

# **South African Multinational Corporations (MNCs) and Regional Claim-making in post-Apartheid Southern Africa: a case study of retail workers at Shoprite-Checkers in Zambia<sup>1</sup>**

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‘Afropessimism’ dominates contemporary accounts of African societies (Arrighi, 2001; Ferguson, 1999; Saul and Leys, 2000; Sichone, 2000; Oucho, 2001). Stagnation and decline are the overarching metaphors for a continent redlined by ‘globalisation’ and devastated by the AIDs epidemic. Yet, in the midst of this ailing social environment, a new development has emerged. Rising above the ‘dongas’ of dirt roads and crumbling buildings is the new shopping mall, an icon of modernity’s delights. One in four African countries have witnessed this revolutionizing change in their urban landscapes in the last decade. In the midst of ‘redlined’ Africa, the shopping mall materializes with all the glitz of the Manhattan mall - marble-tiled entrances, bright neon lights, wide aisles and thousands of commodities from which to choose.

In 1996, the *New York Times* wrote an article called, “A New Scramble for Africa?” - drawing attention to the flurry of new economic activity from South Africa into other parts of Africa. At around the same time, the South African incumbent President Thabo Mbeki announced the *African Renaissance*<sup>2</sup> at a meeting of US businessmen in Virginia, USA, entailing “a new period of renewal and reawakening for the continent.” South African companies were quick to see the political opportunities of the *African Renaissance*. Unwelcome in the past because of Apartheid, South African business could now take their search for profitable investment into the continent. Between 1996 and 1998, South Africa’s share of FDI in the region rose to almost 40% of new foreign direct investment in Southern Africa (Soderbaum, 2002).

An active agent of this new African ‘modernization’ is the South African retail multinational (cf Appendix on SA FDI in SADC). South African retail companies such as Wimpy (fast food), Engen (service station), Kwikserve (mini-supermarket), Woolworths (food and clothing), Game (general merchandise) and the huge regional multinational

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<sup>1</sup> *Work in progress* towards doctoral dissertation.

<sup>2</sup> With democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, South Africa was portrayed as the leader of a new "African Renaissance". The political responsibility that came with democratisation was that South Africa would be a leading force for the economic revitalisation of the whole Continent.

food retailer, Shoprite-Checkers (food supermarket), are building on regional economies of scale and flooding African markets with a host of new consumer goods and services sourced primarily from South Africa. Once again, multinational corporations from South Africa are transforming the regional landscape, this time under the persuasive mantra of a black government. Restlessly pursuing new sites of investment, South African capital has expanded outwards. Companies have quickly latched onto the rhetoric of '*Renaissance*', presenting their economic endeavours in a modernisation frame that they claim is in harmony with the objectives of the new regionalism and the new '*Renaissance*'. Like a flower in the desert, the shopping mall in Africa brings a new march of modernity, as promised by President Thabo Mbeki's *African Renaissance*.

Lost in this new regional clamour, however, are the past agents of so much change in Southern Africa, the black working class. Considerably weaker since the assertive days of resisting structural adjustment in the 1980s, trade unions and workers have lost power in post-Apartheid Southern Africa. The key objective in this paper is to discuss what such new investment means for the workers at these firms. What dispositions and forms of claim-making prevail amongst waged workers at these foreign, South African multinational corporations? The aim here is to understand how workers at these firms see the role of South African companies in Zambia, and what they perceive as their place within these companies both in term of problems and opportunities. This paper seeks to show how, in the wake of growing disillusionment with their national governments, workers at foreign, South African firms focus their claims at the level of the Southern African region.

Workers at foreign, South African companies are developing a set of regional claims that they direct at South Africa. While not the only factors affecting the regional perceptions of workers, forms of workplace organisation of South African companies have important consequences for the regional dispositions and claims of workers at these firms. Research findings presented in this paper show that South Africa has emerged as a universal standard for workers at Shoprite in Lusaka, Zambia. The eyes of workers are focused on their primary international investors, who also belong to the same geographic region, Southern Africa. Attached to this regional geographic focus are particular regional expectations of how Zambian workers should be treated. Workplace standards are set up with reference to South African standards. South African companies, however, value workers according to their national labor markets. National standards, not regional standards, are the measure for conditions of work and remuneration used by South African companies. Shoprite workers construct notions of fairness and justice with reference to South Africa. The exclusion of workers from the perceived South African lifestyle and industrial citizenship of Shoprite has created feelings of frustration and regional exclusion. This contradiction is emerged as a regional geographic imaginary amongst Zambian workers at Shoprite.

Through their workplace practices, regional MNCs are a primary agent of regional perceptions in host countries. The organisational styles and dispositions of post-Apartheid South African investors influence the way that host countries perceive South Africa's regional role. In the wake of nation-state failures, workers turn to the supra-national region as a geographic scale for economic and political leverage.

The paper first provides a theoretical background to the concepts of 'regional dispositions' and 'geographic imaginaries' in relation to the regional claims of workers.

This is followed by a report on the case study, Shoprite at *Manda Hill* in Lusaka, Zambia<sup>3</sup>. The various scalar perceptions of workers – the shopping mall, the work conditions at the company, the body – is outlined, followed by the regional expectations and claims of these workers. The last part of the paper provides a brief overview of conditions in the national labor market of Zambia and the conclusion.

### **Regional claims and the South African, foreign workplace**

Regional claims are understood as the extent to which the demands of workers or strategies of management entail reference to either imagined or real South African shop floor practices. Direct regional demands explicitly invoke the harmonisation of labor standards in the region, such as is the case with the trade union movements (Clarke, et al, 1999; Hayter, 1999; Tan, L and Reeves, D. 1996; Keet, 1999). Indirect regional claims invoke South Africa as the standard for the region. Better South African workplace standards may well be imagined rather than real, as a high level of internal unevenness exists within the South African labor market.

While this project is interested in the regional claims of workers at the new, South African, foreign workplaces, regional notions are not neatly separated off from other levels of experience. Regional expectations of workers are formed at a number of different geographic levels – local, national, regional and global. My particular interest is how the local environment of the workplace has regional effects, that is, how the experience of employees at their local workplace shapes their expectations of and attitudes towards a larger geographic area such as the supra-national region. Worker expectations are formed at a variety of cross cutting scales. Employee perceptions of remuneration or exploitation at work are the immediate, bodily scale at which their dispositions are formed (Harvey, 2000). The prevalence of South Africa in the way that the workplace is organized and managed creates an awareness of South Africa. Such a ‘South Africa-awareness’ can provoke comparisons with conditions at South African workplaces. Metropolitan scales may intervene in the way other Zambians and Mozambicans perceive workers at Shoprite. The built environment of the supermarket is located within the up-market environs of the shopping mall. The mall epitomizes consumptive norms associated with the ‘globalizing’ world, evoking a set of global imaginaries.

This investigation aims to bring to the fore these overlapping, contradictory or reinforcing scalar interpretations that workers have of their workplace experiences. As participants in a ‘consumption workplace’ (Wrigley and Lowe, 2002), retail workers are confronted with daily perceptions of middle class consumption and the contrast between this consumption and their own material realities. On the other hand, comparison with the national labour market may downgrade expectations. Perceptions of the relationship between South African and Zambian management may create or negate notions of ‘regional racism’. How and where workers believe that their grievances should be addressed can shed light on what they believe are the most dynamic social agents – their nation-states, trade unions, Zambian managers, the South African company or

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<sup>3</sup> The core of this research was detailed interviews with 49 workers from Shoprite, Manda Hill in Lusaka. I also interviewed Shoprite management in Zambia, including at Shoprite headquarters in Paarl, South Africa.

themselves. It is through probing different scales of workers' experiences and perceptions that I hope to describe what workers feel and think about the region as it unfolds in a post-Apartheid context, with the direct intervention of South African MNCs. From such descriptions I aim to analyze the regional claims emerging out of these local, workplace dispositions.

A new feature of the current investment is the shopping centre, opened in a number of African countries by South African retail multinationals. Money and shopping centres cluster in space, producing zones of growth and zones of 'underdevelopment' (Harvey, 1989). The shopping centre model has a dramatic impact on 'Third World' urban environments that will influence worker dispositions about where they belong in the national and regional scheme of things, influencing the consumptive and other expectations that these workers have. A further reason for selecting the retail sector is that it is more socially embedded<sup>4</sup> and has a more visible impact than other sectors. The nature of food and beverage distribution and tourist consumption is such that public opinions form around the desirability of particular products, stores and services. Retail companies thus have a higher profile than a number of other sectors. As a highly visible sector, retail is a useful choice for understanding how ideas about regionalism are influenced by the new investment.

### **Making 'space' for the Southern African regional workplace**

A complex range of social processes shape the meaning that workers give to their working lives, and the expectations that they have of work. As workers are drawn into waged labor, they make a range of claims about their work conditions, wages and social value. There are different possible geographic scales at which these claims are invoked - local, national, regional, global. Analysing regional processes requires attention to differences in working class formation. A key difference between workers in different locales - countries, cities, provinces or regions - is the way that they formulate their demands to capital. Differences in the ways of life of workers in different countries of the Southern African region are likely to produce differences in the way that claims are made.

While much of the sociological literature on regions deals with industrial organisation and workers in the sub-national region (Storper, 1997: 4; Massey, 1984), this paper tries to analyse the 'supra-national' regional workplace. It simultaneously begins to address the blind spot in South African sociology on the significant role of South African multinationals in Southern Africa. Work-studies have focused on single host countries such as Anglo-American in Zambia (Burawoy, 1985). One of the more comprehensive studies on South African multinationals in Southern Africa emphasizes how TNCs, headquartered in South Africa, were the conduits for unequal regional development that benefitted South Africa and the colonial metropolises (Seidman, 1986). The limited empirical and theoretical analyses of regional South African MNCs requires a cross-disciplinary approach in this investigation. If indeed a range of dynamic processes

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<sup>4</sup> Some production or distribution processes are more socially embedded than others. Mining occurs in towns that are often isolated from the city, for example. Manufacturing also requires industrial districts that are often spatially distinct from residential areas. As a consumptive sector, food retail distribution however is located in residential areas so as to be near to urban consumers.

are unfolding at the scale of the region, analyses of workers, labour and working class formation in Southern Africa need also to be located at the supra-national scale.

Fears of proletarian metanarratives and economic determinism have pushed many analyses down to local or metropolitan levels where the complexities of working class life are explored to the detriment of the above-national/systemic influences (Crush, 1994; McLennan, 1981; Freund, 1995). This search for non-‘productivist’ accounts of working class formation have produced valuable accounts of the multiple processes entailed in class formation, including a corrective cultural emphasis (Freund, 1995; Crush, 1994). While this orientation is rich and illuminates the diversity in social process, these accounts are often highly localised. The interdependencies of workers at the local scale with regional processes are neglected until the more graphic effects of regionalism such as xenophobia and abuse of illegal immigrants (McDonald, et al, 2000) spill out into the open. National level analyses focus on state-labor relations or national histories of working class formation (Bauer, 1998; Crankshaw, 1997; Mogalakwe, 1997; Penvenne, 1995; Cliffe, 1994; Shadur, 1994). Emphases on ‘globalisation’ and its interactions with national working classes (Crush, 1994; Von Holdt, 1993) fail to show how global and national interdependencies affect or are affected by regionalisation processes.

Where regional analyses do exist, they are located within policy discussions on ‘regional integration’. Narrow institutionalism limits these discussions to contractual relations that govern labor markets and the state (Clarke, et al, 1999; Hayter, 1999; Fashoyin, 1998; Fine, 1998; Mhone, G., 1997; Standing, Sender and Weeks, 1996; Tan, L and Reeves, D. 1996; World Bank, 1995). Institutional actors such as trade unions (Bezuidenhout, 2000; Keet, 1999) are the focus, with limited ethnographic and empirical information on new processes of regional working class formation. In one of the few recent studies of labor in the region, Torres (1999) provides a descriptive, empirical account that avoids the tricky subject of collective identity formation at the regional level. The entity of the Southern African working class is not approached, with only the dubious category of ‘regional labour markets’ put in its place, reflecting the dominance of classical/orthodox economic categories.<sup>5</sup>

The way that workers in one country compare themselves with workers in other countries is an important aspect of regional working class analysis. The concept of ‘working class dispositions’ highlights these cross-national comparisons (Katznelson and Zolberg, 1996: 19). However, Katznelson and Zolberg do not extend their analysis to the (supra-national) regional or cross-border dispositions and sensibilities that workers have, a theme that I would like to elaborate on in this paper. If geographic knowledges are about different ways of imagining the world, the class consciousness of waged workers is similarly an imaginative project. Imaginaries, however, are informed by real material processes (Harvey, 1996:79). Regional imaginaries are similarly located within the geography of the regional firm (Schoenberger, 1997). One dimension of working class imaginaries is how workers think about geographic spaces such as regions. How workers think about geographic spaces can be elucidated through the employment of ‘spatial scale’ and ‘geometries of power’ as categories of analyses.

Power relations have geographic or spatial dimensions and consequences. Massey

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<sup>5</sup> This in a region where Marxist theories of working class revolution dominated labor studies into the late 1980s (Freund, 1984).

analyzes these sociospatial power struggles as shifting geometries of power (Swyngedouw, in Cox, 1997: 144).

Spatial scale becomes an important geographic knowledge to be used in competing ways by different social classes (Swyngedouw, 1997; Massey, 1994; Smith, 1984; Harvey, 2000). Post-Apartheid regionalism informs the experience of the foreign, South African workplace.

Most importantly, however, these scale redefinitions alter and express changes in the geometry of social power by strengthening the power and the control of some while disempowering others (Swyngedouw, in Cox, 1997: 142).

Variations and similarities in working class dispositions, although produced within a specific national context, are constituted by comparisons with workers in other regions, countries or continents. Southern African workers have idealized notions of South African workers because they (South African workers) reside in the economic powerhouse of the region.

### **Working at Shoprite-Manda Hill**

The largest South African investments in retail are by the major food supermarket chain, Shoprite. The parent company Pepkor is Africa's largest retail group, with its mass market in mainly food and clothing. Pepkor is the fifth largest industrial company in SA with a turnover of over R21bn/\$3.5bn, 7 groups of food, clothing and furniture stores operating in Africa, Australia and the UK. As the fifth largest industrial company in SA, Pepkor is an important company in the retail sector. Shoprite is Africa's largest food retailer, operating 634 corporate outlets with a turnover of R22bn in the last financial year (Shoprite-Checkers Annual Report, June 2002). With cash resources over R900m, overaccumulation in South African retail has driven Shoprite to open stores in other parts of Africa. Shoprite now has 61 stores in 13 African countries outside of South Africa's borders ([www.checkers.ac.za](http://www.checkers.ac.za)). Manda Hill Complex in the capital city of Lusaka is a centrepiece of Shoprite's Zambian investment, with a cost of US\$20m for the shopping centre. Employees and managers were drawn from the state shops when the company first started out in Zambia.

#### *Work in a shopping mall*

As part of Zambia's privatisation, the national state wholesale stores were sold off in a deal with Shoprite Holdings in 1996. The devastation of two decades of structural adjustment and a failed policy of privatization has taken its toll on Lusaka, one of the country's largest capitals. The decline of copper prices on the world market led to the decline of the copper belt, a key artery of Zambia's envisioned modernity (Ferguson, J. 1998). In this context of overall economic stagnation and decline, Manda Hill, the Lusaka shopping centre, stands like Kubla Kahn's pleasure dome. Clusters of rural and urban Zambians in their Sunday best stroll its paved corridors on a Sunday afternoon as if strolling the Thames on a romantic European evening.

Certain types of comportment are expected...in malls, business deals are struck and social relationships made as they are in the street cafes of continental Europe... (Shields, R, 1989: 147-64).

Food supermarkets are located in the suggestive ambience of the shopping mall. The mall is an icon of modernity. It rises up out of the dusty, underdeveloped African landscape and promises modernity's consumptive delights. In a range of countries such as Eastern Europe where capitalist development has more recently expanded, cultural appendages such as cell-phones are a must in these environments (Dunn, E, dissertation 1998). The same cultural practices are evident at the Nandos in Maputo, Mozambique. To sit at one of the mall's restaurants is to sup at the table of globalisation and its attendant cosmopolitan sophistications.

Built environments are social spaces that shape our social relations. Working in this 'space of consumption' or consumption workplace places the worker in the midst of this promise of modernity. The food retail worker also occupies this consumptive space. The grandeur of their work environment is not lost on the Shoprite workers.

Somehow their places, the shop itself, the shopping centres are good and modern complexes. Inside you feel very fine and everyone who comes in there will think this is a very good working environment (Interview, Y, August 2002).

The environment is peaceful (Interview, S, August 2002).

What they sell in Shoprite: it's not really found in other supermarkets (Interview, M, August 2002).

I see Shoprite as a powerful company...even the way their buildings are, the way they display their merchandise (Interview, J, August 2002).

Unlike the dreary smokestack environs of the factory worker, the suggestive, imaginary reach of the mall makes the retail worker's consumptive denial that much more stark in its contradictions. The consumption of labor power under these glamorized conditions throws the worker's own physical and emotional deprivation into sharp relief.

We have seen different kinds of food displays and sometimes on our plates, if we manage to buy them (*Interview with Shoprite worker, Manda Hill-Lusaka, C, August 2002*).

### *Job Satisfaction and skills upgrading*

Although workers are embittered towards the company, when pressed to look at the positive aspects of their jobs, many workers express enjoyment of the job itself. Positive features of their work include the physical environment, interacting with customers and exposure to a range of products that are not available in other supermarkets. Customer satisfaction is also more possible with the improved range of goods.<sup>6</sup> Getting paid on time is also something some workers identified as an important advantage.

It's a good company. It's clean and they have good facilities. A worker is a bit comfortable working with them.

In terms of services, the customers are happy compared to some other shops.

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<sup>6</sup> Commodity supply shortages were one of the principal problems in the past.

I love it. It has made me know a lot of people because I work at a checkout. I meet a lot of people.

I love cooking. I work in the deli dept...I really enjoy my job because I really like cooking.

There's only one thing I like about Shoprite. They have taught me to work extra hard, at least I can stand pressure wherever I go.

Workers in higher job grades especially seem to appreciate their improved knowledge of retailing. For example, the PICs (Price Indexing Clerks), the receiving clerks and the department controllers felt their skills had improved significantly through their work.

The thing I like working for Shoprite is the system that they have. It gives me insight into how business entities operate, the part of it is the computer system, the ordering, bringing in stock and the payment. I think they've got a good system.

The ability for women to develop through their work was also cited as a benefit of more senior workers.

What I love about Shoprite is it has given me a job and it has made me be *a strong woman* who is able to do something. Even if I stop working for Shoprite, I will get a shop of my own.

Before working at Shoprite, the large shop and the neat uniforms of the workers suggested they would have a job to be proud of. However, this optimism was short-lived.

### *Less than humans*

A number of workers were adamant that there was nothing that they loved about their work at Shoprite.

Working at Shoprite at first I admired this. What I love most is especially when the shop is full with customers, giving good services to the customers. The conditions I have been subjected to have (changed this). If I had somewhere else to go, I can even stop it (*work*) and go there.

South African companies are companies that are not to be trusted. From the way they treat us, they don't consider us human beings.

If Shoprite were the sum total of South African jobs, South African jobs would epitomise the loss of expectations and the loss of vision for those on the shopfloor. Interviews with these workers were an emotional outpouring. Their working conditions are so bad that they had a litany of complaints and problems. Workers feel misused and mistreated by Shoprite management.

It's pathetic working at Shoprite. Because the country is in a bad economy the only solution one can have is working at Shoprite.

What I can say is they don't have feelings about human beings. If they could feel other people's feelings, I don't think they could treat us like this. If I show you my pay-slip and my budget, and you calculate for me, I don't think you can even manage. It's really sad.

You work long hours but you get little money. At the end of the day you don't achieve anything.

The conditions of service at this company are very pathetic in this country. We work for long hours. You can be asked to do thousands of things in a single time but at the end of the day, no one seems to appreciate. We just wonder if this is the policy right the way from South Africa or (whether) it is the Zambian policy. It's really something that has been worrying to all members of this company... Even when you talk it is like no one is there to hear, so really this puts each and every employee at pains all the time.

When you pay somebody, he's happy and he's motivated, not insulted as it is here in Zambia.

Workers said that they are so embarrassed about working for Shoprite that they sometimes conceal where they work, or face harassment about whether their conditions have improved.

On several occasions I've been going out on dating sprees, and the first question that a person asks me is, 'So you are working at Shoprite. How are the conditions now at Shoprite? Have they improved their conditions?' I just became embarrassed and resorted to not wearing my uniform. I rather say I don't work, because every time they ask me the same question.

*Starvation wages: Our customers eat but we don't*

Maybe in South Africa it's organised because you can find a cashier moving with a vehicle, sitting comfortably, but here we are still struggling. We can't afford to pay rentals because the money's too little. When you are sick there's no help, no medical fee, if you have a funeral there's no money so it's just like somebody who's just standing on the market, so it's not even helping in Zambia.

**New, younger workers were hired from a variety of sources, most of them school-leavers with very little work experience. The following minimum salaries apply to the lowest occupational grades (shelf packers, trolley collectors, etc.)**

**Table 1: SHOPRITE CHECKERS NEGOTIATED MINIMUM MONTHLY SALARY SCHEDULE, 01/07/2001**

Basic	160 000k/R400
Housing	50 000k/R125
Travel	30 000k/R75
Medical	10 000k/R25
Lunch	10 000k/R25
<b>GROSS</b>	<b>260 000k/R650</b>

Working hours are forty-five hours a week, excluding lunch hour, in a 6-day week. Including lunch hour the working week without overtime is fifty-one hours, from 8h00 to 17h00 on Monday to Friday, and from 8h00 to 13h00 on Saturday.

**Table 2: GROSS SALARIES/WAGES REPORTED BY INTERVIEW SAMPLE**

	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Permanent (salary)</b>	<b>Casual (wage)</b>
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			<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>
Receiving Admin Clerk	2		540 000 (R1350)			
Supervisors	2	0	400 000 (R1000)			
Clerks (admin, PIC, two-way and ordering, cash-up, receiving)	4	0	300 000 – 430 000 (R750 – R1075)			
Department Controllers	3	2	380 000 - ? (R950 - ?)	516 000 – 560 000 (R1290 – R1400)	28 000* (R70 or R294 p.m.)	
Shelf packers, cashiers, storeman, sales assistant, till packers, parcel attendants, trolley controllers	9	15	304 000 – 415 000 (R760 – R1037)	210 000** – 330 000 (R525 – R825)	29 000 - 30 000 (R72-75 or R304– R315p.m.)	29 000 – 34 000 (R72-R85 or R304– R357p.m.)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>17</b>				

The wage range for permanent workers in the sample was R525/R1400 p.m. The average wage for the sample was 369 000k/R900. The average wage for men clustered around 389 800k/R974 and for women around 271 000k/R677, suggesting that women are paid lower than men in similar job categories. Although gender discrimination does not exist in workload, it seems to exist in payment scales. Casuals earn between R290 and R360 p.m. Women also cluster in the occupational category of sales assistants and cashiers. The upper job categories such as department controllers, clerks, supervisors and receiving clerks are almost exclusively men, with only a few exceptions.

Theirs is a struggle for sheer bodily survival. They report that their salaries are used up by the fifteenth of the month. They do not have enough money for transport to get them to work. They are dealing with food but they themselves are starving at work.

Before I started working for Shoprite I used to admire my friends going for work, maybe clean uniforms, you'd see them on the till, some merchandising on the shelf so I used to admire such type of work. Even now I can't say I have any problems with my job. I like it as a shelf-packer... I don't like the salaries of Shoprite. They are just too low. I'm getting paid 250 000 (kwacha) on average, but in the compounds where I'm living, for me to find a reasonable house - that could be a 2-roomed house with electricity, the cheapest you can get is 150 000... You remain with 100 000. From that 100 000 you have to buy groceries. Of course, you start with mealie meal which is now about 56 000. You now have 44 000 remaining. For you to buy cooking oil, maybe just 3 things, cooking oil, mealie meal, bathing soap, then the money is finished. But you are supposed to eat breakfast everyday. You are supposed to buy bread everyday and of course you will need milk for the tea, you will need sugar, and there are some other things which come in which you cannot put in the budget. (L, Interview with Shoprite Worker, August 2002.)

Not only did every single worker say the money was too little, over and over again they provided prices of their cost of living to show how their monthly salaries do not meet their basic costs.

I hate working for Shoprite. I put in a lot of effort. I try to work hard to be an asset to the company but what I am given at the end of the month brings dislike working for Shoprite.

As human beings, they felt that they deserved better treatment. Shoprite's working conditions are perceived by them as dehumanising<sup>7</sup>.

### *Working Hours*

The first and most overwhelming way in which workers at Shoprite-Manda Hill made claims was at the scale of the body. All the workers interviewed saw work intensification, a central feature of global capitalism today (Moody, K., 1997; Ong, A., 1987; Meiksens Wood, E., 1998; Herod, A., 1997), as the most degrading and debilitating aspect of their work at Shoprite. It was their immediate, physical pain that preoccupied them most, and which they insisted on talking about. Their physical fatigue was palpable. A calculation of overtime rates showed that they were working 60 hours per week on average. Shoprite relies on the extension of work hours to attain the requisite productivity from workers. Technological innovations that the company has in the pipeline will allow electronic monitoring of workers at the check-outs/tills. Currently, however, most jobs are monitored by their output – the cleanliness of the shelves, the offloading of trucks, the replacement of replenished stocks, the taste of the food made in the delicatessens. Food retailing has its own specificities in relation to work discipline. A significant portion of labor control rests on the 'formal subordination of labor', where external methods of discipline are used to secure the co-operation of workers.

Retailing also has a 'front and back' dimension. During the store's hours of operation, ongoing activities such as customer service, replenishing stock and cleaning are necessary. Ordering, cataloguing, sorting and fetching stock often have to be done before and after the shop's doors have opened or closed. The designated hours of the working day do not correspond to this 'front and back' dimension of the work. Where workers have responsibility for pricing or keeping shelves in order, they will need to work overtime to ensure the requisite level of efficiency. In terms of company policy, for example, sales assistants need to notify management three months before of an expiry date. If they do not, the shelves may carry expired goods, leading to charges of South African "dumping". Shoprite management does not respond to this front/back retail peculiarity by enlarging its workforce. Instead, the working day is lengthened for the same number of workers. Multi-tasking also added to the fatigue of workers. Cashiers complained that they had to do till-packing as well as packing shelves and cleaning the tills, baskets and aisles. Deli assistants complain that they have to make food especially for managers. Managers who are men expect wifely privileges from female deli assistants.

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<sup>7</sup> During the course of the research I visited the township homes of a few workers. They apologized that they had no tea or beverages to offer me. It was the middle of the month, the boniest time. An air of hunger, fatigue and deprivation, amongst not only the workers but also their wives and children, hung over the tiny, concrete homes.

One significant consequence in this extension of their working day that workers point to is the loss of study time. Workers see further study as an important requisite for personal advancement. By working so hard, they are too tired to study. Not only is their current condition unsatisfactory, but their future plans are also being jeopardized. Suffering now might make sense if reward was being postponed. However, work at Shoprite was both destroying their present quality of life and sacrificing their future ambitions as well.

### **Regional claims of Shoprite-Manda Hill workers**

South Africa has emerged as a universal standard for workers at Shoprite. South Africa pervades both the national and local lives of Zambian workers. While political independence and the struggles that emerged over the direction of the Zambian national economy brought an awareness of how important the national economy is, there is a sense that external assistance is necessary for the nation state's survival. The economic prevalence of South African companies, as outlined earlier, means that South Africa has emerged as high up on the list of external rescue parties for the Zambian national economy. The eyes of workers are thus focused on their international investors, who also happen to belong to the same geographic region, Southern Africa. With this regional geographic focus come particular regional expectations of how Zambian workers should be treated. This standard is set up with reference to South African standards.

South African companies, however, value workers according to their international, national labor markets. Regional standards are not a measure for conditions of work and remuneration amongst South African companies. This contradiction has emerged as a regional geographic imaginary amongst Zambian workers at Shoprite. Notions of fairness and justice are constructed by Shoprite workers with reference to South Africa, and the exclusion of workers from the perceived South African lifestyle and industrial citizenship of Shoprite has created feelings of frustration and regional exclusion.

#### *Regional workplace organisation*

Ordering, stocktaking and recording movements of merchandise is controlled centrally in South Africa. White South African nationals are the top managers in the Zambian operations and in South Africa and most of the goods come from South Africa. These aspects of Shoprite's organisation are evident to workers.

Shoprite is organised from South Africa. Most of the products we sell in Manda Hill or other shops in Zambia are ordered from South Africa. The payment of our wages and salaries are organised in South Africa, whether student or permanent, everything is done there. This gives us some kind of worry because such a big company should centralise its operations here in Zambia.

When they hear you don't have stock, they just load all the trucks that they have at their disposal and bring them over here, maybe 6 or 7, they will bring them on a particular day. And I will just be told by my manager that you have to sort out this stock. But again it creeps in my mind that in South Africa they are having forklifters to put in a truck but here I am just using hands to sort out the stock... In South Africa they don't consider where are they going to keep the stock. That night you won't sleep a lot. You have a lot of pain.

One of the consequences of this high level of centralization is the perception that Zambian managers lack autonomy, and that things are controlled from South Africa.

Here all we do is receiving of supplies and checking of stock, but everything is done there. Here it's just basically stock-taking, what we do is just count the stock, then all the work is submitted to South Africa. That's where they do the actual calculation of what you have.

Many workers believe they would be better off if budgets and targets were controlled in Zambia. They believe that there is a lack of empathy amongst South Africans for Zambian conditions because of a lack of knowledge amongst South Africans. Centralization therefore works against the improvement of their work conditions.

I don't understand why because it's not South Africans who work in Zambia. It's Zambians who run the building. I think everything should be run by Zambians because they are the ones who know whatever happens and whatever takes place and they are the ones who suffer more.

We should publish our own Zambian magazine; a Shoprite-Zambian magazine... We can make our own budget because we are the ones who make the money and we know the shop and there's no way somebody outside can make a budget on our behalf. I don't think this should be the case. We should have our own budget, our own system.

The centralized nature of Shoprite's operations has an effect on workplace relations on the shopfloor. Workers complain that the Zambian management refuses to answer their queries or complaints, saying that personnel-related issues are decided in South Africa. This also applies to trade union negotiations, where South African company representatives are the key negotiators on behalf of the company. Workers find this disempowering as their complaints are stonewalled in this way.

According to the management they say it (*the company*) is organized from SA. This affects us because anything you want to find out, they will say they are doing something not here in Zambia but they are working on it in South Africa. So it is quite discouraging and delaying

Once they (South African workers) go to their superiors in Zambia they are assisted very fast. Unlike us, we are told no, the papers have to go to South Africa for approval. You check how long it takes.

We always approach management but the process we have to go through is cumbersome. We are told that the papers have to be approved in South Africa.

For some workers, centralization leads to inefficiency on the shopfloor. If trucks from SA deliver supplies erratically, storemen get exhausted unloading goods manually and packing can become disorganized. Stock can also be near the expiry date sometimes.

For every truck that comes you find that some have expired. Some will expire in two week's time and they expect you to sell those things of which they are slow lines. You might even sell only 10 per month, they are sending them to you. How do you expect to control that kind of stock?

### *Regional expectations and regional claims*

At the height of Zambia's growth, workers were optimistic about the future. They felt that modern life was within their grasp, particularly workers on the mines. The failure of copper industrialization and independence-led modernity makes them look to South Africa for Zambia's scramble into the modern world. As a result of the lack of national expectations, workers have pragmatically set their sights on the regional company.

Currently these workers have very little faith in the government and have set their sights on the regional company. National demands have given way to regional claims. These regional claims are aimed at the company rather than the political institutions of the region such as SADC. The regional company is the place where their demands for fair working conditions should be met. Much of their sense of regional entitlement is market-oriented: they work hard therefore they should be rewarded, and they should be paid the same as other workers in the company, especially south African workers. Workers have knowledge of their south African counterparts through three principal means: first, through the company magazine and its reports on workers; second, through training counterparts, either people they have trained or people who have trained them in Zambia; third, the social connections that Zambians have through friends and family.

To the extent that workers have a utopia, South Africa is the regional standard-bearer of a better life, in their eyes.

I like South Africa because they are self-supportive. They grow everything. They support other countries. They've got everything.

South Africa is nice in terms of development and it has brought this to our country, the things that we didn't have.

There are a lot of things that we admire about South Africa, and here is a South African company in Zambia again. It is like they are bringing South Africa into Zambia.

South Africa is our Europe.

Workers believe that conditions for South African workers are vastly superior. More than 90% of the workers interviewed cited the company magazine as their source of knowledge of conditions for South African workers. Wedding photos in the Shoprite magazine made a strong impact on Zambian workers who cannot think of such celebratory luxuries. Many mentioned that they were unable to afford weddings.

We can see from the magazines which come here. We can see where they are supported. They are having a function like a wedding, you can see their photos, the way they are rewarded. Now here in Zambia, there's nothing like that.

Our friends there they do have good times unlike us... With the magazines you can tell that these guys they are better off.

They also speak to friends and relatives telephonically and compare their working conditions. Some of the workers have visited South Africa and visited the store there.

Workers have various reasons for why they think the company would choose to treat South African workers better. One is that the company started in South Africa and therefore conditions for workers are better there. Second, the national economy is

stronger and the national currency is stronger, so rand-workers are better off than kwacha-workers.

The conditions in South Africa are better because they know they rate them according to their rand, not the kwacha like here in Zambian cities.

Here in Zambia we are being mistreated.

Third is that Apartheid attitudes to black workers endure amongst white South African managers, and that 'boers' or 'mzungus' cannot be trusted to treat black workers well.

They treat us as they used to treat other people in SA in those old, old days. They still have that in their minds.

I know these men are hard-hearted... You know it's difficult for them to release money.

Racialism is still there because of the slave wages they pay their workers. A shelf packer in Zambia earning a salary of 218 000k, converted to rand is about R475, which is not even half of the salary of a shelf-packer in South Africa.

Fourth is that they believe there is regional discrimination between countries, where workers in poorer countries are discriminated against, particularly a poor country of the region like Zambia.

People need to be treated respectfully, unlike the way it is where some people are considered to be inferior. I don't know whether it's because of the country they're staying in, then some other people in some other countries where we have Shoprite are treated like they are superior. It's not very fair... I don't think this is happening in Tanzania, Zimbabwe or South Africa. It is some kind of oppression.

When X (SA general manager) came in, everything was brushed off, because he said he wants to make money, not to give away money. He wasn't interested in any Zambian. What he was interested in was to get money and take it to South Africa, to make us Zambians poorer and poorer. He said he doesn't mind the way you get home. What he wants is to see you come back to work tomorrow. For that it shows what he's just interested in is to rip the country off, of its resources; take it away.

When questioned that South African workers, who they claimed were treated well, were black workers too, workers were perplexed about this apparent contradiction. Fifth is that those who don't experience pain cannot comprehend that pain.

Maybe someone from South Africa doesn't really understand the economic situation in Zambia.

Sometimes he (Whitey Basson) may be given a wrong picture about Zambia... So maybe it would be good if we could go to South Africa. At least management in South Africa would then have a clear picture about Zambia.

Sixth is that they believe South Africans are more united and workers are willing to fight for their rights.

Those people... if they want something from management they make a movement, unlike here in Zambia.

## **Company-level claims: same conditions as South Africa**

Shoprite Manda Hill workers believe that Shoprite-South Africa workers are able to afford cars and drive to work, whereas they in Zambia cannot even own bicycles.

Here in Zambia once you are seen with a car, then you are a suspect of theft. They'll definitely think you stole something from Shoprite.

Workers in South African own houses and get loans from management.

Look at someone working for 5 years. There was an awarding ceremony. He has been given a bicycle, a fridge, a stove, but that has never happened to Zambians ever since they came.

Workers believed that they should get the same payment and conditions as workers in South Africa. A number of reasons emerged as the main motive for parity in conditions and benefits amongst workers in the region. Workers argued without exception that everyone who is part of Shoprite, who is 'under the same roof' should be under the same umbrella as it were, meaning be treated the same.

Regardless of where we are coming from, be it a casual worker or a permanent, they should treat us with respect because we are working for one company.

Also, economic viability should entitle workers to the same or better conditions as workers in the same company in other countries. The geographic expansion of Shoprite showed that it was economically successful. Workers demonstrate a desire to make the company succeed if it will improve their conditions. They are contributing to Shoprite's profitability, they argue, and therefore should be treated the same as other workers.

It doesn't mean that you are supposed to give all the profits to the workers. You give them what they deserve. The work I do is the same as they do, I believe if I was taken there I think they might be surprised because I might even do better than them.

They are also training workers from other African countries. Many workers from new Shoprites in other countries receive training at the Zambian store. This leads workers to believe that they deserve better from the company.

Us as Zambians we have been receiving a lot of foreigners coming to be trained by us,...people from Tanzania. I've trained people from Malawi and I've trained people from Zimbabwe...The entire Africa is here in Zambia.

If the Shoprite company comes and invests in Zambia, and it is able to make profits, then out of that profit, it must give good conditions to the workers who are able to make such profit.

Religious universals also emerged as a claim for equal treatment, as 'god created us equal'. African identity emerged as the third reason why workers should be treated the same. Workers appeal to pan-African universals in their desperate appeal for improved conditions.

We come together as one family, so when we come together we should demand the same things, because there's no difference between south Africans and we Zambians. We're just the same... We are just one. We are brothers and sisters. So why should others benefit while others are crying? But we are doing the same job for the same company, making the same money, even better than them. But why

should we suffer?

We are all Africans, aren't we? We should be given the same conditions, no matter where.

### *Shoprite's Geographic Expansion and the 'African Renaissance'*

Workers have been powerfully affected by this part of Shoprite's activities. For them it proves a host of things – expansion equals profitability, that Shoprite is a powerful regional and African company, and that Shoprite is part of the African Renaissance. Shoprite is also training workers from a variety of African countries to be managers or upgrading their skills levels. This expansion has been made possible through South Africa's democratisation.

Shoprite is a strong South African company in the way they have planted shops around Africa.

Looking at the shops themselves, they build around Africa, I should think they know something about it (*African Renaissance*), they are part of it.

Shoprite has something to do with Africa's renaissance because it is has sent Zambians to train as managers and is sending these same Zambians to other countries in the region.

If it was that time of apartheid maybe South Africa could not have come to Zambia.

One worker argued that Shoprite's strength and expansion was not sustainable if it didn't learn to treat workers better.

Shoprite seems to be a strong company because it supplies as far as Egypt. But it won't last long because of the conditions of service that are given to workers in the countries they are in.

Most workers have not had earlier generations of relatives working in South Africa or in the region. They do, however, have parents who were retrenched during privatisation of state-owned firms, and whom they now support financially.

Workers believe that they have played a major role in Shoprite's growth. They have done the shop floor sales, they are training workers from other new branches in Africa, including South Africa, and Zambian managers are heading up branches in other countries – Namibia, Tanzania. They see how much cash passes through the tills on a single day, and know the precise amounts they have rung up. Their wages strike them as bad by comparison.

I'm a cashier. When you are handling money, you know what the company's making. But you find at the end of the day you have made a lot of money but you are getting peanuts.

Workers embraced enthusiastically the notion of an *African Renaissance*, even if they were unsure of what exactly it meant. They saw hope for the continent if there could be some united action. They felt that the *African Renaissance* could infuse people with a notion of a larger good rather than selfish, greedy personal ambitions. A number of workers do, however, make the link between their exploitation and regional economic

relationships. Many commented that profits are remitted to South Africa, allowing for South Africa's development but not necessarily Zambia's. A few workers felt that the African Renaissance would facilitate continued regional exploitation by South Africa.

The *African Renaissance* as a whole...I don't think this is trying to empower other African countries. I think this is exploitation.

### *Regional Disillusionment and Regional Racism*

The perception of the majority of workers is that South Africa, not Zambia, benefits the most from Shoprite's investment. The gains for Zambia have been very limited in relation to trade relationships and the bad conditions of the jobs created. Both supply systems and profits boost South Africa's growth. Most of the workers are aware that most of the goods sold at Shoprite come from South Africa. South Africa then remains as a zone of development in an underdeveloped world.

They (these investors) are not helping Zambia to develop. Shoprite, whatever they sell, the monies are transmitted to SA right away...Even the government is aware that these people, they are just using Zambia as a market just to sell their things and send all their profits to SA. So Zambia's not benefiting from it (*Interview with Shoprite worker, Manda Hill-Lusaka, L, August 2002*).

If we look at all the products, the merchandise they have, they all come from South Africa, which means the manufacturers in South Africa are on the benefit side, because they are the ones that receive the money (*Interview with Shoprite worker, Manda Hill-Lusaka, J, August 2002*.)

(The companies) that have come from South Africa, they are a relief because the Zambian economy as you know is bad and if we can have an investor who is really serious, they can be a benefit if they become serious with Zambia (*Interview with Shoprite worker, Manda Hill-Lusaka, F, August 2002*.)

I think this thing they call privatization hasn't benefited anything. They have sold all the companies and those people that are coming they are treating the owners of the country as if they are slaves.

Notions that South African companies are perpetuating regional inequality are widespread. Investment should, according to workers, bring about development, growth and improved working conditions for the host country as well. The perception of workers is that South Africa, not Zambia, benefits from Shoprite's investment. Workers use words such as "regret" to describe their experience with this company. In a speech at the University of Witwatersrand, Chinua Achebe, the acclaimed Nigerian poet and novelist, said that he felt the spirit of renewal and reawakening in the South African audiences that he had addressed. Such disempowerment and disillusionment amongst those who are at the interface of bilateral relationships with South Africa, contrast with South African optimists (Achebe, Johannesburg, 17 September 2002). Many workers would like to leave for another company if they had the opportunity.

Workers also have an awareness of South African racism. They articulate their feelings in terms of 'boers' and 'mzungus' and what can or cannot be expected from "these whites".

Those 'boers', they are the South Africans who give directives to our managers.

And our managers... They just say, 'Okay, okay, yes boss, yes boss. We will tell them.'

We fear it's like slavery is still happening in Zambia. We think the outsiders don't know what goes on in Shoprite.

The company is a part of South Africa but it looks as if the 'boers' are still ruling South Africa. The way South Africa is at the moment, it follows (the) race very much. If you are not a 'boer', it will never help.

The people who are coming, who are bringing South Africa into Zambia, the way they are treating the people they find in Zambia, it is not the way they are supposed to be treating people. There is still that element of racism in them. I feel even if Shoprite has come into Zambia, it is more-or-less like we are being ruled by 'boers'. We are being ruled by racism. Whatever they do they pretend that they tell you what to do, you cannot say 'no'. You cannot say anything. I feel the slavery part of it is still happening, even in the shop that is found in Zambia, a country which is a democracy.

These boers, they like that system of racialism which they used to do in South Africa. So there is that possibility, since most of the people who are in Shoprite outlets are blacks, so they are still intimidating us.

### **The national labor market in Zambia**

At the height of Zambia's growth, workers were optimistic about the future. They felt that modern life was within their grasp, particularly workers on the mines. The failure of copper industrialization and independence-led modernity makes them look to South Africa for Zambia's scramble into the modern world. As a result of the lack of national expectations, workers have pragmatically set their sights on the regional company. Currently these workers have very little faith in the government and have set their sights on the regional company. National demands have given way to regional claims. These regional claims are aimed at the company rather than the political institutions of the region such as SADC. The regional company is the place where their demands for fair working conditions should be met. Much of their sense of regional entitlement is market-oriented: they work hard therefore they should be rewarded, and they should be paid the same as other workers in the company, especially south African workers. National minimum are well below the Shoprite basic. The minimum wage is 5 US cents/70.30k per hour or US\$35/90 000k per month. The minimum full-time work week is 40 hours, with 2 days of annual leave per month of service. Life expectancy is 37.06 years for males, and 37.53 years for females (Torres, 1998). Unemployment estimates range from 22% to over 50%. Common parlance refers to Zambia as the "nation of well-educated poor people". During Zambian independence, health, education and housing services improved significantly. Education was compulsory and health services were free. By 1990, illiteracy rates were down to 33 percent from 70 percent at independence (Duncan 1996). Despite this improvement, skill shortages for higher levels of employment continued, filled on a short-term basis by white expatriates (Weeks & Mosley 1998). This led to highly unequal occupational structures, with extremely high expatriate incomes, relatively high modern sector wages and low traditional sector wages. Over 50 per cent of the total labour force are between the ages of 12 and 34 (Torres, 1998:214)

Structural adjustment measures in 1991 included financial liberalisation, trade liberalisation, removal of subsidies, cut in the public sector and privatisation of state enterprises. Chronic poverty in the country and high HIV levels have seen the average life expectancy of a Zambian decline from 45.5 in 1992 to [37 years?] in 1998. It is estimated that 122 500 new jobseekers enter the labour market every year without finding employment (Muneku 1995). Standards of living have declined in the 1990s. On the other hand, Zambia is the second most urbanised country in sub-saharan Africa after South Africa, with just under half the population living in urban areas (Duncan 1996). Income disparities continue, with 10 per cent of the population taking 50 per cent of total national income (Duncan 1996:85).

**Table 3: Employment Trends 1986 to 1998**

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1997/1998
Pop. (millions)	6.6	6.8	7	7.2	7.4	7.6	7.8	8	
Labour force (millions)	2.7					3.2		3.5	3.4
Employed labour force (millions)	2.4					2.5			
Unemployment rate (%)	13					22			22
Formal employment ('000)	527	530	533	541	527	539	534	512	51%

*(Muneku 1995; Icon Group Internation, Inc., 2000)*

**As part of Zambia's privatisation, the national state wholesale stores were sold off in a deal with Shoprite Holdings in 1996. Zambian managers and ZCTU trade unionists who were laid off when these stores were sold to Shoprite, paint a dreary picture of the consumer conditions at these stores (Interviews, 2000 and 2002). All the workers at these companies were retrenched (cf. Table 8)**

**Table 4: JOBS LOST WITH SHOPRITE and PEP STORE'S ZAMBIAN PURCHASES**

AREA	NO OF WORKERS	NO OF JOBS LOST
Cairo Road	707	707
Kitwe Matuka Ave	65	65
Livingstone	26	26
Mufulira (PEP)	21	21
NHS Ndola & ZCBC Cairo Rd & ZCBC Kitwe (PEP)	58 + 80 + 71	58 + 80 + 71
ZCBC Chililabombwe (PEP)	8	8
ZCBC Chingola	40	40
ZCBC Kabwe	40	40
ZCBC Kasama	23	23
ZCBC Luanyshya	41	41

ZCBC Mufulira	41	41
ZCBC Petauke (PEP)	5	5
ZCBC Solwezi	7	7
ZNWMC Katete (PEP)	0	0
	<b>1233</b>	<b>1233</b>

\*K111m

*Source: Zambia Privatisation Agency, Status Report, 31 March 2001*

A total of 1473 jobs were created by Shoprite in 18 stores, a net increase of 240 jobs. (Table 9) However, 44% (661) of the total number of jobs created were casual workers. The official work hours of these students is 24 hours per week (6 hours 4 days per week), around one half of the official working week. If we calculate 2 casual jobs as 1 permanent job, then a total of 1142 full-time jobs has been created by Shoprite, a net loss of 91 full-time jobs.

**Table 5: NO OF WORKERS (PERMANENT AND CASUAL) IN ZAMBIAN SHOPRITE STORES**

	<b>STORE</b>	<b>PERM</b>	<b>CASUAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
1	Lusaka	73	85	158
2	Ndola	80	90	170
3	Kabwe	50	20	70
4	Kitwe	78	70	148
5	Livingstone	26	22	48
6	Mufulira	34	20	54
7	Chingola	51	36	87
8	Luanshya	32	25	57
9	Mongu	34	9	43
10	Solwezi	35	17	52
11	Chipata	33	25	58
12	Matero	25	20	45
13	Mazabuka	33	13	46
14	Mansa	36	12	48
15	Chilenje	33	22	55
16	Kasama	39	14	53
17	Manda Hill	99	161	260
18	Wholesale (Lusaka)	21	0	21
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>812</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>1473</b>

*Source: Shoprite-Lusaka Management, 2003*

## **Conclusion**

Workers are not making claims on the basis of regional entitlements. They are using a market principle. They are not demanding regional redistribution from the rich to the poor. They are saying that Zambia should be given a fair, market-related opportunity to develop. Trade should be fair. They are saying that the company should give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. In so doing, however, they want to discount national variations. They realize that they are disadvantaged when things are taken at a national political or economic scale as the standard of living is lower in their countries. They therefore want regional economic parity. In this sense, their claim is one in favour of the recognition of regional company-level boundaries but not regional political considerations. There is a mild reference to Zambia's assistance to the ANC in the past, and they said that they were hoping for assistance. They do not express strong feelings on this question. The main consideration is that they are serving Shoprite well and therefore deserve economic returns for their effort.

Workers argue that, if things are weighted against them, however, they will go backwards instead of forward as workers and as a country. Their sense of utter demoralisation is overwhelming. Unlike the feisty proletariats of new companies in the past (Silver: 2003), these newly proletarianised workers see themselves as humiliated beggars. Their only current choices are Shoprite or the streets. Unemployment is an overwhelming sword of Damocles. If they resist Shoprite, they will be beggars on the

street. Three places therefore suggest themselves strongly in the imagination of these workers: the first is the despotic workplace, the second is the street, a symbol of the ruined nation, and the third is the regional workspace that holds the promise of global citizenship – the South African company.

Workers express a strong sense of injustice at their perceived inferiority to South African workers in the same company. While new regional workspaces embody a new promise of modernity, if workplace relations and discipline at these firms employ uneven and racialised, regional power hierarchies, then competing and contradictory regional claims are likely to emerge from within these firms. If South African companies bring with them a set of hegemonic styles, workplace dispositions and workplace organization that enforce existing regional inequalities, workers at regional workspaces will both internalise and resist notions of region that have consequences for workplace relations. In the broader context of an envisioned *African Renaissance* and NEPAD, how workers at these firms embrace or resist the ‘Southern African’ workspace will have a potential impact on regional expectations and perceptions. If South African companies are caught within a cultural time warp, unable to shed past gendered, racialised practices and regional patriarchy, the regional workspace may have a despotic work regime (Burawoy, 1985). If the regional workspace is a colonial encounter that creates new styles of regional apartheid, worker claims and demands may invoke a set of geographic universals that disrupt hegemonic regionalism in favour of counter-hegemonic regional projects.

South Africa pervades both the national and local lives of Zambian workers. While Independence and the struggles that emerged over the direction of the Zambian national economy have brought an awareness of how important the national economy is, there is a sense that external assistance is necessary for the nation state’s survival. The economic prevalence of South African companies means that South Africa has emerged as high up on the list of external rescue parties for the Zambian national economy.

This paper tries to show that promises of ‘renaissance’ can be elusive for workers at the new shopping malls in Africa. The food supermarket is the anchor store and has the largest workforces in the shopping malls. The perceptions of workers at these supermarkets are therefore an important component of regional perceptions by workers at these malls. South Africa’s role as agent of a regional renaissance can be perceived as a highly ambivalent role, with employees at these new investment sites feeling themselves firmly excluded from any participation in the benefits of the new investment. On the other hand, they may feel themselves included in a world that extends beyond the poverty of their countries, and into a regional and global environment to which they would otherwise have had no access. Again, although all support job-creation, perceptions of regional exclusion and deprivation may be enhanced by inclusion in this foreign, South African space of consumption.

New investment often brings new worker resistance. Emerging points of tension between host countries and South African investors are an important aspect of post-Apartheid regionalism that will affect claims to an *African Renaissance*. While the role of waged workers as agents of social change has been challenged in recent times, evidence on the class capacities of new working classes is not unidirectional, often demonstrating fresh worker militancy (Silver, 2002, *forthcoming*). Showing how and where regional contradictions emerge can point to areas of strategic weakness for South African MNCs

and potential sites of new, trans-border solidarities in post-Apartheid Southern Africa. While the outcomes of such tensions are not predetermined, the existence of such regional contradictions has important consequences for South Africa's relations with host countries and South Africa's 'renaissance' ambitions.

## Appendix

In the services sector, hotels, petrol service stations, car hire services, shopping malls, clothing stores and fast food outlets have expanded consumer choices dramatically. These are some of the companies involved in these various sectors (Table 3):

**Table 3**

<i>SERVICES</i>	<b>NAME OF COMPANY</b>	<i>HOST COUNTRIES</i>
Petrol Service Stations	Engen	Tanzania, Botswana
Finance (1) Banks	First National Bank	Botswana, Zambia
	Standard Bank	All 14 SADC countries
	Investec	12 SSA countries
Fast Food outlets	Steers	Zimbabwe, Zambia
Finance (2) Insurance, Investment	Metropolitan Life (new Africa Investment Limited)	Botswana
	Kersaf Investments	Mauritius
	Makin international Investment	Mozambique
	Investec	Angola, Botswana
	African Life	Botswana
	Standard Corporate Merchant Bank	Botswana
	Nedcor	Mauritius
<b>TOURISM</b>		
Hotels	Protea	Botswana, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique
	Holiday Inn (Anglo and De Beers)	
	Southern Sun	Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique
	Sun International	Zambia,
	Karos	Mozambique
Car Hire Services	Avis	Namibia
Leisure	Conservation Corporation Africa	Tanzania
	Games Africa Investment	Zimbabwe
<b>RETAIL AND WHOLESALE</b>		

Supermarkets	Shoprite Checkers	Angola, Mozambique, Zambia, Namibia, Egypt, Uganda, Malawi, Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana, Zimbabwe
	Pick 'n Pay	Zimbabwe
Clothing stores	Pep Botswana	
	Truworths	
	Edgars	
	Wooltru	Zimbabwe, Namibia
Wholesalers	Metro Cash & Carry	Botswana
	CNA	Zimbabwe
	Pepkor/Metro	Zimbabwe
Motor Vehicles	McCarthy Retail	Botswana, Namibia
Furniture	Protea Furnishers	Mozambique

**There is a lot more competition from other foreign investors in the telecommunications market, with investors from the UK, Australia, Japan, New Zealand and international development agencies like the Commonwealth Development Corporation and the International finance Corporation also competing for these lucrative investment prospects. The telecommunications and finance sectors are also sectors in which South African companies have some degree of black representation, giving this newer sector a different racial profile in their African investments.**

From Table 2 (below) we can see that South Africa is the most active investor in the region in terms of the number of deals concluded, hence its high visibility in the host countries. SA accounts for 24% of the number of new investments, followed by the USA and the UK.

**Table 2: FDI activity in SADC according to source and target country (number of deals, 1996-98) [Excluding SA]\***

Source Target	SA	USA	UK	AUSTRA	GERM	PORTU	CANADA	JAPN	FRNCE	OTHER	TOT
Angola	3	2		1					1	3	10
Botswana	14		1				1			5	21
DRCongo	4		1	1			1			2	9
Lesotho	3	1									4
Malawi	4		1							4	9
Mauritius	3										3
Mozambique	41	7	9	5		24	1		2	12	101
Namibia	18	3	2	2						2	27
Swaziland	7		3								10
Tanzania	14		4				2			4	24
Zambia	31	4	17	1	1		1		1	20	76
Zimbabwe	28	5	7	6	3		6		1	9	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>359</b>

The service sector has declined as the dominant proportion of the Zambian workforce, with statistics variably showing agriculture's predominance.

**Table 6: GDP/EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR OF ORIGIN**

	% GDP (1998)	% Employment (1990)
Agriculture	20.6	68.9
Industry	30.6	6.3
Services	48.8	24.7
Total	100	100

*Sources: CIA World Factbook, Britannica Book of the Year; CountryWatch.com*

**Table 7: LABOUR MARKET INDICES, 1997/98**

Indices	Zambia	Regional Average
Unemployment rate	22%	23%
Total Labor force	3.4m	6m
Formal sector workforce	300 000	*
Services	9%	18%
Mining, manu & construction	6%	*
Agriculture	85%	65%
Total Unionization	10%	17%
Formal Sector Unionization	60%	*
Adult Literacy	73%	51%
Population Working	51%	53%
Min Wage	\$11 p.m. (R110)	\$50 p.m. (R500)
Workweek	48	44
Min Age	16	16

*Source: Icon Group International, 2000, [www.icongroupedition.com](http://www.icongroupedition.com)*

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