

# Imagining Change, Imaginary Futures: “Conditions of Possibility” in Pre-Independence Southern Rhodesia, 1959–1963

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*This article invites historians to think more critically about the language, narratives, and tropes historians use to identify, describe, and explain processes of change. By doing so, we raise questions about the possibility of historicizing ideas and experiences of change. The suitability of historians’ descriptive and explanatory tools and frameworks for understanding one of the most important aims of historical scholarship is often very limited. We ponder the extent to which historians’ identification of historical change correlates with how historical actors imagined, experienced, and identified change. Starting from the perspective of the latter enables us to examine how far “change” exists prior to its embedding in the (sometimes conflicting) narratives, discourses, and practices of contemporaries. This article seeks to develop the concepts of “critical junctures” and “discursive thresholds.” While both concepts are used in social science research and literary studies, they have rarely been paired together. We combine them because they help relate the importance of events to change and the discourses surrounding them. As a case study, this article looks at a magazine titled *Property and Finance*, which was published in Southern Rhodesia (1956–77) and edited by Wilfred Brooks. Brooks’s editorials and political commentary offer an opportunity to consider broad questions of change, imagined futures, and discursive engagements with the political and social developments underway.*

## Introduction: The Problem of “Change”

In 1964, a monthly magazine titled *Property and Finance*, carried an election advert for the ruling Rhodesian Front (RF), quoting Ian Smith, the then conservative and right-wing prime minister, as saying: “I would rather fail in my mission and concede defeat than mislead the people of Southern Rhodesia.” The advert proclaimed: “These are brave words from an honest and devoted Rhodesian. He has proved himself to be worthy of your trust and support.” In closing, the reader was enjoined to “UNITE BEHIND THIS MAN” (*Property and Finance* [hereafter *P&F*] September 1964: 13). The inclusion of this election poster, and the magazine’s general support for Smith at this point, contrasted with its earlier political stance, which had been more liberal and eager to promote African political and economic advancement. By 1971, the political and rhetorical position of *Property and Finance* had changed again, sliding even further right and labeling Smith a “sellout” who had derailed “the White Man” in Southern Rhodesia (*P&F* December 1971: 1). Over the course of the 1960s, then, radical changes occurred in the political imagination of Wilfred Brooks, the editor of *Property and Finance*, and his visions for how Southern Rhodesia could be best served by its governors.

From the historian's vantage point, we might surmise that the journey taken by Brooks and *Property and Finance* across the political spectrum was occasioned by the anticipation of independence after the dissolution of the Central African Federation (hereafter the Federation), followed by the experiences and interpretations of the effects of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965. This transformation offers an opportunity to think more critically about the language, narratives, and tropes historians use to identify, describe, and explain processes of change. Indeed, the words used earlier to describe the change in Brooks's editorial positions—"journey," "transition," "transformation"—all, variously, evoke similar, though subtly differing ideas about the shift (another of those "change" words) in his political standpoint. A "journey," as a metaphor for a process of change, suggests an accumulation of experiences connected together to influence an individual's viewpoint over a period; likewise, "transition," less poetically and more formally, describes the movement from one state or condition to another; finally, "transformation" describes a marked change in the nature of a form or appearance. Despite the differences between these words, they all have two things in common. First, they describe certain types of change that are identified *ex post facto*. Second, these words also contain, implicitly at least, narrative assumptions about the direction of change that are broadly teleological. While these words can also be used to describe stadial, temporary, or cyclical types of change, the overall narrative direction of representations of change still tend toward the teleological. Such characterizations of change, and the perspectives from which they are viewed, are problematic because they continue to privilege the historians' perspective on past behavior, action, and thought. When "we surmise" that Brooks's altered political perspective was the result of "independence" that occurred during an "era of decolonisation," we map microhistorical changes onto macrohistorical transformations as described by grand historical narratives. Thus, describing the changes in the political standpoint of Brooks and *Property and Finance* between 1959 and 1963 in such terms begs questions about the suitability of historians' descriptive and explanatory tools and frameworks for understanding one of the seemingly most important aims of historical scholarship. We therefore ponder the extent to which historians' identification of historical change correlates with how historical actors imagined, experienced, and identified change. Starting from the perspective of the latter enables us to examine how far "change" exists prior to its embedding in the (sometimes conflicting) narratives, discourses, and practices of contemporaries.

Brooks's editorials and political commentary offer an opportunity to begin to consider these broad questions. His writings in *Property and Finance* were often concerned with the implications of the Federation, and eventually, independence, for the Southern Rhodesian economy. Of course, examining the magazine with a careful attention to how Brooks's editorial performances framed and interpreted changes in Southern Rhodesia's fortunes does not make it possible to escape fully from *ex post facto* identifications and explanations of change. However, a lack of sensitivity to, and awareness of, the language used to describe change, together with the

linear narratives implied by that language can have deleterious effects upon our interpretations of the past. This concern has recently been illuminated by Frederick Cooper, who has argued for a greater appreciation of the possibilities that historical actors faced when they experienced so-called macrohistorical change. Thus, when examining the triumphalism that can accompany historical narratives of African decolonization and experiences of independence, Cooper suggests that

what gets lost in narrating history as the triumph of freedom followed by failure to use that freedom is a sense of *process*. If we can, from our present-day vantage point, put ourselves in the position of different historical actors ... we see moments of divergent possibilities, or different configurations of power, that open up and shut down. Just how wide were those possibilities? And how much did actions taken at any one of many conjunctures narrow trajectories and alternatives? In thinking about such questions, we can never distance ourselves entirely from our present, but we can imperfectly look at different people in their different presents imagining their futures. (Cooper 2008: 169)

Cooper aims to demonstrate the “possibilities of studying conjunctures when different futures were in play” (Cooper 2014: 466). Rather than privilege the macrohistorical transformation that eventually occurred and was then explained by a grand narrative, Cooper wants historians to pay closer attention to the microhistory of these moments and in particular to the uncertainties they engendered for the people who were trying to interpret their potential significance and act accordingly. This article develops Cooper’s ideas by looking at how Brooks and *Property and Finance* interpreted and narrated the changes occurring in Southern Rhodesia from 1959 to 1963.

Our central aim is to suggest how historians might analyze the ways in which historical actors identified, and then engaged with, changes to their immediate contexts. Our first premise emphasizes the possibility that the events that contemporaries thought were responsible for change may or *may not* coincide with those that historians later argued were significant, especially at a macrohistorical level. Our second premise suggests that contemporaries had little or no sense of how any particular future might occur or how a certain course of events might turn out. This statement is no doubt obvious to most scholars, but to take this perspective seriously is to rethink how historical actors dealt with the events of change they experienced, and this means paying close attention to the category of the “future.”

### *Critical Junctures and Discursive Thresholds*

Our analysis of how Brooks’s editorials identified and responded to change develops the concepts of “critical junctures” and “discursive thresholds” to investigate the discourses he deployed to understand, narrate, and act upon the changes that unfolded around him and how he subsequently envisaged the future. While both concepts are used in social science research and literary studies, they have rarely been paired

together. We combine them because they help relate the importance of events to change *and* the discourses surrounding them.

“Critical junctures” is a descriptive and analytical concept that delineates pivotal events that cause significant transformations in the structures of an institution. Explanations of transformations within institutions are developed by identifying a moment when the “path” preceding the critical juncture narrows to a point when an increasingly limited set of choices or decisions are available to actors at a particular time. Conventionally, the concept is associated with the interpretive frameworks of “historical institutionalism” (HI) and “path dependency” theory. HI analyzes the development of institutions with an emphasis on their historicity. Path dependency theory posits that the nature and range of choices and decisions that are available to any one actor at any given moment are constrained by certain choices and decisions made in the past. Both HI and path dependency theory are favored by economists, political scientists, and comparative sociologists because they provide tools to analyze macrohistorical and macrosociological transformations, particularly within political and economic institutions. Within the analytical framework of both HI and path dependency theory, critical junctures signify moments when the equilibrium of an institution is punctured, allowing for the analysis of change. To some extent, HI and path dependency theory should correspond with the aims of historians. Each are predicated on an appreciation of the importance of history for understanding change. Moreover, critical junctures can be useful for describing potentially transformative events and their relative importance compared to other critical moments that did *not* result in change (for overviews see, Capoccia and Kelemen 2007; Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003; Schmidt 2008).

Problems exist with the premises upon which the methods of HI and path dependency are predicated. Both are preoccupied with identifying and explaining the origins of “outcomes of interest.” Explanative models are then posited that offer a logical method for describing how an outcome of interest prevailed. The result is often the creation of highly schematic narratives that are teleological and depend upon the *ex post facto* understanding of outcomes and institutional forms that are presumed to reach a moment of fixity from which the outcomes can be observed. The identification of critical junctures is therefore central to this endeavor because it allows for the discovery of events that transform structures. For historians, then, the concept of critical junctures may be problematic because it is closely associated with research practices that rely upon teleologies and ahistorical premises.

And, yet, the analytical usefulness of critical junctures for historians becomes apparent when it is orphaned from HI and path dependency theory, and used as a framework for describing how historical actors believed particular events had potentially transformative significance. Indeed, the most recent and fecund approaches suggest that scholars should address the processes that occur within the critical junctures, rather than focus upon the transformations they produce (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007). In this formulation, the methods used to examine how people identified and analyzed critical junctures foreground study of the multiple experiences of events and the visions of their possible outcomes, as well as the creation of historical

narratives that preceded them. Furthermore, when examining critical junctures on a microhistorical level, rather than on the macrohistorical, we can pursue a synchronic analysis of languages, discourses, behaviors, and practices that historical actors performed and invested in when confronted with change. The usefulness of the concept is enhanced once it is paired with the idea of “discursive thresholds.”

The term discursive threshold is most commonly associated with Gillian Whitlock’s discussions of various forms of life writing (Whitlock 2000: 146). A threshold is a point of beginning or entry. When prefaced by discursive, a term is created that seeks to identify an occurrence after which a new form of discourse comes into the public domain. A discursive threshold is produced when, after a certain occurrence, there is a noticeable and palpable change in the discourses employed by an actor (be that an individual, group, or institution). Such a threshold involves the waning of one discourse (although not necessarily its complete disappearance) and the growing acceptance and use of another. New discourses may build upon elements that have already been covertly or privately disseminated but, once the threshold has been passed, emerge into the public domain to receive widespread and popular recognition. As Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith explain, local movements or actors often attempt to generate conditions that enable the reception and recognition of new stories and discourses. Individuals or groups can subsequently engage in narrative acts “of critical self-locating through which they assert their cultural difference and right to self-determination, or they may imagine leaving the past behind for a new social order or a newly empowered collective subjectivity” (Schaffer and Smith 2004: 4).

Attempting to identify the exact and specific moment of a discursive shift, such as when a certain term or phrasing becomes accepted in public arenas, is often both impractical and self-defeating. The new discourse is never entirely new and feeds off elements that existed before. What changes is how these new ways of understanding gain popular and political currency. As a result, it is important to identify the circumstances that enable this shift to take place (Okada 1991: 60). Not only are the contexts of dialogs important but so are how interactions are formed and disseminated. Finally, discursive thresholds are not free-floating or invisible, waiting for historical actors to stumble through them. They are created by particular events—critical junctures—responses to those events, and reflections upon their implications and significance. The recognition that when a threshold has been crossed is also the moment when the process of controlling and delimiting the contours of that threshold begin.<sup>1</sup>

As a means of looking into the shifting political realities at the end of the Federation, and how certain junctures and thresholds resulted in dramatic shifts in outlook, discourse, and behavior, our case focuses on how Brooks identified the elections of 1962 as a critical juncture, which resulted in dramatic changes in the way he understood events around him. To do so, this case study is cognizant of “what happened in the context of what could have happened.” This task means

1. For a look into the interrelation of racisms, thresholds, and discourse see Stoler (2002).

complementing the “hindsight perspective (useful to identify moments of change) with a foresight one, which allows reconstructing not only what the consequences of actual decisions were but also what plausible consequences might have resulted from other, viable choices” (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007: 355).

Finally, we stress that the approach outlined and pursued in the text that follows is not only applicable to African or, more generally, modern history but also has much wider application. The focus of the following case study just happens to suit our purposes, and also develops one of our areas of expertise. Close attention to the languages, tropes, discourses, and practices that surround experiences of “change,” and historical actors’ identification of those experiences, are transhistorical, transglobal, and transdisciplinary issues. Large-scale historical narratives can often obscure these experiences. Attention to the microhistories of change provide insights into how historical agents have attempted to negotiate the uncertainty of their lives and worlds and assessed the risks and fortunes of imagined futures.

### **Visions of Independence: *Property and Finance* and Wilfred Brooks’s Political Imagination**

The period after World War II saw many changes take place in Southern Rhodesia. The colony had initially been formed in 1890, with the arrival of the pioneer column on the Zimbabwean plateau. While the initial aim of the settlers had been to find gold deposits, or a “Second Rand,” to rival those in South Africa, these never materialized. As the colony became more established, however, the small white population began to grow and various agricultural, manufacturing, and industrial activities took root. It was only once World War II ended, though, that many of the key facets of economic growth in the colony established themselves. Manufacturing grew and urban areas expanded. Agriculturally, tobacco grew rapidly and soon cemented itself as the key income earner for the country. This resulted in more white farmers settling in Southern Rhodesia.

The main urban areas, Salisbury and Bulawayo, started to expand, both in terms of infrastructure as well as population, white and African. *Property and Finance* was started in 1956 by Gerrard Aberman as a monthly periodical that focused on property sales and financial management issues within Salisbury, the capital of Southern Rhodesia. Aberman had long been involved in various forms of publishing and was most notably editor of a travel periodical titled *Holiday and Travel*, which later became *Africa Calls* and finally *Rhodesia Calls* (Our Rhodesian Heritage 2002). By June 1957, after only a year in existence, the magazine charted its fast-growing readership numbers as a member of the South African Audit Bureau of Circulations. The next year, the magazine proudly claimed it had “THE LARGEST INDIVIDUALLY PAID CIRCULATION OF ANY MONTHLY BUSINESS OR TRADE JOURNAL IN THE FEDERATION” (emphasis in original) with more than 80 percent prepaid annual

subscribers and was read by “most industrialist, managers, officials and even the Prime Minister of the Federation” (*P&F* March 1958: 7; November 1958: 1). The success of the journal resulted in efforts to develop its scope and coverage. To this effect, Wilfred Brooks was appointed as managing editor in 1959.

Brooks was born in the United Kingdom in 1915 before moving to South Africa. There he had been involved in numerous newspaper and magazine operations in Cape Town and Pretoria. After World War II, Brooks assisted in training demobilized troops in journalism. He returned to South Africa and then moved to Southern Rhodesia in 1948. Once in Rhodesia he settled in Bulawayo and became active in local politics. By 1954 he was chairman of the Hillside (a suburb in Bulawayo) branch of the United Rhodesia Party (URP), chairman of the Hillside Ratepayers Association, secretary of the Umuza (a district in the province of Matabeleland North and close to Bulawayo) branch of the Federal Party (FP), chairman of the Publicity Committee “Boost Bulawayo” campaign, and a member of the Bulawayo Civic and Ratepayers Association (*Bulawayo Chronicle*, September 9, 1954). In 1954 he stood as an United Federal Party (UFP) candidate for Parliament, but was defeated by Independent Labour Party candidate, Jack Keller (*Sunday Mail*, May 5, 1968). In the early 1950s, Brooks became the editor of the *Rhodesian Recorder*, the official organ of the Association of Rhodesian and Nyasaland Industries, which mainly dealt with issues concerning federal industries (Gordon Graham pers. comm., October 13, 2014). As *Property and Finance* grew, it began to devote more space to general business, agriculture and rural issues, and “also national affairs, especially as political developments impinged increasingly on economic and business prospects” (*P&F* December 1967: 2). Brooks wrote all the political and political-economic commentaries from this point until 1969. By 1962, *Property and Finance* had the highest paid circulation of any business periodical in central Africa, as assessed by the Audit Bureau of Circulations of South Africa. As the magazine became more reactionary and right-wing (which will be outlined later), its readership grew. By 1971, it claimed a monthly distribution to 41,000 readers, which increased to 52,000 in 1975 and 71,000 in 1977.<sup>2</sup> By this point the magazine titled itself “The white voice of Rhodesia.” The political pontifications of Brooks in *Property and Finance* connected with local and regional white audiences trying to make sense of the changes occurring in the region. The magazine tapped into white fears of what could happen with the processes of independence, decolonization, and African political advances that were underway. It is important to understand these concerns and fears as they illustrate what the concepts of independence, self-rule, the state, and freedom meant for a range of white protagonists during a highly contested time in the region’s history

After Brooks’s appointment, each issue contained one extensive, multipage political piece discussing developments and highlights of the previous month, along with general business and property coverage. The fact that *Property and Finance* was

2. These figures are given on the front page of each edition of the magazine and are claimed to come from the South African Audit Bureau of Circulations.

a monthly periodical, rather than a daily newspaper allows us to read more into these political summaries. Brooks, unconstrained by the immediacy of a daily deadline as he would have been with a more conventional newspaper, was afforded more time and space to compose his editorials and arrange his political thoughts. These pieces, then, illustrate the political thinking and standing of *Property and Finance* and Brooks. Excerpts taken from Brooks's editorials will show his discursive changes over time that were often responses to shifts in political contexts and reality. Furthermore, the aim is to show the evolution of the magazine's political positions from 1959 to 1963. This article stresses the background of *Property and Finance* and Brooks, and shows how the magazine evolved, identified, and reacted to political changes, and responded to the critical juncture of 1962.

### Imagining and Experiencing the Central African Federation, 1959–62

The idea of a federal amalgamation of Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), and Nyasaland (Malawi), all British colonies, had been raised during the 1930s. World War II postponed the plans, but after the war the idea was resuscitated. The Colonial Office hoped the union would stimulate growth and attract capital investment into agriculture, mining, and manufacturing. Accordingly, the Federation was officially formed on the September 1, 1953, but it would only last just more than 10 years, as it dissolved on December 31, 1963. Initially, the Federation performed well. As international copper prices rose, large profits were made from Northern Rhodesia's expansive copper mines. Yet, the profits from this resource largely benefited Southern Rhodesia's infrastructure development and manufacturing sector. Southern Rhodesia also benefited from cheap migrant labor from both the northern territories. This imbalance raised objections from the small white settler population in Northern Rhodesia, and by the mid-1950s there was little support for the Federation from them. From the outset, the Federation had also been bitterly opposed by the African populations in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia. In Southern Rhodesia, opposition was tempered during the early years of the Federation and many African representatives ran for federal office; however, West has suggested that Africans were more opposed to the Federation than formally thought (West 2002). By the end of the 1950s, though, opposition was widespread in Southern Rhodesia (Mlambo 2009: 92–93). As Murray (1970: 363) has observed, this opposition was almost across the spectrum due to “[g]rievances of [African] urban residents, the antipathy of peasants against land laws, the anger of the educated Africans over illusory promised benefits of federation, [and] the antipathy of immigrant Africans from Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia to the federal government arising from the political conditions at home.” In short, Hyam and Henshaw saw the Federation as “an extra-ordinary mistake; an aberration of history and a deviation from the inevitable historical trend of decolonisation.” For Cohen (2017), however, the Federation was more than just a mistake. For him it was a bold



experiment in political change during the end of empire and constituted one of the most intricate episodes in decolonization.<sup>3</sup>

It is this politics of change and decolonization, and how Brooks understood and narrated such events, that we are particularly interested in this article. During 1959 and 1960, there was an obvious liberal edge to Brooks's editorial commentaries. The first prominent example was Brooks's views on the political and economic assessment of the Federation by Sir Ronald Prain. Prain, chairman of the Rhodesian Selection Trust, was initially very supportive of the Federation, but by the end of the 1950s he was publicly voicing misgivings about the political trajectory of the Federation (Butler 2007, but cf. Cohen 2008). His main objection was that there was a desperate need to provide for an African political majority, "in practise and in theory" (*P&F* December 1959: 10). In December 1959, Brooks agreed with Prain, stating that "the longer a solution of basic (i.e. racial) problems is delayed, the higher will be the price exacted by events." This statement outlined Brooks's belief in the need for African economic and political advancement. He also outlined his conceptions of "liberalism" and "partnership."

But let there be no illusion either, among Africans about the meaning of "partnership." The concept is harsh: it means every man, having been given the opportunity, can have no legitimate come-back and must stand on his own feet. It does not mean the politically-easy granting to the African of the means to spend money, which he cannot afford, on expensive European liquor or on large numbers of sweepstake tickets; but it does mean the *opportunity*, without paternal coddling, to earn the higher incomes which can buy not only these and other commodities but also a wider realisation that the material prosperity does not come without a payment of a price in effort and in some sacrifice of the personal liberty of the kraal. . . . Opportunity, however, does not only lie in the economic sphere. One of the most significant passages in Sir Ronald's statement was that indicating the widely-held fallacy that economic development alone will solve the national problems . . . to exclude a respectable non-European from, say, an hotel, is racialism; and the exclusion makes him even more determined to secure equally racist legislative power, by any means. It is thus for the European to decide whether it is better to sit near an African in a tearoom or to have unsuitable (and, probably, embittered) men sitting in a legislature merely because they are black. (*P&F* December 1959: 10)

In 1960 and 1961, Brooks continued to stress the need for economic and political opportunities for Africans. In July 1960, he noted that the "tolerant good humour, and resultant paternalism of the [white] born Rhodesian is often remarkable," in terms of how they have dealt with the "primitive," "tribal African" (*P&F* July 1960: 10). However, he noted that many Europeans cannot "adjust to the fact that paternal 'giving' is out of date. Today the African demands equal opportunity and intends to get it" (ibid). Brooks emphasized the need to learn from a recent rebellion in the

3. For a more on the Federation see Sherer (2007), Fetter (1983), Wood (1983), and Franklin (1963).

Congo, where Congolese soldiers revolted in 1960, killing Belgian settlers across the county, to avoid similar events happening in Rhodesia (Hughes 2003; Scarnecchia 2011). From Brooks's perspective, educated, urban Africans were given a range of economic opportunities in the Congo, but were denied any form of political mobilization. The thought that economic freedoms alone would placate African nationalism was misplaced and the violence against Europeans paid testament to this (*P&F* July 1960: 12). Later, in January 1961, he stated "too-hasty transfer of political power" could be problematic, but the "root cause of the trouble have been the belated recognition both of the need to provide an outlet for the political aspirations of the people and of the necessity of training them in the work of government" (*P&F* January 1961: 8). Ultimately, Brooks drew upon recent experiences of rebellion elsewhere in Africa to envisage a potential future and a kind of change that might not be controlled by the white population. In short, he used the experiences of whites in the Congo to shape an alternative future for whites in Rhodesia and the Federation.

In July 1960, Brooks was aware that the Federation had failed to promote racial harmony "despite real attempts made to meet African aspirations on the bold basis of European paternalism." The main inhibition was the "colour bar," which protected white jobs, wages, and positions of superiority in the workplace and political arena. He repeated his understanding of opportunity, uttered eight months earlier: "the concept of equal *opportunity*, far from being 'pro-African' or 'ultra-liberal,' is a harsh but fair concept: It means that every man has, ultimately, to stand on his own feet and will have no legitimate comeback if he fails" (*P&F* July 1960: 34). He also noted that on both sides of the racial divide there were shortcomings in their approach to racial partnership.

It is ironic that, frequently, those who deny that the non-European is incapable of real advancement are the first to show signs of anxiety at any tampering with the colour bar. Conversely, the African nationalist overlooks the shortcomings of the vast number of his own people who are still enveloped in tribal superstition and whose entire outlook is opposed to the requirements of modern economic development. (*P&F* July 1960: 34)

For Brooks, the Federation sat between extremes of "White nationalism in South Africa and Black nationalism in north Africa," and therefore provided the perfect opportunity to forge real and meaningful partnership between the races. Brooks also stated that, "The more the Governments placate European fears and opinion, the more African confidence they lose, and *vice versa*. The 'policy of partnership' becomes somewhat mauled in the process" (*P&F* July 1960: 11).

As the Federation continued to face problems, the British government formed the Monckton Commission to report its legitimacy and future. The report was published in October 1960 and noted the potential economic benefits that could accrue through the Federation, but stressed that radical changes were needed if it was to overcome African concerns and hostility. It recommended that discrimination be eliminated rapidly and African participation in both the federal and territorial governments be

quickly expanded. Crucially, the commission also recommended that the territories should be given the right to secede from the Federation after a trial period (Hubbard 2011: 280).

While many sectors of white society were shocked and alarmed by the Monckton report, Brooks was effusive in his praise of the commission.

Seldom, indeed, has there ever been such a searching, professional review of any territory's affairs. Bearing all the marks of good faith and none of extremist theory, it should be read, studied and tested by all with a stake in Central Africa and not least by those who tend to hold dogmatic views. No undue prescience is required to forecast that, at the London constitutional conference, the British Government will exert effective economic pressure on any group, Black or White, which refuses to accept at least the principles recommended. (*P&F* October 1960: 11)

The end of 1960 also saw negotiations regarding a new constitution for Southern Rhodesia commence in London. Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia were to be afforded more political autonomy and the Whitehead government hoped to secure similar developments, which would ultimately lead to full independence. The British, anxious to disengage from Rhodesia, hoped to convince the Whitehead administration to accept expansions to the African electorate, with qualified A and B voters roles, a Bill of Rights for African, and a provision of 15 (out of 65) seats for Africans in the Southern Rhodesian Parliament (Scarnecchia 2008: 103–4). African nationalist leaders were present at the meetings, with Joshua Nkomo representing the National Democratic Party (NDP).

By the 1961 draft constitution, Britain agreed to abandon its reserve powers and rights of veto. In turn, the Whitehead government agreed to the 15 parliamentary seats, based on a complicated franchise that would have delayed majority rule for several decades at least, the Bill of Rights, and a limited multiracial Constitutional Council (Meredith 1979: 32). While this constitution offered the African nationalists some concessions, it essentially guaranteed white rule. To the amazement of many, and delight of the Whitehead administration, Nkomo accepted the draft constitution and returned to Southern Rhodesia proclaiming he had achieved an important breakthrough for African political advancement (Scarnecchia 2008: 104). However, facing an escalating backlash from within the NDP over his acquiescence, Nkomo reneged on his acceptance, and the nationalist movements fell into disarray and violence erupted in black townships. White voters, meanwhile, approved the new constitution in a referendum on July 26, 1961. While there were sectors within the white community that felt the 1961 constitution gave too many concessions to the nationalists, the “yes” vote passed with little threat.<sup>4</sup>

4. As well as the official referendum on the Constitution, the NDP organized its own referendum in which they claimed 467,000 people rejected the Constitution and 600 voted for it. White 2015: 93.

In August 1961, Brooks saw this vote as a critical juncture in Rhodesian affairs. During the campaign, he noted, “[T]he malice showed itself all too clearly at both ends of the political spectrum—among some extremist Europeans who should have known better, and simultaneously among African nationalists (advised, encouraged and almost deified by the intellectual Left, here and abroad).” He went on to state that there was a need to ensure moderate policies were enacted, which appealed to both races. However, he was also aware of the class differences that existed in the African communities and warned:

The “15 seats,” broadly, will reflect the opinion of the middle-class African, in town or country, who has as much a personal stake in the economy as any European; but they will not reflect the interests, aspirations, suspicions or resentments of hundreds of thousands still unable to qualify for the vote. Unless the views of these people are at least known and considered in government, there will be little racial peace in the country—and therefore little ground for economic hope. (*P&F* August 1961: 10)

But Brooks insisted that the constitution offered real, moderate change that could diffuse the radical and conservative elements of both sides of the racial divide.

Despite recognizing some of the issues that white society was failing to understand about African politics and resentment, Brooks still viewed African nationalism rather patronizingly, and in the September 1961 issue of *Property and Finance* stated:

Nationalism, particularly African nationalism, is primarily an emotional movement, fed by the colour bar, by White arrogance, and by the corroding resentment of such attitudes. But today, in some quarters, there is also no little naked envy, an envy which seeks to win wealth and perquisites by political pressure rather than by normal economic effort. (*P&F* September 1961: 12. For more on manners and ways of acting see Shutt 2015)

Nevertheless, toward the end of 1961, it was clear that Brooks was genuinely interested in engaging with African politics and ensuring that mutual cooperation took place that kept economic performance ticking over.

### **The 1962 General Election: A Discursive Threshold**

As Patrick Bond has noted, the political outlook of many sectors of white society were dictated by their economic position. Industrial and financial capitalists wanted the development of a black middle class to provide a growing domestic market that would also help reduce social unrest and hold African peasantry and working classes in check. However, many other whites, particularly urban, small-scale capitalists and waged workers, were fearful of growing African urban populations, as well as potential rising labor costs due to political concessions and the rise of competition in the workplace (Bond 1998: 110–11).

Brooks and *Property and Finance* shifted toward this second camp during 1962. The positive messages of African partnership disappeared and the magazine became much more defensive of white interests and rights. While Brooks changed his opinions on African politics, he also began to reveal his concerns about foreign capital and big business. *Property and Finance* became more populist and a staunch defender of small-scale, particularly urban, capital and white workers in general. To this end, Brooks was a founding member of the RF, which formed in March 1962. The RF won the general election in December 1962 and led Rhodesia to UDI in 1965. This move, according to Arrighi, “was directed as much against large-scale capitalism as against the Africans. The populist undertones of the UDI campaign were very noticeable” (Arrighi 1973: 367). The shift of Brooks and his utterances in *Property and Finance* support such a claim (Henderson 1972: 388).

During the course of 1962, the magazine started to include more material that questioned African motives and actions locally and on the continent. For example, in March, concerns were raised about African housing, labor supply, and financial societies in Rhodesia. Additionally, Brooks used *Property and Finance* to disseminate fear of the growing African population, uncontrollable birth rates and the threats this population boom posed to the small white state in Rhodesia (*P&F* March 1962; April 1962). These concerns illustrate how pervasive the “population wars” were in Southern Rhodesia at the time, as illustrated by Brownell (2011). Brooks also raised anxieties about African leadership capabilities on the continent (*P&F* March 1962: 20). Events in independent Africa impacted Brooks’s thinking in two main ways. Firstly, he began to redress his conception of what the African was capable of due to what Brooks saw as his inability to manage and govern. Secondly, he developed a growing concern of what “pan-Africanism” was, fearful that it meant the eradication of white presence in Africa. This was tied into a dim view of British handling of decolonization, which he believed was weak and poorly executed. Fundamentally important here were the clear indications from Britain that, were the Federation to dissolve, independence would be granted to Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, but not Southern Rhodesia because of the contestations over the voters’ roll, the constitution, and African political rights. For many white settlers in Southern Rhodesia, this was both unfair and potentially disastrous for the country’s economy. They had hoped to secure commitment to dominion status or independence after the Federation, but as these hopes evaporated, many turned away from the idea of racial partnership to the more confrontational and populist politics of the RF.

In November 1962, just before the December election, *Property and Finance* published “the white point of view” on the political situation in Southern Rhodesia. The piece started thus:

The evidence is quite overwhelming—

That the aim of Pan-Africanism is the complete elimination of White influence in Africa;

That most African nationalist leaders have, as their prime object, the rich pickings from the assets abandoned (they hope) by the European;

That intellectually, administratively and technically, the African people as a whole have been inferior, still are, and are likely to be so for a considerable time to come, and that, despite propaganda to the contrary, neither “colonialism” nor White “exploitation” has produced that inferiority; and

That Rhodesia is in the forefront of a political war and must take steps to meet it. (*P&F* November 1962: 6–8)

Moreover, Brooks felt that African Nationalism was driven by a form of reverse racism. As such it was marred by envy, greed, and a “chip-on-shoulder” attitude of many nationalists, which was born from a “recognition of intellectual inferiority.” Brooks’s language was now extremely racist: “Anyone who knows Africa will recognize the problems: the uninhibited birth rate, the superstition, the still-backward outlook of the African woman, endemic disease, primitive emotionalism, all come to mind” (*P&F* November 1962: 6). Crucially, Brooks felt that he and other white men had been keen to work with African political entities; however, events in other parts of Africa over the last five years or so had undercut this attitude. Even Tanganyika (Tanzania, which gained independence from Britain in 1961), a country “initially” regarded as a “model of smooth transfer of power and potentially viable independence,” was recast by Brooks as a failure of decolonization (*P&F* November 1962: 6). These “concerns” over independent Africa meant that many white Rhodesians wanted to avoid making the same “mistakes” in Southern Rhodesia.

The November article, titled “The Political Situation in S. Rhodesia: The White Point of View,” was so popular that in the subsequent December issue *Property and Finance* claimed, “Owing to unprecedented public demand, ‘The Political Situation in S. Rhodesia: The White Point of View’, which was one of the main articles in last month’s issue . . . has been reprinted as a sixpenny broadsheet” (*P&F* November 1962: 6). In December 1962, the RF won the general election and in the first half of 1963 the magazine published a great deal of positive commentary on Winston Field, the new prime minister, the RF, and the unity of white society. Alongside this positivism, the paper burgeoned with fears of African takeover, politically and otherwise. At the beginning of 1963, and thereafter the oft-versed trope of the “uncontrollable” African birth rate became a standard feature, as were the laments of the “burden” this put on white taxpayers providing social services (e.g., Brownell 2011; *P&F* May 1963).

Brooks also raised questions over the role played by big business in the politics of the day. *Property and Finance* attacked a number of large corporations, such as Lonrho, Anglo American, and the Argus-owned Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Company, which published the daily *Rhodesia Herald*. Brooks’s vehement hatred of Roland “Tiny” Rowland, the managing director of Lonrho, has been well documented (Cronje et al. 1976). In July 1960, Brooks had written that it was no secret that “powerful business interests, shocked and angry at circumstances leading

to the Southern Rhodesia riots last month [July 1960], have been exerting pressure on the Government to reassess the political situation” (*P&F* July 1960: 2). By 1963, this pressure had become too much for Brooks. In response to the intrusion of big capital into the political jostling at the time, Brooks became more defensive of small capitalists and white workers. In January, Brooks assured his readers that *Property and Finance* was there to look out for the little man, Rhodesians who make Rhodesia tick and live here and deal with the “African.”

This populist stance, at odds with Brooks’s earlier writings on big business, became a mainstay of the magazine. Brooks warned businesses that had been involved with African independence leaders: “Powerful companies, who have been flirting with the nationalist parties in the north, may well live to regret their expediency” (*P&F* January 1963: 2). This jibe was directed at Rowland and Lonrho in particular. By late 1963, Brooks felt that

Business has swung in support of the ordinary [white] man-in-the-street, whose attitudes are quite clear: he has tried to meet Pan-Africanism half-way; he has accepted what (in Southern Africa) is a radical constitution; he has gone about his daily business, in complete confidence that he as a moral as well as a demonstrable case after 40 years or reasonable and pretty fair self-government; and he has not the slightest intention of appeasing more, until he sees what happens in the African territories to the north of him. (*P&F* December 1963: 45)

*Property and Finance* had clearly changed, and the tone and focus of the magazine had shifted radically from its earlier stance. However, in June 1963, the magazine released a statement on its ownership and policy, which sought to assure readers that the magazine was still “liberal” and had not altered. Framed as a response to concerns about malicious rumormongering over the magazine’s ownership and control, the statement noted that the magazine was started by Gerard Aberman at the height of the property boom in the mid-1950s. By the end of the decade,

*Property and Finance* was in the vanguard of what was then considered liberal racial thinking: it pressed for the advancement of the African and an end to paternalism, in the interests of business and of the country in general. Today, however, in the light of events elsewhere in Africa, of the excesses of Pan-Africanism, and of the erosion by American and British policy of all that the European in Africa has built up by his industry and commerce, *Property and Finance* has felt compelled increasingly to present the White man’s point of view, lest it go by default. For the editors are convinced that unless that point of view is vigorously and factually stated hostile elements at home and abroad may well succeed in sapping Rhodesians own resolution and this ensure yet another debacle in Africa. (*P&F* June 1963: 2)

The statement also stressed that *Property and Finance* has never had any political affiliation, but it “happens that the Rhodesian Front . . . also regards the White man’s cause as important—a cause, incidentally, which this newspaper was promoting

before the R.F. assumed power” (*P&F* June 1963: 2). Brooks also supported Ian Smith and his push for UDI in 1965. However, by the end of the 1960s, Brooks would attack the RF and Smith for not protecting the white interests enough. He labeled Smith a “sell-out,” accused him of holding secret talks with British and nationalist leaders in which he undermined the future prospects of white settlers in Rhodesia. Brooks resigned from RF and became an active supporter of a number of radical opposition movements, such as the extremely right-wing Southern African Solidarity Conference (Ellert 1995: 91; Wood 2012: 634). Smith successfully sued Brooks in a civil case for defamation, after which Brooks left for South Africa, where he died in 1984.

### Brooks’s Background and Political Interactions

Brooks used *Property and Finance* to promote continued white rule and ascendancy. He envisioned Africans as needing to respond to the freedoms offered by benevolent white rule and use those to prove their worth and position in society. While framed in “liberal” language—and used to differentiate Brooks and Southern Rhodesians from the backward and clearly racist South Africans—Brooks still felt that, from his perspective in 1960, Rhodesia was experimenting with providing African freedoms that seemed both highly advanced and experimental. Gains were being made, and made in controlled and limited ways that suited much of white society.

This period, however, has also been portrayed as one where the hope of racial partnership was crushed and the space between the races widened, mainly due to the treatment of African political parties and leading nationalist figures. Luise White rejects the conventional narrative that between 1958 and 1961 white racial attitudes hardened against African nationalism, which led to the rise of right-wing politics. Rather, White shows, ideas of franchise and political involvement, before events in the Congo (1961) and the end of the Federation, revealed that a broad spectrum of whites’ “attitudes towards the impossibility of African self-rule were in place well before” 1958 or 1961 (2015: 71). For her, much of white society was of the belief that change had to be managed so that it was not so rapid that it might exceed “European opinion and perhaps African capacities” (*ibid.*). The realization, finally, that the end of the Federation would not mean white independence and the threat of African political control elsewhere on the continent resulted in a shift in discourse, from promoting black interests to defending white rights/privilege/place. The future changed from being managed to unknown, and this fear drove changes in political outlook, discursive responses, and racial attitude. In this sense, we concur with White that the ideas and means of never letting Africans take over was present throughout the 1950s, but the events of 1960–62 impacted on how Rhodesians imagined the possible futures they might now have to entertain.

In addition, the RF, which won a very narrow victory at the 1962 elections, was an unsteady coalition of shifting alliances, amalgamations, and conveniences. The processes of decolonization and the changes afoot necessitated that people articulated



(and amended) their visions of independence. This often meant finding new ways to express oneself or adopting a standpoint or platform to suit. Brooks claimed the RF represented what always were his beliefs, yet a few years later was able to claim the RF had abandoned white interests. The end of the Federation and the processes of decolonization were awkward and uneven in Rhodesia, as the changes in Brooks's political imagination illustrate. The trajectory from colony to pariah state to nation-state defies attempts to construct simple, coherent narratives.

Brooks's editorials in *Property and Finance* tapped into white fears of what could happen with the processes of decolonization. So far, the case of Brooks has illustrated how he envisaged "the phenomenon of the change itself."<sup>5</sup> In the remainder of this article, we offer a little more information about Brooks's background and political networks and interaction (Clements 1969: 140). The aim is to illuminate the specific political culture in which Brooks lived, the constellation of associates and groups within which he was nestled, and the ideas and expectations he held about the process of decolonization.

Brooks forged numerous political affiliations and networks upon moving to Rhodesia (as outlined previously). Joining and assisting the URP and UFP reflected Brooks's "liberal" standing at the time. The URP was, from 1953, led by Sir Garfield Todd. He succeeded Sir Godfrey Huggins, who had become the premier of Southern Rhodesia in 1933. In July 1953, Huggins became head of interim Federal Government (in charge of the newly formed Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland). While Todd introduced repressive and restrictive legislation that adversely affected many Africans (such as the blanket enforcement out of the Native Land Husbandry Act and the Public Order Act of 1955), he was seen by many white Rhodesians as a staunch liberal who was keen to make improvements for Africans, specifically in terms of health and education (Hancock 1984: 61). Todd promoted ideas of multiracialism and African social, political, and economic advancement, albeit at remarkably slow pace and where Africans were treated as the junior partners (Mlambo 2009: 94). But Todd pushed his agenda too far. In 1958, accused of being "out of step with public opinion" (read: white opinion), he was forced to resign from his position as prime minister as his Cabinet revolted (Loney 1975: 101). Shortly before Todd's resignation, the URP became the UFP. Once out of office, Todd resuscitated the URP and ran against the UFP, now under Edgar Whitehead, in the 1958 elections. The UFP won resoundingly. After this defeat, Todd established the Federation-wide Central Africa Party (CAP), which was multiracial and sought to "overcome the barriers of race and colour" (Todd 1959). The treatment of Todd, and his exile from politics, shows how radical Brooks's writing was at the time, and how the popularity of *Property and Finance* ran against the grain of much contemporary political thought.

Few whites imagined that their world and its future was in any danger in the 1950s (Hancock 1984: 47). However, Brooks was aware that some quick concessions were

5. With regard to African rule in other African countries, see statements on Tanganyika (P&F May 1962: 35) and Nyasaland (P&F October 1962: 7).

necessary to appeal to African political agitation. His commentary on Prain and the need for economic and political freedoms for the right kinds of Africans attest to that. And he was genuinely involved in liberal politics of the time. Brooks was a keen supporter of Garfield Todd. Indeed, Brooks is rumored to have written speeches for Todd and was even spoken of as his “private secretary.”<sup>6</sup> As well as running for the URP when it was under Todd’s leadership, Brooks was a member of the CAP.<sup>7</sup> According to those who know him, Brooks was very much for African advancement. Miles Anthony Pedder, who was by 1955 the Secretary of the URP, and later also joined the CAP, said Brooks was “a strong and fair liberal.”<sup>8</sup> He also stated that Brooks

was a liberal in the proper sense—the small sense . . . of the word—in other words of trying to bring about a society where the opportunity was equal for people as far as possible. Implicit I think in his interpretation of this was that the Africans so given that chance would behave to the sort of high levels that you would expect of a person who is himself intelligent enough to be liberal.<sup>9</sup>

Brooks, in his early political thought, conforms to Mlambo’s assertion that “post-Second World War immigrants from Europe . . . tended to be more liberal in their attitudes towards the Africans” (Mlambo 2009: 113). This liberalism, however, has to be qualified. As Law (2012: 24) has noted, “[T]hose who belonged to the ranks of Rhodesia’s liberals still believed in gradual change and only favoured the co-option of ‘educated’ Africans into the existing system.” That said, others have labeled the Federation as high point of multiracial partnership, and any genuine attempts at forging lasting and evolving multiracial interaction ended with Todd’s removal and rise of RF (Blake 1966: 284–345; Holderness 1985; Law 2012: 151; Todd 1966). However, the liberals were a diverse group with a range of ideas about race, gender, politics, and class (Hancock 1984: 7). As one of the most notable “liberals” of the time, Diana Mitchell, has stated, “[L]iberalism was the only word we could’ve applied to ourselves . . . liberalism for me was always a misnomer but it was always a shortcut to saying that we didn’t despise blacks” (Law 2012: 176).

Hancock believed that white society largely underestimated the danger signs of African political awakening in the 1950s. He felt “a renewed militancy was evident in Black-led politics by 1957–8 which in turn manifested and fostered a growing divide between the races.” This widening gap was exacerbated by the “complacency of the federal and Southern Rhodesian governments in the mid 1950s, meant the years of 1953–8 were fateful ones for the concept of racial partnership” (Hancock 1984: 39). While this interpretation may have some merit, Clements has shown that between

6. Gordon Steel, “Letter.” Sunday Mail, May 5, 1968; National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ), Harvey Grenville Ward, Oral/246; Godwin and Hancock (1996: 64–66).

7. NAZ, Leo Solomon Baron, Oral/239: 37.

8. NAZ, Miles Anthony Pedder, Oral/PE 2: 13.

9. *Ibid.*

1958 and 1962 much was done to assist and promote African interests under Whitehead's stewardship. In fact, he called this time "the great reforming period in Rhodesian history" (1969: 138). In terms of regulation passed and bills enacted, more social and economic legislation was passed that directly benefited Africans than ever before. Issues addressed were education facilities, wages, rent, travel, land, and housing and amenities in urban areas. Qualified Africans could enter the "higher grades of the civil service, swimming baths and hostels were allowed to admit Africans, trade unions could become multi-racial . . . betting and drinking laws were revised . . . and amendments were made to the Land Apportionment Act and the Immorality Act was abolished." As Hancock has noted, these changes would have been revolutionary in 1953, and, at the time, many in Southern Rhodesia felt that they were part of an extremely progressive political system in Central Africa, especially when compared to South Africa (1984: 93).

The focus on Brooks and *Property and Finance* illustrates the messiness of this period and the struggles numerous actors had in understanding, documenting, and narrating the unfolding shifts. What is also clear, besides the uncertainty, is the arrogance of Brooks and many other whites. Their imagined futures were always expressed in ways that upheld whites in positions of authority. There were troubles and agitations to deal with, but there was very little immediate threat to their superiority and position in society. Even in Brooks's early "liberal" outlook, the onus was on the African to get himself to the level of whites. Access to citizenship was never conceptualized as a right in this period, it was always something that the African majority had to demonstrate that they were worthy of earning. Indeed, the discourses and ideas of where blacks belonged was always below the European, and at best in some sort of partnership. Brooks saw the future, even if it included blacks as partners, as one where whites would be in control. That seemed imminently possible in the late 1950s and early 1960s. There was little direct threat, and looking forward there was no reason to doubt this. The provisions given to African advancement and the changes in the political landscape made "liberal" whites feel like they were progressive and radical, that they had assisted Africans and cemented their place in society. However, the sense of security, of being privileged, eroded from 1958 to 1962. As Hancock observed, "The events [over this period] forced all those on the left of white politics to consider where they stood on the issue of white supremacy, partnership and African majority rule. Not surprisingly, opinions varied" (Hancock 1984: 79).

Over the course of 1962, the politics of Brooks and *Property and Finance* changed radically. The shifts in regional affairs and the processes of decolonization opened the space for new discourses to emerge and for new ways of writing/talking about happenings. Brooks took full advantage and revised his notions of what should follow the end of the Federation and the role Africans should have in that space. Many, like Brooks, sought to use their position to defend more actively white interests rather than promote racial integration. Brooks was keenly focused on white urban interests, and as his populism developed, became a promoter of the "small man," which in his thoughts translated into urban white men of small means and

capital. His fears of these urban spaces becoming inundated with Africans, and their inability to keep up “standards,” drove much of his vitriol and paranoia. African political and economic freedoms were one thing, but having to share amenities (schools, hospitals, streets) was quite another. This realization, particularly after Brooks witnessed the way Africans “mismanaged” independent states of Tanzania, Malawi, and Zambia, drove him further to the right, and away from his earlier, more “liberal” position.

### **Conclusion: Change and the Politics of the Future**

Change, obviously, occurs on different scales and, depending on the historical interpretation, at different rates. Long-term change, for example, in political systems, cultural structures, social relations, and economic forces may go unnoticed. Our focus on Brooks’s experiences of change as expressed in the editorials of *Property and Finance* therefore required us to make a set of distinctions about the kinds of transformations that affected people and that they sought to understand. We therefore centered our analysis on “eventful” change, which in the case study we presented exclusively referred to the political changes caused by the events that accompanied the processes of decolonization, and the complicated and uncertain (macrohistorical) transition between colonial and postcolonial states. Eventful change referred to types of events that Brooks and his like-minded contemporaries could reasonably be expected to have experienced and that provided them with reasons to think that change had occurred or was occurring or would occur in the future. Moreover, we claimed that events alone cannot cause contemporaries to consider their potentially transformative effect; it also occurs when historical actors construct, interpret, and frame events at any given moment, as well as create the past and possible future of any given event. Explanations can then be devised for why people performed certain actions or enunciated particular discourses that may lack logic from a historical perspective but were, to those involved at the time, significant and necessary to pursue. After all, they may have been envisaging a future that either never or only partially came to pass—as was the case with Brooks and *Property and Finance*. Moreover, the categorization of an event or “change” as significant can occur through a variety of interpretative practices. The significance of any number of happenings may not be immediately clear to contemporaries: so far, so obvious. However, and as the case of Brooks’s illustrated, writing about the future—and not just reflections about the past or its analysis—could stimulate thinking about the historical significance of events. The significance or meanings of specific events to narratives of change may undergo recalibrations as new futures are proffered in light of new information, interpretations, and happenings that have to be incorporated into new narrative renderings of experience.

Between 1959 and 1963, *Property and Finance* was one voice among many in Southern Rhodesia. Other publications, politicians, opponents of white minority government, in particular Joshua Nkomo’s NDP, and the British government, all

imagined the change possible futures that independence would bring to the country. Multiple subjectivities therefore laid claim to interpretive hegemony over the meaning of events and the course of change, during and after it occurred. Conflicting or incongruent visions of the future arose. Our case study focused on one particular person and institution enmeshed in a context that contained multiple voices about the nature of the change being experienced. The micropolitics of these conflicting visions and voices were central to how different groups of people imagined and then mobilized behind particular kinds of futures. More generally, different groups and institutions had various degrees of access to material, intellectual social, political, and financial resources ensuring asymmetries in the distribution of their perspectives, the kinds of publics they could reach, and the influence they had. The reach of particular imaginings of change and the future can therefore be delimited to specific publics depending on local power relations. These publics may to some degree have overlapped and shared characteristics, rhetorics, and languages. For our purposes, an appreciation of different subjectivities, perspectives on change, and the publics to which people have access contributed to our understanding of the precise contexts in which Brooks experienced, analyzed, and contested change.

Brooks's analysis of the potential futures that independence might bring to Southern Rhodesia were designed to inform and encourage readers to consider the consequences of their governors' ability to ensure a smooth, orderly, and beneficial transition for the country. Until recently, though, the discussion of the "future" as a category of historical analysis has largely occurred amongst philosophers and theorists of historiography following the work of Reinhart Koselleck (1985) and his twin concepts of "spaces of experience" and "horizons of expectation" (see also Fabian 1983; Hölscher 1999; Jenkins 2002; Lorenz and Bevernage 2013; Raulff 1999). Historians have rarely addressed these issues, yet they can provide great insights into the political imaginations of historical actors (for exceptions see Karonen 2009; Rivett 2015). For Koselleck, the negotiation of the relationship between the past (experience) and the future (expectation) provides historical actors with the resources to interpret the events they experience and envision the change that might take place. One obvious point of departure for our analysis would be to focus on the futures conjured by utopian or dystopian thinking. However, as Michael D. Gordin, Helen Tilley, and Gyan Prakash have recently suggested, most historical actors do not, at any particular historical moment, imagine futures in the perfectly planned or unplanned ways that are associated with the creation of utopias or dystopias. Instead, they insightfully reframe "utopia" and "dystopia" as categories of practices and thought "through which historically situated actors seek to reimagine their present and transform it into a plausible future" (2010: 2). In keeping with Cooper's injunction, these approaches to experiences of temporality can be used to think about how the past-future nexus might represent a number of possibilities facing a historical actor at any given moment. With this focus we have been able to provide more nuanced accounts of the discourses and practices that were performed and produced by individuals at any particular time.

All these perspectives open two connected themes that illuminate how historical actors imagined different, sometimes conflicting futures and its importance for understanding the practices and discourse through which contemporaries conceptualized and used ideas of change. First, we can consider the “politics of time.” Periodizations of time involve the historian making ethical, aesthetic, and political decisions (Bösch 2012). “Time” is not neutral when conceptualized by either the historian or by a historical actor (Bender and Wellbery 1991; Fabian 1983; Osborne 1995). A “politics of time” informs the creation of periodizations, which often go unnoticed by scholars (Lorenz and Bevernage 2013: 2). Developing these critiques beyond scholarly reflexivity, these ideas beg questions about how historical actors use the future to understand, interpret, and, in the case of *Property and Finance*, politicize events. Second, we can subsequently discuss the “politics of change,” which involves paying attention to the language, rhetoric, narratives, and tropes people have used to create visions of difference between the past and present, and possible futures. Examining how historical actors described and argued for or against particular kinds of potential change ensures that we are attuned to how it can become a weapon used to counteract competing claims upon the direction of change. Thus, our focus on how contemporaries experienced change, attempted to interpret that change and, perhaps, mobilize specific visions of that change, can complicate further grand narratives that continue to predominate within historical scholarship. From our approach, alternative narratives may emerge, producing a variety of conflicting visions of any particular change and their outcomes.

## Epilogue

Wilfred Brooks’s editorial performances in *Property and Finance* were characterized by a series of discursive shifts at moments he interpreted as critical junctures in Southern Rhodesia’s journey toward independence. In the months and years between 1959 and 1963, the editorials were used to imagine a range of futures that drew upon recent experiences of change taking place elsewhere in Africa, as European nations gradually reduced their imperial presence on the continent. As Brooks identified an increasingly uncertain set of futures for white populations in Southern Rhodesia, the editorials crossed a number of discursive thresholds, altering how the magazine interpreted the significance of the events leading ineluctably toward independence. In the late 1950s, the editorials were pro-gradual change, but later rescinded on these ideas. The election of 1962 became about protecting white interests, at the expense of racial collaboration because Africans had shown themselves incapable of self-rule. By the end of 1963, Ian Smith, once seen as the savior of white rights, was castigated for not doing enough in this capacity. He blamed the African nationalists for the 1961 fallout as he saw that as a real chance for change, but then lamented events in the Congo, Zambia, and Malawi and began to fear for white futures in Africa. Brooks adroitly engaged with, and contributed to, a “politics of comparison” to demonstrate

the likely threat posed by majority rule and decolonization to the future of southern Rhodesia.

It is possible that Brooks held different views to those he voiced when he performed the role of the editor for *Property and Finance*. If he did, he may have discussed them in front of other, perhaps more delimited publics that were at some distance from the wider audiences his editorials could reach. Regardless, each of those moments when *Property and Finance* introduced a different and increasingly illiberal perspective on independence and its implications indicate when Brooks considered it possible for him to voice what he had previously thought unable espouse. On each occasion, *Property and Finance* crossed a discursive threshold, re-evaluating and reinterpreting the recent past and altering how recent experiences of change should be understood while seeking to shape that change.

In 1966, Calvin Trillin (141–42) observed that “analyses of what caused Rhodesians to change depend of what the analysts believe they were like in the first place.” Change, for Brooks and *Property and Finance*, had several dimensions. It was imagined, but not in the sense that it was imaginary. Change was projected into the future as a set of feasible possibilities that were more or less desirable. It was contested, as different historical actors questioned and challenged each other on what kinds of futures and their implications were more likely. It was experienced, but not in the sense that it was empirically noticeable. Change was narrated and interpreted after its perceived occurrence, with particular events or trends identified as evidence of its emergence. Taken together—the imagined, the contested, the experienced—all these dimensions inculcated ideas and attitudes that were crucial for how contemporaries attempted to negotiate the ambiguities of their worlds. From there, further action was mobilized: ideas of change became political weapons.

This article has, by appreciating that “change” needs critical attention as an important, but problematic concept, aimed to demonstrate how historical actors identified and experienced “change” on their own terms. We have suggested that Brooks’s editorials provide some insights into the specific “conditions of possibility” through which he envisaged change and that were unique to his particular circumstances. There is a set broader question here: To what extent can experiences, ideas, and narratives of change can be historicized? What assumptions currently exist within historical scholarship (and in other disciplines) about how change was envisaged in any time and place? Are there specific cultures of change that inform the discourses and practices that historical actors perform? And, finally, what might a history of change look like? One approach to these questions, we proffer, is to analyze how people imagined change by examining how they imagined their futures—and then how they speculated upon the trajectories and paths toward them.

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