

ROBERT WYROD

University of Colorado, Boulder

Email: robert.wyrod@colorado.edu

---

## In the General's Valley

*China, Africa, and the Limits of Developmental Pragmatism*

---

**ABSTRACT** Since the turn of the millennium, the landscape of development in Africa has undergone a dramatic shift. China has significantly expanded its foreign aid and investment in the region, decentering the West as Africa's main development partner. What is largely missing from China-Africa scholarship, however, is attention to how the new Chinese presence in Africa is both embedded in and altering everyday social relations. This article examines these issues in a rural setting in Uganda that is in the midst of a large-scale transformation into a China-funded industrial park. It reveals that the complex new politics of Chinese development assistance are intertwined with, and often exacerbate, existing social inequalities based in politics, class, ethnicity, and race. More conceptually, these dynamics demonstrate the need to rethink how we frame development as a transnational field of social practice. China is more than an outlier within the global field of development and instead should be viewed as pursuing its own form of development, what I call "developmental pragmatism." As this case study illustrates, this developmental pragmatism often turns on synergies between the business-focused development approach of the Chinese and the priorities of more authoritarian governments—synergies that require much greater critical attention. **KEYWORDS** China, Africa, Uganda, development, inequality

---

### INTRODUCTION

The rise of China as a new force in African development is one of the most significant political-economic shifts in sub-Saharan Africa in the postcolonial era. Since the turn of the millennium, the Chinese government has drastically increased their funding for development projects across Africa, leading some observers to dub sub-Saharan Africa "China's second continent" (French 2014; see also Sun 2014). This new role for China in Africa has sparked much scholarly interest across a wide range of disciplines (Monson and Rupp 2013). Such scholarship, however, has largely examined this phenomenon through a macro-political lens, typically focusing on whether Chinese-led development is beneficial for Africa or simply another brand of neocolonialism (Brautigam 2009; van Dijk 2009).

What is largely missing from China-Africa scholarship to date is greater sociological attention to how Chinese development assistance is both embedded in and altering everyday social relations. How are the lives of ordinary Africans being shaped by China's new role in sub-Saharan Africa? And crucially, do China-funded projects ameliorate or exacerbate existing social tensions based in politics, class, gender, ethnicity, and race?

---

*Sociology of Development*, Vol. 5, Number 2, pps. 174–197. electronic ISSN 2374-538X. © 2019 by the Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Reprints and Permissions web page, <https://www.ucpress.edu/journals/reprints-permissions>. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/sod.2019.5.2.174>.

This article examines these issues in a rural setting in Uganda that is in the midst of a transformation into a Chinese-funded industrial park. My research in the General's Valley, as I call it, provides a rare opportunity to analyze the social foundation on which a large Chinese-funded development project is being built. Life in the General's Valley shows that the complex new politics of Chinese development assistance are deeply intertwined with existing social inequalities, and that these dynamics are the limiting factor in how this new era of Chinese-led development will benefit ordinary Africans.

More conceptually, this research raises important questions about how China's rise as a major global development actor complicates some central issues within the sociology of development. A prominent theme in current development studies is understanding the values and practices that unify the diverse field of transnational development actors. Such work has argued that there is a core set of values and beliefs that provide a sense of shared mission within the global development sector (Thornton, Dorius, and Swindle 2015). Does China neatly fit within this established field of transnational development actors? Is it operating with same shared values, beliefs, and practices?

This case study in Uganda helps to answer these important questions. A glimpse into life in this village, called Kapeeka, provides much-needed perspective on the actual impact of Chinese development in the lives of Africans. It reveals troubling ways this Chinese development project has worked with powerful Ugandans to heighten a wide range of social inequalities. By extension, life in Kapeeka also helps us see how China is forging its own distinct field of development practice, animated by its own values and beliefs—what I call *developmental pragmatism*.

#### **CHINA-AFRICA RELATIONS AND THE SOCIOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT**

China's role as a development partner to many sub-Saharan African nations is not new. The modern era of Sino-African relations stretches back 50 years, to the creation of the TAZARA railway in 1967. A partnership between Tanzania, Zambia, and China, this thousand-mile railway linked the Tanzanian port of Dar es Salaam with the Zambian Copperbelt. The construction was fully financed by China, making it China's single largest foreign aid project at the time. This Cold War partnership between two prominent African socialist nations and Mao Zedong's China was hailed as a symbol of Chinese-African friendship that cast China as a benevolent supporter of African self-determination (Monson 2013).

With China's emergence as a global superpower since the turn of the millennium, Sino-African relations have taken on renewed significance. As in the Cold War, the Chinese government frames its African assistance as a largely benevolent expression of friendship from a formerly developing country to African countries struggling to escape poverty. Also like the Cold War period, a strong counter-narrative has emerged in the West, portraying China as an opportunistic neocolonialist developing infrastructure that facilitates the export of raw commodities to China and speeds the distribution of Chinese goods to new African markets.

The bulk of Africa-China scholarship to date is framed in these rather simplistic terms and based on national or regional-level data (Insaideo 2016; Moyo 2009, 2012; Rotberg 2008; Shinn and Eisenman 2012; Taylor 2008). Scholarly attention to the micropolitics of

China in Africa is just emerging, from rich historical analyses to site-specific ethnographic fieldwork (Aidoo 2016; Lee 2009, 2014, 2017; Monson 2013; Warmerdam and van Dijk 2016). These studies all strive to move beyond debates over China as benevolent friend or neocolonial opportunist. They illuminate how the Chinese presence in Africa is remaking social relations in ways that both constrain Africans and enable new forms of agency (Siu and McGovern 2017).

This emerging focus is in line with recent trends in the sociology of development more generally. As Jocelyn Viterna and Cassandra Robertson (2015) discuss in their overview of the subfield, a key new agenda for research is moving beyond macroeconomic indicators of growth to focus on how institutions, social divisions, and human capital matter to development. Sociologists, they argue, are especially well poised to deepen our understanding of social divisions, especially how “local development interventions may reshape local patterns of inequality” (262). To date, very little research on China in Africa has explicitly examined this issue, and thus we have scant knowledge about how Chinese projects are intertwined with inequalities of class, race, and gender in specific locales (for important exceptions see Arsene 2014; Lee 2017; Park 2008, 2013; Sylvanus 2013). This is the focus of this article, with the goal of deepening our sociological perspectives on how local inequalities matter to development.

This focus also brings attention to a more fundamental issue: how do we best conceptualize the diverse groups of actors who comprise the transnational development sector? In recent years there has been a move to conceptualize development as a “field” in the Bourdieusian sense. For Bourdieu, the meso-level concept of field demarcates “the local social world in which actors are embedded and toward which they orient their actions” (Sallaz and Zavisca 2007, 24). States, NGOs, multilateral institutions, charitable organizations, and individuals are all actors in the transnational field of development, and their actions appear “united by several shared sets of best-practice narratives and relatively consistent tactical repertoires” (Viterna and Robertson 2015, 260). A key research agenda, as Viterna and Robertson argue, is analysis of this transnational field as an entity itself, especially its “consistencies and contradictions” (262).

An important aspect of this more conceptual research agenda is specifying exactly what constitutes this field’s shared set of values and beliefs. As Arland Thornton, Shawn Dorius, and Jeffrey Swindle (2015) have compellingly argued, there is a cultural model that unifies these diverse actors around the “appropriate” goals of development—what they call “developmental idealism.” They provide a comprehensive list of the shared values and beliefs in the developmental idealism model, including free markets, democratic institutions, human rights, and gender egalitarianism. While many tenets of the model derive from the cultures of northwest Europe, Thornton, Dorius, and Swindle argue that developmental idealism’s values and beliefs are now linked to a *global* model of development and a “universal prescription” of how these values and beliefs are “causes and consequences of global development” (76).

At the heart of developmental idealism is the notion that values of social equality—freedom, democracy, education, human rights, and gender egalitarianism, among others—are fundamental to attaining modern societies and modern political systems. Importantly

for this article, these values are also given prime causal significance in this model's *beliefs* about what produces broad-based economic development. Thus, values of social equality are promoted "not only as ends to be achieved but as means for achieving other valued ends," especially economic development (97). As I strive to show in this article, the emphasis on *values* in this model is a stark contrast to a Chinese development model that singularly pursues economic development as an isolated *result* in and of itself.

Western development efforts, it should be noted, have been widely critiqued for failing to truly improve the lives of ordinary people. A prominent strain of these critiques frames development as a Foucauldian discourse that naturalizes the West's control over global processes and reproduces exploitative colonial dynamics in the postcolonial era (Escobar 1995; Yarrow and Venkatesan 2012). In this sense, Western development agencies' avowed commitments to values of greater political, economic, and social equality have "disguised governmental practices of control and incorporation of 'dangerous borderlands' . . . into global capitalism" (Mosse 2013, 229). As James Ferguson (1994, xv) has famously argued in relation to development in sub-Saharan Africa, the development apparatus can be "an 'anti-politics' machine, depoliticizing everything it touches, everywhere whisking political realities out of sight." Development values become reduced to technical problems to be solved by experts. This particular form of governmentality, in Foucault's terms, both disempowers the intended beneficiaries (i.e., ordinary people) and reframes deep structural inequalities as mere bureaucratic technicalities to be solved by state governments and development agencies (Li 2007; Mosse 2013, 229; see also Englund 2006 with regard to human rights in Africa).

For Thornton, Dorius, and Swindle (2015), these critiques do not challenge their argument about the global diffusion of development idealism as the cultural foundation of world development programs. They are "agnostic" on whether the globalization of developmental idealism "has benefited or harmed people," taking "no position concerning the truths of DI beliefs or the merits of its values" (71). Going further, they argue that while critics of Western development such as Escobar and Ferguson draw attention to development's problematic emphasis on "global capitalism in producing a socially just world," such critics "inject their own vision of a 'good society' into their social theories . . . [and] are strikingly similar [to DI] in the sense that they involve values and beliefs regarding collective well-being and social progress" (81–82).

Turning to China, Thornton, Dorius, and Swindle define developmental idealism in rather flexible and inclusive terms and include China as one of its proponents. They see China's national promotion of modern family planning and low fertility as emblematic of the value placed on certain forms of "family arrangements" within developmental idealism. However, they do not analyze China in any greater depth, neglecting China's resurgence as a transnational development actor. China's new role in African development, therefore, raises important unanswered questions about the extent to which China operates within this shared set of beliefs and values.

Based on research to date, values do appear to guide China's engagement with African development, but they are quite circumscribed. As Helen Siu and Mike McGovern (2017) argue in their review of the literature on China–Africa encounters, China is guided

by a philosophy of mutual benefit and friendship predicated on the history of socialist-era South–South ties dating back to the Cold War. A second, tightly linked value is nonintervention in domestic affairs—a value that emerged out of China’s own struggle with imperialism. These values, I argue, do not overlap with those of developmental idealism; nonintervention may actually work against the core beliefs of developmental idealism.

These ambiguities over the exact nature of Chinese development on the continent have spurred a largely polarized debate on its impact (Siu and McGovern 2017). There are those who see China’s role as largely positive, especially with regard to new channels of South–South business investment and partnerships (Brautigam 2009; Moyo 2009). At the other extreme are critics, often journalists, who frame China as pursuing narrow, economic self-interest under the guise of a development ideology stressing mutually beneficial assistance (French 2010). At a minimum, there is some consensus that China is indeed pursuing a form of economic statecraft in Africa, using development as a realm to expand its business interests, exercise soft power, and, to a lesser extent, secure access to natural resources (Bräutigam and Tang 2012).

Importantly, these debates diverge from those over Western development. Critiques of Western development turn on the mismatch between the values and beliefs espoused by development actors and the actual impact of their efforts. As discussed above, these mismatches range across poorly executed programs, unintended consequences, and more fundamental tensions between neoliberal macroeconomic development policies and the provision of broad-based social services. In contrast, debates over China’s development policies turn on who truly benefits from Chinese investments (donor or recipients) and to what extent the Chinese state is truly committed to improving the lives of the African masses.

Thus, Chinese development should be viewed as fundamentally distinct from developmental idealism. This is not to suggest that values are absent from the Chinese development model. However, the values that drive this model are limited and eclipsed by a focus on achieving narrowly conceived economic results. These results are framed as mutually beneficial for China and African countries and include globalizing the production base of Chinese state-owned and private industries (the Going Global strategy discussed below), funding Chinese firms to improve African infrastructure, and deepening China–Africa trade ties. This contrast between values and results, I argue, is the core factor distinguishing developmental idealism from China’s distinct style of development practice—what I call developmental pragmatism.<sup>1</sup>

Truly understanding how China is doing development, however, requires examining the impact Chinese projects have on the lives of their presumed beneficiaries. As Siu and McGovern (2017:343) discuss, there is a small but growing body of grounded, often ethnographic research helping to move past “dichotomous ordering frames and focus on complex and contradictory human agencies” in the actual practice of Chinese development. Such research has indeed highlighted positive impacts of Chinese investments as well as new conflicts and tensions, many with neocolonial resonances. Taken together, this research reveals that China–Africa encounters are multifaceted, dynamic, and profoundly shaped by local context, with both Chinese and Africans having agency in how

this new form of development is actually enacted (Leslie 2016; Marfaing and Thiel 2013; Mohan and Lampert 2013).

A focus on the practice of Chinese development in Africa is crucial for grasping what is distinctive about China's emerging brand of development. Given that promoting social equality is a core value of developmental idealism, attention to social inequality provides much leverage in distinguishing developmental idealism from developmental pragmatism.

In the following analysis of China's presence in Kapeeka, I use a framework focused on three specific dimensions of inequality: politics, class, and race/ethnicity. I chose the first two because they relate to two core values of developmental idealism, namely democratic social and political institutions (politics) and wealth creation / economic development (class). The third dimension, race/ethnicity, emerges from research that suggests race is a key fault line in China–Africa relations (Aidoo 2016; Castillo 2018; Lee 2009, 2014; Sylvanus 2013; Warmerdam and van Dijk 2016). A fourth dimension, gender, is also part of my analytical framework given the emphasis on gender egalitarianism in developmental idealism. However, given the complexity of how Chinese projects in Kapeeka affected gender relations, I focus exclusively on this dimension in a separate article. Taken together, these four dimensions provide a robust framework for comparing developmental idealism and Chinese development, and they reveal how the actual practice of Chinese development has affected social inequality in one rural African setting.

#### **THE GENERAL'S VALLEY**

Uganda is an especially interesting setting in which to examine this new wave of Chinese development in Africa. Over the last decade, China has provided more than a billion dollars in aid to Uganda, funding hydroelectric projects, roads, rail lines, and even a new office tower for the office of the president. In turn, the Ugandan government has guaranteed China a major role in the development of huge new oil reserves in western Uganda. The Ugandan government's tensions with Western donors over recent anti-homosexuality legislation have made China an even more important partner, given China's own indifference to human rights issues. In this sense, Uganda has been viewed as a bellwether for how African regimes will exploit China as a new political ally and development benefactor (Brooks 2014; Mutiga 2013).

Since 2015, I have been conducting research at four fieldsites where China-funded projects are active. In this article, I focus on one of these projects, in the village of Kapeeka. Kapeeka is in southern Uganda, 40 miles northwest of the capital, Kampala. It is a typical village for this area, with approximately 21,500 residents living either near the village center or in the greater Kapeeka sub-county (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2017). From the 1950s through the 1970s, much of Kapeeka was part of the East Mengo Grower's Cooperative Union, by all accounts a successful small-scale farmers' cooperative that supported thousands of families. All of this came to an end in the 1980s during Uganda's protracted civil war. This area of central Uganda, known as the Luweero Triangle, saw the most intense fighting, and by the war's conclusion in 1986 nearly all the residents of the region had been displaced.

The end of the war ushered in rebel leader Yoweri Museveni's rise to power, and with his re-election in February 2016 he is now one of Africa's longest-ruling presidents. In the 1990s, Museveni's brother, whose *nom de guerre* is General Salim Saleh, began confiscating land titles in the Kapeeka area, eventually transforming a 4,000-acre portion of the former East Mengo cooperative into his own personal fiefdom. In the early 2000s, the general moved permanently to his valley, building a heavily fortified compound that serves as his headquarters. At this time, he began developing the Namunkekera Rural Industrial Centre, a 1,500-acre portion of his land envisioned to combine large-scale agricultural processing facilities with an industrial park.

In 2006, General Saleh started collaborating with several Chinese businessmen, most notably Shen Zhong Yuan, who moved with his family to the General's Valley. Mr. Shen, as he is referred to in Kapeeka, is believed by many villagers I spoke with to have deep ties with the Chinese military and to have relatives high in the Chinese government. Together, the general and Mr. Shen developed several agricultural and light-industrial projects on the general's land. Initially they focused on growing cassava and maize, employing Kapeeka villagers as farmworkers. When these projects failed, they turned to food processing, building a small tomato sauce factory. This also failed, and in 2013 they constructed a large facility for making roof tiles, a venture that proved successful. Thus, for nearly a decade, the general and Mr. Shen have been slowly building a Uganda–China business partnership that has shaped life in Kapeeka.

President Museveni has provided much support for these ventures, and, crucially, in December 2015, the president, along with the ambassador of China, announced that Kapeeka had been chosen as the site for the country's first Chinese-funded industrial park, the Uganda Liao Shen Industrial Park. A 640-acre parcel of the Namunkekera Rural Industrial Centre was allocated to the park, with the ultimate goal of developing 50 different industrial enterprises on 1,100 acres by 2020 (Ulsip 2018).

In both Ugandan and Chinese official statements and media reports, the park is described as a twenty-first-century form of win-win development that promotes both Chinese and Ugandan industrial growth (Mutegeki 2018). The foundation of the project is a partnership between the government of Uganda and the government of Liaoning Province, an industrial powerhouse in Northeast China. This provincial-level involvement is a common but under-studied form of Chinese development in Africa (Xuefei 2016). It is a facet of China's Going Out or Going Global policy, initiated in 2001 and accelerated in recent years, which encourages provincial governments and businesses to be proactive in seeking out new markets and business alliances, including in sub-Saharan Africa. According to the official website, the park is "a platform for Liaoning enterprises to enter the African market. . . . It will surely open the door for Liaoning products to walk into Africa and thus enhance Liaoning's degree of internationalization and improve the adjustment of industrial structure and economic development of Liaoning" (Ulsip 2018). In addition, the project is explicitly framed as a cutting-edge form of development assistance from China to Uganda. According to its mission statement, this is "the first industrial park of cooperation between Uganda and China. It will become a demonstration of Uganda's development of economy and will promote the economic

development of Uganda. . . . [It will become] the most influential park in Africa, and an industrial park promoting the development of East Africa and radiating the whole of Africa based on Uganda” (Ulsip 2018).

The financing of the park is complex, and official statements provide limited information on the specifics. Through the Commerce Department of Liaoning Province, the Chinese government is providing financial support for 50% of all up-front investment costs for investing enterprises, based on loans with 3% annual interest. The Ugandan government has provided lease of the land, generous export and import tax exemptions, and 10 years of corporate income tax exemption. The project also involves two large private investors: China-based Zhongda Group and the Ugandan business conglomerate Zhang Group, owned and operated by Chinese national Zhang Hao. Given his years of business experience in Uganda, Zhang Hao is a key intermediary between the Ugandan and Chinese governments. He holds the official lease on the park land, is chairman of the Liao Shen Industrial Park Co. Ltd., and is also director of overseas activities for the Liaoning Provincial People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries.

Thus, the Ugandan Liao Shen Industrial Park is best described as a public–public–private development project. And given that President Museveni’s brother owns the land, this is a development project the Ugandan first family has a large personal stake in. At the 2015 groundbreaking ceremony in Kapeeka, the Liaoning government, along with Zhongda Group and Zhang Group, pledged to invest USD 600 million over the next five years to develop the park. The first large project, a truck and automobile assembly plant, was announced with the promise to create 10,000 new jobs for Ugandans. Life in Kapeeka, therefore, provides a rare chance to examine the social foundation on which a large Chinese-funded development project is being built and the impact such a project is having on social inequality in everyday life.

This project in Kapeeka is just one of many similar manufacturing parks being developed by China across the African continent. Beginning in 2006, China began a concerted effort to export its model of “special economic zones” (SEZs) as catalysts for economic development (Brautigam 2009). In China, these zones combined tax incentives with government financial and technical assistance to create dense hubs of manufacturing, and they proved key to China’s dramatic economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s. By 2010, China’s Ministry of Commerce was supporting the construction of six of these official economic and trade cooperation zones in Ethiopia, Egypt, Mauritius, Nigeria, and Zambia (Bräutigam and Tang 2011; UNDP 2015). These zones all involve a partnership between the Chinese government, African governments, and Chinese business developers from state-owned, province-owned, and privately owned enterprises (Bräutigam and Tang 2011). These official partnerships have been followed by many other similar partnerships, including those between Chinese provincial governments and African nations. While the track record of these myriad collaborations has been mixed, this model of “win-win” China–Africa economic development has only accelerated in recent years. The Ugandan Liao Shen Industrial Park, therefore, is a particularly prominent East African example of this much larger trend in Chinese-led SEZ development in Africa—a trend that is now widespread across the continent.



## METHODS

I have conducted research in Kapeeka since 2015, interviewing over 100 men and women, with my most recent fieldwork in early and late 2017. This article focuses on the initial fieldwork that I conducted for three months from July to September 2015. I worked with two Ugandan research assistants from this region, including one whose mother's natal village is Kapeeka. Our research began with three weeks of immersive ethnographic fieldwork. This involved living in the village and observing the rhythms of everyday life, visiting villagers' homes and plots of land, and repeated visits to the general and Mr. Shen's offices and business ventures. The general also provided us with several tours of all the businesses, projects, and farms on his land.

During and after the initial ethnographic fieldwork, we conducted in-depth interviews with residents of Kapeeka. The primary goal of the interview sample was to speak with villagers who had some direct experience working on the projects developed by the general and Mr. Shen. In addition, the sample was designed to reflect the demographics of the adult population with regard to ethnicity, education, income, and gender. A snowball sampling procedure was used to recruit participants. This process began with an initial interview with the official political representative for the village (referred to as the Local Council level-III representative). At the conclusion of this interview we asked for suggestions for further interviews and then followed up on these fruitful leads. These subsequent interviewees were then asked for additional suggestions, which also led to new interviews. To diversify our sample, we pursued two additional sampling strategies. First, we went door to door in the residential areas immediately surrounding the general's land asking if adult residents had worked on the projects and if they would be willing to be interviewed. We asked those interviewed for additional suggestions, following up on these leads later. We would then skip a home and continue the process. Second, we also attempted to target workers more directly by lingering outside the work areas and randomly approaching workers as they were coming to or leaving work.

Together, these three procedures produced a large and diverse sample of village residents. In total, we conducted 57 in-depth interviews. Of these 57 people, 54 had direct work experience on the general and Mr. Shen's projects. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 60, with the majority in their 20s and 30s. As in Kapeeka as a whole, most participants were of the Baganda ethnic group, primary-school educated, and living on 2 or 3 dollars per day. Most participants were Christian; 9% were Muslim. Forty-four percent of the participants were women, all of whom had worked on at least one project in the valley. Because ethnicity emerged as a key issue early on in our fieldwork, we recruited additional participants from northern Uganda. We accomplished this primarily by asking northerners we interviewed for contacts for other Ugandans from the north. Overall, Kapeeka residents from northern Uganda comprised 17% of the sample.

Interviews focused on the experiences people had working on these projects, the effect of such work on their families and personal lives, their views on the overall impact of these projects for the village, and their attitudes toward Chinese development assistance and business more generally. Nearly all interviews were conducted in Luganda, the local language in this region of Uganda. Several interviews with northern Ugandans were conducted in their

native languages and the remainder in English. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then translated into English by native Luganda or northern-language speakers.

In addition to the interview with the political representative of the village, I interviewed the chief administrative officer of the district. This interview focused on his knowledge of, and involvement with, any Chinese development plans for the area. He was also asked his opinions on past, current, and future plans for Chinese-funded projects in the district.

Data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. While my research was guided by attention to various dimensions of social inequality, before I began my fieldwork I did not have any assumptions about whether villagers would be positive or negative about the Chinese presence in Kapeeka. During the fieldwork, an initial summary of each respondent was drafted by the research team after the interviewee completed the interview protocol. These summaries identified key emergent themes, including those regarding labor practices, a climate of fear in the village, lack of benefit for villagers, Chinese views of Ugandans, and lack of work opportunities for women. After fieldwork was completed, all fieldnotes and transcripts were imported into NVivo for detailed coding. First, I read through all these documents to categorize each resident's overall attitude toward the Chinese presence in the village, labeling them as positive, negative, or mixed. Fieldnotes and transcripts were then reread and further coded to link the emergent themes with my analytical framework focused on politics, class, race/ethnicity, and gender. There was a great deal of overlap between the themes that emerged organically from the data and the four dimensions of social inequality of my analytical framework. All verbatim quotations in this article are from the transcripts of the recorded interviews. With the exception of General Salim Saleh and Mr. Shen, all names are pseudonyms.

## **THE PRACTICE OF CHINESE DEVELOPMENT IN KAPEEKA**

My fieldwork in the General's Valley revealed that the China-Uganda projects to date have been enmeshed in a wide range of social inequalities. At times these projects have explicitly exploited existing social tensions, especially along lines of ethnicity, while buttressing political power imbalances. They have also created new inequities, in particular class distinctions and dramatically amplified racial tensions. Taken together, these dynamics raise concerns about the overall impact of this new form of development in Kapeeka and in Uganda more generally.

### **Politics and a Climate of Fear**

More than any other place I have conducted research, there was a palpable sense of trepidation among villagers in Kapeeka. Everyone we spoke with was concerned about possible repercussions from speaking with us. This was especially true for the workers currently employed in Mr. Shen's businesses. The villagers and workers were keenly aware that Kapeeka had become a politically sensitive location involving the two most powerful men in the country (the general and his brother, President Museveni), with one man only half-joking that Mr. Shen was now the third most powerful man in the country.

I experienced this climate of fear myself early on in my fieldwork. On my first stroll into the General's Valley along a major public road, the armed security guards at the general's

compound summoned me as I passed. They thoroughly questioned me and said I could not walk past the compound again without the general's permission, which I eventually received. At the end of my first week in the village, a well-meaning resident warned me that my interviews were raising suspicion and that I should be careful not to accept any food or drink from strangers because I was at risk of being poisoned.

I was admittedly shaken by these events but knew that as a white American I was likely insulated from much danger. Others, however, recounted stories that made it clear that the villagers' concerns were justified. Two different men, for example, said they had been arrested and then jailed for weeks after they challenged Mr. Shen about abusive labor practices. Moses, a security guard at Mr. Shen's compound, quit after conflicts over unpaid wages and told me that a week later he was arrested and imprisoned, an action he saw as retaliation by the general for challenging Mr. Shen. "The police officers told me they had an order from above for me to be arrested," he said. "These men were under the control of the general, and so I think that order was from the general himself." Another man, Dennis, who worked in the brick factory, claimed the Chinese were armed:

They have guns, those guys. It seems they have some element of military in them. General Saleh gave them [the guns]. . . . They used to have big guns, so the problem was if you wanted something from them you had to be humble. They would hold the guns just to scare you.

Thus, this partnership between a very powerful man like the general and Mr. Shen, who was given much leeway in conducting his business affairs, was unsettling, and frankly scary, for most of Kapeeka's residents.

The general was, however, adept at presenting himself as something of a benevolent despot, claiming that he was primarily concerned with developing his valley for the benefit of Kapeeka residents. While many villagers had fairly positive views of the general, a minority did question the image the general had cultivated of himself. Vincent, a war veteran who had fought alongside the general, was particularly critical, saying,

They are telling the nation that the big man has put billions here, that he has built a factory in Kapeeka, but it is only General Saleh who is benefitting from the Chinese. The people think he has brought them factories. But there is nothing we are benefitting from that. It is the Chinese who are benefitting from the general. They make their profit. Then they divide their loot with the general. . . . He just deceived us. It's all a political maneuver, so that they thrive and we lose.

Importantly, this climate of fear and intimidation was emblematic of a deeper issue, namely the lack of perceived accountability that this partnership is based on. Given the history of the General's Valley as a farmers' cooperative, and the suspicious way the general acquired this land, many villagers were deeply resentful of what they viewed as an absence of accountability. Indeed, one of the most frustrating and challenging aspects of this research was the cloak of secrecy that draped information about current and future China-Uganda projects in Kapeeka. The local and district-level officials I interviewed knew little about the

current operations and had no specific information about any future plans for new joint ventures. I was, in fact, rather stunned by the amount of misinformation provided to me by the chief financial officer of the district. He consistently misidentified Indian-funded projects as Chinese-funded projects in the district and was clearly not part of any discussions on any future Uganda–China business partnerships. All but the highest-ranking government officials appeared to be excluded from development plans.

The general’s inaccessibility was made abundantly clear to me in my repeated attempts to speak with him. For a week, I began each day by visiting the general’s compound to request an interview, a routine that became comically predictable. I would first have to introduce myself to the guards at the gate and explain my intentions. I was then escorted to the general’s secretary’s office, a small room off the main courtyard. The late-middle-aged woman would politely ask me to write my request in the form of a letter, which was delivered to the general in his private residence next door. I would then take a seat on one of the long wooden benches in a covered section of the courtyard. There I would join the many other visitors who had come to seek assistance from the general. Each day approximately two hours would pass before the secretary politely informed me that the general could not see me that day. Illness, meetings with Chinese officials, and emergency trips to the capital were the excuses. As frustrating as the general’s elaborate protocol was for me, Mr. Shen was even less accessible—it was obvious that he would never agree to speak with me.

Christine, a woman who lived next door to the general’s compound, sympathized with my frustration, telling me, “You are not allowed to get to [the general]. Even if you have a problem, you can’t. It’s only the big shots who can approach him. But as for me, a poor person with no money, there is no way I can get to see him.” For some villagers, these dynamics left them feeling powerless and embittered. Peter, who had worked on various Chinese projects in the village for three years, including most recently the brick factory, said, “For us common people, we don’t have any authority over the Chinese. Only our boss [the general] has authority over them. But the Chinese continue to torture us.”

Overall, my fieldwork made clear that these new business partnerships had exacerbated existing political inequalities. In a country like Uganda, ordinary citizens have little influence on the actions of any political leader, especially a man as powerful as General Saleh. This China–Uganda partnership has only heightened villagers’ feelings of powerlessness and insecurity, making it more difficult for ordinary residents to play a meaningful role in Kapeeka’s development.

### Labor Practices and New Class Distinctions

The most prominent theme that emerged from my fieldwork was that villagers’ discontent with the Chinese presence was rooted in the Chinese labor practices. Here, I first summarize these sentiments and then turn to how they were tied to class inequalities.

Of the 57 villagers I interviewed, 56% had an unequivocally negative opinion of the Chinese. Thirty-five percent had opinions that were largely negative but more mixed, leaving only 9% who felt the Chinese presence in Kapeeka was positive. The main factor driving these negative opinions was labor practices. The common refrain among workers and former workers was that the hours were too long (70–75 per week typically), the pay was too

low, there were very unfair wage penalties for low productivity or missed work, and the treatment by Mr. Shen and his Chinese colleagues was demeaning.

As one woman who worked in the tomato sauce factory told me, “You go and work and that is the torture one endures. You don’t have time to finish the food they give you for lunch, and yet you are working very hard. You are working under duress. . . . That’s the ruthless style of the Chinese management. They really mistreat a person.”

A man who migrated from northern Uganda and worked in the brick factory but then quit echoed her concerns, saying,

If the working conditions were favorable, I would still be working there. But the conditions are abnormal. We were not allowed to move outside the compound and to get connected with people around here. So you are kept as a prisoner inside. . . . And you know they are also kind of abusing people at work. They say, “You Africans don’t know how to work.” And if there is any slight mistake, you are just fired. . . . You work as if it’s a kind of punishment. You can’t exercise your freedom.

Nineteen Kapeeka residents also said they witnessed, or personally experienced, physical abuse at the hands of Mr. Shen and other Chinese managers, especially slapping and hitting. “I witnessed those who were physically beaten,” said Moses, the man who worked as a security guard. “They were beaten by the Chinese. And they feared to go to the general to complain, because the Chinese are the general’s men.” Peter, mentioned above, described the physical abuse he endured. “Even myself, I was beaten,” he told me. “If Mr. Shen sees that you are lifting a brick and it breaks, that will result in caning. If he has a stick he will cane you, and if he doesn’t have one he will slap you.” The threats of physical abuse he experienced when he demanded back pay drove him to quit working on the Chinese projects:

I went to demand my money after four months [without pay] and the Chinese man’s mood changed. He brought the security guard to arrest me and he ordered him to force me down on the ground and cane me. I told the security guard, don’t beat me, I’ll forget the money. So I quit to save my life.

These labor abuses did provoke conflicts between the workers and managers. This, in combination with the failure of the initial businesses, led to shifts in the labor practices in the General’s Valley over the last decade. Initially, the goal was to employ local labor for the agriculture and food processing projects. However, some workers from Kapeeka were not afraid to challenge Mr. Shen, and I was told that he came to view the locals as too demanding and too difficult to manage. This spurred a shift to a new business model: light manufacturing using migrant labor. In the following section, I describe how this shift to migrant labor strategically exploited existing ethnic tensions in Uganda.

The labor practices also had important implications for class divisions. The general and Mr. Shen worked primarily through Ugandan intermediaries who recruited workers and managed the day-to-day operations. Villagers’ views of the managers were decidedly mixed, with some saying they were less abusive than Mr. Shen. As a 24-year-old woman who worked in the tomato factory told me, “When the Chinese started causing trouble among

the workers, our [Ugandan] manager was the pacifier. . . . If we didn't have these other [Ugandan] managers we would have quit this work from the beginning." Others, however, said these managers consistently skimmed money from their wages. Christine, who lived next to the general's compound and worked in the tomato factory, said, "Our fellow Baganda who worked there were not honest. These managers would be given money for us but they wouldn't pay us. Our fellow Africans would not pay us. We were oppressed. . . . So, many of the [women] workers left."

Three Ugandan men were the key go-betweens, and based on my fieldwork they had prospered from their positions. Two of these men, Mukasa and Steven, had fought alongside General Saleh in the 1980s and were part of a small group of war veterans who were involved with developments in the valley from the start. Mukasa was frequently mentioned as Mr. Shen's right-hand man and the local man who had gained the most from the projects. He refused to be interviewed, but when I interviewed his daughter, who had mixed views about the projects, she said her father would only say positive things. I did speak at length with Steven, who stressed that Kapeeka had developed significantly due to the Chinese presence and the Chinese style of working:

As a war veteran, I am very happy with the changes in Kapeeka. . . . But when you are there with [the Chinese] you have to work hard. Most of the people who have been trained there work a lot. And you see that people in Kapeeka have now changed their minds according to these new surroundings. People have changed for the Chinese, to the Chinese way of working.

Steven's personal gain from his role as a key intermediary was evident when I visited his home in the center of Kapeeka. Like many villages in southern Uganda, Kapeeka has something of an urban center, with shops, restaurants, and some homes. Most of the housing was rudimentary: one-to-two-room dwellings similar to those found in Kampala's urban slums. One area, however, was significantly nicer; it was nicknamed Kololo, after Kampala's most elite suburb. The general was constructing a cluster of white bungalows, suitable for visiting dignitaries and investors, in Kololo. And at the fringe of this area was Steven's home, a relatively substantial five-room brick home with windows and a tiled roof. Steven was clearly uncomfortable with my visit and did not invite me in, a rather blatant break of protocol among the Baganda, who pride themselves on their manners and politeness.

A significantly more ostentatious display of wealth was the nearby home of Julius, the third key intermediary. This war veteran, who would not speak with me, had been given the coveted role of managing Mr. Shen's maize mill. With only a handful of such mills in the entire district, this put Julius in a position to reap much profit from the many villagers growing maize on small plots of land. His home was a substantial gated compound surrounded by 10-foot walls. The house itself, with at least four bedrooms, was on par with those found in Kampala's mushrooming middle-class suburbs. Given that this compound was right off Kapeeka's central roundabout, it was a highly visible symbol of the dramatic income inequality that had developed in the village. These class inequalities were not lost on most villagers, and some residents explicitly framed them as a problematic outcome of the new

Chinese presence in the village. As Timothy, a college-educated northern who worked as a labor recruiter, said to me:

[The Chinese] are mistreating black people. China wants to colonize us. That is the worst. But I know a few people who benefit from that, like Julius. Those are the people who are in the forefront to benefit from that . . . . But we educated ones, they don't want us. We have never been employed. . . . I have never been employed and yet Julius is there? What does he know? But he is the big man around here. . . . That is how Uganda is being destroyed.

Thus, even a northern migrant like Timothy, who had in fact benefited modestly from his work as a labor recruiter, was distressed and angered by these new class inequalities in Kapeeka.

### Ethnicity, Race, and China-Uganda Relations

In 2013, Mr. Shen and the general created the now successful brick factory, and Mr. Shen was given tight control over this business. The extent of Mr. Shen's control was evident to me on my tour of the brick factory. The general himself approved my tour, but to enter the facility I needed additional approval from Mr. Shen himself. As I observed, Mr. Shen only employed workers he brought from far-northern Uganda. These workers, all men, lived on site in barracks, with severe restrictions on their after-work mobility. Based on my interviews with several current workers, the abusive labor practices persisted. Thus, the general and Mr. Shen resolved the earlier labor disputes with local workers by essentially replacing them with workers from northern Uganda.

Tensions between northern and southern ethnic groups in Uganda are long-standing, dating back to British colonial "indirect rule," which relied on the southern Baganda tribe as mediators. Northern ethnic groups were poorly integrated into the colonial political economy, serving primarily as a surplus labor force and a source of recruits for the military. This set the stage for the post-colonial period and the continued economic and political marginalization of northerners. Kapeeka is in the heart of Buganda, the home of the Baganda people, and thus the current labor practices exploit and further stoke these long-standing ethnic tensions.

Vincent, the war veteran, was insightful about how the Baganda in Kapeeka felt about this issue. He had a long history working with Mr. Shen and was the supervisor of all the agricultural workers during the first phase of the partnership. He said,

The general keeps thinking that the people of Kapeeka don't want to work. That's why he brings in people from the north, because he hasn't understood why the Kapeeka villagers don't want to work for the Chinese. . . . But Kapeeka has poverty-stricken people. . . . They would have wanted to work with the Chinese, but the conditions are terrible. Do you think the Baganda can work for people like these Chinese? . . . And so you find that there are all these companies that have been brought to Kapeeka to help the people of Kapeeka. But in reality, people in Kapeeka cannot work for such little pay from those men.

A 38-year-old man echoed these concerns. Desperate for money when his wife was pregnant, he worked for a year harvesting maize for the Chinese.

I left and stopped working [for the Chinese] because of the poor management. I realized I couldn't manage that kind of life. I am a child of a Muganda [Baganda]. I am not used to being treated like a Lugbara [northerner]. They make you work so much that the sweat dries up and forms salt crystals on your body. . . . For you, a person from Kapeeka, do you think you could go work for them? And so they bring in somebody from another place who will not give him problems. . . . In Kapeeka we would have benefitted if they had said, let all the Baganda, Banyarwanda, or Banyankore [southerners] work here and let's join hands. But instead they have brought those northerners. So we do not benefit in any way from them.

Others noted that the Chinese played on stereotypes about Baganda seeing hard, manual labor as beneath them to justify hiring northerners who were easier to control. As Peter, who described being beaten, told me:

If you say that a Muganda doesn't want to work, how do you think they survive if they don't work? . . . So [Mr. Shen] employs people from Gulu [the north] that don't know much about him. Someone will come from the north and work here for two months. Then you find that he has gone back home. And he will go crying, saying, they have not paid me, they have beaten me.

These tensions were not lost on the workers from northern Uganda. As another male migrant worker from the north who also quit working at the brick factory told me,

The Baganda were right to quit, because the way the Chinese make people work is bad. The moment you start work in the morning they don't want you to stop until you leave work. . . . But the reason these northerners remain is they lack land back home. If they return home, they will be doing nothing. They can't even grow their own food, because they don't have the land. So, when they get such problems with the Chinese there is nothing they can do. If the Chinese cut their money, these northerners just continue working for them. . . . Some do get annoyed. One man left and went back to the village and said if he is to die of poverty let him die. But he is not going to continue working for the Chinese.

Thus, these new labor strategies explicitly manipulated existing ethnic tensions, further entrenching these social divisions in Kapeeka.

Turning to race, a few people I spoke with had positive attitudes about this partnership and Chinese-Ugandan relations more generally. Not surprisingly, the most vocal advocates were those who had personally benefited the most from the projects in Kapeeka. Steven, whose home was described above, told me:

We were badly off after the war. This area was almost like an empty field. This general with all his money could live anywhere. But he has come to join our struggle to improve lives in Kapeeka. . . . And the Chinese have also done a lot of good because they have used their money here. And we have also learned from the Chinese that there isn't any time to waste. That's a national slogan to them, that they don't have time to waste.

But this rather rosy interpretation of events was shared by few. Many more were decidedly mixed in their opinions. One woman, for example, looked at the partnership more



pragmatically, saying, “They are focused on developing themselves and their business. That is it. It’s up to you to go and work for them and make your own development.” And the majority of residents I spoke with were unequivocally negative in their assessment of the Kapeeka partnership, and by extension the role of China in Ugandan development more generally. In this sense, it seemed as if the events of the last decade had poisoned China–Uganda relations for most people in Kapeeka. As one of the migrants from northern Uganda quoted above told me:

This Chinese development in Uganda, in fact they are only aiming at their own development. If you see what they are doing, it’s like they are just doing their own business to develop themselves and maybe go away. Because they are given land, they are given everything, so they wanted to utilize those things to develop themselves. . . . All the Chinese in Uganda work like this, and they are not developing Uganda.

Significantly, these sentiments were often refracted through a lens of race, with many villagers linking their mistreatment to allegedly racist views Chinese held of black Africans. As one of the war veterans succinctly put it, “You know that since they are white and we are black they are there to torture us. But there’s nothing you can do, because of poverty.” A woman in her 30s who worked harvesting maize voiced similar complaints:

When they see a black person they don’t regard you as important. But because you are in a situation of need, you just keep quiet. You get firm in the heart and say, “There is nothing to do, let me go back home and rest.” . . . If they change their treatment of us we shall work together with them, because they are also human beings like us. It is just their color that makes a difference [in how they treat us currently].

An indication of the racialization of these tensions was that the word *obuddu* (slavery) was frequently used by villagers to describe their relations with the Chinese. A woman who worked as a cook, for example, told me, “The way they used to bark at us, it was like we were not human beings. . . . It was like I was someone who was not in her own country. It was like someone in slavery.” A man who was employed on several projects over the years was more positive about the employment opportunities but similarly unhappy about the labor conditions, saying, “Mr. Shen used to treat us like slaves, because a slave is someone who doesn’t have a choice. It is someone who has no choice to decide that for me today I will not work. Let me rest. Ah, ah, at his place such things are not there.”

There was also a double-edged aspect of these allegations of racism. At times, villagers’ resentments and frustrations were inflected by racist images of Chinese people. As an older woman who had worked as a domestic in Mr. Shen’s home said, “The Chinese are not good people. They are very, very, very difficult people. When they see you, an African, they don’t consider you a human being. They value their animals more than Africans.” Another, younger woman echoed these sentiments, saying,

I would recommend that they should chase the Chinese out of Uganda. . . . They treat us like slaves, yet we welcomed them in our country to come and work, so they should treat us like human beings. But they come and torture us. It is not just this Mr. Shen

but all the Chinese, because the picture this one has shown us means that all the Chinese behave this way.

A man who worked harvesting maize, and who was quite happy about the Chinese presence in Kapeeka, gave me some insight into how Mr. Shen perceived these racial tensions.

That boss, he has no problem with blacks. It's only that his way of doing things, he is normally rude to someone who has handled him badly. If you have stolen his things, or if he tells you something and you are not listening to what he is telling you to do, if you don't respect him, that's when he thinks that you are trying to undermine him. Because for them, they are always thinking about racism. They think we discriminate against them. So then he will hate you.

These racial tensions were pronounced in part because they were embedded in a much longer strain of Ugandan–Asian racial conflict. In the 1890s, approximately 30,000 South Asian laborers were brought by the British from British India to construct the Uganda Railway. After the railway was completed, some South Asians remained and became a vital part of the Ugandan economy. But their success was resented by some Ugandans, making South Asians a convenient scapegoat for Ugandan politicians. This culminated in their expulsion by Idi Amin in 1972. The Museveni government welcomed South Asians back, and since the 1980s many South Asians have created powerful business conglomerates, including agricultural processing facilities in the Kapeeka region. Current Sino–Ugandan tensions in Kapeeka, therefore, occur on soil well tilled for racial conflict. As Dennis, the former brick factory employee quoted above, told me:

I have not seen anyone who has benefited from working [with the Chinese]. . . . It is like the Indians. If someone tells you he works for the Indians, there are few people who benefited. . . . Both the Chinese and Indians are bad. They have the same behaviors. Only their bodies are different, their behaviors are the same.

Not surprisingly, these same sentiments were at times channeled through the lens of colonialism. As Timothy, the college-educated northern quoted above, told me,

It is a problem that we are trying to promote China so much into this country, using the stupidity or lack of knowledge of the majority of the citizens. . . . So when you look at somebody trying to promote the Chinese government, I go against that. . . . They are not doing the work we want. You see them there. They oppress Africans. They bring nothing to Africa. . . . These people come dictating things, and the masses follow. Isn't that slavery? . . . When the British were here, they were the ones who colonized us. . . . I think they didn't leave a bad legacy. They created things. But these Chinese coming here, people still don't see [benefits]. Because somebody is still eating half of it. . . . Yeah, I will criticize colonialism, but I would rather be recolonized by the British than this Chinese neocolonialism.

These issues of neocolonialism were especially stark because there was a very well-liked Norwegian NGO also operating on the general's land in Kapeeka. This NGO was training villagers to modestly increase their agricultural productivity, and they paid locals to harvest maize on their demonstration farm in the valley. The Norwegians lived on site,

and as I observed on several occasions they had frequent, friendly interactions with Kapeeka residents in the village center. The Chinese were rarely if ever seen in the village center, with the exception of Chinese men who came at night to install and service electronic gambling machines. These slot machines were resented by many in Kapeeka and for some emblematic of the exploitative nature of Chinese business in Uganda. As a man who had worked for both the Norwegians and Chinese said,

You find that someone will wake up in the morning to go and work at the Chinese place, and when this person is paid he will put the money in that Chinese machine. I don't think that money is going to work here in Uganda. It just goes back to China. So it is [the Chinese] who benefit. There is nothing they have done for Uganda.

#### BEYOND THE GENERAL'S VALLEY

My fieldwork in Kapeeka reveals the precarious and volatile social foundation on which this China-funded industrial park is being built. As Steven, the Ugandan manager, himself told me, the projects to date have been a test case to see whether the General's Valley is "safe" for a large-scale Chinese joint venture. As he put it, the Chinese government "does not want to risk anything for their people, but with the general there and the comments good from Shen . . . we are now going to be dealing with China directly."

Based on my most recent fieldwork in Kapeeka, in March and August 2017, factory construction is indeed moving quickly, with one football-field-size factory structure completed, another nearly completed, and a third, smaller factory also near completion. Our interviews with villagers and construction workers revealed that nearly all the laborers were migrant men from northern Uganda, with the exception of a few brick masons from the Kapeeka area. Thus, the modest but successful brick factory now seems to have been a model for how a dramatically scaled-up joint China-Uganda business venture should operate. It may have also provided a model for how such partnerships exacerbate social inequalities and stoke racial tensions.

Given that Uganda is not alone in courting China as a development partner, it is useful to compare the Liao Shen Industrial Park to other China-funded SEZs in Africa. As noted above, there are six official zones that are partnerships with the Chinese central government (with Liao Shen Industrial Park an example of the many "unofficial," Chinese provincial-level partnerships). Research on these official SEZs is very limited. In the most comprehensive analysis to date, Bräutigam and Tang (2011, 2012, 2014) stress the potential of this model for African development but also raise significant concerns. While most of the zones have been hampered by construction delays, several zones have already created many new jobs for Africans, contrary to widespread media accounts that Chinese workers are the main beneficiaries. This is especially true in Zambia, with nearly 8,000 local jobs, as well as Ethiopia and Nigeria, with approximately 1,600 jobs each (Bräutigam and Tang 2014; UNDP 2015 reports more than double these figures for Ethiopia and Nigeria).

Bräutigam and Tang (2011:48) also see the prominent role of state-owned and private Chinese businesses in the development of these SEZs as a powerful entrepreneurial incentive structure that "bodes well for their sustainability as zones." However, they caution that

these zones could become gated enclaves primarily serving the interests of Chinese businesses (and the Chinese government in terms of greater diplomatic soft power). They point to minimal links to local companies, few local enterprises in the zones, and an uneven commitment to local skills training as troubling tendencies toward Chinese enclaves (Bräutigam and Tang 2014). They also cite problems more directly reflected in my fieldwork in the General's Valley, especially tensions over locals being displaced from their land and consistent labor conflicts over low wages and long work hours (Bräutigam and Tang 2011).

This issue of Chinese labor standards has been especially evident in the case of Zambia. The Zambia SEZ is unusual because it focuses on mineral processing, while the other zones focus on manufacturing. The China Nonferrous Metal Mining Company, a massive central-government state-owned enterprise, purchased the defunct Chambishi copper mine in the late 1990s and resumed operation in 2003. As chronicled in Ching Kwan Lee's (2009, 2014, 2017) extensive ethnographic research, China paid the lowest wages of all transnational mining companies in the region and had the highest proportion of casual and contract workers.<sup>2</sup> These factors, in combination with a 2005 explosion at the mine that killed 52 casual workers, resulted in wildcat worker strikes. In 2007, the Chinese company acquiesced to workers' demands, providing a 23% pay raise, converting contract jobs to permanent ones, and providing all casual workers with contracts of one to three years (Lee 2009). Significantly, these agreements coincided with the 2007 creation of the official SEZ at the mine, the Zambia China Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone. As Lee (2009) argues, the Chinese central government's commitment to the SEZ as a long-term partnership, plus the Zambian government's emphasis on copper mining as a strategic national interest, created a context that led to significant labor reforms.

Lee (2009) provides further insight into the impact of SEZs on Chinese labor practices by contrasting the Zambian case with the Tanzania-China Friendship Mill. This large textile mill in Dar es Salaam is owned by Changzhou No. 2 Textile Company, a Chinese *provincial-level* state-owned enterprise. Workers at this mill also held wildcat strikes to protest wages and increasing casualization. However, in sharp contrast to Zambia, the Chinese did not concede to any workers' demands and instead summarily dismissed 725 casual workers in 2007. Lee notes that several factors contributed to these differences, not the least being the Chinese *national-level* commitment to the Chambishi SEZ. This makes the Chinese central state "very sensitive to local popular sentiments," while the provincial-level company in Tanzania "does not carry the same level of [Chinese] state economic and political mission" (658–59). These variations in the effects of different types of Chinese capital in Africa (Lee 2009, 2014, 2017) underscore that official, national-level Chinese SEZs in Africa may operate differently from provincial-level SEZs, with different implications for social inequality in Africa—a point I return to in the concluding section.

Finally, Lee's research also reveals that the racial dynamics I observed in Kapeeka are evident in other China–Africa encounters across the continent. At both the Zambian and Tanzanian fieldsites, Lee (2009) found that workers' concerns over pay and conditions were consistently inflected in racial ways. This was especially true at the Tanzanian textile mill, where workers told Lee (2009, 657) that the Chinese were "cruel: they don't treat us like

people, but like animals”; “white colonists were better”; “the Chinese steal our labour power and wealth and profits and send them to China.”

As in Kapeeka, these tensions were exacerbated by how Chinese workers socially and physically distanced themselves from locals, living in secluded dormitories and rarely buying food from local markets. As Lee poignantly observes, this distancing was an aspect of a fundamental cultural clash regarding notions of a proper work ethic. For the Chinese, their everyday asceticism, or what they referred to as a willingness to “eat bitterness,” was testament to their ability to sacrifice and delay gratification. This ethic shaped their perceptions of Africans, leading some to see Africans as undisciplined and lazy. For many Africans, this problematically resonated with colonial-era tropes of African indolence, ignored the precarity of contemporary labor regimes, and reinforced African stereotypes of Chinese as inhumane and greedy—all dynamics I also see driving racial tensions in Kapeeka, and other African contexts as well (Aidoo 2016; Sylvanus 2013; Warmerdam and van Dijk 2016).

### CHINA’S DEVELOPMENTAL PRAGMATISM AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN AFRICA

In conclusion, it is important to ask how these projects in the General’s Valley help conceptualize development as a global field of actors and practices. Based on my fieldwork and my reading of the literature, I argue that China’s development practice in sub-Saharan Africa makes China an awkward fit in the established field of development actors, who are unified by a shared ideology of developmental idealism. Developmental idealism is rooted in the belief that certain values, especially those tied to more socially inclusive and equitable societies, are fundamental drivers of development, including economic development. These values are not at the center of Chinese development in Africa. Instead, China foregrounds values of South–South friendship and mutual benefit, predicated on a policy of nonintervention. The link between these values and more equitable societies is ambiguous at best. Instead, China is focused on a narrow, business-centered form of economic development: developmental pragmatism.

It is important to recognize that both developmental idealism and developmental pragmatism see global capital investment as playing a crucial role in economic development. Promoting free markets is a central value of developmental idealism, and at times the most powerful actors in this field, especially the IMF, have promoted free markets as their highest priority. Chinese developmental pragmatism, in turn, is very much focused on using Chinese capital to spur business-sector growth, a goal that also serves the Chinese state’s interest in cultivating soft power on the continent. Thus, both development ideologies do overlap with global capitalism. Values, however, play a more minor role in developmental pragmatism’s beliefs about what is necessary to fuel development—beliefs that, somewhat ironically for China, focus nearly exclusively on the role of capitalist, market forces.<sup>3</sup>

My fieldwork in Kapeeka helps us take the next crucial step in the analysis. It provides a window onto the actual impact developmental pragmatism is having in African communities. It reveals that the narrow focus on business development has troubling ties to existing social inequalities. To date, the projects in the General’s Valley have exploited and often exacerbated social inequalities linked to ethnicity and political power. In addition, new forms of class stratification have emerged in a fairly short time. Significantly, all of these tensions

are now viewed through a frame of amplified racial differences that has deepened problematic views of racial “others” held by both Chinese and Ugandans.

This rather pessimistic view of developmental pragmatism in Africa should be qualified to some extent. Like nearly all the official and unofficial China-funded SEZs in Africa, the Kapeeka industrial park is in its infancy. As more factories open, the dynamics I have observed may shift. In addition, the Kapeeka park is a project of a provincial-level government, not the Chinese central government. There is evidence that projects of the central Chinese government do include ancillary social development projects, such as health clinics, and, as noted earlier, are more responsive to community needs (Lee 2014). I have seen this dynamic myself in my research at a large, China-funded dam project in northern Uganda. However, it would be a mistake to assume that this represents a commitment to social values of equality in any fundamental sense. Thus, more critical attention to China’s new role in Africa is merited, especially the synergies between the goals of developmental pragmatism and the interests of more autocratic governments, of which Uganda is just one on the African continent. ■

## REFERENCES

- Aidoo, Richard. 2016. “The Political Economy of Galamsey and Anti-Chinese Sentiment in Ghana.” *African Studies Quarterly* 16(3–4):55–72.
- Alden, Chris, Abiodun Alao, Zhang Chun, and Laura Barber, eds. 2018. *China and Africa: Building Peace and Security Cooperation on the Continent*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Alden, Chris, and Daniel Large. 2015. “On Becoming a Norms Maker: Chinese Foreign Policy, Norms Evolution and the Challenges of Security in Africa.” *China Quarterly* 221 (March):123–42.
- Arsene, Codrin. 2014. “Chinese Employers and Their Ugandan Workers: Tensions, Frictions and Cooperation in an African City.” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 43(1):139–76.
- Benabdallah, Lina. 2016. “China’s Peace and Security Strategies in Africa: Building Capacity Is Building Peace?” *African Studies Quarterly* 16(3):17–34.
- Brautigam, Deborah. 2009. *The Dragon’s Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brautigam, Deborah, and Xiaoyang Tang. 2011. “African Shenzhen: China’s Special Economic Zones in Africa.” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 49(1):27–54.
- Brautigam, Deborah, and Xiaoyang Tang. 2012. “Economic Statecraft in China’s New Overseas Special Economic Zones: Soft Power, Business or Resource Security?” *International Affairs* 88(4):799–816.
- Brautigam, Deborah, and Xiaoyang Tang. 2014. “‘Going Global in Groups’: Structural Transformation and China’s Special Economic Zones Overseas.” *World Development* 63:78–91.
- Brooks, David. 2014. “The Battle of Regimes.” *New York Times*, August 4.
- Castillo, Roberto. 2018. “What ‘Blackface’ Tells Us about China’s Patronising Attitude towards Africa.” *The Conversation*, March 6.
- Englund, Harri. 2006. *Prisoners of Freedom: Human Rights and the African Poor*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Escobar, Arturo. 1995. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Ferguson, James. 1994. *The Anti-Politics Machine: “Development,” Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- French, Howard W. 2010. “The Next Empire.” *The Atlantic*, May.
- French, Howard W. 2014. *China’s Second Continent: How a Million Migrants Are Building a New Empire in Africa*. New York: Knopf.

- Insaidoo, Kwame A. 2016. *China: The New Imperialists & Neo-Colonialists in Africa?* Bloomington: AuthorHouse.
- Lee, Ching Kwan. 2009. "Raw Encounters: Chinese Managers, African Workers and the Politics of Casualization in Africa's Chinese Enclaves." *China Quarterly* 199:647–66.
- Lee, Ching Kwan. 2014. "The Spectre of Global China." *New Left Review*, no. 89:28–65.
- Lee, Ching Kwan. 2017. *The Specter of Global China: Politics, Labor, and Foreign Investment in Africa*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Leslie, Agnes Ngoma. 2016. "Zambia and China: Workers' Protest, Civil Society, and the Role of Opposition Politics in Elevating State Engagement." *African Studies Quarterly* 16(3–4):89–106.
- Li, Tania Murray. 2007. *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Marfaing, Laurence, and Alena Thiel. 2013. "The Impact of Chinese Business on Market Entry in Ghana and Senegal." *Africa* 83(4):646–69.
- Mohan, Giles, and Ben Lampert. 2013. "Negotiating China: Reinserting African Agency into China–Africa Relations." *African Affairs* 112(446):92–110.
- Monson, Jamie. 2013. "Remembering Work on the Tazara Railway in Africa and China, 1965–2011: When 'New Men' Grow Old." *African Studies Review* 56(1):45–64.
- Monson, Jamie, and Stephanie Rupp. 2013. "Africa and China: New Engagements, New Research." *African Studies Review* 56(1):21–44.
- Mosse, David. 2013. "The Anthropology of International Development." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42(1):227–46.
- Moyo, Dambisa. 2009. *Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Moyo, Dambisa. 2012. *Winner Take All: China's Race for Resources and What It Means for the World*. New York: Basic Books.
- Mutegeki, Geoffrey. 2018. "Kapeeka Industrial Park to Employ 10,000 Ugandans." *New Vision*, January 25.
- Mutiga, Murithi. 2013. "Africa and the Chinese Way." *New York Times*, December 15.
- Park, Yoon Jung. 2008. *A Matter of Honour: Being Chinese in South Africa*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Park, Yoon Jung. 2013. "Perceptions of Chinese in Southern Africa: Constructions of the 'Other' and the Role of Memory." *African Studies Review* 56(1):131–53.
- Rotberg, Robert, ed. 2008. *China into Africa: Trade, Aid, and Influence*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Sallaz, Jeffrey, and Jane Zavisca. 2007. "Bourdieu in American Sociology, 1980–2004." *Annual Review of Sociology* 33(1):21–41.
- Shinn, David, and Joshua Eisenman. 2012. *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Siu, Helen, and Mike McGovern. 2017. "China–Africa Encounters: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Realities." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 46(1):337–55.
- Sun, Yun. 2014. "China's Aid to Africa: Monster or Messiah?" Brookings Institution (<http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2014/02/07-china-aid-to-africa-sun>).
- Sylvanus, Nina. 2013. "Chinese Devils, the Global Market, and the Declining Power of Togo's Nana-Benzes." *African Studies Review* 56(1):65–80.
- Taylor, Ian. 2008. *China's New Role in Africa*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Thornton, Arland, Shawn Dorius, and Jeffrey Swindle. 2015. "Developmental Idealism: The Cultural Foundations of World Development Programs." *Sociology of Development* 1(2):277–320.
- Uganda Bureau of Statistics. 2017. "The National Population and Housing Census 2014 – Area Specific Profile: Nakaseke District." Kampala.
- Ulsip. 2018. "Liao Shen Industrial Park Co., Ltd." Accessed March 12, 2018 (<http://www.ulsip.com>).

- UNDP. 2015. "If Africa Builds Nests, Will the Birds Come? Comparative Study on Special Economic Zones in Africa and China." Working Paper 06.2015. Beijing: International Poverty Reduction Center in China.
- van Dijk, Meine Pieter, ed. 2009. *The New Presence of China in Africa*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Viterna, Jocelyn, and Cassandra Robertson. 2015. "New Directions for the Sociology of Development." *Annual Review of Sociology* 41(1):243–69.
- Warmerdam, Ward, and Meine Pieter van Dijk. 2016. "Chinese Traders in Kampala: Status, Challenges, and Impact on Ugandan Society." *African Studies Quarterly* 16(3–4):129–48.
- Xuefei, Shi. 2016. "Provincial Chinese Actors in Africa: The Case of Sichuan in Uganda." Policy Brief 15. China Africa Research Initiative. School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD.
- Yarrow, Thomas, and Soumhya Venkatesan. 2012. "Anthropology and Development: Critical Framings." In *Differentiating Development: Beyond an Anthropology of Critique*, edited by Soumhya Venkatesan and Thomas Yarrow, 1–20. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

## NOTES

I am indebted to the many Ugandans who shared their views with me and for the excellent research assistance from John Paul Matovu and Amos Kasule.

1. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for highlighting this distinction between values and results.
2. Lee (2014), however, repeatedly stresses that Chinese labor practices are not exceptional but instead part of a widespread trend toward labor casualization. The roots of this trend lie not in China's recent expanded involvement on the continent but in neoliberal economic restructuring programs promoted by the International Monetary Fund beginning in the 1970s.
3. This is not to imply that this Chinese development model is static. There is emerging evidence that additional values are being incorporated, especially an emphasis on peacekeeping and security cooperation (Alden et al. 2018; Alden and Large 2015; Benabdallah 2016). Thus, any overlap of values between developmental idealism and developmental pragmatism remains an empirical question that requires attention to the dynamism of both models.