sixty years have elevated economic, political, and operational interests over all others. But such ways of thinking about the world leave huge gaps in comprehension. This is particularly true in regard to the cultural and religious experiences of both the people who devise policies and those who live with the policy consequences. *What Price for Privatization?* documents such an instance and suggests some intellectual and practical means by which things might change on behalf of the global common welfare.

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