Land in Limbo

– property in land beyond the effective control of political authority along the Zambian railway

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Abstract

Because of population clustering, it is increasingly difficult for the rural poor to access land in Zambia. Such a clustered space is along the line-of-rail, where more people are looking to make use of land. Simultaneously, in a country where multiple political authorities can perform recognition of land, people also have to balance and navigate within this pluralistic political landscape to enjoy secure access and use of land. As such, property has the potential to improve security and create legitimacy to land. Within 100 yards along the railway, land is in administrative limbo due to the lack of effective control by its legal owner, the state. This thesis investigates the property production in land occupied by rural people along the railway in Southern Province, Zambia, through ethnographic and interview-based fieldwork. With a widened understanding of property that goes beyond juridical interpretations inseparable from law, I show how property making abandons formalised scripts, and instead is performed through contextual and localised orders. Occupants of land along the railway put labour and material investments into the land to reinforce legitimacy, both among each other as well as when facing political authority. With the state as formal owners of railway land, chiefs and headmen (i.e. customary authority) get squeezed by engaging in administering the land since it is outside of their legal jurisdiction. At the same time, state authority also administers and recognizes land, albeit implicitly, when maintenance workers survey the railway tracks. I conclude that these findings together create a whole greater than the sum of its parts of how property production can take place on land in limbo.

Keywords: Land, Property, Political Authority, Recognition, Materiality, Zambia

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Abbreviations

IAPRI	Indaba Agricultural Policy Research Institute
MoL	Ministry of Lands
UN	United Nations
ZDA	Zambian Development Agency
ZRL	Zambia Railways Limited

1. Introduction

Access to land is fundamental to support livelihoods for rural populations, alongside that land is ascribed with social significance from which people construct meaning within their lives. Human organisation upon land includes a broad set of factors conceptually including ownership, control, and use to mention a few (Ribot & Peluso, 2003). It is thus apparent to view the political authorities in control of the resource *land*, as having the potential to exercise power over those who depend on it for survival. Land is, after all, the material basis upon which all else stand, not least due to its spatial position of always being situated *beneath* us.

Researchers and theorists have discussed how access to land commonly is facilitated by law, custom, or convention formed through the production of property (Commons, 1924; MacPherson, 1978; Neale, 1998; Ribot, 1998; Ribot & Peluso, 2003). How property in land is produced is therefore embedded within relations of power between the political authorities that sanction property, and the people/citizens that enjoy it. However, the formalised scripts of laws, customs, or conventions, through which political authorities sanction property, struggle to "completely delineate all the modes and pathways of resource access along complex and overlapping webs of power" (Ribot & Peluso, 2003: 156). This suggests that people can access land outside of formalised scripts, with practices established through context specific collaboration, competition, and coordination, where political authority makes assertions of jurisdiction. As such, property in land also has the potential to be produced through practices that may deviate or completely abandon formal scripts, not least in postcolonial societies where multiple political authorities blurry overlap each other (Hoffman & Kirk, 2013; Lund, 2016).

In hybrid political contexts found in regions that have been decolonised, there are multiple political authorities often divided as state authority and customary authority[1]. Where the state's capacity to govern is effectively reduced, customary

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[1] Throughout the thesis, I use *state authority* when referring to the state and its extensions (e.g. MoL and ZRL), *customary authority* when referring to chiefs and headmen, and *political authority* when referring to them both.

authority with precolonial ties may organise societal relations in spaces where the state is absent (Kapidžić, 2018). Also, "local communities are not passive" (Menkhaus, 2006/7: 75) in the face of fallible state presence, but instead act in ways creating local orders which may or may not be in accordance with any political authority (Meagher, 2012).

Zambia, with its multiplicity of political authorities administering access to land, is a case in point. This thesis revolves around a people occupying land along the railway which is beyond the effective control of any political authority. The land thus appears to be in limbo. All land in the country is nominally vested in the president and is either administered by the state as State Land, or by chiefs as customary land. Along the railway line between the Copperbelt Province at the border of DR Congo, to Livingstone in the south at the border of Zimbabwe, 100 yards of land along the railway is owned by the state through the state-owned company Zambian Railway Limited (ZRL). Simultaneously, the railway runs through rural areas where, apart from the 100 yards along it, land is administered by chiefs and headmen as customary land. There are thus multiple political authorities, state and customary, in close connection to the land. However, people are occupying such land along the railway beyond the effective control of both state and customary authority, leading to questions of how property in this land is produced.

This thesis investigates these land occupations[2] along the railway in Southern Province, Zambia, through a widened understanding of property that goes beyond juridical interpretations inseparable from law, inviting analysis to how the social relations that are property interplay with the materialities it is occupying (Ellickson, 1991; Hohfeld, 1917; Lund, 2002, 2016; Moore, 1998; Neale, 1998; Rose, 1994). Such an understanding has received little scholarly attention, providing openings for expanding the conceptual work of property. This is important to investigate because it will shed light upon how property in land, produced outside of formal law, still has the potential to improve access and security for the people who occupy it, which may be crucial for people in Zambia where land is increasingly difficult to come by.

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[2] I refer to it as land *occupation*, rather than land *use* or *claim*, because it includes the act of seizing and inhabiting the land without formal ownership.

1.1. Research Purpose

Since land occupations along the railway is neither effectively controlled through state or customary authority in Zambia – by law the only political bodies authorised to sanction access to land – the purpose of the research is to investigate these occupations through interviews coupled with ethnography, to depict and suggest new insights into how property in land is produced beyond the effective control of political authority.

1.2. Research Questions

How is property in land produced beyond the effective control of any political authority?

To answer this overarching question, I have rendered three questions applicable for investigation. Each question refers to one specific section in the Analysis chapter of the thesis. The purpose is that they together create a whole greater than the sum of its parts, which can respond to the overarching question of how property is produced (see theory chapter for a more detailed discussion of how these questions have been derived).

How do political authorities position themselves over the control of land along the railway?

How are occupations of land recognized?

How does investment in land shape property?

2. Background

The background sheds light upon how land is administered in Zambia, exploring parts of its colonial and post-colonial history, to be able to investigate how people are looking to occupy land along the railway. Although it is not relevant to give account for all processes involving land, the discussion is driven by the notion to concretely relate to the purpose of the thesis. In the first section I look at the administration of customary and state land to show how its historical process has shaped the current situation. In the second section I look at the discussion of lack and abundance of land to show the opportunities and constrains people face when trying to access land.

2.1. Customary versus State Land

To understand land use in Zambia, I will explore the difference between customary and state land. There is a present (contested) notion that 94% of Zambian land is under customary tenure. This relates back to the pre-independent era when the colonial rulers constructed two distinctive categories of land tenure. *Crown land* was allocated for European settlers for farming and mining purposes "along a narrow strip of about 20 to 30 miles on either side of the railway line from Livingstone to the Copperbelt" (Roth, Khan, & Zulu, 1995: 15), important for transportation of agricultural produce and copper. *Native reserve land* was set aside for Africans and administered through tribal chiefs chosen by the colonial government as a form of indirect rule (Machina & Sorensen, 2011; Ng'Ombe et al., 2014). In 1924, native reserve land represented 94% of the country's land area, a figure still lingering in stylised narratives (Machina & Sorensen, 2011; Sitko & Chamberlain, 2016). Along with national independence in 1964, crown land became administered by the state mainly through the Ministry of Lands (MOL), which is state land bought and sold by individuals gaining titled leaseholds as registered ownership. Native reserve land became customary land administered under customary tenure through chiefs, upon which no titles are held with little or no taxation (Ng'Ombe et al., 2014). Presently, empirical evidence has contradicted

the notion that 94% should still be relevant, with estimates showing that approximately 60% of land is under customary tenure (Honig & Mulenga, 2015; Kalinda et al., 2008).

Commonly, state land has been described as more productive and valuable land, not least since it was because of such qualities the British Colonial Authority appropriated it, instating crown land (Machina & Sorensen, 2011). Land along the railway is a good example of this, which let the British colonialists transport commodities primarily from mines through the country to Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in the south and Belgian Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo) in the north (Brown, 2005; Machina & Sorensen, 2011; Ng'Ombe et al., 2014). To begin understanding what titled land is and why it is seen as more valuable, Hall (2013) argues that it should not be confused with private land. Titled land is "the extension of a particular type of state recognition of property rights" (Hall, 2013: 114) which might include private land, although not exclusively. Titling is a form of formalisation where land and its ownership is recorded into the formal legal system of the state. In the discourse of contemporary neoliberal development thinking, the formal legal tenure system of titling is viewed as more valuable than customary ones, with the latter not promoting land and credit markets (Deininger, 2003). An influential work within this thinking is Hernando De Soto's (2000) book *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else*, where the case is made that although many countries in the South are struggling in their formalisation processes of property rights with gains highly concentrated among elites, they will ultimately benefit by doing so through the generation of surplus value and the expansion of market access for poor people leading to, as whole societies, connection to global capitalism. With property, such as customary land tenure not appropriated into the legal property of the state, Soto (2000: 235) claims that "these societies may muddle along with their dual economies – with the so-called law-abiding sector on one side and the impoverished extralegal sector on the other". For Soto (2000), there is no way forward other than the development of universally accessible legal property, although as a bricolage construction, created in awareness of previous extralegal property contexts, for the benefit of all.

As for the state-owned land along the railway however, it proves that formalising property does not necessarily bring clarity to the practices upon it, nor does it automatically give the state effective control. This phenomenon is also highlighted in previous research (Boone, 2014; Buur & Kved, 2007; Zenker & Höhne, 2018), which shows the important role customary authority plays in different parts of Sub-Saharan Africa concerning property and rights to land, in spaces where the state is

uncapable to effectively govern. This study follows this line of thinking, rather than De Soto's devaluing of customary authority, bringing to the fore how property in land can take shape outside of formal law. It is thus relevant to investigate the practices upon such land, especially in rural areas where the railway is surrounded by a system of customary land tenure, which might further contest the control of the land.

Continuing the dualistic discussion of customary and state land in the case of Zambia, it can also be related to tenure (in)security. Although the de facto practice upon customary land varies between chiefdoms, the chief is the custodian of the land holding administrative power. Mujenja and Wonani (2012: 14) recognize the insecurity such an institution brings, since, although anyone belonging to a chiefdom has the right to use and occupy land in that chiefdom free of charge, "the area chief has the right to withdraw land from anyone he deems to be violating customary rules". They further show cases of chiefs allocating land to outsiders rather than local rural people. Machina and Sorensen (2011) however discuss the opposite; in fact, how customary tenure in Zambia can be a source of security. They make the case that current processes of converting customary land into state land (i.e. titled land) is failing to acknowledge the security customary tenure can bring, which "is producing conflicts over land on a scale never before experienced in Zambia" (Machina & Sorensen, 2011: 258). They also claim that a pro-poor perspective is embedded in customary land, in contrast with the high costs for obtaining private leaseholds not possible for most of the rural population. The notion of tenure security is thus highly relevant for people occupying land along the railway due to the difference between getting it sanctioned by a chief or the state, if sanctioned at all.

2.2. Lack versus Abundance of Land

Apart from the difference between customary and state land, Zambia is also imprinted with narratives of lack and abundance of land. Within the discussion of land in Zambia, there has been a contestation between mining and agriculture suggested to have caused an abundance of uncultivated arable land due to a relatively sparse rural population (Roth & Smith, 1995). Gaining its independence in 1964, landlocked Zambia was transforming into an urbanised country with new cities forming primarily on the Copperbelt, where large-scale copper extraction had been active since initiated by the colonial rulers in the 1920s (Ferguson, 1999). Since then, the mining industry has experienced several structural transformations, shuttling between private sector and state-led organisation. Regardless of the

industry's character, mining, and above all else copper, has been a central part of Zambia's economy in the last century (Rakner, 2003; Sikamo et al., 2016). In contrast, agriculture has been put as losing out due to the large mining production, with the copper industry up until the 1970s helping to "pull labor into urban employment and keep people in the cities" (Roth, Khan, & Zulu, 1995: 11). During the British colonial rule over what was called Northern Rhodesia prior to the independence, the conditions for selling locally produced food were poor, turning people towards wage-labour employment in mines and consequently leaving arable land uncultivated (Roberts, 1976). These are the basic influences Roth and Smith (1995) draw from when presenting the background of why large areas of arable land have been uncultivated. Yet this description is not an accurate one in the context of land along the railway today.

More recently within the discussion on underutilised land in Zambia, it has instead been suggested that, in part, population clustering take place where the conditions for service and market access are best, such as along the railway, preventing potential arable land in more remote areas from being cultivated (Jayne et al., 2008; Jayne et al., 2014a/b; Sitko & Chamberlin, 2016). Governmental audits have even suggested that only 14% of current arable land is being cultivated (Zambia Development Agency, 2014). However, Mujenja and Wonani (2012) urge that caution is needed when interpreting such figures due to shifting criterial frameworks when such estimates are performed, e.g. when it comes to how grazing and fallow lands are accounted for.

Sitko and Chamberlin (2016) also call for critical interpretation of such estimates, adding what they describe as a narrative of land abundance. Such a narrative found in development strategy documents and policies such as the *Agricultural Sector Leaflet* (ZDA, 2014), they claim, is articulated to attract foreign agricultural and mining investment to Zambia, without the support of recent statistics. Following their argumentation, recent household survey data also suggests a more complex understanding of land allocation. From data collected in 2015, 56,7% of Zambia's rural households stated that there was no additional land available for allocation to expand their farms (IAPRI, 2015). This suggests that instead of abundance of land, the majority of rural people experience a lack of land. The data should however not be understood as having a causal relationship with total arable land in Zambia, since evidence of rural spatial clustering, again, adverts to arguments based on lack of access to markets and services. Albeit used to support the narrative of land abundance, the national database on arable land under cultivation is severely out of date and requires to be renewed through national land audits. (Jayne et al., 2008; Sitko & Chamberlin, 2016). Without such a renewed database of more recent

statistics however, the narrative of abundant arable land lingers. For this study, it becomes important to be aware of rural spatial clustering along the railway, since such conditions may affect the opportunities and constrains people have when accessing land.

This background has displayed how customary and state land in Zambia has experienced changes during colonial and post-colonial times which creates a basis of how land is formally administered today. It has also brought forward how the discussion of lack and abundance of land may affect people inhabiting areas along the railway. As Ribot and Peluso (2003) show, how gains to land can be realised is heavily dependent on how land is allocated and distributed within legal and institutional frameworks, and not least how people operate within such frameworks to gain access to land, such as the occupations along the railway. At the same time, population clustering producing a lack of land along the railway may have the effect of thrusting people towards seeking to access land in more unconventional ways.

3. Theory

This chapter discusses how the concept of property will infuse the analysis of the empirical material. Property is a lens the study will use to understand the findings throughout my fieldwork, detailed in the subsequent chapter.

3.1. Property

> Property is far too important to be left to the lawyers. (Blomley, 2015: 605)

It is increasingly common among scholars to view property beyond its function in law, towards an apprehension of placing social relations as the central part for analysis. Property has thus been described as the relations between people with regards to things (Ellickson, 1991; Hohfeld, 1917; Moore, 1998). With indication that such an explanation says either too much or nothing at all, Lund (2002: 12), in accordance with Neale (1998), attempts to specify that "property is a heuristic rubric for a focus on how access to, use of, and control over 'things' or resources are organised in society". For this study, it means investigating the everyday practices upon railway land, the relations between people occupying the land, and the relations between occupants and different forms of political authority. Additionally, land itself should not be viewed as passive upon which property is constructed; rather, the materiality of land and the things upon it also contribute in shaping property (Smith, 2014).

Obvious in Lund's (2002) definition above are the embedded power relations people must engage in when gaining access to, being able to use, and appropriating control over 'things' or resources. There is thus a need to understand the relation between citizens and state authority, and subjects and customary authority[3]. Within property, the investigation of the relation between subjects and political authority is the investigation of recognition. For people to at all have a resource they occupy

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[3] Throughout the thesis, I use *citizens* when referring to people's position to state authority, and *subjects* when referring to people's position to customary authority.

'propertised', they must have it recognized by political authority (Lund and Rachman, 2016; MacPherson, 1978; Rose, 1994). Political authority in the case of Zambia is both state and customary authority. Typically in property production, political authority sanctions people with the right to use a certain resource. Sanctioning can be anything from an official title deed to a verbal agreement between political authority and citizens/subjects, as long as the political authority has legitimacy in the society it is operating in. The political authority should however not be viewed as a fixed point giving out judgements, but also shapes its own position through sanctioning practices, which are under constant negotiation (Lund, 2002). As expressed by Lund (2016: 1205), "the act of authorizing recursively authorizes the authorizer". When political authority successfully recognizes property, their authority is mutually being recognized. It is thus in the doing – when political authority exercises its power – that produces authority (see also Bourdieu, 1990; Giddens, 1984). The reciprocal response by the resource user, such as following this contract of recognition, also recognizes authority. With *contract of recognition*, I refer to a mutual understanding of the relation between citizens/subjects and authority, although "such contracts are not exactly voluntary, not always consensual, often contentious, and always under renegotiation" (Lund, 2016: 1206). If resource users in any way would avoid from following this contract of recognition, they would fail to get their resource propertised as well as undermine the power of the authority. Therefore, just as property, authority is not inherently held. Property holders and political authority's co-dependence consequently means that the failure of one will be at the expense of the other. Their co-dependence may although in reality be asymmetrical, e.g. with the resource user being more dependent on the state than the opposite. However, if accepting the necessity of co-dependence, recognition becomes an inseparable logic of property.

In Zambia, institutions that govern property can be obtained from both state and customary authority. This entails that citizens/subjects potentially have multiple relations with different institutions and might turn to one or the other depending on the issue at hand. The authority of different institutions might also be in competition with, or in support of, each other. Lund (2016: 1212) suggests that institutions can both compete to become the institutional reference of a certain resource which people turn to in order to successfully have that resource propertised, or "depend on each other's recognition and endorsement of their respective authorities". Different resources and divisions of recognition can thus be divided into different categorial jurisdictions, with land along the railway as a categorial jurisdiction. Here, the premise of the study is of course that no one institution has obtained full control over how the practice of property is performed on land along the railway. The land appears to be in limbo. There is thus no single institutional reference of

how people relate to political authority, which calls for empirical work to investigate what happens in such a case, how political authorities attempt to advance their position through practices of recognizing or refusing property, and how citizens/subjects operate within such practices of recognition recursively recognizing authority. The lack of institutional reference does not however imply that governing and propertising of land along the railway is free from institutions. On the contrary, multiple institutions have the possibility to influence the governing and propertising practices on the land, whether they are state or customary institutions. Ultimately, this 'open moment' with competing and collaborating institutions may lead to that practices on the railway land forms its own institutional reference of how land (and things upon it) is becoming property.

Although land along the railway is formally owned by the state, it should not be assumed how people occupying the land get sanctioning from authority. Occupants may look for alternative paths to have land sanctioned in ways they believe to be successful and secure, especially in rural Zambia where customary authority plays a vital role in the recognition of land claims. Following this line of thinking, as well as Rose's (1994: 6) argument that "property regimes and even individual property holdings are by no means self-evident constructs", I call for a contextual understanding of property to accommodate for the unfixed relations between citizens/subjects and political authority.

Political authority may also be involved in the production and maintenance of the boundaries to property in land, recognizing where one occupant's land begins and another one's ends. An important point of investigation for this study is thus how boundaries between land occupations are produced. In fact, without boundaries, property in land would struggle to exist, since property requires categorical cuts (boundaries) whereby land is "identified, bounded and detached, and thus rendered legible and actionable" (Blomley, 2010: 206). Such boundaries can be visible or invisible, physical or non-physical, and rather than being objective, they are operational and interactional (Brighenti, 2006). For this study, it means that investigating boundaries as fluent, contingent, and as "zones of interaction, rather than walls of separation" (Blomley, 2015: 604), will further explore the relation between citizens/subjects and political authority, as well as between people occupying railway land themselves. This is because boundaries are points where social flows become visible as phenomena possible to investigate (Brighenti, 2010).

3.1.1. Materiality and property

While I have established that property cannot be exclusively defined by matters of law, but must include the apparent social relations that produce it, it is still not

enough when dealing with property in land. To be able to address the complexity of land as property, there must be an understanding of how the materiality of land and the things upon it influence property. Although property is about the relations between people with regard to things, the *things* themselves should not be neglected. Rather, things play "a crucial role in property in mediating the rights (and other legal relations) availing between owners, possessors, and others" (Smith, 2014: 15). Things themselves also 'talk', as Daston (2004) puts it, in as much as things enable and constrain meaning to actors deriving from how the properties of things materiality are linked with their cultural function. While it can be difficult to include things into general theorisations of property since these can be a lot of different 'things', this study is concerned with the materiality of land and the things upon it.

What is land? Li (2014), who wrote an article with the same title as this question, gives insights into how the materiality of land can be approach conceptually. To begin with, land is spatially fixed in a way other things are not. Land cannot be taken to or away from people, instead, people have to be taken to or away from the land. Its presence and location make the exclusion practices quite different from how other 'propertised' things exclude. This ties together with why this study is concerned with boundaries, since they decide where the exclusion begins and ends (Blomley, 2007). "The mode of exclusion can be physical and forceful (hedges, fences, guns), regulatory (e.g. through customary or formal property law or land use zones), or it can operate by means of a market mechanism" (Li, 2014; 591). However, Li (2014) additionally claims how rural people in Indonesia are not initially concerned with neither boundaries nor political authority in the creation of individual property. She states that people instead view the investment of labour to create individual property, on the basis "that no one owns it yet, and hinting towards its potential for use, and future status as individual property when labour is applied" (590). This arguments rest on the logic that the appliance of labour will give the individual property a future status which give legitimacy to it, by getting recognition from political authority, the local community, or even neighbours. Therefore, in this Indonesian case, property necessitate and is preceded by labour. I allude to this previous research because it gives insights into how labour and property are connected, which may be applied to the land occupations along the railway in Zambia.

Land can also mean different things to different actors. "Land may be a source of food, a place to work, an alienable commodity or an object of taxation" (Li, 2014: 589). It should not be assumed that land along the railway in Zambia means the same thing to the state, chiefs, citizens, and subjects. The meaning for one actor can

change over time when practice on land changes. This understanding of materiality is important for the study to postulate. That land and the things upon it can bring different meaning to actors give consequence to not only the relations actors form with these things, but also the relations actors form between them, since they may accept or reject each other's meanings. Things themselves, such as the railway, crops, trees, houses etc., are thus things upon land vivaciously influencing property making.

Such spatial markers of property do not however carry deterministic meaning (Blomley, 2015; Braun & Whatmore, 2010). A house, for example, is not in and of itself an artefact of property, but may or may not act and be acted upon as a signal of property. It is thus in the particular and in their enactments where the materialities of property can be viewed as such. The very fact that I refer to it as property making, suggests that property is 'in the making' through enactments and performances. Braun and Whatmore (2010: xx) call this "the performance of things" wherein the meaning of things has to be coupled with how they act and are acted upon through performances.

Performance is relevant not only to the materialities of property, but also of property making as a whole in the scope of this study. Relating back to recognition, land cannot be recognized by authority as property without a recognizing 'moment' or performance: that is, the enactment itself of the verbal agreement or signing of the paper that recognize land. The same goes for boundaries, which creation and maintenance is constituted by performances. The "necessity that property has to be performed" (Blomley, 2013: 37), implies that this study will investigate the performances that make up property with the understanding that property cannot exist without them.

This theoretical lens of property will be important to have in order to investigate land occupations along the railway in Zambia. How people engage in property relations matters to the security of its continued use. While I do not claim that the theoretical usage of property within a hybrid governance setting is new or unprecedented within research, I assert that the state-owned railway land as a strip that cuts through customary land provides a unique opportunity to investigate property relations due to its specific geographic-jurisdictional configuration, which can contribute to the larger literature of property.

4. Methodology

Within this chapter I start by presenting the field within which the study was conducted, to then discuss the approach and specific methods carried out in that field. This is meant to serve as a concrete and operational discussion to create a linkage between the research purpose and questions, the theoretical concepts, and the analysis and conclusions of the study.

4.1. The Field

The fieldwork was carried out along the railway in Southern Province, Zambia, where I conducted ethnography alongside interviews with land occupants, headmen, and civil servants at the MoL and ZRL. Emanating from three towns, Mazabuka, Monze, and Choma (figure 1), investigation was conducted on both sides of each town from the perspective of the line-of-rail. Important to note is that the study is concerned with rural areas where the railway (with its 100 yards along it owned by the state) passes through land otherwise administered as customary land. This was decided because of how there are multiple political authorities connected to the land along the railway in rural areas, affecting the occupation and property making in such land that is in administrative limbo.

Figure 1. Map of Zambia (Source: United Nations 2004)[4]

The railway running from the Copperbelt to Livingstone is owned by the Zambian state and administered by the Zambian Railways Limited (ZRL). The law that 100 yards along it is owned by the state originates from colonial times when the British built the railway (P46). Today, the railway and the highway are running in tandem throughout the country, although the distance between them is most often so vast that it constitutes more land than what is owned by the state along them both. Commonly along the railway, a small dirt road 50 yards on each side of the railway delimits where the state land ends. The land occupations the study is concerned with are thus encapsulated by the railway and the dirt road on opposite sides. Past the dirt road land is used for a variety of purposes, such as commercial farming, grazing, housing, or viewed as inarable and left alone. To get a figurative sense of the geography surrounding the railway, view figure 2.

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[4] Since this map was drawn, a part of Northern Province has now become Muchinga Province.
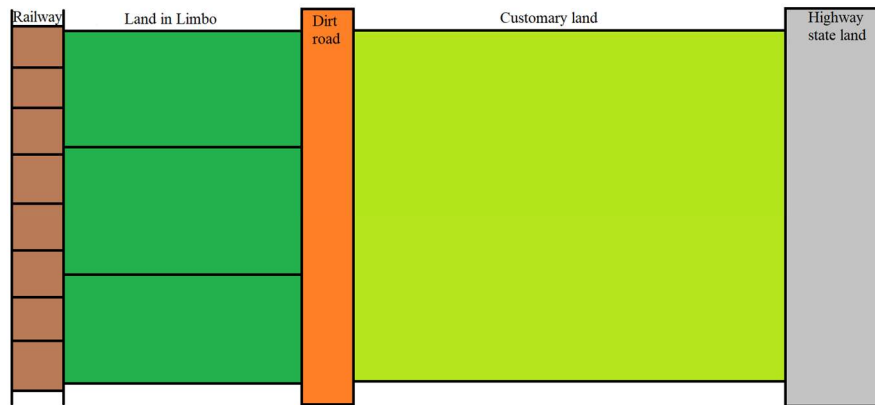
Figure 2. Sketch of railway land and its surrounding[5]

Here, instead of referring to 'the field', I want to make the distinction *between field of analysis* (conceptual) and *field sites* (geographical). Although Southern Province itself could be seen as a delimitation of the study, the field of analysis for the study should be understood conceptually, rather than geographically. The conceptual delimitation is, put simply – land in limbo. This refers to land which is in administrative limbo beyond the effective control of any political authority. To be able to investigate this field of analysis, the fieldwork includes multiple field sites along the railway stemming from Mazabuka, Monze, and Choma. Although the field sites are multiple, they should still be viewed as parts of the same, singular, field of analysis with interrogative boundaries (Madden, 2017). 'Land in limbo', as a field of analysis, is in the scope of the study a politico-legal ambiguous space of investigational interest due to the lack of control by its owner, the state, with people occupying it. This consequently implies that similar investigations could be carried out in different provinces or regions without profoundly altering the theoretical design, because it is not geographically tied, but instead tied with such a politico-legal ambiguous space. Of course, it still includes a spatial dimension. It regards no more than 50 yards from the rail on each side, since that much land is owned by the state in Zambia. Nonetheless, the defining and ruling factor of the field is that people occupy land along the railway beyond the effective control of political authority.

If the field of analysis is not determined by geography, why was then the fieldwork limited to Southern Province? This has to do with the suitability of where relevant empirical material could be gathered within this politico-legal ambiguous space. Knowledge prior to the fieldwork included certain demographical aspects. In

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[5] This sketch serves as an outline of the geography surrounding the land occupations. The relations and proportions should not be interpreted as completely reflecting reality.

Southern Province along the line-of-rail, the population on customary land is both high in density as well as most severely perceiving a lack of land in Zambia (figure 3 and 4). It could therefore be assumed as likely that people are looking for alternative ways of accessing land in this area. Bryman (2012: 419) refers to this as a *critical case*, where a case is "chosen precisely because it is anticipated that it might allow a theory to be tested". For this study, it is reproduced through the anticipation that people occupy land beyond the effective control of any political authority, with the building on and contributing to the theory of property making in such a case.
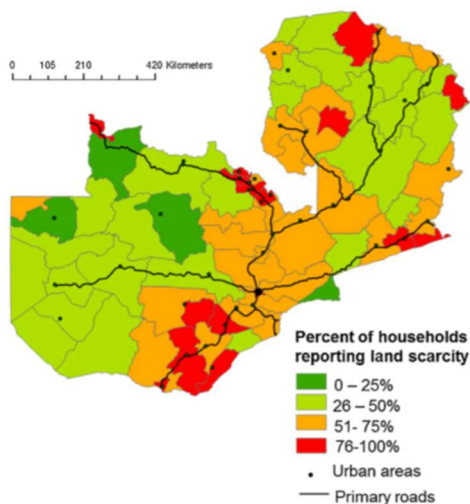
Figure 3. Percent of smallholders reporting that local customary authorities do not have land to allocate (Source: IAPRI 2012)
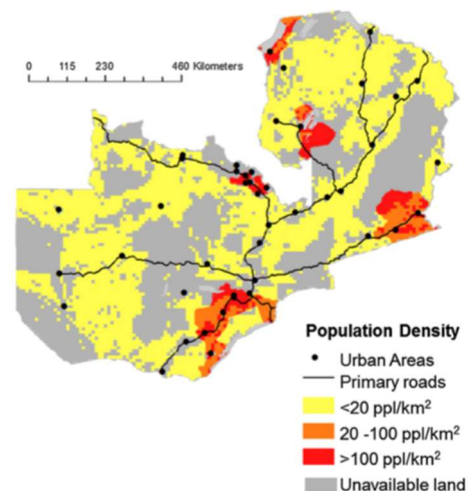
Figure 4. Population densities in available customary land areas (Source: Sitko & Chamberlin 2016)

4.2. Methodological Approach

Undoubtably, the research problem found above suggests a qualitative research approach, since it deals with the socio-political and socio-material aspects of property making, primarily based on the perceptions of people occupying land along the railway. From such a qualitative approach, the study strives to make theoretical claims of how property in land take form outside of formalised scripts and practices by generating depth in its specific setting embracing the real-life complexity of land, agricultural practices, as well as rural life (Creswell, 2014). The intention of the research is thus to ask questions which are relevant to people in their everyday life (Bryman, 2012). To do so, the study will continue along social constructivist notions of how individuals understand the world, namely that meaning is constructed subjectively from individual experiences within cultural and

historical settings. Emphasis will be put on people's views and the intent is to "make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world" (Creswell, 2014: 8). Since the research interprets such perceptions of meaning, a social constructivist approach is important, if not necessary, for the thesis at large. To understand this, we can turn to what Lincoln et al. (2011: 197) states as meaning-making activities, since "it is the meaning-making/sense-making/attributional activities that shape action". For the thesis, meaning-making activities refers to the many layers of occupations to land, as shaped within actions and performances. From this position, how occupations to land are made is dependent upon how people make sense of the world within the context of my specific field sites. Additionally, people also make sense of their world within a historical context, as discussed by Crotty (1998), which is why a background of land processes in Zambia is important when investigating occupations to land in the country along the once British-built railway, especially to understand the pluralism of political authority in land administration.

Constructivism relies on participants' views and perceptions, more specifically that they give account for the meaning of their occupations of land. It so becomes evident to dig deeper in how meaning comes into existence in human consciousness and later performed through actions – to in the end find ways of understanding it.

> There is no objective truth waiting for us to discover it. Truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world. There is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is not discovered, but constructed. In this understanding of knowledge, it is clear that different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon (Crotty, 1998: 8-9).

Applying this reasoning into the study, I suggest that the meaning of property in land, of which comes into existence in human consciousness, is constructed in relation to the land, agricultural, and rural practices surrounding it, e.g. how land is governed and administered through political authority. To understand this knowledge, following Crotty (1998), the thesis accepts that different people might have different constructions of such surroundings, which, if so, will spur different actions of how property in land is performed, as well as the meaning it brings.

Based on this methodological-philosophical approach, I performed fieldwork through interviews coupled with ethnographic engagement with people in spaces of their everyday lives to investigate the property making in land along the railway in Zambia. Below, I give account for the more specific methodological considerations of ethnography and interviewing, which constitute the study's empirical material.

4.3. Ethnography

Although the fieldwork I conducted does not allow a full ethnographic methodology due to the limited time of 8 weeks spent in the field, it still made use of ethnographic approaches. Ethnographic inquires, or ethnographies, can take many different forms and take place during different lengths of time, making it a quite open and reflexive methodology (Madden, 2017). It is thus up to each inquiry to create an ethnographic approach that can respond to the research's purpose and resources. However, as a primary ethnographic principle, it involves doing fieldwork to understand others (Van Maanen, 2011). It involves the researcher to stay and observe the meanings and symbols actors put forward within a particular setting (Jackson, 2013). Thus, there is a necessity of physical presence, of Frykman and Gilje's (2003) notion of "being there", and that the experience of being there "underlies all understanding of social life" (Van Maanen, 2011: 3). Having that said, this section deals with the more specific implementation of ethnography as well as its limitations (forced and intentional) within the thesis.

While the ethnography was conducted under only eight weeks, it provided valuable insight not possible to obtain through other methods. If using Bryman's (2012: 444) different categories of the different roles of the ethnographer, I undertook a role closest to what he describes as a "Non-Participating Observer with Interaction". This involves observing the social setting without participating in it, but instead interacting with the actors through interviews when needed. Observations during the fieldwork depended on going from one land occupation to the next. As an example, one obvious way how such movement was performed came through walking on the railway, since the land occupations of interest to the thesis are all situated along the railway. This was performed starting early in the morning when it was most common to find people in the field, before the sun is less scorching. Observations from this movement came to make up the ethnographic material through field notes, which the thesis makes use of in the analysis. The 'interaction' part of Bryman's category came through interviews, further discussed below.

Within ethnographic methodology, constructivist notions are discussed by Creswell (2014) who states that having a researcher present can by itself create a biased response among participants, e.g. due to expectations of acting in certain ways. Social constructivism, he explains, also acknowledge that the researcher's own background shapes their interpretations, based on biases such as culture, history, gender and socioeconomic status. Such interpretations might obscure the original meaning of participants. The constructivist consideration this study is leaning on is therefore that denying the influence of the researcher within ethnographic

qualitative methodology would be ignorant, since all individuals carry their own subjective meaning shaped by their experiences (Van Maanen, 2011). When collecting and analysing the empirical material, it becomes important to be aware of the researcher's own personal experiences and subjective understanding. In a best-case scenario, it can even be actively used to contribute an outside perspective on the empirical material, since I as a researcher with a different cultural background might not take aspects for granted, but instead put them under scrutiny (Silverman, 2015). This is in clear opposition to classical empiricism where "the emotions and prejudices of the observer were deemed to be incompatible with disinterested inquiry, they were left out of analytical accounts as if their invisibility implied their nonexistence" (Jackson, 2013: 23). By instead including subjectivity, Jackson argues, the creation of knowledge is based on the conditions of the relationship between observer and observed. Translated into my fieldwork, the observations I made in relation to the property making in land along the railway have inevitably been affected by my cultural background. However, by specifying what is going to be observed, that is, what the purpose of the research is with a defined theoretical approach, I was able to let it lead the way during observations (Bryman, 2012).

So, observations are an important part of the thesis, as to any ethnography. However, as mentioned, the time and resources available in a master thesis do not allow to only include observations as the thesis's method, since it generally demands staying in the field for a long time, such as within participating observations. (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2001; Madden, 2017). The ethnography is therefore combined with interviews, where the ethnography's function is to add, confirm, or contradict material from interviews (Bryman, 2012). Such a methodological triangulation process serves to account for the complexity of occupations to land, as well as a validity strategy of the empirical material. Moreover, observations alone also would struggle to engage with the parts of the research's purpose, since such empirical material could not reveal past occurrences (Creswell, 2014), with the thesis calling for how people have approached land in the past, upon which they are now occupying. Interviews, alongside observations, thus prove to be suitable, if not necessary, to engage with the purpose of the research. From this ethnographic starting point, the discussion below will include more specific reasoning of how and why interviews are important in response to the purpose of the research.

4.4. Interviews

As Bryman (2012: 432) notes, interviews are commonly viewed as part of ethnography, "on issues that are not directly amenable to observation or that the ethnographer is unclear about". However, I feel the need to discuss interviews more specifically since they make up a large part of the empirical material.

The interviews had an open-ended explorative approach, reflecting previous discussions on how different people might have different constructions of their land occupations. "The more open-ended the questioning, the better, as the researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life settings" (Creswell, 2014: 8), which the fieldwork applied by not only focusing on farming related activities, but on all activities of social life in connection to land. This is also due to the discussion by Ferguson and Li (2018) concerning the 'proper job', with the diffuse division of work life and social life among rural farmers. Because of the issue of distinguishing where one begins and the other one ends, the property making in land have the possibility to take form in any situation of social life.

Within what Spradley (1979) refers to as the 'ethnographic interview', the core concern is within the meaning actions and events bring to those the inquiry seeks to understand. There is a clear open-endedness to such interviews, allowing participants to influence the direction of interviews and even the questions asked, depending on what they construct meaning to.

> I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand? (Spradley, 1979: 34)

Somewhat romanticised by Spradley (1979), his notion of showing respect and giving control to participants is important, especially when combined with the awareness of the researcher's own role in the co-construction of meaning during the interview process. Heyl (2001) also recognize the relationship between interviewer and interviewee as where meaning evolves. These considerations where applied to interviews during the fieldwork by not assuming what the property making activities were, but instead letting people explain how they had approached and occupied land. I thus strived to be attentive during interviews and adapt questions based on what meaning participants emphasised as important.

The study strived to reach saturation when conducting interviews with people along the railway in Zambia. They were intended to stand on an explorative basis allowing

for a complexity of views to reach the surface following the methodological considerations discussed above. When interviews did not give new information of occupations to land in relation to previous interviews, it was a reason to believe that saturation had been reached (Creswell, 2014). The selection of participants on the field sites were based on coming across people working the land, when walking on the railway, often walking in the same place more than once if it was obvious that the land was being occupied through farming or housing. Participants were thus chosen randomly, with the criteria that it was obvious that the land occupation belong to them, when I was walking by. A bare majority of the participants were women, although this cannot be claimed to hold statistical certainty for all land along the railway in Zambia, since such a claim would require a larger sample. However, it indicates that neither women nor men has come to dominate occupying the land, but it rather seems accessible for both women and men.

Furthermore, since interviews were conducted in support of a translator, the following considerations were made. Overall, as Van Nes et al. (2010) recommend, the researcher should discuss the meaning and the context of the research with the translator before interviews, as well as discuss them afterwards to flesh out subtle meaning and possible wordings in translations. This becomes evidently problematic within parallels and metaphors when word-for-word translation is not possible to remain the intended meaning. To mitigate the distortion of meaning I not only discuss the interviews with my translator before and after, but also kept records of those discussions, to make sure I still have them when writing and analysing the empirical material. Also, since the purpose of the interviews is to understand the interviewees within their social life, having them speak in their native language "the same way they would talk to others in their cultural scene" (Spradley 1979: 59) is of most importance. The interviews performed throughout the fieldwork were thus made possible by a translator shifting between speaking English and Tonga (the most common language in Southern Province).

Examples of questions that were asked to initiate what meaning the occupations had for participants are: "what was here before you, how did you first come to this land and why did you decide to approach it?", "where are the borders of your land and how do you decide them?", "how are you interacting with a chief, headman, the ZRL, the MoL, or any other authority?", and "what would happen if you leave the land?". Interviews were then adaptable based on how participants responded and what they found as important. The total number of interviews amounted to 46. However, 8 of these were conducted within Monze town and are not included in the analysis chapter, since they do not refer to a rural area. Also, 5 interviews were

conducted with political authorities, discussed below. A complete list of all interviews can be found in the appendix.

4.4.1. Elite interviews

The study included interviews with political authorities through questions owning to the ownership, control, use and practices on land along the railway, with three headmen, a civil servant at the Ministry of Lands (MoL), and a civil servant at the Zambia Railways Limited (ZRL). It was considered to not expose any exact location where people were occupying the land when interviewing political authorities, since it might lead to eviction. Consideration also included not taking the side of the people who occupy the land, but instead maintaining neutrality when interviewing political authorities, to ensure that the participants in 'elite interviews' not become defensive. These interviews are crucial for the study through deepening the understanding of the relations between political authority and citizens/subjects, intrinsic to the investigation of property.

4.5. Ethical Considerations

The focus of the relationship between research and participant, and interviewer and interviewee, is a steppingstone into 'reflexivity'. Burawoy (1998) presents the reflectiveness of the process of research as within the four following measures: *intervention*, the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee; *process*, working through and analysing local processes; *structuration*, identifying the connections between local processes and the wider social context, and; *reconstruction*, theory is reconstructed from what has been learned through interviews. Although these steps may seem obvious to research, critique of reflexivity is still needed to go beyond only accepting the subjectivity of the researcher, but to also look at the power asymmetry between researcher and participant within interviews. Wasserfall (1997) offers critical arguments within her divide of 'strong' and 'weak' reflexivity. The idea of strong reflexivity is that the interviewer can get rid of their own authority and thus create a non-hierarchical relationship with the interviewee. Wasserfall is sceptical that such a relationship can be created when conditional differences are too great, wherein weak reflexivity the interviewer instead makes sure to be aware of the conditional differences and accepts their affect when performing and analysing interviews. This critical view is supported by Bourdieu (1996) who acknowledges the relationship as asymmetrical. To combat this, he suggests active and methodological listening, involving the interviewer to be in full attention during interviews. Although he believes it to be difficult to achieve such a high level of

attention throughout an entire interview, its use is for the researcher to not get inattentive to matters which she/he believes might not directly relate to the research topic, which is a common feature of everyday conversation. It thus becomes clear how connections back to the discussion of understanding interviewees from their point of view can be made. 'Full attention' during interviews is a strategy which I as an interviewer aimed to achieve, not to be selective of empirical material based on any personal biases, but rather treat all statements from interviewees as potentially valuable for them, and thus also potential valuable for analysis.

Participants in interviews are also intended to remain their full anonymity. Following Bryman (2012), any process or outcome the research produces should not reveal who the participants are. This is considered to protect people's integrity, increase the possibility of people's willingness to give account for their occupations to land, and ensure that the research is not responsible for sharing information of who is occupying what land and under which circumstances. There is thus an approximate account for where occupations are situated, without specific mentioning of their exact location. This is a pressing ethical issue, since interviews were held with people occupying the land, headmen administering land, as well as with officials from the Ministry of Land and Zambia Railways Limited. It was therefore taken into consideration that the specific land upon which people are occupying along the railway should not be known to neither state nor customary authority through the interviews. All interviews were also based on consent whereby participants were made aware that I was conducting a study and had to agree to be interviewed. Audio recordings of interviews were documented when accepted by participants, and if not, written accounts of interviews were performed instead. Participants were given the option to have the interview documentation deleted at any point, upon request.

4.6. Data Analysis

Hereinafter, I describe the process of how the analysis of data was performed, following Creswell's (2014) discussion on data analysis in qualitative research. Once the fieldwork ended, I transcribed the audio recordings of interviews so that all empirical material was in written form. This allowed me to read (and reread) the material to "reflect on its overall meaning" (Creswell, 2014: 197) and get an overarching sense of how it could be interpreted. I then started coding the data into different potential analytical themes, by bracketing and categorising different parts of the material which could be connected. The codes were based on how they emerged when reviewing the data, as well as from how they engaged with the

theoretical consideration of the thesis, that is, property making in land in limbo. I thus used a "combination of emerging and predetermined codes" (Creswell, 2014: 199) in the production of the analytical themes. The analytical themes which the codes produced came to make up the headings in the Analysis chapter, to ensure that there were no gaps between the process of data analysis and the presentation (text) of the analysis. Admittedly, this process was not as linear as this description might suggest, but involved rereading and recoding the material repeatedly to develop the analysis and conclusion of the study.

5. Analysis

The analysis is divided into three sections, each pertaining to one of the rendered research questions. The order of the rendered research questions is the same as the order of these sections of analysis. Each section analyses and discusses a specific aspect of property making which feeds into the overarching research question. I then go on to conclude how these aspects together respond to the overarching research question of how property is produced.

5.1. Authoritative Squeeze

The pluralistic political environment of land administration in Zambia, which has been hinted at throughout this thesis, inevitably leads to questions concerning the blurred line of authoritative jurisdictions. As I alluded to in the Introduction, Kapidžić (2018) notes that customary authority can organise societal relations in spaces where the state is absent. While this may seem obvious, my fieldwork contributes to the discussion that customary authority can even be part of the administration *within* the legal jurisdiction of the state, since land along the railway in law is owned by the state. I will show how customary authority in Zambia gets placed in an authoritative squeeze, administrating land along the railway while at the same time not enjoying the full authoritative control such as on customary land. This section will exemplify and elaborate on how the blurred lines of jurisdiction and the unwillingness or incapacity of the state squeeze customary authority, ultimately affecting the property relations occupants engage in, and, in extension, how property is produced.

To begin with, the three headmen I interviewed had different perceptions of how land along the railway were to be administered. Although I should be cautious to make conclusions based of what one of them said, especially if contradicting the others, the very fact that they have different views points to the administrative limbo the land appears to be in. To get a sense of how they differ, I will shortly present their perceptions of how they become authoritatively squeezed, before moving on to discuss how it interplays with property relations of occupants.

To reach the headman south of Monze (P43), I was lucky enough to come across a person who was willing to take me and my translator to him, which included walking on small paths through the bush. When we reached his farm, he agreed to be interviewed and told me that he did not view the land along the railway as any different than the surrounding customary land. P43 therefore understood it as the headman's jurisdiction to allocate land along the railway. People have to approach the headman and be sanctioned to use the land. Another headman north of Choma (P44), which a taxi driver knew how to find, also told me that he understood it as the headman's role to administer how subjects' access and use the land, unless people had built houses, which I previously discussed, upon which they would be able to sell the land. P44 did although accept that it is legally state land, meaning that the state or the ZRL ultimately have the right to do whatever they wanted with it. Finally, the headman south of Choma (P45), which the same taxi driver helped us to find, stated that he views it as state land, where upon people did not have to approach the headman to occupy it. P45 had however been headman in the area since 1991, and was therefore well aware how people occupied land along the railway. Additionally, P45 alluded to a change made by the ZRL of how the land should be administered.

> ZRL told us that we were free to use the land but that they could force us to give it up anytime they wanted. It used to be that people asked the ZRL for the land, now the ZRL gave us more power to use it freely so people later have come to me and asked if they can use the land. (P45)

Once again, the divergence of perceptions points to the limbo-like state of the land. There is no formalised script which is followed consistently throughout Zambia. These interviews rather indicate how localised systems come into play establishing the real and effective relations of how to administer the land along the railway.

Despite a prevalent knowledge among occupants that the land along the railway is owned by the ZRL, the actual administration of the land appears to be more complex, with the ZRL having little or no involvement in everyday practices. Chiefs and headmen, if any, are rather expressed by people as the ones who engage in smaller and more specific matters on the land. Their involvement as perceived by people is however difficult to outline in general terms, because it differs drastically between what practices they engage in from place to place. Why it differs has both to do with the structure and recognition of their authority upon the land as well as what actual issues has arisen in each specific place. For example, one occupant who viewed the land as owned by the ZRL explained how the land is administered by the chief, before describing to me the historical background of that process.

> The land is for the railway per se, but the one who overlooks the whole land is the chief. […]
> At inception, before they had put the rail, those chiefs that were there they owned the land. That
> is theirs. So, when those white people came and they wanted the rail to pass in their land, they
> had to ask from the chief who owns the land, then the chief had to agree that you can use my
> land for development. That's how they agreed, and they were given those meters, this side and
> the other side. The railways they are in a chief's area. (P30)

"The railways they are in a chief's area". Although the logic behind this statement
would infer that all state land is in a chief's area, since such was the case before the
"white people came", the spatial dimension of the railway land still matters as to
why the occupant made such a statement. Because the railway uses a thin slice of
land that cuts through customary land, as opposed to areas of state land that is wide
in both long- and latitude, it contributes to the perception that the railway passes
through customary land. So, if the railway passes through the chiefs' area –
customary land – it is not surprising that chiefs, or their headmen, involve
themselves in the administration of land along the railway, albeit knowing, or even
accepting, that the 100 yards along the railway is state land. This is exemplified by
another occupant who had been given the land by the headman and later been told
to by maintenance workers from the ZRL surveying the railway that the land
belongs to them. The person explained to me why the headman is still in contact
with the people occupying land along the railway.

> Yes, there is a contact. Because the headman really wants to know the number of people who
> are really farming here in case there are any questions that arise, he is able to answer them.
> (P13)

This matters for the property relations in the land. Without this involvement by the
headman, subjects would lose their relation to customary authority concerning the
occupations of railway land, and therefore lose an opportunity of getting it
recognized as their property. Consequently, some occupants I interviewed got
recognition from both state authority (in the form of the ZRL maintenance workers
appreciation of clearing the land, more on that later) as well as from customary
authority (in the form of this previous example). This indicates how people both are
approached by, and take advantage of many different authorities – having their
access recognized in different ways by different actors. Lund (2016) notes that this
can happen when practices upon land do not follow formalised scripts.

Another area which shows how the presence and squeeze of customary authority is
acted out is south of Mazabuka, where 8 houses occupy a small area of railway
land. I was able to interview two of these occupants (P37; P38), who stated that the
nearby district council, which is a localised branch of the state, wanted to remove
them because they had built these houses. The chief however provided another

solution, exercising the power of the chief's position in issues of land, although the land is legally outside of the jurisdiction for the chief to govern.

> The council wanted to remove us here, but we went to the chief. And the chief had to agree with the council that if you council have a land where we can put these people, you can find the land. But meantime let them settle here while they don't have anywhere else to stay. (P38)

This example shows how customary authority becomes squeezed between the ZRL and people occupying the land, and simultaneously how the district council becomes squeezed between chiefs and occupants. Although land along the railway is outside of the legal jurisdiction of customary authority, chiefs and headmen still seem to involve themselves in administering the land. Their involvement is important to acknowledge, since it provides another opportunity for occupants to get the land 'propertised', as well as an opportunity for chiefs and headmen to reinforce their authoritative power through recognizing the land occupations, as Lund (2016) notes how the act of recognition recursively recognizes authority. However, the chief in this example had to act within a limited window, since the council was accepted to have the final power in evicting the occupants, but agreed to only do so if the people could settle on another piece of land. The example also indicates how political authority is under constant negotiation of jurisdiction (Lund, 2002). The chief was able to negotiate with the council how they should treat occupants, despite it being on state land. I would also like to join in how the geography of the railway therefore matters, through how the railway as state land is cutting through customary land. Because occupants of land along the railway also live and involve themselves in other issues outside of the railway, within the domain of customary authority, they already share relations with chiefs and headmen. In some cases, these even proved to be lifelong relations. An occupant I was able to interview while he was working on the land even told me that he had been living with the headman.

> We just to stay together. He's the one who used to keep me way back. (P13)

Although not always this intimately, chiefs and headmen already have established relations with subjects who also happen to occupy railway land. However, their authority to act within the socio-legal domain of railway land becomes squeezed.

Findings throughout the fieldwork also point to how occupants may seek out property relations with political authority to secure claims. As previously mentioned, a headman (P45) I interviewed explained how the ZRL previously was administering land use along the railway, by which people had to ask and get it sanctioned by them. Later, the ZRL renounced their sanctioning authority, whereas

now people can approach the land freely, although still not to obtain ownership. Throughout this shift, P45 has noticed how more people ask him before occupying the land, despite of it not being a requisite. Such acts indicate that people want to engage with political authority to get their occupations recognized, since recognition provides security to continue occupying the land. This sense of security through recognition, and the willingness to have a relation with political authority, can be exemplified by two different occupants I interviewed. One of them stated how the ZRL were aware of the land occupation, and another person stated how the awareness of the chief provided security.

I feel secure because the owners [the ZRL] are aware that I am farming here. (P13)

We feel protected because we are being protected by the chief himself. We feel secure. (P30)

However, the headman (P45) still told me that his authority to recognize land, such as through verbal agreements with occupants, is still limited. This is because, he said, how the ZRL had stated that they can claim the land whenever they want. This proves the property agreements created through the headman's recognition as uncertain, and possibly temporary.

The squeeze chiefs and headmen are in forces them to cope with an act of balance. While chiefs and headmen involve themselves in practices upon railway land, which may ensure recognition of their authority and possibly make them become the institutional reference for people to turn to regarding railway land, acting too liberal outside of their legal jurisdiction risk to violate the authority of the ZRL. Since the ZRL renounced their participation in administering land occupations along the railway, they also refrain from competing for institutional reference. The ZRL may however intervene if their authority is challenged in a way which affects their practices. In fact, the ZRL (P46) civil servant I interviewed stated that they are concerned with the number of people occupying the land, because the ZRL are looking to develop the land commercially. If customary authority is endorsing land use along the railway too liberally, the ZRL may try to restrict their authority to recognize, in order to also restrict the number of occupants. Although I did not record any occurrence of this during my fieldwork, it was clear that these dynamics were at play through the concern of the ZRL regarding the increasing number of people occupying the land

The fieldwork also came across a case of what had happened in an area which lacked present traditional authority. As told by an occupant (P18) in this area, people from the outside not belonging to the rural community had claimed that they owned a piece of land along the railway, at that time occupied by members of the

rural community. To solve the dispute, they went to the ZRL who told them that no one can own the land because it belongs to them. The community members could thus continue to occupy the railway land. However, to avoid similar problems in the future, the community chose a headman in order to solve future disputes, with authority to administer land among the community members. The chosen headman was also accepted by the chief who had little contact with this specific community. The mental and spatial distance to the ZRL thus appeared to be too vast, and the perception of their capacity to continuously govern over peoples' practices on the land was questioned. There was not only a need to have clarity concerning who holds authority over the land, but especially how that authority should be practiced, hence, the appointment of a headman. According to P18, this shift entailed that people felt more secure using the land because of the established property relations, and that they now became aware of how the procedure would work if any conflicts arose, which reflects how people are used to deal with issues concerning land on customary land. Therefore, to produce property, it is not enough for people to be aware of the political authority that is within the jurisdiction in question, in this case the ZRL as owners of the land. Instead, property is dependent on continuous performances. A headman was chosen to engage in such continuous performances of property making (e.g. to solve disputes). At the same time, this points to a complicated property making context. Categories of authority become blurred when customary authority can exercise power on land within the jurisdiction of the state. So, although I make the case in this section that chiefs and headmen are squeezed, this squeezed space is still a void necessary for them to fill, in order to 'perform' property.

It would however not be fair to dismiss the presence the ZRL did have among people occupying land along the railway. As the previous case also includes, the ZRL made it clear that they hold ownership to the land. A similar case was found in another area as well, where an occupant (P24) explained that another person had claimed ownership to the land, upon the ZRL when confronted declared that they own the land and that P24 was free to farm on it. This leads to an overall presence of the ZRL's authority. Apart from a few who view the land as customary, occupants expressed that the ZRL had the right to claim the land whenever they would want, thus forcing people off the land. Although the fieldwork found no cases of this happening, it still is the perception among people occupying the land, which recognizes the authority of the ZRL. It can also be coupled with the view people have that if their land (or material investment on it) were to be damaged as a result of any activity by the ZRL, they would not have the right to enjoy compensation for that loss, because the land belongs to the ZRL. For property making therefore, although the ZRL as owners of the land showed little engagement in administering

it, their overall presence as owners still influences how people view the land and enter into property relations.

These findings thus display how political authorities compete, and sometimes support, each other over the control of land along the railway. The squeeze of customary authority is created by how chiefs and headmen engage in administering the land although it is within the legal jurisdiction of the state.

5.2. Clearing as Recognition

When people occupy land along the railway, the fieldwork found that they do so for the purpose of farming. Although I came to meet a few people who had also built houses and were living on the land (which I elaborate on later in the text), all occupants were farming on the land with the intention to provide food for their household. These pieces of land are therefore quite small, on which people most commonly farm maize, at times accompanied by cowpeas, groundnuts, watermelon, and sweet potato. To be able to farm on the land, it may be self-evident to specify that the majority of the land needs to be clear from trees and bushes for crops to be able to thrive. However, clearing the land also proved to be a performance with importance for the property making in the land.

Clearing is a practice that has to be performed when people enter an unoccupied piece of land as well as continuously when farming. For those I met who had cleared unoccupied land, they described it as extensive and time-consuming work which included heavy labour with trees and bushes being chopped down and conveyed away from the land. Once performed, this initial labour-intensive clearing is an investment from which further clearing, such as removing weeds, is performed occasionally alongside other farming practices. The landscape along the railway thus dramatically changes when people occupy the land, since this mode of clearing entails that vegetation is kept low through crops, as opposed to trees and bushes springing up and densifying the land if left untouched by people.

In excess of that clearing is necessary for people to be able to use the land, it is also appreciated by state authority. Civil servants from the head offices of the MoL (P42) and the ZRL (P46) told me that they prefer to have land along the railway clear to improve both the visibility for the train and the access to the railway when in need of service, but that the state do not have sufficient resources to perform such a task on its own. However, P46 explained how there are ZRL maintenance workers out each day surveying some part of the railway network to inspect if the tracks

need repairing. When ZRL workers surveying the tracks come across people occupying the land next to the railway, these occupants described to me how the ZRL workers show appreciation that the occupants are keeping the land clear to improve the visibility for the train and simplify the access to the railway if in need of repairing. During an interview with a person removing weeds from the land occupations, I was told that:

> This land belongs to the railways. They just told us to help keep it clean. (P30)

As Li (2014) discusses, land can mean different things to different actors. More specifically, having the land clear means different things to the different actors connected to land along the railway. For occupants, it is as stated necessary to at all be able to occupy, use, and farm on the land, in extension important to provide food for the household. For state authority, it improves the visibility for the train and simplify the access to the railway when in need of repairing, so as to use the land for transferring people and goods. As for traditional authority, a headman (P43) I interviewed considers it to be important to have the land clear for safety reasons, because of an incident where a person had been killed and hidden in the vegetation next to the railway. If the land is clear, people can instead access and walk on the railway without concern. Interestingly, all actors found motivation to have the land clear, albeit through different motivation.

Here I would like to draw analytical attention to a specific meaning of clearing, namely the interactions between occupants and the ZRL maintenance workers regarding practices of clearing the land, which functions as a form of recognition. As alluded to in the Theory chapter, recognition of property in land also happens outside formal and legal procedures, and can even come through verbal agreement (Lund, 2016; Rose, 1994). This indicates that when ZLR maintenance workers, who are an extension of the state that owns the land, tell people who have occupied the land that they are doing a good job keeping the land clear, the ZRL are implicitly recognizing the land occupations, thus 'propertising' them, and authorising their existence. Hence, the ZRL are not only recognizing the actual clearing of the land, but more importantly recognizing people's occupancy of the land. This is because clearing is an internal logic of using the land, which presupposes that the land is occupied. I want to stress the point that this is not supported by a formal contract, but the recognition rather occurs implicitly within the interaction between occupants and the ZRL maintenance workers.

Mutually, when occupants continue clearing the land, they are recursively recognizing the authority of the ZRL, since they are complying with the given directions of clearing as something appreciated. When these interactions of

recognition take place, they should be viewed as important recognizing 'moments', since they are necessary for the property making of the occupations. They form what Lund (2016) refers to as a contract of recognition, that is, occupants as citizens and the ZRL as state authority become mutually aware of that the other accepts the clearing of the land. For example, an occupant who agreed to be interviewed, and also took the opportunity to take a break in the shade under a nearby tree, told me that:

> We were just allowed that we use this land, because this year when I was trying to clear, the people from the railways came, we talked to them, they said this land belongs to the railways. (P13)

However, that recognition happens through the performance of clearing cannot be taken for granted. They are not inherently tied to one another. The fieldwork rather found that clearing initially happens on its own, without recognition from political authority. When recognition happens through the ZRL maintenance workers encouraging people to clear the land, it was instead some time after people had cleared the land. The knowledge that the land could be approached, cleared, and occupied was thus not created through the interactions between citizens and state authority, but rather through interactions between people. This is brought to the fore in my interview with an occupant who had recently approached the land, telling me that:

> We started clearing the land because neighbours on both sides said it could be done. Later, the ZRL came and saw us clear the land and said that we were doing a good job to keep the land clear. (P22)

This indicates that there is no political authority that holds institutional reference to how people initially occupy the land. Institutional reference refers to an institution which people turn to in order to have a resource (in this case land) 'propertised' successfully (Lund, 2016). Land occupants along the railway most often instead start occupying the land without recognition from political authority. The land is perceived by people as being owned by the ZRL, but beyond the effective control of both them as well as customary authority, since neither was commonly approach before occupying the land. This enlightens the limbo-like state of the land. However, it does not entail that the property relations on the land are free from institutional influence. As the previous discussion of customary authority rather shows, as well as this example of 'clearing as recognition', institutional procedures are at play within property relations. All the same, there is yet to be a clear and single institution that is referenced when people engage in property relations on land along the railway.

Paradoxically, the civil servant at the ZRL (P46) I interviewed did not recognize the land occupations, but rather claimed that these people are encroaching on land owned by the state, and do not appreciate that people occupy the land even when clearing it. On this basis, there is an obvious discrepancy between the ZRL maintenance workers who implicitly recognize people's occupations to the land as legitimate, and the civil servant working at the head office of the ZRL who views that people are encroaching on the land. Although I was not able to further investigate this discrepancy within the ZRL, it still leads to the question of what this means for the relation between the state and citizens. If we, once again, accept that property can be shaped outside of legal procedures, how and by whom the land occupations is recognized matters less. Because the ZRL maintenance workers are an extension of the state, their implicit recognition, through clearing the land, is as good as any performed outside of the law. This also exemplifies how the state is present in everyday life, rather than a distant abstraction far away from the citizens it governs. In other words, without formal contracts, verbalised agreement, or even without intent from the ZRL headquarter, property making occurs every day along the Zambian railway, albeit implicitly.

To summarise, the very fact that the ZRL said that people were 'doing a good job' when keeping the land clear should be interpreted as an indirect permission for people to legitimately occupy land along the railway. Such permissions are of course not backed up by law, but they nevertheless contribute to people's perception of that they have a right to occupy the land, since they perceive the ZRL maintenance workers as an extension of the state, which are the formal owners of the land. Although the fieldwork did not come across any cases where people had been evicted for not clearing the land, the very fact that all occupants were clearing the land strengthens the argument that this works as a form of 'contract of recognition', that is developing through the interactions between occupants and the ZRL maintenance workers.

5.3. Investments in Land Reinforce Legitimacy

I have previously discussed how research has shown that the things (or materialities) upon land influence property making (Blomley, 2015; Braun & Whatmore, 2010; Daston, 2004; Smith, 2014). My findings point to several examples of how investments in land reinforce the legitimacy to occupations along the railway. They do so because the state, chiefs, headmen, citizens, and subjects all have to take the materialities upon the land into account when producing property.

5.3.1. Labour

To begin with, a distinct investment in the land is through people applying labour. Apart from a few people who had occupied the land with awareness that the ZRL allowed it if the land was kept clear, or had been sanctioned to occupy the land by their headman, most people I interviewed had occupied the land without the knowledge of how any political authority would regard it. Instead, these people initially legitimised their occupations with investing labour in the land. This labour was, just as previously explained, to clear the land and start farming on it. This was viewed to in and of itself produce legitimacy to the land occupation. People saw the potential to occupy the land by the mere fact that it was unoccupied, especially when coupled with their observation that other people were using similar land. These people thus perceived that it was legitimate to occupy the land if they cleared it and especially made use of it by farming, without having the occupation sanctioned by any political authority when doing so.

According to Li (2014), labour can have an important role in legitimising use of land. Although property making of the occupations still requires recognition from political authority (Lund, 2016), my fieldwork found that most people considered it to be legitimate to occupy the land if putting labour into it, without approaching any political authority. However, on the surrounding land administered as customary land, outside of the 100 yards along the railway, the headmen I interviewed (P43; P44; P45) all told me that people must approach and get sanctioning from them before start putting labour into land. This points to the limbo-like state of the land next to the railway, and the lack of effective control by political authority of its administration. Most participants thus viewed labour to reinforce their claim to the occupations, which later became recognized, as I previously discussed, by the ZRL maintenance workers through giving indirect permission when showing appreciation that people are clearing the land. So, labour as an investment reinforces legitimacy to the land between people within the community along the railway, by letting people recognize each other's occupations when they observe that labour is applied. This communal recognition of the occupations may strengthen their position to engage in property relations when latter facing political authority.

5.3.2. Houses

Another investment of importance is when houses had been built on the land. This proved to change the conception of the occupation, which has to do with that people, beyond occupying the land, also were living on it. Through the fieldwork I encountered four occupations which included houses, apart from farming activities.

These houses had been built next to the railway because people expressed that there is a lack of land to both put a house and farm on. For example, I was told by an occupant, while standing among their maize crops and being able to glimpse a house behind some trees, that:

> We are aware that this is the field of the rails, so lacking of land from where to farm from, that's how we decided to come. (P38)

Building houses do not however come without risk. An occupant (P18) with a house on the land I interviewed who had previously worked at the ZRL described how houses built too close to the rail could be damaged by acid on the trains, as well as by the continuous vibrations of passing trains. The risk of building too close to the tracks was also shared by another occupant, who offered me and my translator a seat in the shade by their house, stating that:

> We had built the first house which was closer to the rail. So, we decided we could move a bit. That's how we shifted to that house now. Because we are scared maybe because there is any break down, they may try to pass through our house. So, at least we had to leave some meters away so that our house can be secured. (P17)

Such as P38, the civil servant at the ZRL (P46) also attributed the reason for people to build houses next to the railway to a lack of land, not least since there is a general growth of population along the line-of-rail. However, P46 described that the ZRL do not appreciate when people build houses on the land, with the latest survey they performed showing that the number of houses doubled from 2018 to 2019. In fact, the civil servant considered that houses are even more problematic than 'only' farming on the land. This is because it makes it even more difficult to evict these people from the land, which they still claim to have the right to as legal owners of the land. As Daston (2004) refers to how things 'talk', the houses on the land along the railway 'speak' to the actors in a way which reinforces people's occupation of it. For property making, houses strengthen the security to the land for people through how they transform the relation between citizens and state authority, since the ZRL are less likely to evict citizens from the land. Also resonating with Braun and Whatmore's (2010) discussion of how the enactments of 'things' may be signs of property making, houses bring with them a conceptual change based on how they are acted upon by the actors.

The fieldwork found the political power of houses not only in the relation between state authority and its citizens, but also between customary authority and its subjects. A headman I interviewed (P44) stated that people who occupy the land for farming purposes only, cannot sell the land nor even transfer it as inheritance.

The land must go back to the headman who can decide upon its further use. However, if the people occupying the land had built a house on it, the headman deemed that those people would have more power to decide upon the land's future. The headman even stated that it would be eligible for the occupants to sell the land, because they were living on it.

Within this discussion, there is a need to explore why there is a practical and conceptual change when houses enter the occupations, as well as how the *practical* and *conceptual* recursively affect each other. The civil servant at the ZRL (P46) increased reluctance to perform evictions if houses have been built is based on the responsibility they feel (or are compelled to as political authority) to take care of their citizens. Evicting citizens on land occupations with houses would not only make citizens lose an opportunity to grow food for their household, but it would make them homeless. The practical implication is as such different with houses on the land. The practical implication that people would become homeless if getting evicted then reshapes the conception of the meaning a house on the land brings – as an investment in the land. In turn, this conception of a house as an investment in the land which reinforces people's claim to it affects their practical access, use, and security to the land. In this fashion, the practical and conceptual implications of houses on occupations recursively affects each other.

Although Braun and Whatmore (2010) discuss how we should pay attention to 'the performance of things', this case of houses on land along the railway indicates that the absence of certain performances can have an equal effect on property making as those performances who are realised. The increased reluctance of evicting people on occupations with houses reflects just this – how the non-performance of political authority on occupations with houses produces property. Thus, I argue that the things on the land matters for property. Having built a house on the land, and therefore *living* on the land, creates a stronger bond to the occupation than if 'only' performing farming activities. Alongside gaining stronger power to decide upon how the land can be transferred, having a house also clearly makes it more difficult for the ZRL to deny such people to continue living on this land, which consequently means that people reinforce their occupations with putting investments in it, through building a house.

5.3.3. Boundaries

Alongside labour and houses, the production of boundaries proved to be an investment of importance to occupants. While the railway and the highway[6] in general terms run in tandem through the country, the distance between them is most often so vast that it constitutes more land than what is in title along them both. This is at least true for the sites where the study was conducted. Commonly, the land occupations are surrounded by other occupants on each side going along the railway, and a small dirt road going away from the railway. The small dirt road is where the occupations end and is also viewed as where the railway land end, by occupants. This goes together with the previously stated 50 yards, which seems to be the approximate distance between the railway and the dirt road. Land on the other side of the dirt road is e.g. used for commercial farming, grazing, and housing. The opposite boundaries of the railway and the dirt road were thus static boundaries with little or no negotiation. Once again look at figure 2 to get a figurative view of these geographical relations.

As I stated in the Theory section, property in land cannot exist without separating what piece of land is, and is not, propertised (Blomley, 2010, 2015; Brighenti, 2006). The production of boundaries is thus an inherent part of property in land in need of investigation. While the railway and the parallel dirt road proved as boundaries taken for granted by people, the boundaries between occupations however become important for analysis as zones of interaction where social flows become visible (Brighenti, 2010).

Above all, the demarcation that can be found between all occupations is some sort of 'natural' marker, such as a tree, bush, or an anthill that had been left untouched when clearing the land. No fences or 'unnatural' demarcations were built to enforce the boundaries. Rather than a fence, a big tree that could be seen from far away was common to stand between occupations as a demarcation of boundary. The reason why such a tree is kept varied among occupants. Some expressed that it is simply to show the boundaries, some expressed that the fruits on the tree can be eaten, and others expressed that because the tree is so big, it was left when clearing the land which now instead constitutes as a boundary. The materiality on the land, in this case trees, were thus not only a thing which will let people know where the boundaries are, but at times the trees themselves had shaped where boundaries were drawn, if such a tree was deemed valuable or if too much labour would go into

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[6] "The highway" is referred to the main road that runs along the railway through at Zambia. It starts of as the T3 in the north, which turns into the T2 at Kapiri Mposhi, and eventually follows the T1 from the Kafue river all the way down to Livingstone in the south. Interviews with people occupying the land were solely conducted in southern province where the railway is running alongside the T1 highway.

cutting it down. The creation of such boundaries happens between people, commonly without the involvement of political authority. During an interview with an occupant, I asked if there had been any disagreements concerning the boundaries, with the following response:

> No longer, that only occurs when you are just starting, where people they don't know exactly where it reach. But eventually when time goes, we come to agreement, because everyone gets to know where the field ends. (P9)

In addition, at occasions when people had cleared unused land next to a pre-existing occupation, those people expressed that they simply cleared the land upon until where the others' crops started. However, it was common to leave a strip of land between occupations as a 'buffer zone' to make sure of the boundary and to not by mistake harvest each other's crops, as well as creating a path when wanting to cross the rail. Notably, such creations of buffer zones were created out of respect to the people occupying the neighbouring piece of land, without any negotiations.

In this manner, people's enactment of natural boundaries makes their occupations identifiable and bounded, which in turn makes them legible for political authority to recognize. In as much as labour lets people recognize each other's occupations, boundaries also become a performance which strengthens the conception of property within the community along the railway. Without the production of boundaries, people would struggle to engage in property relations with political authority, because property requires categorial cuts (Blomely, 2010). In this case, boundaries contribute to creating such categorial cuts, that is, boundaries create demarcations which specify what can, and what cannot, be 'propertised'.

Many occupants expressed that they could not build a fence, because they did not own the land. There was a worry that a fence would signal too strong of a claim to the land, since nearly all of those I interviewed were aware of that the ZRL own the land. What can be drawn from people's reluctance to build fences is that it would indicate a claim to ownership, rather than 'only' an occupancy. Such a claim to ownership would challenge the legal owners, the ZRL, with the risk of eviction. Successful propertisation therefore depends on balancing the effects of practices (performances) on the land. While building houses have the potential to enforce legitimacy, fences are viewed as unsettling this balance, with the repercussion of instead risking to lose legitimacy. Therefore, 'natural' boundaries of trees, bushes, and anthills can be found between occupations along the railway.

6. Conclusion

This study is an investigation of how property in land is produced beyond the effective control of political authority along the railway in Southern Province of Zambia. It investigates the different ways people who occupy the land enter into property relations to secure their legitimacy to the land, and how political authorities, through positioning and negotiation, recognize (or avoid recognizing) occupations to strengthen their own authority.

The role of political authority is important within property relations. The study has demonstrated how customary authority in Zambia becomes squeezed due to the lack of a formalised script, trying to balance their engagement with occupants as well as not violate the jurisdiction of the ZRL as legal owners of the land. This authoritative squeeze of customary authority is also based on the geography of the railway as state land, cutting through areas of customary land. Chiefs and headmen have established relations with their subjects, making it 'natural' for them to recognize land along the railway as if it was customary land. Although customary authority gets squeezed, the fact that the land is in administrative limbo enables margins of negotiation, where chiefs and headmen attempt to enhance their authority, despite that land along the railway is legally owned by state. While discussions of property commonly accept that customary authority can fill voids where the state is absent, this study contributes to the broader literature of property by more firmly asserting that customary authority even can enter *within* the jurisdiction of the state. Land occupants have 'brought' customary authority into this land since they share previous relations and due to the railway land's geographic-jurisdictional configuration, leading to that chiefs and headmen can provide the rural poor with security to land which they otherwise would be unable to obtain. This plays out in the wake of how state authority fails to create institutionalised practices of how land along the railway is administered.

Clearing of railway land, that is, chopping down trees and bushes to make land arable, have become a performance which have resulted in legitimation. Maintenance workers from the ZRL are showing appreciation to people who are performing this clearing, thus recognizing the occupations which the clearing

produces. This appears to happen outside of the ZRL formalised script of how the land should be administered, proving that the real and effective practices establish contextual and localised orders of property production upon land in limbo.

Investment in land, through labour, houses, and the creation of boundaries, also strengthen occupants' legitimacy to it. While a strict economic rationale would view investment in land to increase the potential capitalisation of it, I have rather shown how investments in land improve security to it, and not the monetary value of it (see also Li, 2014). Material aspects of property should therefore not be neglected, but rather be a central part of its analysis, since the cultural understanding of specific materialities influence how they are acted upon. The strengthening of claims to railway land through material investments ultimately improves the condition for occupants to engage in property relations.

Together these aspects of property relations add up to show how the administration of land along the railway is starting to carve out its own institutional procedure of how the land is propertised. It can however not be stated that a single institution holds reference to how land is approached, invested in, and ultimately propertised, since my empirical material displayed somewhat contradicting procedures on different field sites. Nonetheless, the involvement of customary authority, recognition from maintenance workers, and peoples' material investments, may be in its initial phase of combining into a single institution that people can go through to engage in property relations.

Further research should investigate the linkage between labour and legitimacy to land. While this study only scratches on the surface of how people legitimise occupations of land by investing labour into it, further investigation should more deeply explore this linkage. Such research could also benefit from performing enquires on land that is not in administrative limbo, but instead try to depict how labour in fact is part of everyday scripts (albeit beyond state law), to create legitimacy to land in Zambia.

As policy recommendations, future governance and administration of the land, from customary and state authority alike, should consider a pro-poor perspective since people occupying the land do so because of lack of opportunity to access land elsewhere. The ZRL could even include occupants that clear the land as part of their official strategy, which would alleviate their own pressure of cutting trees and bushes next to the rail. Although there is a political divide between customary and state authority, my study demonstrates how their collaboration, rather than competition, will ultimately benefit themselves and most importantly the people they are governing.

Finally, because land along the railway is in administrative limbo beyond the effective control of any political authority, people seek alternative ways to legitimise occupation of it. They engage in property relations performed outside of formalised scripts through contextual and localised orders, within which political authorities negotiating their positions to recognize land, recursively recognizing their authority. This matters, because, engaging in property relations can improve access, as well as ensure stable use and security to land, crucial for the rural poor in Zambia where land is becoming increasingly difficult to come by.

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Appendix 1

Notably, the first 8 interviews in Monze Town were preliminary conducted with people along the railway to test out the format of interviews, but do not influence the analysis of the study since the occupations were situated in an urban area without customary land surrounding them.

Identity in text	Area	Interview date
P1	Monze Town	20191230
P2	Monze Town	20191230
P3	Monze Town	20191230
P4	Monze Town	20191230
P5	Monze Town	20191230
P6	Monze Town	20191230
P7	Monze Town	20191231
P8	Monze Town	20191231
P9	South of Monze	20200101
P10	South of Monze	20200101
P11	South of Monze	20200101
P12	South of Monze	20200101
P13	South of Monze	20200101
P14	South of Monze	20200101
P15	North of Monze	20200102
P16	North of Monze	20200102
P17	North of Monze	20200102
P18	North of Monze	20200102
P19	South of Choma	20200107
P20	South of Choma	20200107
P21	South of Choma	20200107
P22	South of Choma	20200107
P23	South of Choma	20200107
P24	North of Choma	20200108
P25	North of Choma	20200108
P26	North of Choma	20200109

P27	South of Choma	20200110
P28	South of Mazabuka	20200113
P29	South of Mazabuka	20200113
P30	South of Mazabuka	20200113
P31	South of Mazabuka	20200113
P32	South of Mazabuka	20200113
P33	South of Mazabuka	20200113
P34	South of Mazabuka	20200114
P35	South of Mazabuka	20200114
P36	South of Mazabuka	20200114
P37	South of Mazabuka	20200115
P38	South of Mazabuka	20200115
P39	North of Mazabuka	20200116
P40	North of Mazabuka	20200116
P41	North of Mazabuka	20200116
P42	Civil Servant at MoL	20191216
P43	Headman South of Monze	20200101
P44	Headman North of Choma	20200109
P45	Headman South of Choma	20200110
P46	Civil Servant at ZRL	20200120