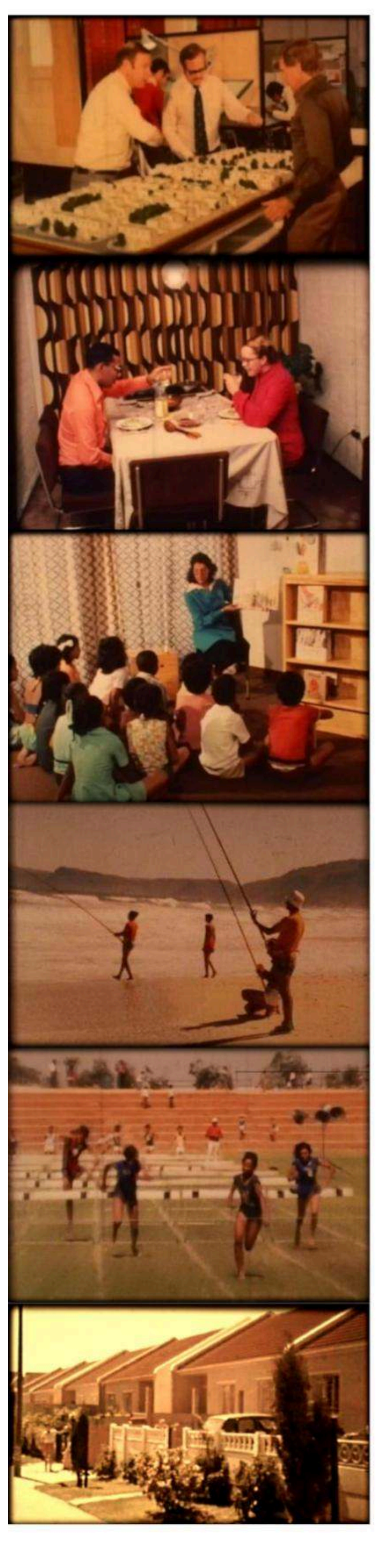

WELCOME TO MITCHELL'S PLAIN

FILMING A 'MODEL TOWNSHIP' DURING APARTHEID

Ludmila Ommundsen Pessoa

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Welcome to Mitchell’s Plain

Filming a ‘Model Township’ during Apartheid

Ludmila Ommundsen Pessoa

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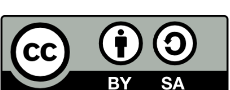

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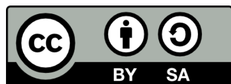

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ABSTRACT

Under the apartheid regime, South Africa’s Mitchell’s Plain, situated close to Cape Town, was devised as a “model township.” A cutting-edge urban planning scheme would provide middle-class Coloured people—evacuated from their homes by racialised rehousing programmes—with exemplary living conditions. This flagship for the regime was inaugurated with fanfare in 1976,

and heavily publicised not just within South Africa but also in the international press. Cohorts of political leaders and journalists were invited to admire first-hand how racial segregation could be paired with progressive social planning. A documentary film was commissioned for worldwide distribution: *Mitchells Plain* (1980).

Like other well-laid plans, however, Mitchell's Plain would foil the designs of its architects. The vaunted utopian township was, for its inhabitants, deeply flawed: essential facilities such as schools and transport were thoroughly inadequate to the population's needs. These sources of frustration generated a groundswell of civic activism. While the government had banked on separating the Coloured population from the national liberation movement, in 1983, Mitchell's plain acquired important symbolic status as the birthplace of the United Democratic Front, an umbrella organisation of anti-apartheid associations. This event marked a turning point in the history of South Africa's struggle for freedom.

This study chronicles the fortunes of Mitchell's Plain: its conception and role as propaganda for the apartheid regime. It draws on official documentary sources, but also on interviews with the various social actors whose life-experience conveys a very different image of the process, to reconstitute from a critical and historical perspective, the ill-fated window-dressing efforts of the National Party government during its declining years.

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Welcome to Mitchell’s Plain

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My "special relationship" with South Africa started in 1994 when I began a doctoral thesis on Victorian women travellers in Southern Africa, which gave me the opportunity to live in Pretoria during the busy and exciting Mandela years. It has grown in intensity, owing to the people of Mitchell's Plain—inspirational men and women—whom I came to meet while working for the French Foreign Office as the director of the *Alliances françaises* in Cape Town and Mitchell's Plain from 2008 to 2013. Although I have resumed my academic position in France since then, formal working ties have developed into solid and friendly relations. This book would not have been possible without journalist and photographer Yazeed Kamaldien, whose advice and suggestions have always been highly beneficial, Janine Van Rooy, founder of the non-profit organisation Blaqpearl Foundation, helping youth cope with the harsh realities of life through arts, who organised a debate with a group of Plainers around the issues raised by the documentary film *Mitchells Plain* (1980), and the assistance of Michael Bell who created Mitchell's Plain Online,[1] a website highlighting the positive and motivational stories of the area. When we met in 2019, the aims and scope of the initial research project were meant to be much broader. Unfortunately, the sudden Sars-CoV-2 pandemic and its aftermath prevented the original plans from unfolding as expected.

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1. *Mitchell's Plain Online*, archived 2 November 2020: https://web.archive.org/web/20201102092532/https://www.mitchellsplainonline.com/ (archive).

Town and Jacobus van der Merwe, Western Cape Archives and Records Service I wish to thank Trevor Moses, South African National Film and Video and Sound Archives, for his great help tracing the documentary film *Mitchells Plain* (1980) and his much-appreciated comments on the South African film industry. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Orla Smyth (ULHN) for her friendship and support in moments of struggle.

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Introduction

"There is nothing so universally intelligible as truth.
It has a thousand meanings, and suggests a thousand more."
Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883).

Who cares about Mitchell's Plain? Mitchell's Plain is one of South Africa's largest townships[2], located about 30 km from Cape Town. If you publicly mention your intention to go there, you would instantly be told: "You'll be shot." Mitchell's Plain ranks among the top three in community-reported serious crimes and the worst precinct for drug-related crimes.[3] For most people, it is synonymous with gangsterism and drugs. Yet, it has more to offer than sensationalist stories of violence.[4] During apartheid Mitchell's Plain was a strategic site for both the National Party government and the liberation movement. Opportunely, its heritage has started to be reclaimed as it holds a critical place in the histories of townships and ethnic minorities, which illuminate the interpretations of national history in South Africa. On 20 August 2019, the Rocklands community complex—the Community Hall, the library, the Memorial Square and the Community Healthcare Centre—was declared a provincial heritage site as the birthplace of the United Democratic Front

2. The estimated population of South Africa stands at 59,62 million, according to the 2020 mid-year population estimates (MYPE), with 80.8% in the Black African group, 8.8% in the Coloured group, 7.8% in the White group and 2.6% in the Indian/Asian group (See Statistics South Africa 2020). According to the 2011 census, the population of the Western Cape is 5,822,734 (48.8% of whom describe themselves as Coloured, 32.8% as Black African, 15.7% as White and 1% as Indian/Asian), Mitchell's Plain is 310,485 (90.8% of whom describe themselves as Coloured) (Statistics South Africa 2012). Please note that since the first report on the construction of the new town in the Cape Flats, the name of the location has been spelt either Mitchells Plain or Mitchell's Plain. In this study, the spelling varies according to the sources cited. Both spellings can also be found in the same source.

3. "Crime Statistics: Integrity." South African Police Force. https://www.saps.gov.za/services/crimestats.php. Accessed 1 February 2022 [archive].

4. Also conveyed by the image of the Coloured gangster in documentary films such as *Devil's Lair* by Riaan Hendricks (2013) or *Incarcerated Knowledge* by Dylan Valley (2013) or fiction films such as *Call Me Thief [Noem My Skollie]* by Daryne Joshua (2016) based on a true life story. See Jacobs (2018).

(UDF). A year later, on 14 October 2020, the iconic Rocklands Community Hall was declared a national heritage site[5]:

> "The UDF was launched at the Rocklands Civic Centre in Mitchells Plain on 21 August 1983 to oppose the apartheid government's rule. Filling the gap created by the banning of the liberation movement and the imprisonment and exiling of a number of cadres, the UDF together with other organisations became a key vehicle in the struggle for democracy. Within a few years the UDF built a national following of over 3,000,000 people, representing hundreds of affiliates, including religious groups, student and youth organisations, trade unions, civic organisations, women's organisations and many other bodies opposed to apartheid." ("The United Democratic Front (UDF) Memorial Storyboard" 2020[6])

The UDF was a key actor during the years of rebellion. It "helped build an unprecedented organisational structure from the local to the national levels" (Seekings 2000, 3). It "played a vital role in bringing the banned African National Congress (ANC) back on the center stage of South African politics, thus paving the way for its unbanning and for the subsequent stage of negotiating and power sharing" (Van Kessel 2000, 2).

Ironically, this major stronghold of the UDF was a "model township" planned in the 1960s and designed in the 1970s by the apartheid government. It was much publicised at national and international levels. Mitchell's Plain was intended for the Coloureds.[7] "[T]he term 'Coloured' in the South African context refers to those people often described in other societies as mixed race, mullatoes or half-castes" (Lewis 1987, 1). Prime Minister John Vorster held an official opening ceremony in 1976. Two years later, on 5 May 1978, the housing scheme was the subject of a special report of 32 pages in the *Financial Mail*. The top business magazine, which enjoyed national and international circulation, heralded "a new era in mass housing" ("Mitchells Plain, a New Era of Mass Housing" 1978). In 1980, City Engineer Jan Brand earnestly declared that South Africa had received "much favourable publicity in the foreign press and influential foreign circles as a result of visits arranged

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5. See "MEC Anroux Marais Unveils Provincial Heritage Site Plaque at Rocklands Community Hall, 20 Aug." (2019) and Departement of Sports, Arts and Culture (2020).

6. "The Memorial is a living entity, breaking through the cemented foundations of apartheid, and in so doing reclaiming, as nature often does, the land and its history" (ibid.). It was designed to reflect and recount "the historical context in which the UDF was founded, and the fighting spirit of its members in their quest for a liberated South Africa" (ibid.).

7. Please note that the "racial" terms used in this book correspond with official terminology and are used for purposes of clarity. This usage does not imply acceptance of the underlying ideology of apartheid by the author. As Posel (2001b, 51) writes: "If apartheid's racial categories were previously the locus of racial privilege and discrimination, these very same racial designations are now the site of redress."

to Mitchells Plain"; he pointed out that "220 foreign visitors and 760 visitors from South Africa were, during 1979, officially conducted on tours around the Plains" (Brand 1980a, 15–6).[8] These visitors represented a third of the 674 foreign visitors who, according to the Information Service, "came to the Republic at their own expenses and approached the Information Service at the suggestion of its overseas offices for assistance in arranging interviews, seminars, conferences, etc. They included journalists, politics, clerics and, in particular, investors" (Department of Information Report 1979b). The Information Service would spare no effort in propaganda. Motion pictures conveying tailor-made realities were valued as an "important aid in promoting South Africa's public image": in 1979, "seventeen films were made and circulated," and eight were "still in various stages of production [...] [among which] *Mitchells Plain"* (ibid., 23–4). The documentary film *Mitchells Plain* was commissioned for worldwide distribution (Brand 1980a, 16) and released in the wake of the Information Scandal when Pieter Willem Botha assumed South Africa's premiership under the guise of the genuine reformer. It opportunistically echoes the language of the new government in defence of professed Christian and "civilised" values.

Meanings that individuals and groups assign to places are sustained by diverse imageries through which they are seen and remembered (Boyer 1994).[9] It is undeniable that the recent heritage landmark in Mitchell's Plain contributes to celebrating its cultural history and, as such, to reinforcing feelings of belongingness based on a shared history of the liberation struggle. The creation and use of space is a political act, and "places make memories cohere in complex ways" (Hayden 1995, 133). Mitchell's Plain was chosen for the national launch of the UDF "to emphasise the UDF's appeal for the support of the Coloured South Africans" (Seekings 2000, 54). This choice becomes all the more meaningful when set against its creation as a "model" housing development by the apartheid regime and its use as cosmetic ammunition in the official propaganda war worldwide. Ironically on 20 August 1983

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8. Jan Brand (March 1925 Mossel Bay, South Africa–July 2010 Sydney, Australia) became Cape Town's City Engineer in 1975: "The 11 years that I was city engineer of Cape Town were very, very fulfilling [...]. In 1985 the French Government conferred the Order of Merit on me, and in 1988 the South African Government did the same; I was the first municipal employee to be honoured in this way. My position as city engineer was, I believe, the very best any person could have wished to have. I faced many exciting challenges. Perhaps the most satisfying was the building of Mitchells Plain, a suburb with a population challenging that of Bloemfontein" (Brand 1999, 29).

9. Christine Boyer (1994) describes a series of different visual and mental models by which the urban environment has been recognised, depicted, and planned. She identifies three major "maps": one common to the traditional city—the city as a work of art; one characteristic of the modern city—the city as a panorama; and one appropriate to the contemporary city—the city as a spectacle.

"fifteen thousand people, young and old, black and white, Christians and Jews, Muslims and Hindus, people of all faiths" (Boesak 2009, 115) met in a place devised as a segregated dormitory suburb far removed from the White areas of Cape Town as well as isolated from the other racial communities. This study is the first to address the origins of Mitchell's Plain through the critical and historical perspective of the documentary *Mitchells Plain* (1980) proposed by the South African Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Information. The film is unknown to many Plainers, including people who were relocated in the township or born there of parents forcedly removed in the 1970s.[10]

The South African film industry is one of the oldest in the world, and its documentary tradition dates back to 1896 and the Anglo-Boer War. In the late 1980s, South African media scholar Keyan Tomaselli (2014, 11) drew attention to the fact that cinema was historically playing "an important role in presenting apartheid as a natural way of life," with incontestable effects on the South African social mosaic. Apartheid's successive governments recognised documentary films as powerful tools. They used them to promote South Africa's public image at home and abroad. These documentaries were made available in most European languages to counteract what they deemed adverse publicity in and outside the English-speaking world. Produced through the Department of information and later through the National Film Board, these films were presented under the pretext of narratives serving historical and educational functions while advancing political interests. As such, they necessitated "a particular approach that would come to typify South African documentaries for decades" in the "traditional BBC style characterized by didactic, voice-of-god narration in simple, binary representations with subjects typically reduced to stereotypes" (Pichaske 2007, 132). The documentary film *Mitchells Plain* is no exception. The viewers are invited to a discovery journey into a miracle-like engineering adventure "laying the foundations of a new society." Non-White people—migrants forced by work-related circumstances to live in slums or local families stuck in overcrowded housing estates—are offered the opportunity to reside in state-of-the-art housing developments, such as Mitchell's Plain. The "metropolis" in the "heartland of South Africa's Coloured community" emerges from the sand in a sort of Promised Land. Three residents are interviewed and talk about their sea-change experiences with much enthusiasm: Mrs Rinehart, a housewife, does not worry about the future of her daughters any longer, Mr Claasens, a self-made man, is planning the expansion of his bookshop, and Mr Arendse, a salesman, feels fortunate to have got a modern three-bedroomed house so easily. Those

10. I had the opportunity to realise this when I screened the film in Mitchell's Plain in March 2019. The screening was documented in two local newspapers. See articles by Lee (2019) and Leitch (2019).

who move to Mitchell's Plain can only live happily ever after in their sweet homes. The documentary film is politically cautious in its discourse strategy. Semantic acrobatics circumvent the truth without elaborating lies; there is no linguistic reference to the three racial categories instituted by the 1950 Population Registration Act, although Whites, Africans and Coloureds are present as social actors. Ingeniously, the word "township" is mentioned but does not refer to the segregated place that was a prominent feature of the South African landscape. Apartheid is presented as a most progressive way of life, with Pepsi, Gillette, and baseball offered as evidence of an anti-Marx lifestyle revolution.

Documentary film theoretician Bill Nichols (2017, 10) defines documentaries as films that speak about "the historical world directly rather than through an allegory." Although relying heavily on real footage and testimonials—indexical images as evidence of the world—"they may represent the world in the same way a lawyer may represent a client: they make a case for a particular interpretation of the evidence" (ibid., 30) before the viewer, using rhetorical techniques in "ways designed to move or persuade us" (ibid., 88). *Mitchells Plain* opens with a silently respectful shot. The introductory sentence names its official maker ("The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Information presents"). It is set against the old South African state coat of arms, a quartered shield allegorically representing the former Transvaal, Cape and Natal provinces and the Orange Free State[11] with its Latin motto "*Ex Unitate Vires*" ("Unity is Strength"). No sooner does it disappear than the viewer enjoys the noisy launch of the European rocket Ariane into space on 24 December 1979, followed by its ascent in the sky, then sees the American Landsat 3 satellite gravitating around the world, and finally planet Earth from space. An off-screen male voice with an English accent energetically comments upon these latest technological developments of the 1970s: "Mankind, with his incredible technology, has conquered many problems in the twentieth century. He thrusts out into space and makes ghost-like satellites to travel into eternal circles as his slaves. And when from space he looks back at his home, he sees a romantic blue ball" (*Mitchells Plain* 1980[12]).

The opening scene is devised to capture the audience's attention. It sets the tone for the whole film and provides the viewers with the key to deciphering the constructed narrative. How could the beginning of *Mitchells Plain* trigger the viewer's curiosity? By inscribing the housing development within the discourse of science and progress. Indeed, at the end of these introductory lines, the off-screen commentator conjures up a vexing paradox:

11. An ox wagon for Transvaal Province, a woman with an anchor for the Cape Province, two wildebeests for Natal and an orange tree for the Orange Free State.

12. The transcript of the documentary is in the appendix.

"And yet, back on Earth, he is struggling to provide decent living space for a fast-growing world population." The remark is intentionally provocative to frame a dramatic issue. The purpose is to expose the tragic and derisive duality of mankind. While amazingly capable of "conquering" outer space with rockets and "enslaving" high-tech machines such as satellites, he is desperately "struggling" for "living space." The comments are couched in aggressive terms. The earthly struggle for life is much more intense since man's "incredible technology" makes him see Earth as a "romantic blue ball" from space—a deceptive quality. Survival seems to be at stake and dependent upon ways of believing and seeing. The imagery transforms an inconvenient truth into a sign of progress: how does space technology compare with the management of people and spaces? This is a fundamental—and biased—question. It is related to the politics of a government guided by the ideology of apartheid and relying on a system of institutionalised racial segregation stemming from the 1950 Population Registration Act and Group Areas Act. In 1980, in a context of growing international criticism of apartheid policies sparked by the 1976 mass shootings in Soweto and the murder of Black consciousness leader Steve Biko in 1977, the beginning of the documentary *Mitchells Plain* keeps the audience mesmerised up to the end of the film. The concluding scene is reassuring: "Alongside the blue depth and foam-tipped crests of False Bay, Man with his skill is painting a living colourful picture of a happy community. Like Ennerdale, Eldorado park, Atlantis and Phoenix, this is a nation's answer to a worldwide problem that is also threatening our people, thus laying the foundations of a new society" (ibid.). The new South African townships are allegedly comparable with the series of technological breakthroughs made in the USA and Europe and, as such, beneficial to a world under the threat of an "annoying need for housing." Within such an axis of civilisation, it is evident that "South Africa hails the future with confidence" (ibid.).

The 1980 documentary film *Mitchells Plain* is an old narrative history of South Africa. As Etherington rightly remarks, "if historians do not set about writing new narrative histories of South Africa, the old ones will survive," and "many of the 'old' histories clearly serve the interests of formerly dominant social formations whose day will not come again" (Etherington 2001, x). Up to this study, the Department of Information's visual propaganda about Mitchell's Plain has survived without any counter-perspective. Could this unique record of Mitchell's Plain's origins and its residents' lives be archived without any contextualisation? This pioneering work on Mitchell's Plain's origins has been undertaken in line with the values of history in the South African context "to understand and evaluate how past human action has an impact on the present and how it influences the future" (Republic of South Africa, Department of Basic Education 2008, 7). By addressing the birth of

Mitchell's Plain through a critical study of the eponymous documentary film, it is intended as a contribution to the history of South African townships and the history of ethnic minorities within the crucial and growing field of heritage studies.[13]

In post-apartheid South Africa, townships such as Mitchell's Plain are still sites of struggle and resilience. This work further expands the oral history project *Mitchell's Plain, a Place in the Sun.*[14] It provides a guidepost for addressing some of the socioeconomic, cultural and political challenges that Mitchell's Plain and other places in the country face today. It is consistent with the launch of Mitchell's Plain's first museum in December 2020 (Leitch 2020), a community-engaging place that encourages reflections through the creation and reconstruction of memory. This critical and historical perspective of the documentary *Mitchells Plain* (1980), made by the South African Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Information, supports a culture that values and promotes the complexities of truth.

13. According to Mr Trevor Moses, a film archivist at South African National Film and Video and Sound Archives (NFVSA), the NFVSA and the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture are planning to digitise the entire collection—mostly the newsreels and documentaries.

14. The collection of narratives of people of who have lived, worked and made an impact on the development of the area is presented in Ommundsen Pessoa and Le Roux (2012). The project was financially supported by the French Embassy in South Africa and the South African Ministry of Social Development. Its context and specificities are described in Ommundsen Pessoa (2017).

Chapter 1

Mitchell's Plain and the Branding of Apartheid

The Birth of a New "Model" Housing Development for the Coloureds: Mitchell's Plain

When the National Party came to power in 1948 in South Africa, the State undertook a marked escalation to control the movements and space of Whites, Africans, Coloureds, and Indians, legally reinforcing the racist segregation that predated the ascension of the Afrikaner nationalist alliance.[15] The newly-elected government created a legal framework compelling South Africans to register as members of the officially designated race groups in the Population Registration Act of 1950.[16] Race groups were subsequently forced to reside in specified areas under the Group Areas Act of 1950.[17] This Act imposed property rights regulations and impacted interracial property transactions and property occupation. The Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act of 1951 introduced another form of control, targeting predominantly Black informal settlements.[18] Up to the early 1980s, more than 3.5 million

15. "The stress on the discontinuity between the segregation era and apartheid is part of South African liberal mythology. The idea that the National Party government reversed the liberalising urban policy of the previous United Party government and United Party-controlled city councils is untenable. There is so much evidence to show that the Group Areas Act was very much in line with the earlier plans and practices of United Party policy makers. Many cities—Durban, Pietermaritzburg and East London, among others—are known to have been pretty thoroughly segregated by 1950. Cape Town, often projected as the 'liberal city', had a tradition of segregation. United Party-controlled councils had envisaged and planned the destruction of black urban communities—such as Johannesburg's Western Areas—long before it was eventually carried through by the National Party Government." (Maylam 1995, 34)

16. Racial classification was a process as heterogeneous as the officials undertaking them, with much scope for capricious and arbitrary judgments, as analysed by Posel (2001).

17. Details are compiled in Horrell (1950, 26). The Group Areas Act was regularly amended and re-enacted in the Consolidation Acts of 1957 and 1966.

18. The Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, No. 52 of 1951, was subsequently amended in 1952, 1976, 1977, 1980, 1988, and 1990.

people were displaced to satisfy the geographical ideal envisaged by the ruling National Party.

The Population Registration Act defined the Coloured group in a doubly negative manner as it included any person who was neither a member of the White group nor a member of the Black African group. The group was further subdivided into "Cape Malay," "other coloureds," and Khoisan. The Coloured population originated from the miscegenation among seventeenth-century White Dutch colonists (The Dutch East India Company arrived and established a colony in the Cape in 1652), their slaves from Madagascar and East Indies, and the autochthonous Khoisan peoples (also referred to as Hottentots and Bushmen). As a result, the Cape region was—and still is—predominantly Coloured: in Cape Town, "to a far greater extent than any other in South Africa, there was and is a continuum of pigmentation or 'race,' like Brazil's, with no unambiguous break between White and Black" (Western 1981, 36). This singularity came under strain during the industrialisation of the country:

> "[D]uring the slave owning period Whites did not need to underscore their evidently superior social rank with spatial segregation. Even after the emancipation of the slaves, when the Coloureds became servants [...] the British colonial government perceived no need to provide any legal means of segregation in Cape Town, for Whites clearly dominated the subordinate Coloureds in all respects. [...] However, with industrialization comes the possibility—although not the inevitability—that the demand for manual labor will not be based primarily on color, as it was on the agrarian slave-owning Cape. There is a potential for an equalization in status between White and Coloured as they become part of a single working class, that is, a potential for 'blurred social distinctions.' One of the ways in which this potential blurring can be countered in by the witting imposition of a more formal 'territoriality,' that is, by the deliberate policy of spatial segregation as exemplified by the group areas conception." (Western 1981, 62–3)

Before the Group Areas Act, Black African segregation constituted the primary concern. Legislation had been passed (e.g. Native Urban Acts of 1923, 1930, and 1937) to move them to the peripheries of cities. Western argues that when Black Africans were moved, it was not "under the provisions of the Group Areas Act *itself*, although they were being moved to fit a group areas ideal." As the Act did not target Whites directly, he sustains that,

> "It was aimed at those 'in the middle': the Coloureds and the Indians. By 1950 the Indians' freedom to purchase any property in any area from a person of any race was already circumscribed; but for the 90% of all the Coloureds who lived in the Cape Province in 1950, the act was the first legal restraint placed upon their property rights, their first experience of de jure disqualification." (Western 1981, 73)

The act would not fail to affect their voting rights because of its radical impact on Coloured housing and property ownership. As evinced by the

White Paper on the Group Areas Bill, the strongest reason for the act was "to give members of the Native and Coloured groups an opportunity under proper guidance to assume responsibility for their own local government" (Maasdorp and Pillay 1977, 92).[19] In Cape Town, the first Group Areas Act proclamation was issued in 1957. Among the zones proclaimed White was the Table Mountain area, which covered a large territory where three locations, in particular, had a concentrated number of disqualified families: the Leeuwenhof Road area of Gardens, Newlands and the Tramway Road area of Sea Point. The latter constituted one of the largest groups of disqualified people: 55 Coloured families and 7 Indian families, many of whom had lived in the area for most of their lives. They were among the first large stable communities to be displaced: "In 1959 when the Tramway Road residents were faced with removal, the state had just begun to acknowledge that the provision of housing for Coloureds and Indians with all its financial implications needed serious attention" (Mesthrie 1994, 73).

Most areas were not zoned until 1961. In 1950, the City Council objected to the introduction of the Group Areas Act, refusing to supply the state with detailed survey data on racial patterns of occupation and ownership (Western 1981, 121–2). When the City Council adopted a proposal for a housing survey of Cape Town in May 1955, one councillor, who voted against it, was reported by the *Cape Times* as saying, "I would like to know what is behind this. It seems to me to be another move toward the implementation of the Group Areas Act."[20] The Council was reluctant to cooperate with the Group Areas Board since they were elected from a voters' roll that included the Coloureds. The Council's resistance developed initially on the grounds that preference should be given to destitute families and not to families who were adequately housed but then living in the wrong group area:

> "It may reasonably be assumed [...] that the majority of Coloured people at present living in proclaimed white areas are housed in satisfactory conditions and therefore not among the 12,000 households living in overcrowded conditions. If, therefore, preference were given to the rehousing of these 'disqualified' families, the Council's normal housing programme would be further retarded." (*Cape Times*, 29 July 1959; quoted in Younge 1982, 19)

In 1964, the Council also voted that the central city area and District Six should not be zoned for any particular group; the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce supported the decision (Horrell 1965, 212–3). The resistance[21] was

19. Gavan Grant Maasdorp and Pillay Nessen, *Urban Relocation and Racial Segregation: the Case of Indian South Africans* (Department of Economics, University of Natal, 1977), 92; quoted in Younge (1982, 17).

20. *Cape Times*, 27 May 1955; quoted in ibid., 18.

21. Western (1981, 120–34) discusses the arguments and details of such resistance.

short-lived, first assuaged by the assurance given by the Central government to provide funds to house the disqualified Coloured families living in overcrowded conditions, then undermined by the amended and more elaborate subsequent acts. District Six was eventually reclassified as a White area in 1966; its Coloured, Indian and African residents had to be forcefully removed and relocated to the Cape Flats. The preliminary statement of the Joint Town Planning Committee on the Development of the Cape Flats in 1967 outlined that the first goal of the proposed scheme was "to develop on the Cape Flats an autonomous Coloured City within the Metropolitan area."[22] By 1972, City Engineer Morris reported that "the Minister of Community Development announced that 33,918 Coloured people (about 5,640 families), 1,494 Indians, 144 Africans and 424 Whites were still living in District Six. 9,936 Coloured people and 30 Indians had been moved" (Morris 1972, 1). The Coloureds who moved early acquired a standard of housing superior to their District Six accommodation in that their new houses were clean, had full facilities, small plots of land and modern conveniences. However, "they remained poor, and now they had to spend more money on commuting to work, as well as the often higher prices that shops and services with monopolies in the townships could charge. [...] [P]eople were now living far away from kin and neighbours with whom they had built up long-term networks of support and cooperation. Now they were isolated in their poverty, made to feel it much more, and despair" (Watson 2007, 469). In her book of memories, Hettie Adams, who spent her childhood in District Six and moved out to Mitchell's Plain with her parents, recalls how her extended family was relocated to no fewer than five different townships (Adams and Suttner 1988, 55–6).

In 1970, the South African Census established that while the Coloured group comprised 9.4% and the White 17.3% of the total population (21,794 million),[23] more than 50% of all Coloureds resided in the South Western Cape area. At the time, Professor Cilliers, head of the Department of Economics at Stellenbosch University, later appointed ad hoc consultant on the Mitchell's Plain project, claimed that "at least one-third of the Coloured people in urban areas of the Western Cape were either not housed at all, or were living in non-permanent or sub-standard housing." He stressed that "between two-thirds or three-quarters of all those in the region lived in overcrowded conditions. In the Greater Cape Town area, 43 000 families were in need of housing."

22. "Cape Flats: Preliminary Statement of the Provisional Joint Town Planning Scheme: Outline Development Plan for the Cape Flats" (1969), 17; quoted in Younge (1982, 19).

23. The figures are the following (South African 1970 boundaries): Total: 21,794,000; African: 15,340,000; Coloured: 2,051,000; Indian/Asian: 630,000; White: 3,773,000. See Statistics South Africa (2000), "1.4 Population at each census by population group and gender, 1904–1996."

The alarming assessment prompted the Minister of Planning Carel de Wet to reply. He confirmed that "new housing schemes were to be developed on Mitchell's Plain, between the existing Coloured areas on the Cape Flats and Strandfontein Beach."[24] If the conception of Mitchell's Plain as a physical entity started in 1965, the green light by the Department for Planning was given in 1971 only. The need for a massive housing program for Coloured families under the racist legislation necessitated new studies. These indicated that the only remaining significant piece of land was the 3,100 hectares of the property known as Mitchell's Plain, which the Department of Planning had advertised its intention to keep for White occupation in 1966 (Brand 1980a, 1). This discrepancy caused a delay in implementing City Engineer Morris's proposals compiled in his 1965 "Broader Horizon" report.[25]

In 1972, City Engineer Morris pointed out that "the early selection of a suitable name for the town [was] extremely desirable" (Morris 1972, 27). The development project, "equal in magnitude to many of the new towns of Britain and Europe," representing "a major extension of the far eastern boundary of the City of Cape Town, it [was] recommended that the name Goeie Hoop should be adopted for the town as a whole" (ibid.). The new town inherited the name of the 1,540 hectares property set aside for the Coloureds, a name somehow associated with Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Collier (Cornwallis) Michell, first surveyor-general of the Cape of Good Hope.[26] The recommendation highlighted in Morris's report was not implemented. Was it an oversight? Sociologists, historians and geographers have long recognised the importance of place naming. Place names do not simply celebrate historically famous people, events or geographic features. They are symbols reflecting and embodying ideologies. The name Mitchell's Plain was not changed; an old geography of memory and history could not be ignored or forgotten. By keeping the name Mitchell's Plain the avant-

24. "At the national conference on 'Education for Progress, with Special Reference to the Needs of the Coloured Community,' which was convened by the Institute of Race Relations in January [1971], Professor S. P. Cilliers, head of the Department of Economics at the University of Stellenbosch, gave a paper on the socio-economic status of the Coloured community. It was estimated, Professor Cilliers said, that at least one-third of the Coloured people in urban areas of the Western Cape were either not housed at all, or were living in non-permanent or sub-standard housing. Between two-thirds or three-quarters of all those in the region lived in overcrowded conditions. In the Greater Cape Town area, 43 000 families were in need of housing. […] The Minister of Planning said in the Assembly on 9 June that new housing schemes were to be developed on Mitchell's Plain, between the existing Coloured areas on the Cape Flats and Strandfontein Beach." (Horrell, Horner & Kane-Berman 1972, 159)

25. "Broader Horizon – a Report on Cape Town's Land Requirement," dated 30th September 1965. Quoted and discussed in Morris (1972, 1–2).

26. Republic of South Africa (1981, 8).

gardist town would paradoxically continue to remember and memorialise a White-controlled and White-dominated conception of the past.

In 1973, the Theron Commission, which included some Coloured members, was appointed to carry out an inquiry into "matters relating to the Coloured population group" (Theron 1976, 465).[27] The Commissioners distinguished three groups: an established middle-class constituting perhaps 20% of the population; a middle group of perhaps 40% between the middle class and the chronically poor; and a bottom stratum of perhaps 40% perceived as trapped in a subculture of chronic and institutionalised community poverty[28]:

> "What is of fundamental importance is for the pattern of socio-economic stratification, which is today still so closely bound up with the contours of ethnicity and/or colour, to undergo a drastic change. Opportunities for economic progress must be more equitably distributed and the living conditions of the underprivileged Brown people must be drastically improved as regards housing, schools, public amenities and job opportunities. Vertical stratification will gradually have to yield to horizontal stratification. Only in this way can socio-economic tensions be prevented from erupting into militant ethnic and/or colour conflict." (Theron 1976, 465.[29])

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27. In March 1973, the government under Prime Minister Vorster appointed the *Commission of Inquiry into Matters related to the Coloured Population Group* under the chairmanship of Prof. Erika Theron. It consisted of 18 members (11 from the National Party, 1 from the United Party and 6 from the Coloured community). Its report was presented in April 1976.

28. "The Commission recommended drastic and widespread policy measures to eradicate chronic community poverty. Almost four decades later one may well ask how much the situation has improved; it appears that, despite the poorer parts of the coloured community having made progress in some respects since the mid1970s, delinquent behaviour is still endemic amongst a large part of this community (alcohol abuse and crime are two areas of particular concern) and they still do not appear to have found a ladder out of poverty… The historic evidence presented shows those today classified as 'coloured' set out as a rural proletariat, owning few agricultural assets, in a country in which urban-rural divisions became quite strong. With little prospect of securing occupation in the formal, mainly urban economy, they had little incentive to invest time and effort in education and left formal schooling fairly young and failed to progress to higher levels of education. With little education they could not readily be absorbed into the modern economy and they found it difficult to make inroads into the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy. In the 1950s, for example, coloured males were dominantly in agriculture and industrial occupations. The position of coloureds in the mid-20th century was still much the same as in the nineteenth century, i.e. with a strong presence in the primary sector and in low status occupations, with almost no progress into professional and managerial positions, despite the fact that rural-urban migration grew rapidly in the 9th century." (Du Plessis and Van der Berg 2013, 73–98, 77, 96)

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Was the drastic improvement advocated by the Theron Commission considered, especially concerning Mitchell's Plain? The City Council consisted of six departments (i.e., City Engineer, City Electrical Engineer, City Administrator, City Treasurer, Medical Officer of Health and the Personnel Office). The City Engineer was the biggest—it was built up by Solly Morris into an empire within the City Council and continued in this vein by Jan Brand up to his retirement in 1986 (Cameron 1988, 51). The notoriously bad relationship between the City Council and the Department of Planning came from two approaches to the project. Whereas the latter supported the idea of home ownership, the former wanted to solve Cape Town's housing shortage in a financially meaningful way:

> "Although then city engineer Solly Morris's 1972 (Good Hope: A First Report on the Development of Mitchell's Plain) bravely announced the project would 'not be merely another housing scheme; what is contemplated is an entirely new and up-to-date town complex with all the essential facilities,' what the Council was in fact planning was its biggest housing scheme yet, financially tailor-made for the poorest member of the population." (*Financial Mail* Special Report 1978)

The advent of the apartheid government in 1948 and the implementation of the 1950 Group Areas Act led to township building. The townships combined the designs of the garden city (a self-contained community surrounded by a greenbelt and composed of harmonious areas of residences, industry and agriculture) and the neighbourhood unit (a physically defined unit with schools, churches, and recreational areas at its centre).[30] These townships evinced three distinctive features:

> "Firstly, their location on the periphery of the city spatially asserted white supremacy over the city centre. Secondly, townships were often bounded by large swaths of open land, or buffer strips, so that they were cordoned off from other nearby suburbs and readily available for stationing armed forces in times of unrest. Thirdly, by planning only one main road entrance and a maze of interlinking roads within, townships were designed to more or less trap their residents and force them to develop a racially defined sense of community." (Jethro 2009, 23)

Residential segregation already existed before apartheid and progressed in a rather haphazard fashion. In Cape Town,

> "[R]esidential segregation was increasing. The ever-growing urban Coloured population had filled their older working-class tracts and pockets until they were bursting at the seams. Such penetration as occurred could not accommodate

30. The institutional, social, and physical design forces that shaped the ideology of Clarence A. Perry and influenced his development of the "neighbourhood unit" concept, including the Garden cities movement, are presented in Lloyd Lawhon (2009).

> this population pressure, and areas of Coloured housing to jump surrounding White tracts. New Coloured housing grew beyond any intervening White areas, towards the Cape Flats as at Athlone/Crawford [...]. The 'voluntary' expansion of the urban Nonwhite population into de facto segregated areas like Belgravia and Gleemoor in Athlone was complemented by 'involuntary' segregation in the sense that municipal housing estates for Coloured only were being established. Maitland Garden Village had been set up during the 1920s, and near Athlone a generation later came Bokmakierie, Silvertown, and the wide, windswept wastes of Kew Town." (Western 1981, 55)

The concept of the garden city was not an innovation. It had already influenced the building of dual-class-designed and race-based model housing schemes in the previous decades:

> "Attempts have also been made in the twentieth century to provide class-differentiated housing for a section of the African community. Urban policy makers and planners have tried, in some cities during the course of this century, to establish 'superior' housing areas for the aspirant black middle class. In Cape Town, Langa was established during the 1920s as a 'respectable' township and it was still the most middle class of Cape Town's African communities when Wilson and Mafeje produced their study in the early 1960s. In the 1930s Lamontville, to the south of Durban, was designed as 'a model village,' to be reserved for the 'better type of native.' At much the same time McNamee township in Port Elizabeth was being planned as 'a garden village.' In Soweto in the 1940s the Dube home ownership scheme was also geared towards the urban African middle class. This policy of class-differentiated housing was very much part of a white 'liberal' agenda that was gaining ground in the 1930s and 1940s [...] Financial parsimony meant that the ideal of the 'model' or 'garden' village was never realised. Langa, Lamontville and McNamee were far from being quaint, green and picturesque. Moreover, when the National Party government came to power class-differentiated housing was abandoned in favour of another form of differentiation—ethnic zoning." (Maylam 1995, 29–30)

City Engineer Brand bombastically presented Mitchell's Plain as "possibly one of the most ambitious new town developments in the world" (Brand 1979, 24). It was a renewed attempt at the garden city in line with contemporary trends in Western countries. In fact, during the 1960s, the British government had decided to relieve housing congestion in London with new towns and thus revisited the garden city ideal. Milton Keynes was one of these, and its radical planning attracted much attention,[31] notably "spacious development with good landscaping and a generous provision of open space" (Bendixson and Platt 1992, 72). Director of works Riley recorded that Mitchell's Plain was unusual. The new development was grounded on a research that was "one of the first in its kind in South Africa," based on "a model of a similar research

31. For details, see "Planning Study: Milton Keynes: New City for the South-East" (1969).

in the United States of America and the United Kingdom," and specifically conceived for the Coloured population of Cape Town—40,000 houses planned for 250,000 people (Riley 1980, 16). In City Engineer Brand's words,

> "A high standard of landscaping has been adopted not only in the public open spaces but in the road reserves (open street tree planting) and on the erven too. Every house is sold with grassing on all unpaved spaces on that part of the plot which is forward of the house itself. A nursery sales run by the City Engineer's Department supplies householders with plants at cost and with free horticultural advice." (Brand 1980a, 9)

A combination of ethnic zoning with class-differentiated housing characterised the new garden city project. Mitchell's Plain was not primarily intended for the poorer Coloured families,[32] and the first report by City Engineer Morris in 1972 makes it very clear: "It is highly recommended that the sub-economic content of Mitchell's Plain should be as low as possible" (Morris 1972, 1).[33] Thus, "it was decided that the first stage of development should not make provision for the full range of incomes which had been reflected in the surveys" (Mabin 1977, 16).[34] Nevertheless, Margaret Nash

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32. "Prior to 1974, the policy of the Cape Town City Council had been one of building houses and flats at minimum cost for occupation by the many thousands of poorer Coloured families on the Council's waiting lists. National Housing funds were available only for the dwellings and basic services and the Council had been obliged to provide all amenities from its own limited financial resources. As a result, the townships lacked adequate amenities and community facilities; this was a source of considerable dissatisfaction to their inhabitants. The building of more expensive dwellings for home ownership was restricted by availability of national housing funds and this form of development received a lower priority than that accorded to the building of low cost lettings. [...] Agreement was reached with central government that Mitchells Plain would be financed entirely by the central government, including all amenities, and that it would be built to concepts of planning which were largely new to local authority housing in South Africa. The objective was to plan a series of new suburbs, each self-contained in respect of a wide range of community facilities. The decision was made to build for home-ownership as far as the market would bear and thereafter to build for rental, but to a similar standard and with the option to purchase." (Brand 1980a, 1)

33. The recommendation concludes with the following remark: "Account should, however, be taken of the fact that housing estates planned for Manenberg, Parkwood and Hanover Park contain rather more sub-economic housing than is justified by the current waiting list. [...] Had my original proposals for a larger number of sub-economic dwellings in Hanover Park been accepted, the need for sub-economic housing at Mitchell's Plain could have been further reduced" (Morris 1972, 20).

34. He adds: "As the first suburb of Mitchells Plain [Westridge] would be for home ownership with a certain prestige attached, it was planned almost exclusively for the upper echelon of householders, with income from about R300 to R400 per month. Although this cost structure has restricted the sale of houses to existing Council tenants to those with relatively high incomes it has certainly established a prestige value to the area. 29% of the houses so far sold have been purchased by Council's tenants" (Mabin 1977, 16).

(1979, 4), an officer of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and a member of the Liberal Party,[35] contended that 70% of the Coloured families who lacked adequate accommodation fell into the sub-economic group, i.e. earning less than R 160 per month. After ironising "the political pay-off of the more prestigious Mitchells Plain-type of mass-housing project," she rebuked the Secretary of Community Development and the City Engineer: "Messrs Fouché and Brand assiduously propagate the view that most 'coloured' families are 'not really poor.' They like to believe that incomes are rising rapidly and that this trend can be expected to accelerate over the next few years" (Nash 1979, 10–1). According to Younge (1982, 27), the rationale for the State's differential provision of economic and sub-economic housing was "to ensure the 'co-operation' of the upper, skilled and economic section of the Coloured population through better housing and lower rents for both political and economic reasons," in an attempt "to exaggerate the internal stratification of the Coloured community." Slayern (1987, 17) argues that the strategy behind the development of Mitchell's Plain was one of social control and meant dividing the oppressed by granting concessions to some of them, essentially the petite bourgeoisie[36]—who strongly yearned for assimilationism:

> "One of the essential features at the heart of coloured identity was assimilationism. This was less an impulse for acculturation than a striving for acknowledgement of the worth of coloured people as individuals and citizens, and inclusion within the dominant society on the principle that it was 'culture' and 'civilisation' rather than colour that mattered. Throughout the twentieth century, one of the strongest imperatives within the coloured community, especially the petty bourgeois elite, was the urge to gain this acceptance. […] Although disconcerted

35. Margaret Nash (1929–2011). "In 1960, Nash joined the Liberal Party of South Africa (LPSA). She was a member of various anti-Apartheid organisations, among which the Black Sash (member of the National Executive committee) and the Christian Institute. She was also involved in the Anglican Board of Social Responsibility and the South African Council of Churches. […] She devoted most of her time to writing reports on living conditions of people under Apartheid South Africa. The best known of these was published in 1980 and concerned the government's policy of forced removals, particularly in and around Cape Town. Her report was presented to the United Nations, Europe and Britain in 1984 shortly ahead of a tour by South Africa's then President, P W Botha. It caused international outrage and was a great embarrassment for the South African government, contributing to the end of forced removals soon after. Her report mentioned that she had calculated the number of people who had been forcefully removed out of their homes to be between 2.5 and 3 million." "Margaret Nash," *South African History Online*: https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/margaret-nash [archive]. See also "Margaret Nash (d. 2011)," *Black Sash*: https://www.blacksash.org.za/index.php/our-legacy/515-margaret-nash [archive].

36. Slayern M., "A 'Plain' Solution," in "Housing in Cape Town" (unpublished), 75; quoted in Le Grange (1987, 17). There is no date recorded for Slayern's paper. The references listed in this part of the dissertation were published either in the late 1970s or early 1980s.

> by each new discriminatory regulation and alarmed by the more Draconian developments, setbacks were usually rationalised as temporary reversals and acceptance into white middle-class society was often seen as something that coloured people still needed to earn and would only be attained after a struggle worthy of the prize." (Adhikari 2006, 475–7)

Mitchell's Plain received extensive publicity at the local and national levels, with the "intensity of coverage in the daily press remain[ing] at a steady level since commencement of construction in 1974," as acknowledged by City Engineer J.G. Brand (1980a, 15). The first families settled in the new town shortly after the official opening ceremony by Prime Minister John Vorster in March 1976. Mayor of Cape Town from 1996 to 1998, Theresa Solomon moved to Mitchell's Plain with her husband at the end of 1975. She admits that "people were urged [to Mitchell's Plain], besides those forcibly moved here, to come and live on the city by the sea. Westridge was the show area" (Ommundsen Pessoa and Le Roux 2012, 57).

In the June 1977 issue of the *Mitchells Plain News*, produced in the City Engineer's Department for use by the public relations officer for unofficial visitors and prospective inhabitants, the birth of the Coloured housing development is couched in the discourse of independence and the myth of the Founding families. Westridge is presented as an arcadia-in-the-making ("Westridge will be one of the most beautiful areas together with its natural landscape"). After a section devoted to "What's happening," the issue offers a nostalgic "look back" provided by the testimony of Diane Stevens dated 2 June 1976 (*Mitchells Plain News* 1977, 3). Entitled "My first month in Mitchells Plain," it aims at kindling a new community spirit. The narrative cannot but conjure up the settler narrative, with the author immediately boasting the status of a founding member of the community—a way of claiming legitimacy and respectability. Credibility seems vital as "really" is repeated four times.

> "A Look Back
>
> My first month in Mitchells Plain
>
> Being one of the twenty families to move into Mitchells Plain, I was quite thrilled, and it took me about a full week to really take in this beautiful environment, compared to where we stayed for 10 years.
>
> Firstly, the house that we have now is spacious as we only had one room for a family of five.
>
> Secondly, the peaceful evenings compared to the usual rowdiness we had on the estates, especially over weekends.
>
> Thirdly, we have never had so many visitors as in this short a time. It is really unbelievable. People just flock in, and they are genuinely fascinated with our community.
>
> Being a housewife, I have made time to get to know quite a few people, not only from my previous area, but strangers too. We have quite a few friendly people who really go all out to greet you or even smile. I feel that this is very homely,

> and it makes you feel like talking to a person. As we are all going to be here for a life-time, now is the time to get to know each other's good and bad ways, so as to adjust ourselves. I have also discovered very helpful neighbours. As we have no car, my fortunate neighbours transport my husband and school-going children to and from, for which we are very thankful.
> Already some of the residents have started to do some extra attractions to their homes, and you can see that Westridge will be one of the most beautiful areas together with its natural landscape. It is only up to us to keep it so. To all of us, it is the first time we own a house of our own, we know what we are faced with in our Council estates.
> Here, we really have something for our children to grow up in. Also, there should be no discrimination in Westridge, no matter the type of hair you have, or the type of work you do, or religion—we are all on the same level,: Home-owners at Mitchells Plain. So let's not look down on anybody in our area, let's stay as friendly as we are, and where we can help our immediate neighbour, let's do so. With our Ratepayers Association being formed, we will be able to cope with our little difficulties—if everybody is prepared to take an active part, and not sit back. It is for your own benefit and that of your children.
> I would like to end with a note to our children of Westridge. This is your community. Be proud of it. Look after it. Do not get tired of it. Remember, you've got a lot to be thankful for. If you did not have these wonderful parents who have and will sacrifice for you children, there would never have been a place like Mitchells Plain. Was it not for you, children, that we as parents moved here for your future.
> Diana Stevens, 13 La Provence Way Westridge
> 2nd June 1976"

Diana Stevens proposes a well-constructed account meant as a call for action. It starts with a rational comparison between her past and present and ends up with an emotional address to the children of Mitchell's Plain. The rhetorical testimony evinces a new identity politics that obliquely reveals the reality of apartheid and its impact on people: Mitchell's Plain's residents are described as more house-centred with their lives characterised by "peaceful evenings," "especially over week-ends." The destabilising loss of old relations is further discernible when Diane Stevens encourages new residents "to know each other's good and bad ways, so as to adjust ourselves." Within this context, capital unites the community, connecting place and power (e.g. her "very helpful neighbours" are "fortunate neighbours"). The private property right is the new common denominator, and the material standard is the new identity marker: "There should be no discrimination in Westridge, no matter the type of hair you have, or the type of work you do, or religion—we are all on the same level: Home-owners at Mitchells Plain." The passage is interesting for its ideological stance as it reassuringly relates home ownership with equality, stability and peace. Could it be categorically so when material acquisitions become the only criteria for a

person's worth and value? Diane points out that "some residents" are adding "extra attractions to their homes"—pride in the new neighbourhood or social competition cropping up? An acclaimed businesswoman in the financial service sector Venete Klein was 16 when she moved to Mitchell's Plain with her parents. Her interview for the Mitchell's Plain oral history project weighs in favour of the circumstantial formation of a united community of owners:

> "We were one of the first families to move into Westridge. Settling in Mitchell's Plain was challenging at first, because it was so different from the southern suburbs where I spent my early years growing up. I had to travel to Lansdowne every day until I finished my matric at Oaklands High. In no time at all, however, the neighbours bonded with each other to form a very tight-knit community. What we had in common was the fact that many 'owned' their first homes in Mitchell's Plain. This created a bond so strong that, almost 40 years on, my mom, who now lives in Pretoria with us, is still in regular contact with most of the Mitchell's Plain neighbours. They became a family to us." (Ommundsen Pessoa and Le Roux 2012, 24)

Diana Stevens's following sentences somehow amount to a wishful declaration of independence: "With our Ratepayers Association being formed, we will be able to cope with our little difficulties—if everybody is prepared to take an active part, and not sit back. It is for your own benefit and that of your children." In 1979, the Director-General of the Information Service Engelbrecht reported that "the residents of Coloured residential areas [were] accepting more and more responsibility for the management of their areas to an ever-increasing degree" (Department of Information Report 1979b, 11). Diana Stevens's statements seem to testify to the trend, if not try and reinforce it. Diana Stevens was the wife of Chris Stevens, the chairman of the Mitchell's Plain Rate Payers' Association, a chemical technician whose actions would be commented upon by Councillor Eulalia Scott, Housing Committee chairman at the City Council, to the Financial Mail reporter in 1978: "I feel for Mr Stevens, but I will fight him tooth and nail and in his own interest. Not even the most affluent white suburb's rates are enough to pay for services; you need a fully developed commercial and industrial sector for that" (*Financial Mail* Special Report 1978, 32). The South African state's housing policy was part of its grander scheme for separate development; encouraging home ownership was in line with the aim of creating autonomous local authorities for each racial group.[37] According to Younge (1982, 27), the final step beyond the removal of the Coloured population to the segregated outskirts of the city—"away from strategic infrastructure and the city centre itself, the 'traditional' home

37. Mabin and Parnell (1984) examine the implications of home-ownership schemes for black working-class South Africans.

of the working class in most industrial cities"—was "to restore the domestic property-based franchise in a segregated municipality on the Flats, which will inherit the responsibility for housing provision, for the shortage, as well as for rent collection, housing allocation, maintenance, eviction and squatter control." Interestingly, Cameron (1988, 53) mentions an "informal chat" held in 1981 between the President's Council and senior City Council officials about the constitutional future of local government, during which City Engineer Brand handed a copy of his report on metropolitanisation: "While not exactly recommending separate 'coloured' municipalities in areas like Athlone and Mitchell's Plain, the report certainly regarded them as a *fait accompli* for planning purposes."

Diana Stevens's final address is to the children—she would be busy setting up the first creche in Mitchell's Plain in 1978. Diana, her husband and children, had been living in a one-bedroomed house in Heideveld, an older housing estate, described as "army camp conditions" (*Financial Mail* Special Report 1978, 32). In such circumstances, migration to Westridge could only be an opportunity for new beginnings (e.g. "If you did not have these wonderful parents who have and will sacrifice for you children, there would never have been a place like Mitchells Plain. Was it not for you, children, that we as parents moved here for your future"). The forced removals implemented by the Group Areas Act are not an explicit issue for apparent censorship reasons. Yet, one may wonder if the word "sacrifice" (e.g. parents "will sacrifice for you children"), i.e. submission to higher wisdom for a higher cause, does not subtly refer to the painful segregative law. The settling in Mitchell's Plain is presented as a carefully considered decision based on a long-term desired change. It heralds the birth of a new civilisation as responsibility passes from the founders to the children (e.g. "This is your community. Be proud of it. Look after it. Do not get tired of it. Remember, you've got a lot to be thankful for"). The final page of the June 1977 issue of the *Mitchells Plain News* reinforces the founding myth: "At the time of going to press, there were some 1,120 *pioneering* families living in Mitchells Plain. It is strange to imagine that just a mere three years ago, it was just *all just virgin countryside*. It is equally strange to imagine that in another three years there will be almost 20 times as many houses and as many people" (*Mitchells Plain News* 1977, 4 [my emphasis]). Mitchell's Plain is undeniably given a fundamental part in the birth of a new Coloured nation. Was Diana Stevens convincing? One thing is sure, such testimony, be it two-sided, played on people's uncertainty and lack of information:

> "Those who do not want to move are desperately asking 'Can we be forced to move?' Those who have struggled to rebuild a sense of community and a 'sense of place' after being uprooted from the older areas are being faced with a further severing of neighbourhood links and relationship. […] In their plight

> people are looking for impartial advice, counselling and guidance. Ratepayers' and tenants' associations, community organisations and churches are finding themselves caught up in the double crunch of runaway transport costs and the frightening pressure of 'force-filtering.'" (Nash 1979, 7)

A founding member of Mitchell's Plain Islamic Society, Moosa Aysen was also among the first people to move to Westridge. Moosa Aysen was born in Potchefstroom on 29 March 1945 and moved to Cape Town in 1970. After getting married, he looked for a place to buy and moved to Mitchell's Plain in 1976. He is still living there. In his interview for the Mitchell's Plain oral history project, he acknowledges the widespread reluctance to settle so far, even if the area had been ingeniously planned. The authorities had to resort to security measures: "No one wanted to move to Mitchell's Plain, and that is why I got a call so quickly. Mitchell's Plain was a well-designed area. It had lots of green places and parks in which kids could play. The houses were guarded because they were empty. But believe me when I tell you that nobody wanted to move here" (Ommundsen Pessoa and Le Roux 2012, 18).

On 5 May 1978, the *Financial Mail*[38] devoted a 32-page special report supplement to Mitchell's Plain. The Johannesburg-based weekly business magazine enjoyed national and international circulation. The detailed articles are highly enlightening because they provide valuable information about some scenes of the documentary *Mitchells Plain.* As if trying to ascertain their credibility, both the opening of the documentary film and the editorial of this special report warn against deceptive ways of seeing apartheid policies. The latter dwells upon the "myopic" perspective of criticising the 1950 Group Areas Act and Mitchell's Plain: "Its status as a Group Area development

38. The *Financial Mail*, *Rand Daily*, *Sunday Times* and *Sunday Express* were owned by the South African Associated Newspapers (SAAN). "The Financial Mail, South Africa's first free-standing financial newspaper, was launched by South African Associated Newspapers in 1959… In South Africa, the financial press has throughout its history been sponsored and subsidised by the markets and corporations it covers. Financial news organisations draw their advertising from the corporate world. […] With its dependence on advertising from Anglo American, which at that stage controlled a quarter of the market capitalisation of the stock exchange, the Financial Mail could hardly be expected not to reflect the interests of the mining industry. The Financial Mail in its early years steered clear of politics, except when it considered that a political issue would affect business. […] Given the Financial Mail's self-conception as a "non-political" journal – which was shared by other financial publications of the time – as well as the fact that the financial media have never catered for mass audiences, the question arises whether the financial press could play a role in the political process? […] The financial press throughout its history has reflected and interpreted not mass opinion but the values and views of a narrow elite, including businessmen, economists and political agents. In this way, the financial media have played – and still play – play a crucial role in spreading economic ideas and ideologies and setting the parameters of debate about economic issues." (Brand R. 2009, 9–10).

is a glaring flaw since it precludes the first tenet of humane housing: free choice of location. Totally to condemn Mitchells Plain on that score would, however, be myopic" (*Financial Mail* Special Report 1978, 1). This figurative use of myopia, i.e. the impaired vision that creates difficulty in seeing distant objects properly, finds an echo in the metaphor used in the opening of the documentary. The film begins with the launch of a rocket into space, from which the viewer can see the Earth, followed by close-ups of people queuing. At the same time, the off-screen voice reflects on the deception between how man sees the Earth from space and how man experiences it: "And when from space he looks back at his home, he sees a romantic blue ball. And yet, back on Earth, he is struggling to provide decent living space for a fast-growing world population." In both cases, the preambular correction and adjustment frame their contents within the logic of redress.

The title of the *Financial Mail* special report heralds "a new era in mass housing", as launched by Mitchell's Plain. An article assigns a specific role to the avant-garde project: "The housing situation in area terms is the worst in the greater Cape Town where some 350 000 people are inadequately housed—Mitchells Plain is meant to be the *deus ex machina*" (ibid., 1, 13). As depicted, the new housing estate appears to the reader as a means of bringing order to the chaos. An allusion to the 1976 riots? Most evidently so. The 1976 Soweto riots marked a dramatic turning point in the history of the struggle nationally and internationally. Many people were injured; arrests, deaths in detention and trials followed the revolt.[39] Against such background, the country's intensifying troubles could be ascribed to unmet housing needs. The causal link, although not exclusive, would be endorsed by Secretary for Community Development Fouché in his report for 1978–1979:

> "A further reason why the rate of housing provision ought not to be retarded is the importance of housing and, in particular, home-ownership, in the success of the proposed constitutional dispensation. Without positive proof that the Government is succeeding in bringing the housing question under control, it will not be possible to rely on the cooperation of the various population groups. The riots that took place as recently as 1976 serve as a reminder of the dangers in poor housing conditions which serve as a breeding ground for communism.

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39. "On 16 June 1976, police opened fire on approximately 10 000 school students in Soweto during a protest against the compulsory use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in schools. The shootings provoked extensive unrest and protest throughout Soweto, spreading over the following months to several other regions in South Africa, particularly Cape Town. Around 575 people were killed, 390 in the Transvaal and 137 in the Western Cape. Over 2,000 people were injured. Arrests, deaths in detention and trials followed the revolt, and the first members of the 'Class of 76' left South Africa for training in armed resistance." "Soweto Uprising." Glossary, *Truth Commission Special Report*. http://sabctrc.saha.org.za/glossary/soweto_uprising.htm [archive].

> It should be remembered that the findings of very responsible bodies were that poor housing was *one of the main causes of the 1976 riots* [my emphasis]. Proper housing is a fundamental requirement for the creation of a contended and productive labour force." (Quoted in Younge 1982, 25)

A picture of Fouché and another of City Engineer Brand illustrate an article inside the supplement. The article is interestingly entitled "The Brave New World of Mitchells Plain" after Aldous Huxley's futuristic novel—itself inspired by the famous ironical line in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*—which suggests the underlying dystopian quality of the housing scheme (*Financial Mail* Special Report 1978, 1–3, 14–5). The *Financial Mail* special report editorial uses the title of another famous science-fiction work, H.G. Wells's *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933), with an added question mark. It, thus, invites the reader to wonder if, in the wake of the violent 1970s, South Africa is on its way to peace and utopia, owing to the benevolent action of apartheid authorities (e.g. "humane environment," "humane housing," "humane decision")—as exemplified by Mitchell's Plain.

> "The Shape of Things to come?
> Superlatives are a common affliction of journalists, though mercifully on good papers most of them (the superlatives, not the journalists) get thrown out by judicious sub-editors. But if hyperbole is a tempting trap, so is, admittedly more rarely, the tendency to overlook or downplay a local happening that is unique. One such is Mitchells Plain. Mitchells Plain, a city in the making planned for a quarter million people, is growing at present at the rate of over 600 houses a month. It was started in 1975 for completion in 1984. Its community facilities—schools, shopping, sports fields, etc.—are progressing at a rate synchronised with the housing programme. It is this combination of scale and time that this SA New Town, nestling in the False Bay dunes 27 km from Cape Town CBD, five car minutes from the Marina da Gama, is unique in the world.
> That in itself could mean nothing more special than a technical feat. But judging from the international documentation on mass housing, Mitchells Plain has at least a sporting chance of becoming outstanding in a much more important sense. It may well be the first example anywhere of its size and category of a humane environment planned with people rather than for them, taking into account not just their needs, but also their preferences and future aspirations. To some extent at least.
> In the purely SA context, Mitchells Plain is a major breakthrough in terms of its planning input and physical implementation. For this Cape Town City project, funded entirely by government, researched, planned and designed by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals, most of whom previously couldn't conceive of working on a government-sponsored scheme, happens to be a New Town for coloured people. (If and when African housing is planned on identical lines, that will be a breakthrough indeed.)

> Its status as a Group Area development is, of course, a glaring flaw, since it precludes the first tenet of humane housing: free choice of location. Totally to condemn Mitchells Plain on that score would, however, be myopic.
> Apart from the simple fact that such free choice remain a strived-for, but so far not attained, ideal on any large scale anywhere for the economically poorer classes, the housing needs for coloureds had reached such disastrous proportions in the Peninsula by the early Seventies, that to go ahead was the humane decision that dictated itself. Scale need meant massive land requirement. The 2 400 ha of Mitchells Plain—so named after the farm that formed one of the biggest parts of the area—was the nearest suitably large piece of land to the city.
> Concurrent with the decision to go ahead, Cape Town City adopted a radical change in its housing policy. It would not embark anymore on series after series of sub-economic townships catering for the neediest on the waiting list and hence perpetuate the ugly monotony that's cheapest to build.
> Instead it would build a city of 10 suburbs based on home-ownership, one of which its inhabitants could be proud—not least because they helped plan it—and that would in the process become a catalyst for upward social mobility.
> Fortuitously for the Council, the Department for Community Development reached the same conclusion round about the same time as far as planning for whites, coloureds and Indians is concerned.
> Praiseworthy as this new policy may sound, it is the New Town's second major flaw in the eyes of those who maintain that the bulk of the Peninsula's coloured population will be left out in the cold. The houses at Mitchells Plain are feared to be out of their reach financially.
> So what is Mitchells Plain going to be? A white elephant that may be desired but cannot be afforded by those most in need of it—or a planning dream come true? Special Report examines and evaluates, the odds." (*Financial Mail* Special Report 1978, 1–2)

Topicality and ethics are highlighted to justify the focus of the special report. The cleverly worded editorial sets the ethical tone, criticising hyperbole, "a tempting trap," and "the tendency to overlook or downplay a local happening that is unique. One such is Mitchells Plain." The innovative housing development is presented as a reflection of South Africa's capacity for change, complying with both international and national standards: "from the international documentation on mass housing, Mitchells Plain has at least a sporting chance of becoming outstanding" (i.e. integrating contemporary approaches to housing, thus competing with new towns such as Milton Keynes in Britain) and "in a purely South African context, Mitchells Plain is a major breakthrough" (i.e. a collaborative project as opposed to the standard negatively connoted model of the apartheid township, its massive and monotonous spatiality—thus oppressive and repressive). As if sympathetic to the growing international criticism of apartheid policies, there comes a supposedly critical comment on segregation: "Its status as a Group Area development is, of course, a glaring *flaw*" (my emphasis). A euphemistic

or diplomatic appraisal? The "glaring flaw" does not explicitly refer to the official racialisation of space but can be understood as an oblique allusion: "It precludes the first tenet of humane housing: free choice of location." The argument opportunistically turns into a warning against a gross lack of perspective ("totally to condemn Mitchells Plain on that score would, however, be myopic"). It evokes market mechanism ("the simple fact that such free choice remains a strived-for, but so far not attained ideal on any large scale anywhere for the economically poorer classes"). Even though residential segregation existed before apartheid, the Group Areas Act's implementation strongly impacted racial groups' environmental distribution. Race differences tended to coincide with economic differences because of legal discriminatory practices giving preferences to White employment while, at the same time, allowing the exploitation of Non-White labour.

Set against a state of emergency ("the housing needs for the coloureds had reached such disastrous proportions in the Peninsula"), the building of Mitchell's Plain can only become synonymous with moral concern and common sense ("a humane decision that dictated itself"). Hence the "radical change" of building "a city of 10 suburbs based on home-ownership" to become "a catalyst for upward social mobility"—namely, a reformist approach by authorities now cast as opportunity providers.[40] This perspective makes Mitchell's Plain a South African version of the American dream.[41] It inevitably conjures up the images of the self-made man and freedom of enterprise, individual achievement and mobility regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position—or race in the South African context. Among the pictures of rows of houses and happy children which frame the editorial, what better illustration of the individual's potentialities than the full-length portrait of a disabled young man with crutches playing soccer with his friends!

40. The consequence of "not catering for the neediest" will "be felt a few years later: residential overcrowding in Mitchell's Plain is a problem exacerbated by the perennial failure of authorities to provide adequate housing for low-income communities in Cape Town. Thus, low-income communities are housed in existing informal settlements and existing housing stock. One finds that in low-income communities, many existing formal dwellings have been extended or backyard dwellings built on the property for accommodation purposes" (Spocter 2007, 165).

41. "If America has stood for anything unique in the history of the world, it has been for the American dream. [...] that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position." (Truslow 1931, 135, 404).

Overall, under apartheid, the English-language press, owned by big business interests, supported the ideas of the United Party and the Progressive Reform Party (later known as the Progressive Federal Party); the Afrikaans press supported the ruling National Party and its principles. Pollak wrote at a time when the State monopolised broadcasting. It used its laws, directly or indirectly, to govern the freedom of journalists, writers, and other communicators to collect and disseminate information as they saw fit (e.g. the 1950 Suppression of Communism Act alleged protected the population from liberal and left-wing ideas). Pollak (1981, 3) believed that the English-language press was the only real opposition in South Africa: "More than any other powerful force in the country, these newspapers stand almost alone between the Afrikaner government and totalitarian darkness." However, the English-language press was not an independent force; it functioned ambivalently as a limited opposition because of its ties and relationships with the significant industrial interests of its owners.

The Anglo American Corporation occupied the economic base of power in South Africa with stakes in almost every sector, from publishing and property to steel mills and construction.[42] Before being appointed Mitchell's Plain planning director in 1975, David Jack held the same position at Marina da Gama, the Anglo American joint venture with the City of Cape Town. In 1978, he worked as municipal director for planning services (*Financial Mail* Special Report 1978, 16–17). The powerful mining conglomerate controlled the English Press, "consequently the newspapers [were] disinclined to offer political programmes that might jeopardise their patron's financial hegemony. Since an end to apartheid would mean granting full political rights to the overwhelming non-white majority, editorials in the English press tend[ed] to beat round the thorny bush" (Pollak 1981, 9). The English-language press did not advocate fundamental changes to the system but campaigned for social reforms. The editorial "The Shape of Things to Come?" regrets and hopes for equality of treatment within the apartheid parameters: "If and when African housing is planned on identical lines, that will be a breakthrough indeed." When the project's "second flaw," related to the financial situation of the Coloureds, is raised, it is not identified or characterised by the editor but by "those who maintain that the bulk of the Peninsula's coloured population will be left out in the cold."

While praising the engineering adventure behind the planning and building of Mitchell's Plain, the Special Report distils a severe concern over squatting and slums. The issue is tackled from a cost and management perspective, pointing to negligence and inefficiency:

42. Duncan (1984) examines the emergence of the Anglo American group as a major power in South African manufacturing and finance.

> "Many families were moved out of squalid slums. But there were also many for whom the new accommodation was inferior to the old and people who were living in tolerable circumstances where they could have held out for many years were moved at great cost into new houses while the squatter population, in the Western Cape particularly grew alarmingly. [...] Quite apart from the breaking up of established communities where an intelligent programme of urban renewal would not only have been healthier and probably cheaper—as with Cape Town's District Six—the Group Areas policy has another deleterious effect on the housing stock in general. That is that whole unproclaimed neighbourhoods are deteriorating fast while property owners and local authorities don't bother with maintenance and can't go ahead with their building programmes. The Group Areas Policy also meant that vast tracks of land for new housing had to be found in order to put as many people as possible of one racial denomination together. And, because of the mostly sub-economic structures to be erected on it, it had to be cheap land too. Large areas of cheap land invariably mean land far away from the core of the 'white' city and often also from the locations of industries. The result, for the lowest income groups, is not only severely slashed discretionary time but also, despite heavy subsidies, slashed discretionary income because of high transportation income." (*Financial Mail* Special Report 1978, 13)

The report is openly critical of the Department of Community Development's attitude towards squatters:

> "'But do you think squatting is a good thing?' Fouché asked Special Report, his voice incredulous. 'We actually encourage self-help housing, we actually make loans available to individuals to build homes according to approved plans.' Yes, on approved plots, in approved areas. But housing experts around the world have proved that for some people, at any one time, the jump from squatting to even lost-cost rent paying is too much. The Government [...] still suffers from the burnt fingers syndrome of proliferating ill-conceived self-help schemes after Verwoerd made them legal in the Fifties." (Ibid., 19)

Squatters and slums were a source of concern because they posed a threat to the health of their residents and public health in general. Nevertheless, they were also a source of concern because they posed a threat to the segregationist state, which could not control and surveil them. As a matter of fact, despite the liberal rhetoric of dominant companies' owners (e.g. Harry Oppenheimer, the then Chairman of Anglo American), which the English press echoed, their financial success was based on the exploitation of Black labour. Their aim was not to destabilise the regime. Comments upon negligence, inefficiency or red tape demanded performance (i.e. a business approach deemed realistic for its reliance on figures); they did not demand democracy (i.e. the implementation of civil and political rights). Hence, the title of the last paper of the Special Report: "Mitchells Plain is fine; but more realism towards the poorest is needed" (ibid., 31). Issues were raised. These did not challenge or oppose the segregationist system. They rather adroitly legitimised it as if establishing an

open democratic debate. As Brand (2009, 10) argues, "through this process of legitimising a particular economic system and culture, the financial press in South Africa helped cement consensus among political elites (but not the broader public) about the shape of the economy." According to Pollak (1981, 9), the English press helped deliver needed information inside and outside South Africa. To him, "The role of the English-language press is critical because it provides a highly visible forum for information and ideas inside South Africa and because its reporting has been relayed around the world by a corps of sympathetic foreign correspondents." The worrying housing shortage mirrored and conveyed the fear of further riots, which a housing development such as Mitchell's Plain—and all the publicity surrounding it—could, at best, delay but certainly not prevent.

Mitchell's Plain received the "Award of the Most Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement of 1979."[43] The South African Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)—whose political neutrality was problematic[44]—also published a study about the quality of life in the new housing development in 1979. The conclusion weasels about the very wording of this quality:

> "It *would appear* that Mitchell's Plain is *more a model than* a disillusionment, *more a success than* a failure. Of note is the fact that Mitchell's Plain was seen by some respondents as a development mechanism; in other words, as a mechanism for changing attitudes towards both life in general and life quality in particular. It *would appear* that Mitchell's Plain *is capable of* producing feelings of security, belongingness, privacy and territoriality and thus of improving the self-respect and dignity of the Coloured people who are fortunate enough to live there." (Smedley and Human 1979, 24–5 [my emphasis])

Indeed, the engineering achievement was not as outstandingly perceived by its residents as predicted or expressed by the media. The fundamental economic contradictions and ideological implications of Mitchell's Plain were the central themes of a scathing paper delivered by Margaret Nash (1979) at the Debating Union Symposium on District Six in the presence of Community Development Secretary Louis Fouché. Her study entitled "Mitchells Plain:

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43. This is the focus of Brand (1980a).

44. "Surveys […] were carried out by the HSRC, a quasi-state organization in Pretoria, by contract for the government family planning organizations. Accordingly, the survey results are taken to be confidential government material rather than a resource open to researchers and to the general public. This is partly in keeping with the system that evolved after the Nationalist electoral victory in 1948, whereby close and confidential relations were forged between the growing, and largely Afrikaner-staffed, public service and quasi-state research organizations centered on Pretoria that shared a common view about the destiny of the country. In the case of fertility surveys it is also explained by the fear of providing evidence that would politicize a population program adopted by a government based on a minority electorate." (Caldwell and Caldwell 1993, 229)

Valid Alternative for District Six?" was an informed criticism of government policy. It bluntly deconstructed the current propagandist discourse around the new housing development, as summed up in her introduction:

> "Everyone wants a home, a safe environment for family life and the care of children. A wise government builds on this fundamental human aspiration: a foolish one ignores it or plays favourites. But what of a system which exploits people's deep desire for a home, making it a means of control and continued subordination of one sector to another? Such a system surely perverts what is good and sows the seeds of social disintegration. In Calvin's teaching a government guilty of such a behaviour would no longer be legitimate but tyrannical: therefore not deserving of the respect and obedience due under God to lawful authority. How does the RSA government treat Cape Town's 'coloured' people and their deep desire for home and family life ...?
>
> Since the mid-sixties some 50 000 'coloured' families have been uprooted under Group Areas legislation. Community Development Secretary Louis Fouché claims that ninety per cent of them were living in slum conditions and should have been moved anyway: but in fact during 1964–77 only 569 slum declarations were made in metropolitan Cape Town.
>
> When District Six was declared white 94 per cent of its residents were disqualified. The long drawn out but remorseless destruction of the area is a blatant example of the 'Group' in operation. In the eyes of the world and in the experience of the people concerned, this is not slum clearance: it is 'nazi-type institutionalised theft and violence' and typical of what is happening, less conspicuously in so many other areas—Walmer township in Port Elizabeth; Duncan Village East London, Ciskei, Winterveld—to millions of people in this country. All in the name of western Christian civilisation.
>
> In reply government spokesman and supporters point to the wonders of Mitchells Plain where R500 m is being invested to provide 40 000 'coloured' families with the benefits of home ownership by 1984. 'Isn't it better?' they say, 'that Cape Town should be famous for Mitchells Plain and Atlantis than notorious for Modderdam, Unibell and Crossroads; for the slum of District Six and the squatter problem!'
>
> Government policy, supported actively by the Urban Foundation, is to promote 'non-white ownership' as a buffer against social instability and revolutionary tendencies. Hence Mitchells Plain, which offers a prestigious demonstration of the government's goodwill and good intentions towards the 'coloured' people of Cape Town.
>
> In the Western Cape—a 'coloured labour preference area—an estimated 300 000 'coloured'' people lack adequate accommodation. Seventy per cent of the families concerned fall into the sub-economic group. Yet Mr Fouché has set his face resolutely against 'second-best' or 'instant' solutions to the housing shortage, solutions like site-and-service or squatter upgrade. He is committed to provide 'high standard permanent housing.'
>
> What hope does this offer to the majority needing to be rehoused or better housed, who have a head-of-household income of less than R160 per month,

> and a dependency ration of 92:100 compared to 60:100 for whites? What of the hundreds, if not thousands, of families who due to factors like illegitimacy, redundancy, physical or mental disability, or alcoholism, have no full-time breadwinner, therefore no reliable source of income?
> For Mr Fouché the answer lies in 'filtering': 'The better off families will buy Mitchells Plain or Atlantis houses. The poor will move into the council flats they vacate. The Department of Social Welfare can look after the problem cases. The squatter camps will be demolished and the squatter problem will disappear.' Hey presto." (Nash 1979, 2–4)

In conclusion she issued a warning:

> "Black home ownership sounds so enlightened. But there is reason to fear that in reality it is bait for hungry fish, and that when the hook really jabs the fisherman will be shocked to find an enraged shark at the end of the line. If so, the ravaged state of District Six may yet become a grimly prophetic symbol of our national prospect." (Ibid., 13)

Cry, the Beloved Mitchell's Plain? Nash was, perhaps, metaphorically recalling the concern voiced by writer and founder member of the Liberal Party of South Africa (LPSA) Alan Paton in the famous line from *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948): "I have one great fear in my heart, that one day when they [the Whites] are turned to loving, they will find we [the Blacks] are turned to hating (1982, 37)." Homeownership in Mitchell's Plain would not necessarily mean control and stability.

From the 1978 Information Scandal to the Birth of the Documentary *Mitchells Plain* (1980)

Between 1961, when South Africa was declared a republic, and 1990, when President Frederik Willem de Klerk announced the dismantling of apartheid, the country was "a security state, one which used intelligence extensively to directly target its opponents both internally and externally" (O'Brien 2010, 5). More effectively so after Prime Minister John Vorster established and institutionalised the Bureau for State Security (known as BOSS) in 1968–69:

> "While nominal political authority and power rested with the elected ministers who composed the Cabinet, this was not the reality of the situation. By 1970, the true centre of power resided in the central security structures of the government—led by the State Security Council (SSC); while the Cabinet oversaw and acquiesced to all major decisions affecting the country, the SSC was the 'super Cabinet.' In its sessions, the members of SSC made all the recommendations and decisions which affected the governing of the country; ultimately bodies such as the SCC ran the policies of 'Total National Strategy' and 'Total Counter-revolutionary Strategy' that ran South Africa. The authority of the wider cabinet would not be restored effectively until De Klerk came to power in 1989." (O'Brien 2010, 5–6)

In 1978, discreditable actions involving the Department of Information came to public attention. The South African government[45] faced a political scandal over a secret propaganda war designed to influence local public opinion and rebrand the racial institution internationally (the manipulation programme aimed essentially at American and British media). The "Information Scandal" was nicknamed "Muldergate" after the Minister of Information Dr Cornelius (Connie) Mulder, who, a few years before, on 22 September 1970, had shown Parliament how determined he was to glamorise the country's image:

> "[...] in countries abroad we must have every means at our disposal in order that we may present the image of South Africa as it is, namely that of a beautiful, prosperous country, in which law and order prevails and in which progress in the scientific, technical, economic, cultural and numerous other spheres is the order of the day, and where, in an atmosphere of peace and calm, numerous peoples, with different languages, cultures, religious and traditions are living together in an orderly manner, a country, furthermore, where democracy is being practised in the full sense of the word, and where political parties are represented in parliament, as elected by the people—an example to the whole world."[46]

Rand Daily Mail journalists Mervyn Rees and Chris Day exposed the secret propaganda and influence-buying schemes.[47] Public funds had been used to "patriotically" manipulate national and international media's presentation of South Africa. Between 1973 and 1978, the Department of Information spent at least $70 million to improve South Africa's image abroad (Houser 1984, 48). Undoubtedly, the country's image needed an extensive overhaul in the wake of the 1976 Soweto riots and the murder of Black Consciousness leader Stephen Biko by the police in 1977. The iconic picture of dying 13-year-old Hector Pieterson (Pitso[48]), taken by *World Newspaper* photographer Sam Nzima shocked the whole world. "Had the riots lasted a week and been

45. "In the system of government of the apartheid era, four government ministries formed the RSA's 'security family,' all of whom discussed matters of state security, with the Office of the Prime Minister at the summit of this power structure. This quartet comprised the Department of External Affairs (renamed Department of Foreign Affairs in 1961); the Department of Finance; the Department of Defence; and the Ministry of Information." (Onslow 2005, 369)

46. *Debates of the House of Assembly of the Republic of South Africa (Hansard)*, 22 September 1970. In 1972, Connie Mulder appointed Dr Eschel Rhoodie as Secretary of the Department of Information. Rhoodie's book—*The Paper Curtain*, written in 1969—argued that unconventional methods should be used to fight the curtain of lies and communist propaganda against South Africa.

47. The thorough investigation is documented in Rees and Day (1980).

48. The family name was originally Pitso. The Pitsos decided to change their surname to Pieterson to pass as Coloured.

confined only to Soweto, the media would have dropped the matter after a few weeks," wrote Secretary of Information Rhoodie in his annual report,

> "In fact the initial reporting in most Western countries was reasonably objective in the first week. However, the continuation of the riots and the spread to other cities and to rural areas over a period of months had a devastating effect on South Africa's image as a politically stable country." (Department of Information Report 1976, 3)

A year later, he was convinced that the damage was severe:

> "When the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed on December 14 last that 1978 was going to be the International Anti-Apartheid Year, it brought to a climax the worst period of anti-South African publicity and hostility in the country's history [...]. Reporting on the Biko case was extremely negative and widespread. It received the most in-depth coverage of any South African news story since the first heart transplant and was extremely damaging [...]. In volume the coverage of South African affairs in the media and on television remained at the high levels of 1975 and 1976 but in the USA it skyrocketed. [...] For the first time French newspapers began to give massive coverage to South African news and France, also for the first time, began to support, openly, international punitive action against South Africa." (Department of Information Report 1977, 3)

Rees and Day also revealed that officials and government supporters had used public funds for their enrichment, including laundering through Swiss bank accounts. The Information Scandal forced John Vorster to resign from the Premiership of South Africa. It became a springboard for Defence Minister Pieter Willem Botha's political ambitions. All doubts and concerns were not clarified. In his editorial of the *Rand Daily Mail* dated 29 September 1978, Allistair Sparks pointed out that the affair was being brushed under the carpet in the aftermath of the prime ministerial election:

> "It is intolerable that this affair, with all its suspicious circumstances and large unanswered questions, should be left to lie there like an untreated cancer in our body politic. We have just seen it dominate the election of the new Prime Minister [...] In the end it wasn't so much a matter of who would be the best man to deal with the formidable problems closing on us that counted as much as the Department of Information affair. [...] Mr. Botha pledged, as one of the main themes of his premiership, 'at all times to uphold honest public administration.' Excellent. But that means he must start with a clean slate by wiping out this sordid affair. And only a full public inquiry can do that. No more of these secret investigations into secret activities, which are only adding more doubts and questions to the whole business." (Rees and Day 1980, 77)

In November 1979, Prime Minister Botha was enthusiastically given the "Man of the Year Award" by the *Financial Mail*. According to the business magazine, "in its 15 months as premier, [Botha] achieved more than most of his predecessors collectively." It stressed a year "marked by a driving

resolve on his part to move away from the narrow, sectarian approach which [had] characterised the regimes of other National Party Prime Ministers." It emphatically acknowledged that "he [had] met the challenges of his office, creating the firm impression that he [sought] to serve the interests of all South Africa's peoples."[49] Transnational corporations with interests represented in the English press profited from and sustained the apartheid regime. The nature and degree of the State-corporate relationship were rather evident when, in 1980, Botha appointed corporate representatives from Barclays, Standard Bank, Anglo American and other firms to serve on the Defence Advisory Board (DAB). This group was instrumental in securing corporate support for apartheid policies (Bond and Sharife 2009, 115). In 1985, the South African Associated Newspapers announced that they would cease publication of the *Rand Daily Mail* ("Newspaper Opposed to Apartheid to Close After Financial Losses" 1985). Botha cheered the closure.[50]

At the international level, when Botha took office after his election by the National Party caucus, "many liberal and conservative voices in the West hailed [him] as a genuine reformer. Many Americans were given the impression by their 'opinion leaders' that apartheid was on its way out" (Danaher 1984, 177). Even if the situation was far from being clear:

> "[Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs] Crocker's 'constructive engagement' and the Study Commission[51] report differ markedly in one crucial

49. *Financial Mail*, 30 November 1979, 932.

50. "President Botha cheered the closure, congratulating the paper's owners and bestowing an award on Anglo American chairman Harry Oppenheimer, though it has never been confirmed that there was a causal connection between the two events." (Louws 2005)

51. Chester Arthur Crocker served as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in the Reagan administration from 1981 to 1989. The Rockefeller Foundation-funded Study Commission on US Policy Toward Southern Africa initiated a study of the "South African problem" in 1978 and published a detailed report in 1981: *South Africa: Time Running Out, The Report of the Study Commission on US Policy Toward Southern Africa* (Thomas 1981) which reads: "In discussions of U.S. policy toward South Africa it is frequently said that the region is not of vital importance to the United States compared with Western Europe, Japan, or Latin America. While this is true, all the ingredients of a major crisis are present there. The dangers of political instability, large-scale racial conflict, and the growth of Communist influence are real. The initiative now lies with the South African government. It has the power to minimize these dangers by adopting policies that produce constructive change and movement toward a genuine sharing of political power. Or it can reject that course and try to reinforce the status quo. [...] There are, as we have suggested, no easy solutions in South Africa. Change will be a piecemeal and uneven process. U.S. policy makers will find tension, frustration, and moral uncertainty as they deal with specific day-to-day issues while simultaneously keeping ultimate goals in focus. Most Americans want change in South Africa. Foreign policy, unfortunately, has a price tag, and South Africa is no exception. Stockpiling of key minerals, diversification of sources of supply, assisting black South Africans, providing economic aid for South

> respect. Crocker's entire perspective is rooted fundamentally in his belief that white South African politics 'are demonstrating a degree of fluidity and pragmatism that is without precedent in the past generation.' He believes that Prime Minister P.W. Botha and his senior supporters 'have been carrying out the equivalent in Afrikaner nationalist terms of a drawn out coup d'état' with which they will build a political apparatus capable of 'autocratic political change.' Crocker argues that the United States has no alternative but to support Botha since, 'apart from revolution, change can only happen this way.' In the Study Commission's section on support for organizations working for change in South Africa, neither Botha nor the National Party are ever mentioned as potential change agents." (Bowman 1982, 189)

In 1979, William Raiford, an analyst in international relations at the American Congressional Research Service, exposed the new attractive packaging provided to race discrimination. In his own words, "Initially this policy was termed 'apartheid,' and the government currently favors the terms 'separate development' and 'plural democracy' to describe its policy. While the name changes reflect substantive differences in policy, the system's basic feature—a determination not to share political power with blacks—has remained constant." Then draws a biting conclusion: "In essence, South Africa is in a state of evolution, but it is an evolution of the political economy of apartheid and a clear rejection of an evolution towards an integrated political community" (Raiford 1979, 30). The manoeuvre could easily be discernible in the proposed constitutional plan:

> "The constitutional plan provides for three parliaments representing, respectively, the white, coloured, and Asian populations, with each empowered to decide on matters exclusively affecting its own group. Members are to be elected on a 4:2:1 ratio (in order to approximately proportional representation: i.e., 4.4 million whites, 2.5 million coloureds, 800,000 Asians), with a white parliament of 185 members, a coloured parliament of 92 members and an Asian parliament of 46 members. Legislation affecting all three population groups would be discussed in a Council of Cabinets which would advise the State President who would take final decisions. The State President would thus make decisions on matters affecting the country as a whole, appoint the Prime Ministers of the three parliaments and, upon the advice of each Prime Minister, appoint their cabinets as well. The State President would be elected by an 88-member electoral college represented on the 4:2:1 ratio. While the South African government emphasizes that its policy of separate development is based on a tribal principle, its policy of plural development appears to be based on a principle of designated races. Although the black tribes would be excluded from South African citizenship, the Asian and coloured 'races' would be embraced within the political system, albeit

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Africa's neighbors, and a policy of non-expansion for U.S. companies in South Africa will cost money. It is our firm conviction, however, that if we do nothing or adopt the wrong policies, the eventual costs will be much higher." (Thomas 1981,455)

> under an arrangement which gives them roughly proportional representation in a system designed to subordinate them to the new (*sans* black) white majority." (Ibid., 31)

Finer linguistic acrobatics characterised the new official discourse:

> "The language of the Botha government has shifted away from Verwoerdian ideological orthodoxy in certain noteworthy ways, some more dramatic and sensationalist than others. [...] 'Pragmatism' now comes before the stubborn adherence to principles for their own sake; 'free enterprise' and 'economic growth' take precedence over Afrikaner unity and an uncompromising racial separatism. The process of government is depicted as a 'total strategy' in defence of 'civilised values,' rather than a moral crusade for the protection and preservation of racial identities." (Posel 1984, 139)

Indeed, when Botha addressed the Transvaal National Party congress in September 1980, he stated that "the main priority facing the country" was "to maintain civilisation, Christendom and its economic strength in order to ensure the Republic's survival" (*Dynamic Changes in South Africa* 1980, 12). He included the Coloureds in his vision. "I want to take millions of Coloured Christians in South Africa with me in my struggle against Godless Communism which will destroy everything in South Africa if it gains the upper hand in the country" (ibid.). The courtship of the Coloured was part of a new class-centred plan of action inscribed in a counter-revolutionary project: "The white government has no intention whatsoever of altering the fundamental aspects of apartheid. Basic policy has not changed. What has changed is the strategy of control: the government is more actively seeking Coloured, Indian, and African middle-class allies to strengthen its resistance to the democratic demands of the African majority" (Danaher 1984, 196).

Paradoxically, the Information Scandal did not have much impact at the international level, even if it provided the world with "a glimpse of the lengths to which the country would go to protect itself, and it gave further political ammunition to the still-growing anti-apartheid movement" (Nixon 2015, 100). The 1978–79 annual report of the Information Service positively acknowledged the business-as-usual course of action:

> "In spite of the turbulence surrounding the former Department of Information, officials of the Foreign Branch carried on with their work as if nothing had happened. Thus it can be said, without fear of contradiction, that the normal information assignment, although at times under pressure, was continued and broadened during 1978. The so-called 'info scandal' has clearly, compared with other events in South Africa, had little or only transitory effect on South Africa's image abroad, it is being viewed overseas as largely an internal affairs." (Department of Information Report 1979a, 9)

The apartheid propaganda machine continued to roll on. The same report was rather optimistic about South Africa's influence on its traditional allies at

the United Nations Organisation (UNO), namely the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France. A certain ambivalence was felt in the USA:

> "Although the mass media's interest in South Africa manifested negative tendencies […] there were occasional rays of light where the realities of the South African situation were acknowledged. […] The Prime Minister's performance on NBC-TV's programme, Meet the Press, which evoked a favourable reaction, can be referred as an example of a more positive note." (Department of Information Report 1979b, 10)

Difficulties had been mastered in the UK:

> "Publicity given to the British Press (with its direct SA links) to the events surrounding the former Department of Information in the earlier stages undoubtedly had an adverse effect on the prestige and activities of the London Information Office. As a result a special plan for restoring the credibility and prestige of the office had to be implemented. Noticeably at one stage, toward the end of the year, important contacts were trying to minimise their connections with the office but these same persons are now once again quite prepared to give their full cooperation and to do it openly." (Ibid., 13)

In France, prospects were brightening up:

> "The change of attitude to South Africa, referred to in the previous annual report [1978], has continued to increase and it may be said that this year the political climate is such that it has been possible to make maximum use of the basically favourable attitude prevalent in France. […] The founding of a French-South African friendship Group, and its increasing activities, offered for the first time the services of well-disposed Frenchmen, acting outside the Embassy environment, to mobilise public opinion and to turn long-standing goodwill into purposeful, constructive action." (Ibid., 14)

A report by the United Nations Centre Against Apartheid confirmed that, following the scandal, "the Department of Information was reorganised. Propaganda work continued, but it was to be carried out in the open. Yet, 56 secret projects were approved to be continued because of their importance to the national interest. Information on these projects [was] unavailable" (Houser 1984, 48). Rumours of this reorganisation were already circulating in the 1970s, the intense interference of the Department of Information under Connie Mulder and Eschel Rhoodie with high-level diplomacy duplicating the duties of Foreign Affairs. As of 1 April 1980,

> "The joint departments now concentrated on implementing new foreign policies, communication, and propaganda efforts both abroad and domestic. The mission of the department with regards to its information resolution remained the same as the one conceived by Rhoodie, countering the Total Onslaught against South Africa by infiltrating African and international audiences with the message of South Africa." (Haasbroek 2016, 164–65)

Thus, post-Muldergate, "media production and liaison services continued spreading film productions, radio tapes, and pro-government publication," targeting international anti-apartheid and anti-government propaganda films (ibid., 166–7). Why should they have stopped? In the words of Engelbrecht, the new Director-General of the Information Service, "the period under review [1 April 1979-31 December 1979] was characterised by a marked improvement in South Africa's image abroad" (ibid., 11).

After 1945, a field of action emerged, referred to as international housing policy, after a series of development in the world. During the 1970s, the problem of urban growth in developing countries was receiving more international attention than ever before, notably with the entry of the World Bank into the housing field in 1973.[52] Housing developments, such as Mitchell's Plain, were exploited within the political arena. Burns and Grebler acknowledged this opportunism in their famous 1977 study of housing in an international comparative framework:

> "Politicians are highly conscious of the visibility of housing and the attitudinal effects of home-ownership. On the one hand, an incumbent or a challenger can exploit the existence of slums as tangible evidence of the need for reform. […] On the other hand, politicians in power can point with pride at highly visible publicly-aided housing projects as a measure of their concern for people and their social accomplishment." (Burns and Gebler 1977, 213–4)

According to Seekings (2000, 14), when the reformist National Party leaders recognised that they crucially needed the support of the Coloureds and Indians, the government "sought to encourage a nascent process of embourgeoisement of the Coloured and Indian working class, investing heavily in housing, infrastructural development and schooling." Nash (1979, 4) reckoned that Mitchell's Plain was "a fantastic technical achievement, representing a truly phenomenal input of thought and energy, skills and finance." She stated that it had "won international acclaim and helped attract foreign loans for 'low-cost non-white' housing in the Republic" (ibid.). Indeed, banks, including Barclays, Citicorp, Dresdner and Commerz, financed and sustained corporations and the regime (Bond and Sharife 2009, 116).[53] Hence, the apartheid government's substantial investment in propaganda for all its returns.

South Africa Panorama was a prestige periodical portraying the country and its people to the world, distributed through the South African embassies

52. More details on these developments can be found in Harris and Ceinwen (2003) and Cohen (1983).

53. The authors quote an article published in *The Nation* in 1976, which reads, "South Africa is borrowing heavily to finance massive development projects and boost its defence spending […] It is hard to imagine where it would be right now without borrowed funds."

abroad. The illustrated monthly magazine was attractive; it contained stunning colour photography and many informative articles. It was published for the first time in 1956 in Afrikaans and English. As of 1963, with the launch of the French and German versions, the South African scene was conveyed to the non-English world (Department of Information Report 1973, 51). By 1979, it also appeared in Spanish and Portuguese, with a total circulation of more than 265,000 per edition. In 1980, the Information Service was planning to introduce the seventh edition in Italian (Department of Information Report 1979b, 20). In the *South Africa Panorama* edition of February 1977, a concise article—albeit with many pictures—was devoted to Mitchell's Plain. The "20th-century city in the making," promoted as "not a conventional housing project," is described as "a self-sufficient city equipped with all the communal facilities, recreation centre and the infrastructure for fostering a balanced, contented community." These are all technically detailed to present a seemingly sensible conclusion: "No wonder the Coloured population of Cape Town regard Mitchell's Plain as a prestige development and 'the' place to live in" (Botha and Yssel 1977, 32–5). Residents are not interviewed or quoted; they are present in the pictures as if the proof was in the spontaneous, on-the-spot capture of the living: a man is mowing his lawn in front of his house, along a row of pleasant houses and nice cars, another is paving a path in his garden in front of his big car, a housewife is washing the family car, and another is sewing in her cosy lounge, some children are playing in the shade of a tree in a quiet cul-de-sac while two teenagers are on their bicycles and two small dogs running around, another group is having fun on the green lawn in front of the family house. Lightness and casualness shape the photographic style. The pictures evoke an atmosphere of domestic harmony and national stability—far from the dark and grave atmosphere permeating the country after the Soweto uprising of June 1976. Cameron reveals that "the brochure was not (as it should have been) submitted to the Council's Housing Committee for approval and the chairman of the committee is on record as saying that 'the brochure outdid Dr Goebbels at his best'" (Cameron 1986, 53).

At the end of 1979, the Information Service published a glossy brochure entitled *Mitchells Plain, an Investment in People*. In Director-General Engelbrecht's own words, "although a modest production, it gives a striking picture of what South Africa is doing in regard to the Coloured" (Department of Information Report 1979b, 20). The brochure insists on the American-dream-like dimension of the prestigious residential area. The new estate must not be confused with a council estate, criticised through the stereotyped image of the ignorant and undeserving, who are made accountable for their own misery: "it was no use building Mitchells Plain for the unemployed or the poor. People must learn to appreciate a good home, and there were even examples of rehoused shack dwellers who had chosen to return to their squalid way of

life—which, of course, cost them next to nothing" (Information Service 1979, 15–6). By contrast, the residents of Mitchell's Plain are identified as responsible people who make the right choices—among which peace:

> "The department's regional representative, Mr Jan Walters points out that Mitchell's Plain was entirely unaffected by the 1976 urban riots. The active ratepayers' association is even said to have voted against establishing a liquor store in the new city. (Alcoholism is rife in some lower income communities.)" (Ibid., 12)[54]

The remark provides a background against which spreading anti-apartheid protests—Coloured students came out in support of the 1976 unrest much to the general surprise[55]—could be blamed on the uncivilised unemployed and the poor, thus associated with intoxication and moral weakness if not opportunism. Mitchell's Plain is used as evidence of a benevolent State providing hard-working and thrifty people with the opportunity for prosperity and success together with the protection of moral standards. Shrewdly, the Group Areas housing estate becomes the symbol of progress and evolution: "If you live in Mitchells Plain you are acknowledged to have arrived socially," says Mr Walters, "You *have* arrived socially. Mitchells Plain is civilisation" (Information Service 1979, 31).

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) regularly highlighted Mitchell's Plain.[56] South Africa adopted television very late compared to

54. The Theron Commission identified the causality between the general health conditions of the Coloured community and their poor socio-economic condition, pointing out to poor nutrition, over-consumption of alcohol and the spread of diseases like tuberculosis as stressed in Van Deventer (2000).

55. "The report signed by the majority of the Theron Commission did not denounce apartheid and also endorsed some of its principal features, like residential segregation. Some of its findings, however, amounted to strong and devastating criticism of the government neglect of the colored population. The chapter on economics spoke of 'chronic community poverty' that affected more than 40 per cent of the population. In the cities and towns between 10 and 20 per cent lived in squatter camps and many of the rest in overcrowded houses. A high rate of infant mortality had hardly changed from the 128 deaths per thousand births in the period 1946–51, and 120 in 1965–1970. In the urban labor market coloreds were reported to be suffering from pervasive discrimination since their workers could not join mixed trade unions without government permission. Even in its own terms apartheid had failed because whites, particularly Afrikaners, dominated the senior positions in all state institutions that served them. The commission recommended a direct say for coloreds at various levels of government. The government accepted the recommendation for a direct colored say in political structures, but also declared that the principle of white self-determination remained paramount. The tone of its response was so churlish that it pushed considerable numbers of colored people into participating in the uprising of 1976 and the public demonstrations of subsequent years." (Giliomee, 2003, 558)

56. This is stressed in Brand (1980a, 15–6).

other technologically advanced nations worldwide for political, cultural, and economic reasons. Prime Minister Vorster officially opened South Africa's national television service (SABC-TV) on 5 January 1976.[57] The Department of Information also provided the SABC with funds to deploy covert propaganda; investigations by the *Sunday Express* revealed that the SABC was still receiving money from secret state funds in 1981, which amounted to a total of R 840,000 by then.[58]

The documentary film *Mitchells Plain*[59] was commissioned during the International Anti-Apartheid year (21 March 1978—20 March 1979) proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 32/105B of 14 December 1977 and released the same year when the Foreign Affairs and Information departments officially merged.[60] Satbel TV produced *Mitchells Plain. Suid-Afrikaanse Teater Belange Beperk* (Satbel) was a renowned company formed by the prominent insurance company Sanlam, which owned the film producer/distributor Ster Theatres and Films and bought out Twentieth Century Fox's South African division in 1969.[61] *Mitchells Plain* was conceived to ingeniously

57. Satellite television was officially launched by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in 1962. Harrison and Ekman (1976) claim that television comes at a crucial point in South African history. The advantages and drawbacks of television were thoroughly debated. The television service was first in English and Afrikaans. A separate Black service was introduced for the African population on 1 January 1982, which in any case, remained firmly under the Afrikaner-dominated South African Broadcasting Corporation. See Jackson (1982). SABC remained the sole legal terrestrial broadcaster until 1986 when M-Net was launched.

58. *Sunday Express*, 25 January 1981, & *Sunday Express*, 22 February 1981; quoted in Haasbroek (2016, 101). "Minister of Information R.F. Botha [Pik Botha], in reply to formal questions in Parliament, admitted that the SABC had been given a total of R 840,000 in secret funds—of which R 365,000 came from the Information Department. This was in addition to the R 81 million in subsidies paid to the SABC by the state for its external services between 1969 and 1979." (Hachten and Giffard 1984, 258)

59. It is mentioned among the productions yet to be completed in Department of Information Report (1979b, 24).

60. "The Department of Information was dissolved on 1 July 1978, following a decision based on a recommendation from the Public Service Commission. On that day the Bureau of National and International Communication came into being. In a strange arrangement the Bureau fell under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—Pik Botha thus being the minister responsible—but not under the Secretary of Foreign Affairs; instead it was placed under the Secretary of Plural relations and Development, whose department dealt exclusively with black affairs. From September 1978 the Bureau was assigned to the Department of Foreign Affairs. On 1 February 1979 it was renamed the Information Service of South Africa, and it merged with foreign Affairs on April 1980." (Geldenhuys 1984, 269)

61. "South Africa's first cinema houses (Africa's Amalgamated Theatres and the Empire Theatres Company) were bought out by the Schlesinger Corporation, which dominated film importation and distribution in South Africa until the late 1950s. In 1931 Schlesinger

draw upon the pragmatic language of the Botha government and the Prime Minister's image of a reformer: the housing scheme is defined as "laying the foundations of a new society" and "a nation's answer to a worldwide problem."[62] The Department of Information used audio-visual impressions such as *Mitchells Plain* to counteract adverse publicity in and outside the English-speaking world:

> "Apart from being available in English and Afrikaans, many of these films are also obtainable in the most important Black and European languages. Information films were also made available to TV networks in the Republic of China. The circulation of films abroad is carried out with the assistance of distributing agencies, a system that ensures country-wide viewing." (Department of Information Report 1979b, 24)

Overseas broadcasting in France, Australia, West Germany, the Netherlands, Brussels, Argentina, Zimbabwe Rhodesia, Britain, Austria, Portugal, Switzerland, Israel, the USA, Canada, Spain, and New Zealand provided statistics. Unlike other countries, television and film audiences in the USA were counted separately and showed impressive figures:

> "TV—826 shows reaching 9 757 000 viewers. General—9,904 non-commercial shows before 464,994 viewers. Cinemas—14 615 shows before 4 013 857 viewers. A short film about SASOL was shown over 120 TV stations throughout the USA before an audience numbering more than 11 600 000." (Ibid., 24)

In 1974 the Department of Information was aware that "television [was] the most important publicity medium in the USA," therefore, "to achieve maximum exposure there, the standard South African propaganda films were Americanized and shortened" (Department of Information Report 1974, 39). The Department's strategy in the USA was highly significant, and the

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merged its interests with Kinemas, establishing African Consolidated Films and African Consolidated Theatres under the African Film Production (AFP) banner. A decade later 20th Century Fox bought out AFP, renaming it South African Screen Productions. In 1969, the insurance company Sanlam, which owned the film producer/distributor Ster Theatres and Films, bought out 20th Century Fox's South African division and formed Suid-Afrikaanse Teaterbelange Beperk (Satbel), which operated as Kinekor due to regulatory concerns. When television was introduced in 1976, cinema attendance dropped significantly and the government permitted the merger of the two entities as Ster-Kinekor. Ster-Kinekor was subsequently acquired by Interleisure in the late 1980s and finally by Primedia in 1997. Ster-Kinekor Theatres is now the largest exhibitor in South Africa." (Angelopulo and Potgieter 2016, 997). According to Fourie (2001,86),"Despite the original intention to provide Afrikaans films as a counter to American culture, with the merger, Ster-Kinekor became the conduit for Hollywood into South Africa with control of 76 percent of all distribution." Tomaselli (2014, chap. 8) gives a detailed account and analysis of film mergers, distribution contracts, buyouts, interlocking boards of directors and other legal arrangements during apartheid.

62. See transcript of documentary (appendix).

Information Service (ISSA) operated large-scale propaganda on behalf of South Africa. In 1977 a booklet exposing South Africa's international propaganda machine ironically revealed that "literature and other forms of propaganda flood[ed] the United States" (Burgess 1977, 64). The extent was such "that one editor [had] observed, 'I receive more propaganda from South Africa than from *all* other foreign governments combined,' adding that 'the only rival remotely matching South Africa's effort [was] Taiwan, and [was] far behind'" (ibid.). The special relationship between South Africa and the USA had deep roots. In his account of the intellectual background to apartheid, Giliomee (2003, xviii) maintains that,

> "the main ideological influences on apartheid were not Nazi racial dogmas but (i) the established practice of segregated schools (accepted by virtually the entire white community); (ii) the theology of the Dutch Reformed Church—a people's church or volkskerk with a mission strategy of working towards self-governing indigenous churches; (iii) racial discrimination in the United States; (iv) imperialist ideas about indirect rule and trusteeship; and (v) emerging theories of social conflict in plural societies."

The United States and South Africa shared similar mindsets:

> "Both the United States and South Africa have been referred to as 'Herrenvolk democracies,'[63] in which the rights, duties, and privileges of citizenship have been controlled by particular racial and ethnic groups. As a description of American society at least through World War II and of contemporary South African policies of apartheid, the reference is clearly accurate. In both cases, particular racial and ethnic groups appropriated control of the political community, reaped the lion's share of its benefits, and arrogated to themselves the ability to regulate its membership in accordance with their own values and ideals." (Hughey 1987, 23)

However, the structures of race relations in these countries could not be considered identical due to different historical circumstances and experiences:

> "In the United States, too, the cleavages of race coincide with those of social class; races are de facto segregated, the Blacks are poor, a society of laws causes Blacks to suffer many disabilities, and wide inequalities in health exist. In the Old South legal discrimination against Blacks, combined with their deprivation of political rights, made for even more of a parallel, sharpening the inequalities in health. There are large differences between South Africa and the United States, however, including the Old South, and one may ask if and how these translate into differences in health. In South Africa, Blacks were domesticated by conquest and not by enslavement. They retain their own languages, tribal affiliations and cultures and perceive themselves as Africans; this Black majority, unlike the Black minority in the United States which perceives itself as American, does not aspire to be "South African" and the subjects of a White-dominated republic. A dual legal system formally and systematically excludes Blacks from

63. The phrase was coined by Pierre Van den Berghe (1978).

> many of the rights but not the penalties of law. This legal system—a "state within a state"—ensures that, with unimportant exceptions, Blacks can own no land; that unless born in areas reserved for Whites, they can work there only as unwelcome if needed transients; that as wandering migrants they are always at risk of heavy-handed arrest. Apartheid is an ideology rooted in these circumstances. Its meld of law, doctrines of race, and the Old Testament is taken to justify the racial segregation that ensures White domination. In South Africa the constitution-unlike the American constitution which finally generated sufficient centrifugal force to undo the fixed structure of inequality in the Old South entrenches that domination." (Susser 1983, 583)

Within the American context, the relevance of such a documentary as *Mitchells Plain* resided in that racial segregation in the USA was still very much present in the 1970s, especially in housing. The 1978 *Financial Mail* alludes to the situation: "Altogether, some 20 million people in the US, most of them racial minorities, live in sub-economic housing" (*Financial Mail* Special Report 1978, 4). Besides, the issue of segregation in housing was independent of Blacks' family incomes: "Even if black incomes had continued to rise through the 1970s, segregation would not have declined: no matter how much blacks earned, they remained spatially separated from whites. In 1980, as in the past, money did not buy entry into white neighborhoods of American cities" (Massey and Denton 1993, 85).

Foreign investment was vital to economic growth in South Africa, and American investments in apartheid South Africa "paid off spectacularly, generating rates of return that were consistently the highest in the world. How could one not make money in a country in which annual GNP growth, between 1948 and 1970, averaged nearly six percent, a country with a burgeoning white consumer market and cheap, politically disenfranchised black labor?" (Campbell 1998, 24).[64] In 1979, the analyst in international relations of the US Congressional Research Service, William Raiford, plainly

64. "Perhaps the most portentous new arrival was IBM, which established a South African subsidiary in 1953 and began to market its then state-of-the-art 5000 series computer a year later. In the decades that followed, American computer companies—and IBM in particular—would revolutionize the working lives of South Africans as fundamentally as American mining and manufacturing engineers had transformed the lives of previous generations. In direct and indirect ways, American corporations helped to underwrite apartheid South Africa's extraordinary (and extraordinarily skewed) rates of economic growth, and thus to solidify the initially tenuous political grip of the National Party. From the perspective of American capital, of course, such considerations were secondary to profits. And make no mistake: investments in apartheid South Africa paid off spectacularly, generating rates of return that were consistently the highest in the world. How could one not make money in a country in which annual GNP growth, between 1948 and 1970, averaged nearly six percent, a country with a burgeoning white consumer market and cheap, politically disenfranchised black labor?" (Campbell 1998, 24)

stated in his report that "foreign investment [was] of such magnitude and importance that it clearly ha[d] strengthened the South African government and, consequently, its capacity to sustain apartheid" (Raiford 1979, 32). The American deepening economic involvement with the apartheid regime made them "South Africa's political metropole" (Campbell 1998, 27).[65] Admittedly, inside the United Nations Organisation, South Africa's infallible ally was the USA. The latter's investment and position in vital sectors of the economy (e.g. computers, transportation, energy and steel) made it a significant component of total foreign investment in South Africa. Although the American Congress passed sanctions on the apartheid regime for the first time in 1968, by the end of the 1970s, the American investment in South Africa was valued at between $5 and $6 billion: $1.8 billion in direct investment,[66] $2.2 billion in private bank loans, and an estimated near-$2 billion in portfolio investment, primarily gold stocks. It constituted over 20% of total foreign investment in South Africa—approximately double the 11% position it held in 1960—and in volume was more than ten times greater than it was in 1960. Concerning investment, Carter Administration's statements and actions suggested the consistent pattern of continuing the long-standing policy of neither encouraging nor discouraging investment in South Africa (Raiford 1979, 33).

Interestingly, one cannot miss the presence of famous American brands in the documentary *Mitchells Plain*: two big bottles of Pepsi and Gillette signs at a checkout lane in the busy supermarket (figure 1.1). Gillette and PepsiCo (with its rival Coca-Cola) were among the American multinational corporations operating in South Africa and developing their business on the political and economic realities of apartheid. Gillette started operations related to toiletries and blades in South Africa in 1930. By 1980 it made and sold a variety of products. Over the years, the South African plant accounted for about 1% of Gillette's worldwide profits (Ricardo-Campbell 1997, 55–6). The company was an early signatory of the 1977 code known as the Sullivan Principles, a set of criteria for the treatment of workers by companies operating in South Africa, starting with the non-segregation of races and equal and fair

65. "The United States deepening economic involvement in apartheid South Africa was accompanied by a profound change in the political relationship between the two countries, to the point that one can begin meaningfully to speak of the U.S. as South Africa's political metropole. [...] 'The deepening relationship between the United States and apartheid South Africa reached a kind of climax in the early 1960s. In March, 1960, South African police fired on unarmed African demonstrators in the 'model township' of Sharpeville, killing sixty nine and wounding over two hundred. The massacre provoked an international outcry and the first of many bouts of emigration fever, as whites fled a seemingly inevitable cataclysm. While the United Nations debated an international ban on South African products—the United States, predictably, vetoed the resolution—international, especially British, capital flooded out of the country." (Ibid., 27)

66. They totalled more than $2.6 billion by 1981 (Davis 1993, 16).

employment practices for all employees and including periodic reports on the implementation of the code. By mid-1978, 103 of the approximately 350 American corporations in South Africa had signed it[67]; Gillette was classified in the top levels of companies "making good progress" over these goals.

Fig. 1.1 Supermarket in Mitchell's Plain - Gillette and Pepsi

The Coca-Cola Corporation and PepsiCo stand out as the world's best-known soft drink brands. These global corporations are inextricably linked with the United States and the American culture. Immensely profitable, they have competed in many countries. The Coca-Cola Export Company was formed and entered the South African market in 1930, while PepsiCo arrived in 1948; by the end of the 1960s, Coca-Cola was far eclipsing PepsiCo (Moses and Vest 2010, 240–1). By 1981 Coca-Cola had become one of the largest American employers in South Africa. Its products accounted for 90% of the country's soft-drink market.[68] While both companies followed discriminatory hiring

67. "The Sullivan Principles make no reference to political change. [...] The South African government accepts these codes as being within the framework of their efforts to improve the lot of its black workers. Due to the absence of reference to political change as well as South African acceptance of the codes, the U.S. government remains faced with the issue of whether support for the Sullivan Principles is an adequate expression of governmental opposition to apartheid and to the promotion of political change. [...] However, a Protection of Business Act passed in Parliament in 1978 would prohibit persons from supplying information about business operations in South Africa-including on order of a foreign court or government-without the permission of the Minister of Economics." (Raiford, op. cit.,32–4)

68. "Coca-Cola in South Africa" (The Africa Fund, January 1986): http://kora.matrix.msu.edu/files/50/304/32-130-F43-84-al.sff.document.af000217.pdf [archive].

practices common in most businesses of the era, PepsiCo could boast a slightly better track record for minority involvement (ibid., 245). The association of Pepsi with Gillette in the same scene mutually reinforced the image of firms championing the Coloured minority.

Coca-Cola's strategy in South Africa was to build brand awareness and deep market penetration into the townships and rural areas. Instead of appealing to race sentiment, Coca-Cola appealed to both a sense of tradition and people's passions like sports, notably soccer (ibid., 246). The Pepsi placement in the checkout lane in *Mitchells Plain* occurred during the soda war waged by Pepsi against the worldwide dominant Coca-Cola with its highly innovative and aggressive "Pepsi challenge" in malls and shopping centres[69] (1975–1983). In contrast with the Coca-Cola drinkers, portrayed as old-fashioned and conservative, the "Pepsi generation" was youthful and trendy. The image was in line with a propaganda documentary branding Botha's government and the birth of Mitchell's Plain as a break from the past. As the supermarket sequence full of youngsters draws to a close, sport is enthusiastically conjured up by the off-screen voice, juxtaposing Pepsi and baseball: "And when the shopping is done, the baseball field and other sports grounds are within easy reach." Pictures of female baseball players (figure 1.2)[70].

Colas and baseball were part of the American way of life. Baseball was a major sport in the United States but was (and still is) a minor sport in South Africa. It did not enjoy the popularity of rugby, soccer or cricket, even though the country played in the 1974 Baseball World Cup as the first African country to represent the continent in an international competition (Grundlingh 2017). The visual focus on baseball was not arbitrary as it provided enforcement of the special relationship with the United States. South African baseball has American roots. It was first introduced in the country by American gold diggers in the late nineteenth century. South Africa stepped onto the international stage in 1955 when an American team of "All Stars" toured the country and introduced the sport to some decent-sized crowds (Chetwynd 2008). During its golden years in the 1950s, locally-based American- owned companies such as General Motors extensively supported baseball games.[71] In the United States, (American) football and baseball have been the top two

69. To steal market shares of worldwide dominant rival Coca-Cola, Pepsi introduced the Pepsi challenge. The blind-test campaign pitted the two soda giants against each other, resulting in Coke's market share dipping to 21.7% of the worldwide soda industry and Pepsi's share edging up to 18.8% (Frank 1997, 168–83).

70. The film stills showed in this book are used by permission of the Government Communication and Information System of South Africa (GCIS).

71. "South African Baseball Union (World Baseball Softball Confederation): https://www.wbsc.org/members/81/rsa [archive].

sports for decades.[72] So, a baseball scene would be meaningful and appealing to American viewers of the documentary.

Put together, Pepsi, Gillette, and baseball are offered as evidence of an anti-Marx lifestyle revolution in a Coloured community of homeowners and consumers living in a state-of-the-art new town in South Africa. Against the background of growing international criticism, after the Soweto riots in 1976 and the murder of Black Consciousness leader Stephen Biko in 1977, the strained relations between South Africa and the rest of the world needed to be mended. By 1980, fierce anti-communist leaders such as Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had just been elected, and Republican candidate Ronald Reagan was on his way to the presidency. Botha's new strategy was formulated to unite the middle classes against the same common enemy. In his own words,

> "We hope to create a middle class among all the nations of South Africa. Because, if a man has possession and is able to build his family life around those possessions, then one has already succeeded in laying the foundation for resisting Communism. If anyone has something to protect, to keep as his own, then he fights Communism more readily." (*Nat'80s* [National Party newspaper, April 1981], 8; quoted in Posel 1984, 143)

Botha's neo-apartheid measures with their neo-rhetoric were fundamentally part of the battle against the struggle of liberation organisations.

Fig. 1.2 Baseball game in Mitchell's Plain

72. *The Harris Survey*, 19 January 1978: https://theharrispoll.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Harris-Interactive-Poll-Research-FOOTBALL-IS-TOPS-1978-01.pdf (accessed 20 February 2022, unavailable 2 November 2022).

The Documentary film *Mitchells Plain* (1980): An Overview

Mitchells Plain is a documentary film in the sense that it speaks about reality, with situations and events involving real people and engaging directly with the historical world,[73] i.e. Mitchell's Plain is a real inhabited housing estate in the Cape region built in the 1970s. Indisputable facts are introduced as proofs: archival footage of the area evened out with bulldozers, the building of the business complex, the station, and the houses. However, as film scholar Nichols (2017, 24) argues, "a documentary is more than indexical images, more than the sums of its shots: it is also a particular way of seeing the world, making proposals about it, or offering perspectives on it."

The eighteen-minute documentary starts with the launch of rocket Ariane in French Guiana, followed by a view from space and a series of shots of slums in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. At the same time, the off-screen narrator reflects on humanity, technology, history and urbanisation. The central part of the film takes place in Mitchell's Plain, where a new form of urbanism is explained and advertised through archives and interviews. It sharply ends with a bird's eye view of Mitchell's Plain, with the off-screen voice referring to the housing project as "laying the foundations of a new society" and then "a nation's answer to a worldwide problem," vigorously concluding that "South Africa hails the future with confidence." Indeed, *Mitchells Plain* was produced in the spirit of place marketing[74] to position South Africa in international relations and economic development. The documentary fell into the framework established by the apartheid Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Intelligence: "It is information's task to make purposeful and scientifically planned audio-visual impressions on targets; to imprint specific positive images and values, and, if need be, to modify fallacies" (Department of Information Report 1979b, 4). Like many other commissioned documentaries, *Mitchells Plain* was meant to counter what the Ministry deemed manipulative:

> "The propagandists against the RSA are busy manipulating information which is presented in such a way that it achieves the objectives of the manipulator in creating an anti-RSA thought reference. Factors that play a role in this

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73. "Documentary film speaks about situations and events involving real people (social actors) who present themselves within a framework. This frame conveys a plausible perspective on the lives, situations and events portrayed. The distinct point of view of the filmmaker shapes the film into a way of understanding the historical world directly rather than through an allegory." (Nichols 2017, 10)

74. Place/city marketing was not a new phenomenon, but since the 1980s, it has received increased interest for the development and competitiveness of cities. Deffner and Metaxas (2005) investigate the relationship between vision, local identity, and image in several European places.

> regard include conspiracy, half-truths, exaggerated emphasis on negative aspects, and downright untruths. Manipulation can be subtle and indirect, as in advertising." (Ibid.)

The beginnings of anti-apartheid documentary films in South Africa have been traced back to the making of *Come Back Africa* in the 1950s and the few documentaries made in the 1960s.[75] A marked new critical South African cinema started in the late 1970s with a group of independent film and video producers and directors who made films and videos about the country's socio-political realities and the hardships endured by Black South Africans.[76] These films and videos played a crucial role in the international pressure on apartheid. They had small budgets, sometimes financed by progressive organisations such as the International Defence and Aid Fund for South Africa (IDAF), founded in the 1950s by Canon John Collins of St Paul's Cathedral in Britain. As Botha argues,

> "The major audiences for IDAF productions were the international anti-apartheid movements. The work was intended to play a campaigning role for the liberation movement in South Africa and unfortunately offered an uncritical account of its policies. IDAF productions keep to cinéma vérité techniques by avoiding voice-over commentary and by using live sound and letting political spokespersons speak for themselves. Those productions unambiguously presented an ANC point of view. IDAF was instrumental in establishing an alternative news distribution office in London, namely Afravision, by providing financial and logistical assistance. [...] Many South African documentaries were made with an international audience in mind in order to get support for the anti-apartheid movement and to educate an international audience to the horrors of apartheid." (Botha 2012, 147–8)

Among notable works released internationally in the same period as *Mitchells Plain*, Botha mentions two major productions about the South African liberation struggle: Peter Davis's *Generations of Resistance* (1979) and Barry Feinberg's *Isitwalandwe* (1980) for IDAF. Another, the squatter camp film *Crossroads* (1979) by Lindy Wilson, tackled the Group Areas Act and the Homelands policies. It documented some people's lives when it seemed likely that the government would demolish the settlement housing 20,000 people just as it had destroyed others. Wilson's documentary was found "undesirable" by the South African Publications Board for many reasons, including the "undesirable and prejudicial international reaction"—allegedly

75. Unwin and Belton (1992) examine films produced during apartheid which engaged critically with the social and political realities.

76. The chapter "Oppositional Film-making in the 1980s" in Botha (2012, 145–56) is instructive in this respect.

"calculated to provoke international hostility of an extreme kind against the Republic"—thus banned in South Africa (Wilson 1981, 38).

Mitchells Plain aimed at challenging these anti-apartheid documentaries made by directors and producers in the late 1970s. Its stylistic elements were designed to adapt to their main characteristics: "A strong narrational presence in the form of an omnipotent off-screen male voice speaking in what is perceived to be a 'white' English accent; representation of South Africans in stark categories—all blacks are victims of oppression, all whites are oppressors; and they rely on crude statistics and stereotypical images of apartheid" (Maingard 1995, 658). *Mitchells Plain* similarly adopts the voice-of-God tradition—the off-screen male voice with the "white" English accent—that is the hallmark of the expository mode, as categorised by the most influential conceptual mapping by Nichols:

> "The commentary is typically presented as distinct from the images of the historical world that accompany it. It serves to organize these images [...] [and] make sense of them [...] The commentary is therefore presumed to be of a higher order than the accompanying images. It comes from some place that remains unspecified but associated with objectivity or omniscience."[77] (Nichols 2017, 122–3)

Mitchells Plain also introduces the participatory mode of representing social issues and historical perspective: "Filming takes place by means of interviews or even other forms of more direct involvement, such as conversations or provocations" (ibid., 22). Four Coloured individuals are interviewed: Mrs Rinehart, a housewife, and three businessmen, Mr Dudley, who represents Model Development Company contracted to build houses in Mitchell's Plain; Mr Claasens, who owns Westridge Booksellers and Stationers; and Mr Arendse, who works for Mitchell's Plain Housing Sales. By suggesting "situated engagement, negotiated interactions and emotional-laden encounter" (ibid., 143) to the viewers, these fieldwork-like testimonies are similar to oral histories. They create a sense of experience through the words of those who are living through it; "the articulateness and emotional directness of those who speak give films of testimony [...] a highly compelling quality" (ibid., 149). Weaved together, they constitute a voice of authority, contributing to and supporting the alleged "objectivity" and "truth" conveyed by the expository mode. As Nichols reminds us, "Michel Foucault argues that these forms [of engagements] involve regulated forms of exchange, with an uneven distribution of power between client and institutional practitioner, and that they have a root in the religious tradition of the confessional" (ibid.,

77. Nichols (2017, 22) proposes six subgenres or modes of the documentary: expository, observational, poetic, participatory, reflexive, and performative.

146). That is all the more obvious in the case of a film especially commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Information.

Succinctly, *Mitchells Plain* shows Coloured victims, squatters and those inadequately housed, who become beneficiaries of housing development projects, as illustrated with Mitchell's Plain, by White decision-makers and solution providers, Parliament, The Department of Community Development and City council/City engineers. The latter claim to have managed to neutralise and overcome a natural socio-environmental oppressor, namely the pressing housing shortage resulting from worldwide post-war socioeconomic circumstances (migration-inducing industrial growth). The Coloureds are offered a sea-change experience: they go from the state of nature (slums) in survival mode (inadequate sanitation and lack of running water; children fighting; substandard trap-looking flats) to that of culture (Mitchell's Plain as a state-of-the-art housing development with ample facilities including a large central business complex), enjoying their new lives in epicurean conditions (adults are eating, drinking and dancing; children are playing, reading or listening to music and looked after). The sense of otherness (as symbolised by nameless idle or inactive squatters and poorly housed people who are voiceless) gives way to identity (home-owning residents with names and functions who supposedly speak their own minds during the interviews). The documentary *Mitchells Plain* displays what one could characterise as the law of compassion leading to order and progress. The most vulnerable (migrant squatters) are living in such extreme conditions that "the South Africans [are] shocked to the core," and overcrowding conditions in older housing schemes are causing "serious headaches." Authorities are reactive ("Parliament voted millions of rands for housing schemes, and the Department of Community Development set to work to eliminate the pressing housing shortage. Vast housing projects were launched"). These create a harmonious whole and set an innovative example assimilated to a rescue operation ("Alongside the blue depth and foam-tipped crests of False Bay, Man, with his skill, is painting a living colourful picture of a happy community. Like Ennerdale, Eldorado Park, Atlantis and Phoenix, this is a nation's answer to a worldwide problem that is also threatening our people, thus laying the foundations of a new society").

In *Mitchells Plain*, the only acknowledged oppression is the shock felt by the South Africans at the sight of slums. It has a silver lining as it generates a generous multimillion-rand vote and prompts action for housing relief. Whites, as represented by the authorities and official institutions, are cast into the role of rescuer. They seemingly proceed to the speedy and spontaneous launch of projects nationwide ("Vast housing projects were launched: Eldorado Park and Ennerdale between Johannesburg and Vereeniging, Atlantis on the West Coast near Cape Town, Phoenix in Natal and Mitchell's Plain").

The role verges on that of the liberator when social, physical, and mental freedom permeates the sequence in the busy Westridge community hall, where a crowd of smiling young people and dignified older adults dance to a live band. Such display of happy gatherings and dancing was in line with the country's contemporary cinema in presenting "apartheid as a natural way of life" (Tomaselli 2014, 11). These scenes positively deny the reality of the damaging effects of constant subjection to institutionalised racism on the mental, physical and social health of all South Africans: "Apartheid and health are not only antithetic but are mutually exclusive," stated Comlan Quenum, Regional Director for Africa in the World Health Organization in 1981, "exploitation and oppression in the South African socioeconomic framework induce the oppressors the complacent, sado-masochistic idea that the oppressed are physically, mentally, and socially inferior" (World Health Organization 1983, 7). Deprived of freedom of movement and expression, "Black South Africans experience[d] powerlessness, discouragement, and despair because they [were] not in control of their own political, economic, and social destiny" (Kagee and Price 1995, 739).

Politically cautious in its discourse strategy, the documentary makes no linguistic reference to the three racial categories instituted by the 1950 Registration Act, even though Whites, Africans and Coloureds are present as social actors. The linguistic choice is all the more noticeable since race was "common sense" in South Africa: the country was one of the most thoroughly racialised social orders in the world with the advent of apartheid and the implementation of the Act. As Posel (2001a) argues, official categories of race were defined and enacted in ways which connected them closely to factors of lifestyle and social standing rather than based on any scientifically measurable biological essence so that "racial common sense" infiltrated the processes of racial classification. These categories were powerfully rooted in the materiality of everyday life, and "it would be difficult to deny the extent to which the demarcation of South African society into Whites, Indians, Coloureds, and Africans has been normalised—for many, a 'fact' of life. It is no surprise, then, that despite the repeal of the Population Registration Act, these racial categories are still writ large in the everyday life of the citizens of the 'new' South Africa" (ibid., 109). Yet, the documentary operates a visual segregation that could go unnoticed: no image ever shows people of different ethnic groups together. Some scenes have White people only (e.g. people queueing up outside an office), and other scenes have Black people only (e.g. crowds in the streets), but the words "White" and "Black/African" are never employed by the narrator. The "Coloureds" are also visually segregated, but since they are the actual residents of Mitchell's Plain, the reference to the racial category could not be avoided. It appears twice: in both cases at the beginning of the documentary, when the housing project is introduced, and

astutely, among sentences referring to land and ownership (the opposite of dispossession and removal):

> "Mitchell's Plain, one of the most exciting housing projects in the world, is situated in the heartland of South Africa's *Coloured* community above 25 km from Cape Town and within the city's municipal boundaries. A metropolis of a quarter of a million people in 40,000 houses is being developed here by the Cape Town City Council in cooperation with the Department of Community Development, which was set up to deal with the establishment of communities and the housing of *all South Africans*. For the Mitchell's Plain project, the Department made lands available at a low-interest rate to the Cape City Council through the National Housing Fund and the Council, in turn, planned and developed the townships and sold the houses to prospective *Coloured owners* at a very low deposit and with subsidised bond interest rates." (My emphasis)

Stating that the housing of "all South Africans" is organised by the same Department of Community Development (i.e. the Department in charge of group areas decisions) is a deliberate attempt to convey the impression that the law applies indiscriminately to and impacts equally all race groups. The linguistic manipulation circumvents the truth without elaborating on a lie. Factually, Black African people were no longer citizens of South Africa then because the Bantu Homeland Citizenship Act of 1970 had changed their status, requiring them to become citizens of one of the ten self-governing territories (or Homelands). Thus, the "heartland of South Africa's Coloured community" romantically covers the spatial reality of the Group Areas policy.

It is worth noting that using "Coloured" would not so much shock American or British viewers as the word was also commonly used for their demographic realities. The American "Colored" stood for African Americans, while in Britain, the adjective "Coloured" often applied to the immigrants born in the former Indian Empire or British Caribbean territories. The reference to the "Coloureds" in the documentary could opportunistically bring some confusion as to what "all South Africans" really included, thus forming the wrong impression that the Botha government regarded—or even treated—all ethnic groups equally.

In June 1979, the Institute for Sociological, Demographic and Criminological Research (ISDCR) of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) carried out a field-work in Mitchell's Plain: "Quality of Life in Mitchell's Plain: An Exploratory Study Using the Delphi Technique" (Smedley and Human 1979). Significantly the documentary film does not fail to challenge and neutralise the two strongest negative factors identified and promote the strongest contributors and positive factors highlighted. These are listed in the summary table below:

***Quality of Life in Mitchell's Plain: An Exploratory Study Using the Delphi Technique (HSRC)* (Smedley and Human 1979)**	**Documentary *Mitchells Plain* (1980)**	
Factors and key findings	Sequences, shots and scenes	Transcript/relevant passages
Mitchell's Plain's strongest negative factors: – Transport/distance from employment opportunities and lack of adequate mass transportation links (22.9%) – Facilities/lack of shopping centres (18.8%)	**Central business complex** – Construction site with cranes and workers – Aerial view of the construction site – Images of the railway station under construction	*In addition to the shops in every township, a large central business complex is being built by the Department of Community Development. This centre, which will cost more than R15 million, will eventually form the heart of the new city. It is expected that more than 5,000 people will be employed in its shops and offices. Right next to the city centre, the main railway station is near in completion. Altogether 3 stations will serve the town's 30,000 to 50,000 daily commuters. Altogether 40,000 workers are employed in building the town and many opportunities for enterprises have been created.*
Mitchell's Plain's strongest contributors to happiness and meaningfulness: – Family life (28.3%) – Financial security (15%) – Personal/egocentric factor (13%)	**The Rinehart family** – The Rinehart bungalow with its flowery front garden – Medium close-up shot of Mrs Rinehart being interviewed – Images of her three daughters listening to music, crocheting and hanging out the washing	*Mrs Rinehart describes her own experience: "It was such a change for me coming from Bonteheuwel to Mitchell's Plain, especially with my children, you know. They, Adelaide and Dominique, Penny did not want to go to school there, and I thought 'what is going to happen to these children one day?' But here Adelaide wants to become an air hostess, even Dominique. The facilities that they have here... Dominique is going to the Far East in a few months' time, and Penelope would like to become a doctor. As far as crime rate is concerned, there is nothing that we have to worry about. Mike is going out; he can come home any time. There is time that they forget my front door open, standing open, and nothing happens"'*
	The Arendse family – The whole family watching television – Close-up shots of the three smiling youngsters – The youngsters together in a bedroom: the older daughter is playing the guitar while the others are quietly listening – Medium shot of Mr Arendse being interviewed – Images of Mrs Arendse cooking in her kitchen and Mr Arendse washing his hands in the bathroom	*This Mitchell's Plain businessman Mr Arendse is proud to be able to raise his children in a home like this: "Now I was fortunate to get a job for the Mitchell's Plain Housing Sales as you can see I bought a little place, a choice I'm just so proud of because I now have a room for each of my children. And I have got onto it very easily by paying a R 100 deposit and only R 92 a month.''*
Mitchell's Plain's positive factors: – Facilities (in particular schools) (25%) – Feeling of Independence (25%) – Physical environment /aesthetic qualities and tranquillity (23,1%)	**Education** – Aerial view of school buildings – Wide shots of school buildings, pupils streaming out of them and crossing an avenue showing a long row of houses	*On completion, Mitchell's Plain will be served by 66 primary and 22 secondary schools. Technical training, as well as higher education through an extramural division of the University of the Western Cape, are also envisaged here.*

Mr Claasens : The self-made man – Medium close-up shot of Mr Claasens being interviewed – Mr and Mrs Claasens having a bountiful meal	*After a hard day's work, a businessman can relax in the comfort of his own home and plan for the future. Someone like Mr Claasens: "Two years ago, I opened a bookshop in Mitchell's Plain. The name of the shop is Westridge Booksellers and Stationers, and I must say that the business came very well. So much so I have decided to open one in the town centre. The town centre is a R20 million project and there I can't let out. There I intend to expand my business into another bookshop because there will be big business houses." A peaceful supper at home made with a woman's love and a glass of good Cape wine. What more can a man ask?*
Environment – Images of drawings showing the variety of house designs – Aerial views of Mitchell's Plain – Travelling shots of streets showing the different patterns of the houses and their nice gardens.	*With the accent on house ownership rather than rented accommodation in Mitchell's Plain, a wide variety of designs is offered to prospective buyers. After a survey of potential owners' tastes and preferences, the planning division of the Cape Town City Council created no less than 70 house designs for Mitchell's Plain. The positioning of the houses on the stands was planned to provide the maximum variety and privacy. [...] Quality houses have been built, and much has been done to beautify the area. Residents own their homes, and they have pride in the fruits of their work in the neat gardens. For most of them, Mitchell's Plain means not only new houses but a new life.*

Ingeniously, the off-screen narrator uses the word "township" without referring to the segregated township, a prominent feature of the South African landscape. Instead, "township" is used in its legal meaning related to cadastre (e.g. similar to the "survey townships" of the USA and Canada) as a group of pieces of land, a land subdivided into erfs (stands)[78]:

> "For the Mitchell's Plain project, the Department made lands available at a low-interest rate to the Cape City Council through the National Housing Fund and the Council, in turn, planned and developed the *townships* and sold the houses to prospective Coloured owners at a very low deposit and with subsidised bond interest rates. [...] When Mitchell's Plain is completed, 15 million cubic metres of earth will have been moved to make room for *160 townships*. [...] In addition to the shops in *every township*, a large central business complex is being built by the Department of Community Development. This centre, which will cost more than R15 million, will eventually form the heart of the new city. It is expected that more than 5,000 people will be employed in its shops and offices." (My emphasis)

78. This is the case in Department of The Prime Minister (1972).

Contemporaneous removals were not slowing down, and townships remained the most common destination for displaced families. Mesthrie (1994, 78) acknowledges that "in many ways, while group area removals were harsh, Coloureds and Indians were granted some courtesies by the State," as opposed to "the drama of—for instance—the removals at Sophiatown."

In February 1980, the Centre for Intergroup Studies of the University of Cape Town expressed a concern in the *Black Sash Magazine* that "removals [were] being carried out by the Department of Community Development more vigorously than ever before, with residents offered little choice in their place of resettlement. Often the offered alternative [was] miles from their work, hospitals and schools," pointing out, about the area of District Six, that "most of those who ha[d] been removed from their homes ha[d] been moved to the bleak townships on the wastes of the Cape Flats. Some ha[d] gone to Mitchells Plain" ("District Six—Apartheid Wins, the Nation Loses" 1980, 21).[79] As the statement implies, Mitchell's Plain was perceived differently, possibly as a better option—which is not necessarily synonymous with a good option. Interestingly, an enthusiastic 1979 Cape Times paper advertising the "controversial, exciting" Mitchell's Plain admitted: "it has been said that it is a 'homeland' away from the City for coloured people" (Cassere 1979, 17). So, Mitchell's Plain was not seen as a township but possibly as a homeland (i.e. the delimited territory conceived as a reserve of Black labour for the South African industries[80]). That might explain why Mitchell's Plain is defined as a project "situated in the heartland of South Africa's Coloured community" at the beginning of the documentary. If so, the image of the homeland is rapidly dismissed with an aerial view of a remarkable construction site described by the off-screen narrator: "a large central business complex is being built by the Department of Community Development. This centre, which will cost more than R15 million, will eventually form the heart of the new city. It is expected that more than 5,000 people will be employed in its shops and offices." The change allows for Mitchell's Plain to be grasped as a body of residents who are modern business people, therefore dispelling the image of

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79. The Black Sash was founded in 1955 by 6 middle-class white women: Jean Sinclair, Ruth Foley, Elizabeth McLaren, Tertia Pybus, Jean Bosazza and Helen Newton-Thompson. The movement initially campaigned against the removal of Coloured voters from the voters' roll in the Cape Province by the National Party government. It expanded to include the moral, legal and socio-economic issues around racial discrimination introduced in other apartheid legislation. Their website is instructive: https://www.blacksash.org.za/index.php/our-legacy/history-of-the-black-sash [archive].

80. The Bantu Authority Act, no. 68 of 1951, provided for the establishment of Black homelands (https://www.jstor.org/stable/al.sff.document.leg19510615.028.020.068). The Bantu Homelands Constitution Act, no. 21 of 1971, enabled the government of South Africa to grant independence to any homeland.

the traditional and isolated rural community. The imposing pictures of the mall establish the dominant ethos of consumerism—to be understood as a source of power. It identifies the area as part of the first world and exudes what Campell (1998, 28) sees as the "Americanization of South Africa" through its "mallification."[81]

Mitchells Plain is an audio-visual illustration of what Posel (1984) defines as the post-1978 language of "effective government" within the new legitimatory rationale. The off-screen voice and the Coloured interviewees give statistics, figures, and much information. These are introduced as diverse and reliable sources for forming beliefs about South Africa, therefore, exploited to contribute and erase what is designed as a stereotyped image: apartheid. At the documentary's end, Mitchell's Plain turns into "a nation's answer to a worldwide problem that is also threatening our people." The film pointed to a unique achievement in terms of planning and construction for the actual relief of massive housing crises (i.e. accommodation for 250,000 people in one hit) within the financial and technical capabilities of the country (i.e. the partnership between the Cape Town City Council and the National Housing Fund). It offered a model to the rest of the world. Besides, it artfully suggests that South Africa has devised and applied its local solution to a vexed question posed by (so-considered) foreign migration waves brought by international history—in the case here, World War II. The stance echoes the National Party's recurrent justification of apartheid, also endorsed by Botha in 1980, blaming British Imperialism for having moved different peoples within the borders of a White South Africa:

> "The complexity of South Africa's population structure and that the political aspirations of the divergent communities can be accommodated only in a system in which the rights of minorities—all minorities can be protected. The South Africa mosaic of peoples is perhaps more complex than any other country on earth. *More than a dozen distinctive peoples were brought together within the borders of one country, not at the whim of South African Whites, but by history, more particularly the dictates of British Imperialism* which had reached its zenith of its power in Africa by the end of the last century." (*Dynamic Changes in South Africa* 1980, 14 [my emphasis])

81. "The first [crucial development] which I can note only briefly, is the suburbanization of economic life—what one might call, only half facetiously, 'mallification.' The erection of the first shopping malls in the 1970s—malls modelled on American prototypes and, in several cases, designed by American firms—heralded an extraordinary spatial reorganization of South African urban life, a process embracing commerce, consumption and, increasingly, white collar work." (Campbell 1998, 28)

Chapter 2

Mitchell's Plain as South Africa's New Civilisation Challenge

A Binary World View: Civilisation and Barbarism

The documentary *Mitchells Plain* is composed of two parts: an opening structured as TV news with its international and national sections and the story of Mitchell's Plain, cast as a momentous local scoop of global impact. The opening has a worldwide perspective. It starts with the launch of the European rocket Ariane on 24 December 1979 in Kourou (French Guiana),[82] followed by the American Landsat 3 satellite[83] floating in space and a picture of the "Blue Marble."[84] Back on Earth, images of White people queuing up give way to shots of slums in South America (Brazil, figures 2.1 and 2.2), Africa (Zambia, figure 2.3) and Asia (India, figures 2.4 and 2.5, and Malaysia, figures 2.6 and 2.7). All the while, an energetic off-screen narrator reflects on humanity, technology, history and urbanisation:

> "Mankind, with his incredible technology, has conquered many problems in the twentieth century. He thrusts out into space and makes ghost-like satellites to travel into eternal circles as his slaves. And when from space he looks back at his home, he sees a romantic blue ball. And yet, back on Earth, he is struggling to provide decent living space for a fast-growing world population. All over the

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82. The launch is on the French government website: "Premier lancement de la fusée Ariane Le 24 décembre 1979" (*Gouvernement.fr*): https://www.gouvernement.fr/partage/8671-les-europeens-viennent-de-s-entendre-pour-la-construction-de-la-nouvelle-ariane-6 [archive].

83. The US Department of Interior website provides details and pictures of the satellite and missions: Landsat Mission, "Landsat 3" (*USGS*): https://www.usgs.gov/land-resources/nli/landsat/landsat-3?qt-science_support_page_related_con=0#qt-science_support_page_related_con [archive].

84. *The Blue Marble* is an image of planet Earth taken by the crew of the Apollo 17 spacecraft on 7 December 1972. To the astronauts, the slightly gibbous Earth had the appearance and size of a glass marble, hence the name. It was taken at a distance of about 29,000 kilometres from the surface and is one of the most reproduced images in history. The image has the official NASA designation "AS17-148-22727." It shows the Earth from the point of view of the Apollo crew travelling towards the moon: "The Blue Marble from Apollo 17" (*Visible Earth – A Catalog of Nasa Images and Animations of our Home Planet*): https://visibleearth.nasa.gov/view.php?id=55418 [archive].

> world, the most beautiful cities, the most prosperous peoples must still contend with annoying need for housing. 20% of the population of one of the world's great cities live in slums with no municipal service. In another historic city, two out of every three families live in a single room. Even in wealthy countries, millions of people live in sub-standard houses. More than a thousand million people in Asia, South America and Africa are homeless, albeit to a lesser degree."

The introduction suggests a Manichean-like world, seemingly divided into an axis of civilisation (the USA, the UK and France, i.e. the Western world) and an axis of barbarism (Brazil, Zambia, India and Malaysia, i.e. the Global South). The USA, the UK and France—indirectly designated through the rocket and the satellite—were South Africa's traditional allies at the United Nations Organisation (e.g. they vetoed South Africa's expulsion from the UNO proposed by Kenya, Mauritania, Cameroon and Iraq in 1974).[85] The off-screen comments define them as a group of nations whose imagination and creativity (e.g. technology is "incredible," satellites are "ghost-like") make them leaders of a new form of imperialism (e.g. "many problems in the 20th century" are "conquered" and satellites are "slaves"). The words cannot fail to evoke President Kennedy's New Frontier with the challenge of venturing into space. The other group encompasses third-world countries whose chaos (images of slums) is considered irrelevant to the issue of wealth ("prosperous peoples," "even wealthy countries"), thus obliquely raising the question of incompetence or negligence, if not corruption.

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85. In 1970, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 282 (1970), calling on States to take a series of measures to strengthen the arms embargo against South Africa. Twelve countries voted in favour of the resolution with three abstentions (France, the UK, and the USA). In October 1974, the United Nations Security Council considered the relationship between the United Nations and South Africa and received a proposal by Kenya, Mauritania, Cameroon and Iraq to recommend to the General Assembly the immediate expulsion of South Africa from the United Nations in compliance with Article 6 of the Charter. The proposal received ten votes in favour but was not adopted because of the negative votes of three permanent members—France, the UK, and the USA. South Africa remained a member but was not represented at subsequent sessions of the UN General Assembly as in Resolution 3324 E (XXIX), the General Assembly recommended that "the South African regime should be totally excluded from participation in all international organisations and conferences under the auspices of the United Nations so long as it continues to practice apartheid and fails to abide by United Nations resolutions concerning Namibia and Southern Rhodesia" ("3324 [XXIX]. Policies of Apartheid of Government of South Africa" [E: "Situation in South Africa," United Nations, 16 December 1974]: https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XIV/III/III_00006/imfname_562087.pdf [archive]). See also: "Relationship between the United Nations and South Africa," in *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council: Supplements 1972–1974*, "Chapter VIII. Consideration of Questions under the Council's Responsibility for the Maintenance of International Peace and Security" (New York: United Nations, 1974): 191–3: https://www.un.org/en/sc/repertoire/72-74/Chapter%208/72-74_08-14-Relationship%20between%20the%20United%20Nations%20and%20South%20Africa.pdf [archive].

Fig. 2.1 Brazil - The Sugar Loaf Mountain in Rio de Janeiro

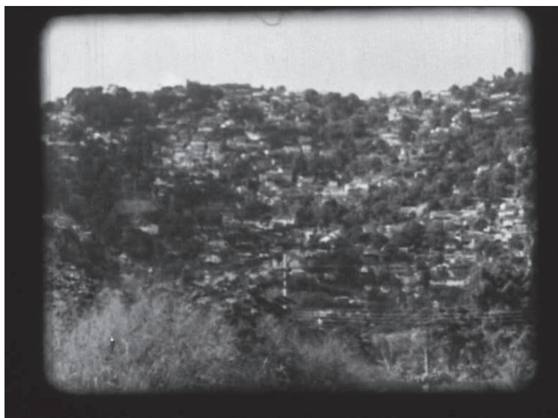

Fig. 2.2 Brazil - A Favela

Fig. 2.3 Africa (Zambia) - A Compound

Fig. 2.4 Asia (India) - A Slum

Fig. 2.5 Asia (India) - A Shack - Weaver and child

Fig. 2.6 Asia (Malaysia) - Woman and children

Fig. 2.7 Asia (Malaysia) - Removal

Nonetheless, Brazil and India were leading world powers in the late 1970s: in terms of GDP, they ranked above South Africa (i.e. 1978 and 1979, Brazil ranked 8, India 12 while South Africa was 25 and 24, respectively[86]). The images of African, South American and Asian slums and their accompanying off-screen remarks echo the ideas of Charles Abrams. The American urban planner was then one of the world's leading housing consultants; his thought fuelled the economic ideology that set the parameters of debate about socioeconomic issues.[87] A contemporaneous analyst summarises his standpoint in *Housing in the Modern World* (1966),

> "Mr Abrams writes with particular insight on the problems of squatters and shows that *squatting is more frequently due to faults in the political and legal institutions and structure of developing countries* than to the extremely low levels of income which prevail in these countries. He recommends that land reform be given a very prominent place in developing the urban areas of African and Latin American cities, for without a proper system of registered legal rights and land tenure, the cities are deprived of desperately needed land for expansion, and potential investments are not realised because of the fear that titles to land will be overthrown." (Nevitt 1967, 170 [my emphasis])

86. "Historical GDP by Country Ranking, Statistics from the World Bank 1960–2019," *Knoema*: https://knoema.com/mhrzolg/historical-gdp-by-country-statistics-from-the-world-bank-1960-2019 [archive].

87. Illson (1970) provides an overview of his life and ideas.

Contrary to the African, South American, and Asian slums, South Africa's new spatial organisation and housing policy, the listed "vast projects [...] launched," could be interpreted as the advocated land reform. Hence Mitchell's Plain is characterised as "one of the most exciting housing projects in the world [...] situated in the heartland of South Africa's Coloured community" by the off-screen voice and recommended by the most confident investors of all—i.e. the homeowners themselves represented by Mrs Rinehart, Mr Claasens and Mr Arendse.

The documentary film does not cite Charles Abrams explicitly. Yet, he is quoted in both the 1978 *Financial Mail*'s Special Report about Mitchell's Plain (*Financial Mail* Special Report 1978, 32) and the 1979 glossy brochure of the Information Service, *Mitchells Plain: An Investment in People* (Information Service 1979). The Special Report opens with an overview of the international scene titled "When it comes to housing, the poor are disenfranchised," which refers to Abrams's book together with a then more recent book, *Urban Housing in the Third World* by Geoffrey Payne (1977):

> "The magnitude of the problem in the underdeveloped world may be gleaned from the fact that more than a billion people in Africa, Asia and Latin America—or roughly half the population of these continents—are homeless or live in housing that is described by the United Nations as a menace to health and an affront to human dignity' wrote Charles Abrams in the mid-sixties in Housing in the Modern World, still the classic work on the subject. On one of his latest books on the subject (Urban Housing in the Third World, 1977) Geoffrey Payne quotes unofficial estimates of squatters at Kuala Lumpur as 250,000 (35% of the population)—the official figures put the total at 180,000; squatting he writes, is the shelter for one in two inhabitants of Lusaka, while over 20% of Rio's population lives in favelas, with little or no services, and a recent survey in Calcutta has shown that two-thirds of families there live in one room or less." (*Financial Mail* Special Report 1978, 4)

Payne's material is discernible in the documentary film: the paragraph above clearly provides the key to the geographic locations of the cities shown. When the viewer sees Brazil's touristic Rio de Janeiro—easily recognisable by its Sugar Loaf Mountain—the off-screen voice adds, "20% of the population of one of the world's great cities live in slums with no municipal service." The former capital of British India, Calcutta, is indirectly alluded to as the "historic city" of the poor Indian weaver and her child, where "two out of every three families live in a single room." Zambia and Malaysia can be inferred from these initial references. Lay people and non-nationals would need help spontaneously identifying the disorderly structure of the informal settlement on a plain as a compound in Lusaka. The scene showing Asians piling their boxes on a rental truck with a board in Mandarin Chinese could take place in cities other than Kuala Lumpur. The documentary might seek to play on the ambiguities thus created and, patronisingly, assimilate countries—if not regions and continents—to wild expanses of slums.

Fig. 2.8 Garbage removal (1)

Fig. 2.9 Garbage removal (2)

Fig. 2.10 Houses with neat gardens

In the 1979 brochure *Mitchells Plain: An Investment in People*, Abrams's book serves as a guiding criterion for a question of primary historical and geographical importance:

> "Will the Mitchells Plain approach solve the Coloured housing problem by converting an enormous expense into a profitable investment in people? If it does, South Africa will have achieved an important breakthrough, at least for Africa, Asia and Latin America where, according to Charles Abrams's *Housing in the Modern World*, roughly half the population were homeless in the 60s or living in housing described by the United Nations as a 'menace to health and an affront to human dignity.'" (Information Service 1979, 27)

The 1980 documentary film goes further in that the question exists no longer—there is no room for doubt. Acclaimed as "a nation's answer to a worldwide problem," Mitchell's Plain is the technical invention that identifies South Africa as part of the First World, thus inscribing the country into the axis of civilisation. By association, the country boasts pioneering and complementary expertise skills.

As opposed to the chaotic, indistinct and dirty settlements in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, the documentary film constructs Mitchell's Plain as a structured, orderly and healthy place: "Mitchell's Plain was regarded right from the start as the establishment of a healthy vital community, rather than simply a housing project" claims the off-screen commentator, a scene showing garbage removal (figures 2.8 and 2.9) testifies that "community services are growing with the town" (i.e. addressing the risks of contamination and disease), and residents are said to "have pride in the fruits of their work in the neat gardens" (figure 2.10) with their children "us[ing] up their energy" in "neat little parks" (figure 2.11).

Mitchell's Plain notably boasts a community health centre (figure 2.12), crowded with young mothers, lively babies and children (figure 2.13): "A healthy community is a happy community," the narrator declares, "Medical help and advice are at hand. And this service is avidly used." Such images endow the apartheid authorities with a protective aura—i.e. associated with life-giving rather than death-bringing. A UDF founding member and a community activist, Veronica Simmers moved to Mitchell's Plain with her husband in 1979, when the documentary film was being made. Her own experience sadly nuances and challenges this idealised approach: "There were no doctors; I had to go outside Mitchell's Plain for check-ups during my first pregnancy. I lost my first child. It was the year 1980; I was 29. My son died in my arms 15 days after I gave birth to him… I blame the State" (Ommundsen Pessoa and Le Roux 2012, 73).

Fig. 2.11 Children in a neat park

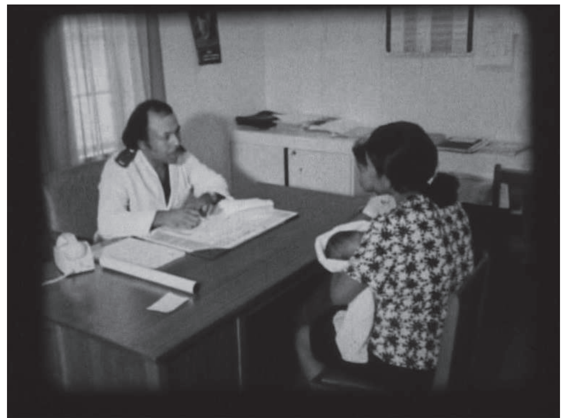

Fig. 2.12 Health Centre - Doctor and patient

Fig. 2.13 Health Centre - Young mothers and babies

The documentary's health-centred sequence camouflaged the discriminatory practice of medicine and its terrible effects on the disadvantaged. On 25 July 1981, the *Star* warned that "there [was] one doctor for every 600 people in the big cities (Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town) and one doctor for every 20 000 people in the homelands."[88] The massive drain of doctors out of the country rendered the problem more acute.[89] A few months before, on 7 January 1981, the *Rand Daily Mail* had reported that the infant mortality was for "whites 12/1000 live births; urban blacks 69/1000 live births; and rural blacks 240/1000 live births" (World Health Organization 1983, 17). For Black children—African, Coloured and Indian—"perinatal and neonatal mortality [was] high; the infant mortality rate in certain regions reached 378 per 1000 in 1976. Diarrhoeal diseases cause[d] 50% of deaths before the age of 10 years. Malnutrition [was] responsible for 30% of deaths before the age of 10 years [...] Rheumatic heart disease affect[ed] 6.9 per 1,000 of schoolchildren" (ibid., 31). The Medical Association of South Africa (MASA) eventually admitted the racialist practice of medicine to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC): they confessed that, although some members actively opposed the apartheid government, the association "was always, without doubt, a part of the white establishment [...] and for the most part and in most contexts, shared the worldview and political beliefs of that establishment. Inescapably, it also shared the misdeeds and the sins for which the white establishment was responsible," so "it failed to see the need to treat all people as equal human beings. Perhaps the same could be said of other groupings in society. MASA allowed black and white people to be treated differently, and this is the form of human rights violations for which it stands disgraced" (TRC 1998, vol. 4, 146 [§110–1]).[90]

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88. Quoted by John Nyati Pokela, Chairman of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, in World Health Organization (1983, 16).

89. "In regard to health infrastructure it was found that in 1975 bed/population ratio was 1:96 for less than 5 million whites as compared with 1:186 for more than 23 million blacks"; "The problem of the maldistribution of health manpower is complicated by the massive drain of doctors out of the country." (Ibid., 30)

90. "NAMDA [National Medical and Dental Association] was an 'alternative' medical association, formed on 5 December 1982. In its submission to the Commission, the Progressive Doctors' Group (PDG), a core group of ex-NAMDA doctors formed to pursue discussions about a united medical association for South Africa, gave some of the reasons for the NAMDA breakaway from the MASA. These included:

> With the increased repression of the 1980s, it became important to work at making health facilities safe or providing alternative services. NAMDA, together with other professional organisations, such as the Organisation for Appropriate Social Services in South Africa (OASSSA), took on this responsibility. NAMDA disbanded in the early 1990s when it became evident that South Africa was moving towards a new democratic dispensation in which the Department of Health would (it was believed) take on the issues

The complex relationship between segregation and health, and its roots in colonial ideology, have been extensively researched. In the imperialistic imagination, the civilising mission was conceived first as a healing mission. Spiritual enlightenment and material progress came together; numerous doctors, such as David Livingstone, laid the groundwork for imperialist expansion. While Maylam (1995, 15) signals that "It would be a mistake to view the 'sanitation syndrome' as the major imperative towards segregation," Lund (2003, 91) argues that "with the advent of germ theory in the latter part of the nineteenth century, hygiene became a paramount public interest. Cleanliness of mind and body were increasingly inseparable in public discourse, and dirt of any kind was thought to be morally as well as physically corrupting," thus justifying surveillance and control:

> "Public health policies extended the power of the colonial state over the indigenous population, intervening in everything from housing to personal habits. This assertion of control over black bodies in the name of hygiene served colonial interests by protecting the material welfare of settler society: its health, home, trade, and workforce. Though hygiene campaigns ostensibly assuaged white paranoia about black alterity, they surreptitiously encouraged racial suspicion in order to legitimize continued state authority." (Ibid., 92)

With urban growth and its correlated slums and squatting, Swanson (1977, 409) contends that "urban race relations came to be widely conceived and dealt with in the imagery of infection and epidemic disease." Set against the Latin American, African, and Asian slums, the trash removal service and medical help in Mitchell's Plain point to race relations under control (miscegenation under control?[91]) if not appeased race relations. Interestingly, the medical centre is defined as "avidly used." This ambivalent phrase suggests either an exaggerated or an unfounded concern, all the more so as no patient looks sick or tired in the sequence—the centre is bursting with life. Rather than a healing ideology, apartheid seems to be proposed as a healed ideology (i.e. Botha's neo-apartheid).

What better illustration of a healthy and orderly activity than gardening? Mitchell's Plain has no hill of shacks or worm-like people moving around. The travelling shot of a street displays houses adorned with trees, and several images capture the inhabitants' lovely flowery lawns; here, a man is cutting his grass, and there another is planting a shrub (figures 2.14, 2.15,

that had triggered its creation." (TRC, vol. 4, 147 [§113–5]: https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/report/finalreport/Volume%204.pdf [archive]; http://sabctrc.saha.org.za/reportpage.php?id=13051)

91. "Miscegenation was the most horrifying specter to haunt the dream of pure difference that arose in South Africa: conjuring up the mixing of body fluids, of blood, of races, it signified erasure of identity, loss of distinction." (Lund 2003, 95)

2.16). In Mitchell's Plain, "residents own their homes, and they have pride in the fruits of their work in the neat gardens." The feeling seems essential as it is repeated and equated with sports: "The pride of many people's lives is their garden, and surely gardening in the fresh air is just as relaxing as a sport." The notion of pride in the environment was a positive matter of concern for the Theron Commission over the effects of group areas on the Coloured population:

> "The negative side, on the other hand, is that the Coloured group areas, in terms of location, beautification, architectural lay-out, and availability of community amenities, compare badly with most White residential areas. It is difficult to develop community pride when there are so few visible things to be proud of." (Theron 1976, 464)

Besides, the garden city was an urban reformist planning model conceived by the British town planner Ebenezer Howard and aimed to address the overcrowded, polluted, unsanitary conditions of Victorian cities amid fears of working-class revolt:

> "Many 19th-century housing reformers, gardening enthusiasts and those landowners and employers who built model villages for their workers believed that the provision of better homes preferably with gardens would not only improve the living standards of the people but by altering their recreational activities would inculcate the domestic virtues and thereby improve the behaviour of the masses. Their influence can be seen in the adoption in the early 20th century of a radical new housing design. But more profoundly it can be traced in the consequent changes in the pattern of popular recreation, just as the reformers had predicted. The new estates consisting of low density houses and attached gardens encouraged the development of home-centred leisure activities." (Constantine, 1981, 399[92])

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92. "Much of the popular recreation of the lower orders in the 19th century seemed to the middle class to be debilitating, irrational and degrading, laced with physical violence and heavy drinking. Much of it seemed to imply no special regard for family and home: recreation was usually taken publicly in group or community activities not as a family concern. The low-grade theatre, music hall or riotous street outing; wakes fairs and violent sporting activities; and the ubiquitous public house and associated games and gambling dismayed the middle-class observer… Alarmed by working-class behaviour there followed a number of campaigns to control and discipline the working class in their use of leisure, and to encourage the pursuit of 'rational recreations.' It was in this context that we should see 19th-century attempts to encourage gardening among the urban and rural masses. […] Efforts to encourage gardening among the mass of working people ran up against substantial obstacles. That few working people had the leisure for gardening after a day's work was perhaps the least of them. In the towns, a smoky polluted atmosphere was another discouragement. But the principal problem was the character of most housing development in the 19th century. […] In practice except for the building of a handful of model industrial villages, nothing effective was done in the 19th century to counter the urban obstacles to popular gardening. So long as income

Fig. 2.14 House with nice garden

Fig. 2.15 Man cutting his grass

Fig. 2.16 Man planting a shrub

The insistence on gardening in the documentary *Mitchells Plain* acquires a strong connotation when set against the violent and brutal political background of the 1976 Soweto riots and its subsequent propagation to the Cape and the Coloured community. These neat gardens could visually confirm the positive assuaging effect of the new housing design. They mirror the statement made by the Department's regional representative, Mr Jan Walters, in the 1979 propaganda brochure *Mitchells Plain, an investment in people*, that "Mitchells Plain was entirely unaffected by the 1976 urban riots"[93] (Information Service 1979, 12). The insistence on gardening does not preclude a possible reference to Voltaire's *Candide* (1759),[94] the famous optimistic character through whom the satirical French philosopher praises the lives of those who mind their own business, as expressed in his final words: "Let us cultivate our garden." By analogy, in the face of contemporary protests, Mitchell's Plain's industrious residents are retreating into gardening ("it is the pride of many people's lives"), therefore minding their own business in search of peace ("just as relaxing as sport"). Being constructed as a place of civilisation, Mitchell's Plain implicitly constructs places of protest as places of barbarians.

The film's final sequence comprises aerial views of Mitchell's Plain, showing Table Mountain in the background (figure 2.17) or focusing on plots of well-aligned houses (figure 2.18) and a series of images of peaceful streets with pretty white bungalows (figure 2.19). Here, a skateboarder emerges, followed by children on bikes (figure 2.20); a modern bus appears there (figure 2.21). As the documentary draws to a close, the off-screen voice declares:

> "Alongside the blue depth and foam-tipped crests of False Bay, Man, with his skill, is painting a living colourful picture of a happy community. Like Ennerdale, Eldorado Park, Atlantis, and Phoenix, this is a nation's answer to a worldwide problem that is also threatening our people, thus laying the foundations of a new society. South Africa hails the future with confidence."

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was low, land expensive travel to work by foot or slow transport and government intervention minimal, then a high density of building was inevitable in the towns when industrialisation sucked people to them and population grew. In these circumstances there was little space for gardens or allotments. Attempts to make gardening the 'rational recreation' of the urban masses were doomed to failure." (Constantine 1981, 390–4)

93. The Theron Commission identified the causality between the general health conditions of the Coloured community and their poor socio-economic condition, pointing out to poor nutrition, over-consumption of alcohol and the spread of diseases like tuberculosis.

94. "Pangloss sometimes said to Candide: 'There is a concatenation of events in this best of all possible worlds; for if you had not been kicked out of a magnificent castle for love of Miss Cunegonde; if you had not been put into the Inquisition; if you had not walked over America; if you had not stabbed the Baron; if you had not lost all your sheep from the fine country of El Dorado; you would not be here eating preserved citrons and pistachio-nuts.' 'All that is very well,' answered Candide, 'but let us cultivate our garden.'" (Voltaire 1918 [1759], 168)

Fig. 2.17 Aerial view of Mitchell's Plain with Table Mountain

Fig. 2.18 Aerial view of Mitchell's Plain - Plots

Fig. 2.19 Row of bungalows

Fig. 2.20 Skateboarder followed by children on bikes

Fig. 2.21 Modern bus

The image of the romantic blue ball from space echoes the aerial image of the romantic city by a blue bay. Just as in the painting *The Birth of Venus* by Sandro Botticelli, Venus is pictured arriving at the shore after her birth from the sea foam, so is Mitchell's Plain born "alongside the blue depth and foam-tipped crests of False bay." It is represented as a display of artistry ("Man with his skills […] painting a living colourful picture") and the materialisation of happiness ("happy community"). It becomes the locus of a "new society" meant as a break from the South African past (Botha is then publicised as a reformer) or the worldwide present (its "struggle for decent living space"). *Mitchells Plain* reveals an extraordinary realisation in technical terms and

a labour of love by its makers. South Africa's elimination of the "threat" that allows the "foundations of a new society," namely the New Civilisation challenge, is represented as comparable with the New Frontier challenge overcome by the USA, the UK and France in the area of science and space.

Brazil, Zambia, India, and Malaysia: Convenient References?

Taken from Payne's *Urban Housing in the Third World* (1977), the references to Brazil, Zambia, India and Malaysia become all the more conspicuous since they conjure up the profound influences of foreign societies on South Africa. The country's most ancient peoples were the hunter-gatherer San (Bushmen) and the pastoral Khoi-Khoi (Hottentots), known collectively as the Khoisan. The latter were displaced by or intermingled with Bantu-speaking people from central Africa. These also settled in Zambia during their migrations. The first Indians and Chinese arrived during the Dutch colonial era as slaves. In the second half of the nineteenth century, they came as indentured labourers mostly—the former to work in Natal's sugar plantations and the latter in the Witwatersrand gold mines—but they also came as free and exiled individuals looking for opportunities abroad. The Chinese and Indians were often merged in terms of racist legal designation, and their political paths crossed in racially segregated South Africa.[95] Malay identity was open. It comprised individuals

95. Interestingly, as Karen L. Harris argues, "the Chinese participation in the first phases of passive resistance was [...] meaningful in terms of Gandhian historiography. [...] Their actions in the early 1900s were significant in that they placed the Chinese at the centre of an internationally important political movement, Gandhi's 'satyagraha.' In her preface she stresses that 'contrary to the impression created in South African historiography, their role was not confined to the half dozen years at the turn of the twentieth century when Chinese mine labourers were indentured on the Witwatersrand gold mines. Since Dutch administration at the Cape in the mid-seventeenth century, free, slave and exiled Chinese individuals formed part of a small, but growing, multicultural South African society. Their numbers remained insignificant for two centuries, but there was an increase in Chinese immigration until legislation restricted it after 1912" (Harris 1998, xi).

Eventually she points out that "the Chinese participation in the first phases of passive resistance was, however, meaningful in terms of Gandhian historiography. In this context, they provided a different perspective to his relations with non-Indian communities and therefore repudiated the conventional revisionist view of Gandhi as 'politically exclusive.' Gandhi was not the leader of the Chinese passive resistance movement, but in many ways he did encourage and approve of their participation in the widespread political campaign against racist legislation. Although the Indians never concluded a firm alliance with their fellow Asians, the Chinese, this was not because it was unexpedient, but rather because of their cultural ethnocentrism. Cultural exclusivity seemed to cut across class lines in the organization of passive resistance. The Indians and Chinese fought a similar battle, against similar laws and similar governments, yet their respective

from diverse cultural and racial categories, including descendants of enslaved people from South and South-East Asia and Mozambique imported in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Arabs and Khoisan (Adhikari 1989). The Malay population was relatively small; a group area was proclaimed in Cape Town only.[96]

Much like South Africa, Brazil also saw the emergence of an intermediate race category—the Mullatoes—reflecting physical mixing. However, the two countries differed in their perceptions of miscegenation. In the early days of the Cape Colony, as white men outnumbered white women, sexual relationships between persons of different races were widespread. As of the second half of the seventeenth century, "the melting-pot which Cape Town had already become, was added a new racial flavour. Malay and Indian slaves and others joined the Khoi-Khoi, San, Dutch, German and Huguenots (who had first begun arriving at the Cape in 1688) to provide the ingredients for the creation of the class of persons of mixed race" (Du Pré 1994, 13). Tragically, after the arrival of the British, who introduced the first race laws, and "throughout the 19th century, despite being on an equal footing legally and politically, whites continued to distance themselves from coloured people. Segregation became the norm of race relations between these two groups" (ibid., 15). The high degree of miscegenation in Brazil resulted from historical circumstances in which Portuguese settlers, because of the shortage of white women, disregarded the official prohibition of cross-racial sexual practices by the Church and the Crown:

> "By 1890 the census showed 41 percent mulatto nationally [...] Blacks and Whites embraced miscegenation and mulatto offspring, not seen as a diluting of the white race but as 'whitening' all Brazilians. The resulting mixture was widely celebrated as a social strength, as was true elsewhere in Latin America." (Marx 1998, 66–7)

Is it such a coincidence that the respective populations of Brazil, Zambia, India and Malaysia are reminders of South African race groups? They provided convenient examples for a comparative demonstration of the apartheid government's better treatment of their mosaic of peoples in a documentary that sought to expose and undermine what the Department of Information called "journalistic racism":

> "Journalistic racism is a relatively new product produced in, packaged and distributed mostly from the USA, Britain, Holland, Canada and Scandinavia, and to a lesser extent Germany. [...] This new journalism purports to concern

cultural chauvinisms kept them apart" (ibid., 330–2).

96. In Cape Town, Bo-Kaap was declared a "Group Area for Malays" in terms of the Group Areas Act of 1950. In his study, Jeppie (1987, 47–51) examines the attempts to reinvent and reconstitute the "Malay."

> itself with the human dignity, political rights, economic and spiritual well-being of Black people—but not *all* Black people—only Black people who are in contact with White people. If the human dignity of Black people, their political rights and their religion are denied or even ruthlessly stamped out as happened to the Black Christians in the Sudan, as is now happening to the Black Christians in Mozambique or to the Blacks in Guinea, Angola or other assorted one man Black man dictatorship, then hostile analysis and constant publicity of these events are avoided or played down, deliberately so. In terms of the new racism, human dignity is only at stake within a framework of Black-White relations. In the same vein, what Brown and Yellow is doing to Brown and Yellow elsewhere on the globe is strictly a one-week issue." (Department of Information Report 1977, 4)

"Brazil [...] was a formative influence on architects and town planners during a critical period in the 1930s and '40s" (Campbell 1998, 2); in the decade after World War II, Brazilian modernity was a source of inspiration to South Africans. Several South African architects, such as Norman Eaton, Barrie Biermann and the President of the Institute of South African Architects (ISAA), Brodrick St Clair Lightfoot, visited Brazil. The architecture of Oscar Niemeyer inspired the design of some buildings, more specifically in post-1948 Pretoria:

> "The prerequisites for a regional style were all present in Pretoria during the 1940s and 1950s: graduates fresh from a pragmatic education, state commissions to further nationalism after the election of the National Party in 1948, an improved patronage of the modern aesthetic and a rich diversity of indigenous building materials. The time was ripe for new influences and the 1943 Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) exhibition and subsequent publication of 'Brazil Builds' brought new Modern Movement mutations to the rest of the world, including South Africa." (Barker 2017)

In the late 1970s, Brazil was less inspiring. The documentary reveals the blatant discrepancy between the picturesque view of Rio's Sugar Loaf Mountain at the mouth of Guanabara Bay jutting out into the Atlantic Ocean and the subsequent image of a slum stretching over the side of a green hill. "The most beautiful cities, the most prosperous peoples must still contend with annoying need for housing," says the off-screen commentator. He associates remarkable beauty and prosperity with annoyance at the need exposed by the sight of the slums—an understatement meant as a sarcastic snapshot of contemporary Brazil, which is far from being a raw model in social engineering and politics.

Indeed, in the late 1970s, Brazil was not a democracy. The country was under a brutal military dictatorship. Thousands of arrests followed the March 1964 military coup. It included the "spectacle" of the public torture of communist leader Gregorio Bezerra, filmed and broadcast by TV *Jornal*

do Commercio of Recife.[97] Ironically enough, in 1966, barely two years after the military putsch, an international seminar on apartheid—inaugurating the first of a series of conferences on apartheid—was held in Brasilia from 3 to 24 August, organised and sponsored by the United Nations. Brazil was also an elected member of its Security Council from 1967 to 1968. Inside the country, the military junta heavily curtailed freedom of expression. The Fifth Institutional Act (AI-5) of December 1968 allowed censorship of the press, repression of public protests, harassment and imprisonment of anti-regime artists, surveillance of learning institutions for any "subversive activity," torture and murder of political activists and opposition leaders[98], including their children.[99] The act was eventually abrogated in 1978. In 1979, at the end of his five-year term, General Ernesto Geisel appointed General Joao Figueiredo (1979–85) as his successor. This former head of the National Intelligence Office promptly signed the Amnesty Law pardoning anyone involved in political crimes and human rights violations between 2 September 1961 and 15 August 1979.

During the years of military dictatorship, the west zone neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro rapidly developed into a favela. In 1960, Cidade de Deus ("City

97. Martins Filho (2009) examines memories and testimonies about the practice of torture by the military regime.

98. "A key feature of the Brazilian military regime was its curtailment of the freedom of expression, especially after the draconian Fifth Institutional Act (AI-5) of December 1968, which essentially allowed the military presidents to rule by decree. Public protests were severely repressed, and the freedom of assembly depended on the consent of local military commanders. Prior censorship of print media became routine, and to avoid complications, editors often adopted policies of self-censorship as well [...]. In the cultural sphere, anti-regime artists were harassed, imprisoned, or forced to pursue their careers abroad. Universities were monitored for 'subversive activities' by state agents operating undercover or posted directly into the upper university administration. The ability of lawyers and judges to defend the rule of law was constrained by so-called 'national security' legislation... AI-5 was not abrogated until 1978, well into the period of military-led political liberalization, and the various National Security Laws persisted throughout the regime." (Power 2016, 18). Joan Dassin's book, *Torture in Brazil: A Shocking Report on the Pervasive Use of Torture by Brazilian Military Governments, 1964–1979, Secretly Prepared by the Archdiocese of São Paulo* (Dassin 1998 [1986]), is the English version of *Brasil: Nunca Mais* (Arns 1985) and summarises the findings in a 7,000-page report prepared over five years by a team of 35 researchers. Sponsored by Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns, archbishop of Sao Paulo, and coordinated by Presbyterian minister Dr. Jaime Wright, the project draws upon more than 1 million pages of records of military court proceedings between 1964 and 1979. It records the testimony of 1,843 political prisoners, documents 283 types of torture, locates 242 clandestine torture centres, and identifies 444 individual torturers.

99. Twenty-four testimonies of children of political activists and opposition leaders are gathered in Merlino (2014). The book was made after a series of auditions before the Truth Commission of the State of São Paulo (6–20 May 2013).

of God") was founded about 25 km from the Sugar Loaf Mountain (*Pão de Açúcar*)—the same distance that separates Cape Town from Mitchell's Plain. Opportunistically enough, the strategy of successive removals from Rio de Janeiro to Cidade de Deus mainly affected disadvantaged Afro-Brazilians:

> "Rio de Janeiro's government was also busy with social engineering or, more exactly, with the remaking of communities according to a concept of ideal urban space as held by the administration. It was not an apartheid regime; ethnicity had little to do with it—at least at first sight. But with around 40 percent of the urban population of Rio de Janeiro living in favelas or precarious housing, most of them Afrobrazilians, the local administration embraced slum removal with enthusiasm. […] when a large flood swamped Rio de Janeiro in 1966, government planners seized the opportunity to remove large chunks of the poor population from the favelas in the hills or in the riskier areas to the newly built (and not yet quite habitable) neighbourhood of Cidade de Deus—City of God. The housing project had been planned to promote the development of the western borders of the city. […] Floods in the following three decades would also bring new waves of displaced communities to City of God. They also created waves of growth in the area: there were those who had arrived with the 1967 rains, and those of the 1978 rains, and then again those of the 1988 rains. It was not only the community that changed with each flood but the landscape as well. Eventually the neighbourhood reproduced many of the central city's vices. There was social and gender inequality within City of God, there was drug use and drug trafficking, and there was a predatory relation with that new landscape, which was quite foreign for most of the residents born and raised in the streets of Rio. […] It was simply a policy of removing people from visible and valuable areas without investing in housing or equality strategies." (Sedrez 2014, 113–6)

Following the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960, the South African government banned the African National Congress (ANC) under the Unlawful Organizations Bill for its involvement in the demonstration. The ANC's "external mission" headquarters was in the UK and Tanzania at various times. The movement had its headquarters in Zambia for the most prolonged period.[100] The newly independent country supported freedom fighters from neighbouring countries. The ANC came to be closely associated with Lusaka, to such an extent that "Lusaka" became a shorthand identifier of the ANC in exile. The pilgrimage or trek to Lusaka became a feature of internal politics for supporters, critics, and even opponents, of the ANC in the later 1980s (Macmillan 2009, 305). Zambia was then a one-party state with President Kenneth Kaunda's United

100. "The impression is sometimes given that Lusaka became the headquarters of the ANC immediately after Zambian independence in October 1964, but this was not the case. […] The military headquarters and president's office were in Lusaka from 1967 onwards, and the national executive committee usually met there from that date—the treasurer-general and secretary-general's office moved there in 1971–2." (Macmillan 2009, 308)

National Independence Party (UNIP) as the sole legal, political party. The country was far from being a haven:

> "As a result of the oil price crisis, the collapse of copper prices, the subsequent depression, economic mismanagement, and the shortage of 'essential commodities,' life for almost everyone in Zambia was uncomfortable [...] The 'strange appeal' of Zambia included the fact that, with neighbours such as Rhodesia, Angola, Mozambique, South West Africa and the Congo, all of which suffered liberation and/or civil wars, it was an island of relative peace, stability and non-racialism—in spite of economic hardships that were often attributed to the sacrifices made for the liberation of others." (Ibid., 307)

Lusaka had enormous slums, such as Chawama (Robert Compound) or George Compound. In 1973 unauthorised areas in Lusaka accommodated 26,300 households: 40% of the city's population. None of these people had formal title to the land, planning or building permission, thus officially regarded as illegal residents (Radoki 1987, 353). The Improvement Areas Act of 1974 paved the way for upgrading unauthorised urban settlements, and the World Bank supported an upgrading programme, which ended in the early 1980s. However, while Zambia was one of the middle-income African countries until the 1980s, "the successive post-independence governments have also failed to come up with a permanent solution to the provision of decent housing in a rapidly growing city" (Mulenga 2003, 14). The visual reference to a Zambian slum was opportune in that the documentary film was made and released at a time when the ANC in Lusaka was undergoing a transformation and becoming conspicuous in many areas, including the rather embarrassing living standards of its members:

> "After the Soweto uprising of 1976–77, there was a large influx of new recruits and the ANC population of Lusaka grew steadily in the latter years of the decade. The ANC was transformed from a relatively small and still rather beleaguered community, whose exile leaders were not at all well known internationally, or even in South Africa, into something like a government-in-waiting [...] Most ANC people lived in high-density suburbs cheek by jowl with poor Zambians. The ANC members' lack of formal employment and their apparently privileged access to 'essential commodities' caused some resentment among the host population. A major difference between members of the ANC and of the other liberation movements based in Zambia was that ANC 'cadres' lived in town while most members of other groups were placed in camps, often at great distances from Lusaka." (Macmillan 2009, 318–9)

The strife between India and the apartheid government started under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru (1947–64). He brought South Africa's new system to the attention of The United Nations Organisation in 1948, which subsequently led to a series of resolutions and measures to bring the abandonment of apartheid. When Indira Gandhi succeeded her father and became Prime Minister of India (1966–77), the gap widened:

> "Outwardly it could be perceived that New Delhi's closer ties with Moscow influenced Gandhi's relations with African states. This outlook was broadly aligned to the Soviet Union's growing support for the major continental liberation movements, such as the anti-apartheid struggle of the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa and the independence movement led by the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) in Namibia [...] India provided financial and material assistance through mechanisms such as the UN Fund for Namibia, the UN Education and Training programme for South Africa and the Action for Resisting Invasion, Colonialism and Apartheid." (Naidu 2011, 51–2)

In the late 1970s, India was one of the South African government's bitterest enemies. The documentary's reference to the severe problem of poverty in India could have been meant as a retaliatory opportunity not to be missed. According to Bhargava (1987, 21–3), the objective of erasing poverty is distinctly spelt out for the first time in the Indian Draft Fifth Five Year Plan (1974–79), stipulating that "the estimates of the Planning Commission, however, indicate that for the country as a whole the percentage of people below the poverty line has marginally gone down from 51.49 in 1972–73 to 48.13 in 1977–78. Thus, nearly 50 per cent of our population has been living below the poverty line continuously over a long period." The film's heart-breaking image of the single mother spinning outside a cluster of shacks in a "historic city" where "two out of every three families live in a single room" could mean scathing criticism at the Indian National Congress. A jibe at its blatant neglect of its neediest citizens—while financially and materially assisting foreigners. An irony? The camera focuses on the spinning wheel. The charkha symbolised Mahatma Gandhi's nationalism and social cohesion, as well as the Indian independence movement.

By allowing a certain degree of imprecision, the critical edge of the scene becomes sharper. Indeed, the "historic city" is not distinctly named or recognisable. The context is minimalist: the viewer is shown a few shacks in an empty squatter area, then a closer shot of the weaver with her child by her humble dwelling—the epitome of loneliness and desolation. It is all the more striking in such a populous country. By showing some intimacy with voiceless individuals stripped of their identities, thus embodying the plight of ordinary people, the scene is reminiscent of the socio-political narration of artists such as American photographer Dorothea Lange in her iconic *Migrant Mother* series, a reflection of the times.[101] Was the documentary alluding to Indira Gandhi's controversial state of emergency from 1975 to 1977? The dark period included a mass forced sterilisation campaign amongst many other violations, and the demolition of slums in Delhi culminated with

101. Curtis (1986) provides a historical analysis of the picture, which he sees as essential to understanding the period.

the infamous episode of the Turkman gate,[102] spotted by the South African Information Service as a case of double standards by the Foreign Press:

> "When the Gandhi government bulldozed a slum into a wasteland in the area of Delhi known locally as the Turkman Gate, this was followed by serious riots. Many people died in police firing and hundreds were injured by bricks in the police charges and beatings. Dozens of women were publicly raped, but perhaps the most savage of all, men and women were bulldozed to death in their houses for refusing to get out. When squatter camps were cleared up in Cape Town during 1977 the news made headlines in most of the liberal media in Britain and the United States. With the exception of a few British newspapers, for example *The Guardian* of February 6, 1978 and a few brief mentions and a few brief paragraphs in some of the American newspapers, this record of slum clearance in India is still virtually unknown to the Western world." (Department of Information Report 1977, 13)

Similarly, the documentary film points to another case of double standards when it represents Malaysia's Chinese community with the pictures of a woman surrounded by children collecting wood in a filthy street and three busy people putting away parcels on a truck. By 1980 the Malaysian government had implemented a system of ethnic discrimination. From 1870 to 1930, the country saw a sharp influx of economic immigrants sponsored by the British colonial authorities and drawn primarily from India and China. As they became economically successful in many industries, the Chinese groups were considered a "danger" to the Malay intellectuals, who began talking about themselves as a "Malay race" (Nah 2006, 288). As of the late 1950s, the transfer of power from colonial rule

> "entrenched Malay paramountcy as the ideological foundation of post-colonial nation-state. The provisions for citizenship were widened and brought closer to nationality. Non-Malays could be admitted to the nation, but the first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman did not concede that nationality should be the basis of citizenship. There continued to be a distinction between the nation-state and its cultural foundation." (Harper 1996, 241)

On 13 May 1969, racial riots in Kuala Lumpur made hundreds of victims, most Chinese. The government responded by adopting measures favouring Malays (i.e. the *Bumiputera*, "indigenous" or "sons of the soil") at the expense of Malaysia's Chinese and Indian citizens: the "New Economic Policy" (NEP),

> "The redistribution goal was to be realised by aggressive use of the public sector, imposition of quotas and preferential treatment for Bumiputera, coupled with restrictive licensing practices. Important components of the NEP were the imposition of a rigid education quota for Bumiputera in a broad-based education system as well as changing the medium of instruction from English

102. Dayal and Bose (2015) offer a detailed account of the Turkman Gate incident.

> to Bahasa Malaysia. These were seen as vital because the elitist education system inherited from the British at independence disadvantaged the largely rural Malays because the best schools were in the cities and instruction was in English." (Thillainathan and Cheong 2016, 56)

Tensions crept in:

> "The racially most divisive issue in Malaysia, however, is and remains education as it directly affects a cultural heritage-language. The year 1978 witnessed another corrosive debate as Chinese guilds and clan associations insisted upon the establishment of a private Merdeka (independence) University in which Chinese would be the main language of instruction. The argument was that too few non-bumiputras were admitted to existing universities (about 27.5%), overseas education had become too expensive, and emigration was not feasible for most Chinese parents." (Indorf 1979, 21)

The NEP paradoxically used ethnic preference to promote national unity.[103] It enforced affirmative action on behalf of the *Bumiputera* community. Wasn't it reinforcing stereotypical ethnic identities instead of creating an inclusive society?

> "The identity is one which is fraught with its own ambiguities and contradictions. With the advantage of hindsight, we now know that its main consequence has been to drive a divisive wedge between its citizenry, as it logically sought to define who to include or exclude, who to empower or marginalise." (Ibrahim 2012, 293)

The references to Brazil, Zambia, India and Malaysia are composed in such a way as to create a legitimate basis for an argumentative documentary about social responsibility and political commitment. They imply inconsistencies at several levels: environmentally (e.g. the juxtaposition of the Sugar Loaf Mountain and the favela), aesthetically (e.g. the compound in Lusaka has no identity), historically (e.g. a "historic city" is represented by a lonely and destitute mother with her child—the epitome of an endangered civilisation), economically (e.g. "even in wealthy countries" people are migrating, like the Malaysian Chinese, thus jeopardising stability), and at a human level (the people pictured from a distance are like insects moving around, and those seen at closer range do not speak). Set against these cities in these countries, the creation of Mitchell's Plain becomes all the more powerful. The housing development is environmental and technical advancement (e.g. "Because of its sandy nature, the ground had to be stabilised with straw and rolled firm to provide excellent building stands"). It also incorporates aesthetic concerns (e.g. there are a "beautiful 9 km seafront" and "no less than 70 house designs"). In Mitchell's Plain, history and culture are not disregarded (the housing estate is built in "the heartland of South Africa's Coloured community," and

103. This is analysed in Ibrahim (2012).

the nursery is "moulding the future men and women of Mitchell's Plain"). In the economic sphere, the off-screen narrator evokes investments and opportunities creating stability and growth (e.g. Mr Claasens, a businessman, "can relax in the comfort of his own home, and plan for the future"—i.e. open a second bookshop). Lastly, human dignity is acknowledged and conveyed through face-to-face interviews with named individuals: Mitchell's Plain residents allegedly speak for themselves and look straight at the camera as if addressing the viewers.

Truth, Deception and Magic

Within 1 minute and 15 seconds, the well-structured and concentrated sequence, going from the successful launch into outer space to specific spots in selected countries, provides the contextualisation needed to qualify and reposition South Africa. The quick pace catches and controls the audience's attention. All the while, the images and their related off-screen comments secure support with what is already agreed as factual (i.e. the latest advances in science and technology and the global demographic problem). These constitute concrete arguments meant to bear on the presentation of South Africa's case (i.e. Mitchell's Plain as "a nation's answer to a worldwide problem"). The off-screen narrator first engages in a philosophical and poetic reflection on humankind—the creator of "incredible" and "ghost-like" machines sees a "romantic blue ball"—a possible warning against the slumbering of reason. He then switches to down-to-earth demographical considerations with figures and ratios ("20% of the population of one of the world's great cities," "two out of every three families," "more than a thousand million people") to encourage the awakening of reason. The whole perspective, a visual surgical-like approach coupled with the meditative then pragmatic discourse, poses the question of truth and deception, thus setting an opportune background against which the situation in South Africa can be introduced:

> "Since World War II, the Republic of South Africa has experienced the same housing problem as the rest of the world. Industrial growth enticed large numbers of people to South Africa's principal cities at a faster rate than the giant housing programs could progress. Slums developed, and South Africans were shocked to the core by conditions like these. The problem was not confined to slums. In older housing schemes, overcrowding began to cause serious headaches. Parliament voted millions of rands for housing schemes, and the Department of Community Development set to work to eliminate the pressing housing shortage. Vast housing projects were launched: Eldorado Park and Ennerdale between Johannesburg and Vereeniging, Atlantis on the West Coast near Cape Town, Phoenix in Natal, and Mitchell's Plain."

Fig. 2.22 Johannesburg

Fig. 2.23 Crowd

The reference to WWII immediately revives the trauma of millions of deaths—between 65 and 75 million[104]—and the tragic fact that humans regularly kill each other. The reference serves as a reminder of society's misuse of technology—as opposed to promising applications such as the rocket and the satellite—and outbursts of aggressiveness in response to territorial conflicts. War could be the inevitable consequence of population pressures (as forewarned by Malthus in his 1798 classic essay)—pressures such as the waves of people captured by the film, moving crowds filling the entire screen. Black African people walk towards the camera, some repeated shots creating the awkward impression of frontal

104. World War I mortality is estimated between 13 and 15 million, and World War II between 65 and 75 million (Leitenberg 2006, 9).

waves overwhelming South Africa through Johannesburg (figures 2.22 and 2.23). The question of containment—i.e. asserting one's authority—inevitably looms up.

Most people (youngsters to older adults) are smartly dressed. Some men are more elegant than others, wearing nice coats, hats and ties. Two of them have oldish woollen caps. A woman is carrying a big bundle on her head in a more rural fashion. Then, images of slums succeed one another. People are walking in filthy alleys bordered by shacks. At the end of a lane, two young girls are standing with their arms folded, looking after two toddlers; Table mountain is in the background, and clothes are drying on a washing line (figure 2.24). A group of women are standing around a tap, filling buckets of water, surrounded by children (figure 2.25). Some children are running around and playing; two of them are fighting. A man is standing outside his shack, his hands in his pockets (figure 2.26).

This introduction irons out the specificities of the South African economic context, especially regarding the mobility status of Black African workers. European countries became attractive destinations for potential migrants after WWII when their shattered economies had to be rebuilt. In South Africa, the industrial boom took place during the war years because of the worldwide transport disruption. It moved the country from a mining to a predominantly manufacturing economy, developing its metal and engineering industries.[105] Besides, Black African migration to the cities was not only due to the growing labour demand in the industrial sector. The 1913 Natives Land Act—one of the most important segregation laws of the century[106]—had carefully delineated the boundaries of the African reserves allowing ownership rights in only 7% of the country (a percentage that went up to 13% with the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act) but rapid population growth and soil erosion seriously undermined the income earning capacity of African farmers,

> "Widespread impoverishment, malnutrition and disease were reported in some areas by World War I and within most reserves by the late 1930s, with conditions being most severe in the Ciskei and Transkei areas of the Eastern Cape. By World War II, the disastrous conditions existing in the reserve areas of South Africa produced a massive movement of Africans to the cities." (Packard 1989, 687)

105. "By the end of the war South African manufacturing industry was not only capable of mass manufacture of a wide range of consumer goods but was also developing the capacity to manufacture the machines with which these goods could be produced. Though still needing technological imports, South African industry had passed the vital point of take-off into self-sustaining growth." (Omer-Cooper 1994, 183).

106. Feinberg (1993) analyses the political debate over the passage of the law.

Fig. 2.24 Young girls with toddlers

Fig. 2.25 Women around a tap with children

Fig. 2.26 Man outside his shack

The origin of squatting in Cape Town has its historical roots in the colonial dispossession of land with the arrival of the Dutch in the seventeenth century. It emerged as a significant social phenomenon in Cape Town in the 1930s and 1940s. As a result of the increased demand for unskilled labour in urban centres and the inadequacies of the African reserves, waves of Africans swept into the Cape Peninsula and took up residence as squatters. Squatting was also practised by Coloureds. African and Coloured squatters lived alongside one another. Since Africans were generally without labour rights, they were more tractable, particularly by accepting lower wages, so they appealed to most employers. In the 1940s, the mass scale of the influx of Black Africans into Cape Town was a source of alarm to politicians, civil servants, ratepayer associations, and journalists. This sense of fear and insecurity is visually conveyed in the documentary by the crowds moving towards the camera uninterruptedly and filling the entire screen—a metaphor for challenge, invasion and conquest.

When the National Party (NP) came to power in 1948, the newly elected government adopted a more repressive attitude to African urbanisation and squatting than its predecessor, the United Party (UP). In addition to the 1950 Population Registration and Group Areas Acts, categorising and segregating population groups according to race, the government directly targeted squatter settlements with the 1951 Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act.[107] It made for the establishment of emergency squatter camps. It authorised local authorities to forcedly remove Africans, who were "illegally" squatting, to these emergency camps or send them back to the reserves.[108] In 1955, the government implemented the Coloured Labour Preference Policy (CLPP), which prevented Africans from entering the boundaries of the CLPP unless in possession of a firm offer of employment:

> "The policy had explicit goals, the first, which it shared with apartheid policy elsewhere in the country, was to prevent the movement of Africans from the homelands to the Western Cape. This was its influx control component. The second policy goal was to secure, protect and bolster the participation of Coloureds in the labour market from competition by Africans. This was the preference component of the policy. Besides these explicit goals, the policy had a third, implicit rather than explicit goal, of attempting to preserve the Western Cape region as one part of South Africa where whites would be numerically dominant. This was linked to the possibility of a radical partition of the country.

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107. Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, Act No. 52 of 1951: https://www.jstor.org/stable/al.sff.document.leg19510706.028.020.052; https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/prevention-illegal-squatting-act-act-no-52-1951. The Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, No. 52 of 1951, was amended in 1952, 1976, 1977, 1980, 1988, and 1990.

108. Legassick (2006) details these removals between 1948 and 1970.

The coloured labour preference policy held sway for almost thirty year until its abolition in September 1984." (Humphries 2017, 169)

As Humphries (2017, 179) argues, the inefficient implementation of the CLPP and growth marred these explicit goals: "Economic expansion meant that the goal of reducing the numbers of Africans employed in the region could not be achieved—to say nothing of the ability of Africans to circumvent the influx control machinery." There were at least 120,000, probably about 180,000, Coloured squatters and about 51,000 African squatters in the Cape Town region in 1977 (Maree 1978, 1). The continuing and intensifying squatter policy made a clearer distinction between them: "Coloured squatters are to be tolerated but strictly controlled whereas African squatters are persona non grata and to be eliminated as soon as possible" (ibid., 7). The fundamental causes for squatting were political as well as economic:

"Coloured and African squatters are some of the most exploited workers with very low incomes as we have seen above. They are therefore in no position to afford to buy or live in economic housing even if it were available (which it is not). But they also belong to race groups that are denied political power ac the national and at the local levels. As a result they have no hand in shaping the housing policy that is handled at the national level by the Department of Community Development for Coloureds and the Bantu Affairs Administration Boards for Africans. Squatters are basically treated as labour units by the system: their labour is readily exploited, but their essential human and social requirements are ignored." (Ibid., 6–7)

The overcrowding and unhygienic living conditions of the squatter settlements, especially their inadequate sanitation and lack of running water, severely affected the health of their residents. The spread of diseases kept authorities anxious (Meier 2000). While the investigative camera of the documentary reveals the squalor of these informal settlements, the off-screen narrator cries out, "Slums developed, and South Africans were shocked to the core by conditions like these." He refers to the population of South Africa as a unified group, as if racial discrimination were not the identification norm. This reference immediately creates a devious difference between the pictured "large numbers of people"—Black African people walking in the streets and those living in slums, which Coloured people also inhabit—and the unseen "South Africans [who are] shocked to the core." The latter's racial group is guessed by default and opposition. Indeed, the filmed African and Coloured squatters do not look shocked. No infant is crying. Children are standing in groups, playing around or smiling—apart from two boys whose fighting might provide the exception that proves the rule and renders the placidity of the others more conspicuous. These squatters are not as dejected or hopeless as the lonely Indian weaver; most look indifferent to their conditions or

unaffected by them. Some are standing with folded arms, others with hands on their hips or in their pockets, positions stereotypically evocative of idleness. Visually speaking, they cannot possibly be identified with the shocked South Africans referred to by the commentator. As mentioned earlier, Black Africans were no longer citizens of South Africa since the Black Homeland Citizenship Act 26 of 1970, which required them to become citizens of one of the self-governing territories. Thus, the South Africans "shocked to the core" excluded both the Black Africans and the Coloureds. The sequence reflects the preface of the 1979 study "Quality of Life in Mitchell's Plain," published by the Institute for Sociological, Demographic and Criminological Research of the South African Human Sciences Research Council:

> "Perceptions and evaluations of the constituents of high and low quality of life are relative. [...] For example slums which are regarded as a blight by one sub-culture might be regarded as the epitome of social cohesion by another; [...] Similarly, although residence in informal settlements may be regarded by many White people as detrimental to life quality, the Coloured inhabitants of various localities in the Cape did not assess their neighbourhoods as providing a low quality of life. Indeed a significant number of squatters have at some stage resided in planned townships." (Smedley and Human 1979, 2)

Slums were a source of concern because, on the one hand, they posed a threat to public health, and, on the other hand, they could not be controlled and administered by a segregationist State. As Robinson (1996, 159) argues, these informal areas "ma[de] it very difficult for authorities to perform a wide variety of tasks, from service provision to policing and political control. And in South Africa, where detailed supervision of black people was considered the norm, shack settlements were a positive hindrance." The worrying housing shortage mirrored the logic of surveillance and control, which only the provision of housing schemes could achieve. In the documentary, the swarms of unattended children who roam the lanes of the squatter camp incarnate this anxiety as reminders of the popular adage that idleness is the mother of all vices. Three teenagers are filmed entering an empty and dirty area of dilapidated shacks taken over by wild nature; one leads the others into a narrow corridor between two partitions (figure 2.27). Another sequence shows two younger boys in a boxing fight (figure 2.28). The potential for future underground manoeuvres and social unrest is visually palpable. This threat is neutralised in Mitchell's Plain: the camera follows the happy game of three boys; one holds a toy gun and looks at the camera (figures 2.29 and 2.30), while the off-screen narrator declares, "Just a stone's throw from home, neat little parks with permanent playgrounds ensure that the small fry can use up their energy."

Fig. 2.27 Teenagers and dilapidated shacks

Fig. 2.28 Young boys in a boxing fight

Fig. 2.29 Boys and a toy gun (1)

Fig. 2.30 Boys and a toy gun (2)

These images and comments focus on the usual question of superfluous energy, which, if not suppressed, can easily be channelled into crime from an early age and spread into the community. Indeed, a high proportion of youth could be a danger to public order when placed in tense circumstances. Some concern is perceptible in the first report on the development of Mitchell's Plain by City Engineer Morris: "Under the section 'Provision of Community Facilities' he stresses that,

> '*one third of the population will be under ten* years of age and *no effort must be spared* to cater for the needs of the youth. *Special provision* will accordingly have to be made in the business zones for youth centres. Special provision will also have to be made in the town centre for the community facilities to serve the teenage population.'" (Morris 1972, 23 [my emphasis])

In the documentary, Mitchell's Plain children have toy guns—only.

"The problem was not confined to slums," the off-screen narrator declares, "in older housing schemes, overcrowding began to cause serious headaches." The scene shows a row of three-storey red brick buildings with outside stairs (figure 2.31). Unlike squatter camps, the location is neat (there is a specific area for the washing lines), and nobody is idling around (a few people are walking in a given direction). As opposed to squatter children standing about the shacks, fighting or looking for mischief, four calm children are walking in an orderly fashion with shopping bags (food as a reference to home) (figure 2.32). From the outside, the older housing scheme is not critical *per se*. As the camera moves inside, a flat is bursting with people: children and older people are either sitting down or standing because they cannot move for lack of place (figures 2.33 and 2.34). Nevertheless, they are quiet and dignified (e.g. older women are in armchairs, and children are friendly, clean, and well-behaved).

Fig. 2.31 Older housing schemes

Fig. 2.32 Older housing schemes - Children going home

Fig. 2.33 Older housing schemes - Lounge (1)

Fig. 2.34 Older housing schemes - Lounge (2)

These rows of red-brick buildings with outside stairs could be found in areas like Hanover Park, Lavender Hill or Manenberg. The documentary does not provide information on how old these "older" housing schemes are. While the Technical Management Service (TMS) of the City Engineers Department acknowledged that 90% of the City Council housing stock was built in the 1960s—when state intervention became crucial with the implementation of the Group Areas Act—,[109] Assistant City Engineer Mabin (1977, 5) reported that "in Cape Town, mass construction of three-storey flats started in 1965 and ceased in 1974," and further reckoned that,

> "In 1971, when serious thought was devoted to the planning of Mitchells Plain, the Coloured population of Cape Town was 366,000, of which 50% lived in some 30,000 low cost lettings, built by the City Council. Most of this stock was built after World War II. It was estimated that the Coloured Population comprised some 59,000 families, and that they were approximately 9,000 privately owned dwellings occupied by coloured families. A theoretical shortfall of housing for about 20,000 families existed." (Ibid., 9)

Overcrowding was not the only plight in these older housing schemes:

> "Rows and rows of shoddy houses and dingy flat in drab and dreary townships were erected on the Cape Flats for the coloured people who were evicted by the Group Areas Act. People were crammed into Bonteheuwel, Manenberg, Hanover Park, Heideveld and other townships. Each winter, many of these areas, were ravaged by floodwaters because no storm water drains had been laid." (Du Pré 1994, 88)

109. Technical Management Services (TMS), City Engineers Department, "To Outline the Coloured Housing Problem ad Question of the Role of Housing in Terms of Physical, Social and Economic Criteria" (working paper, 1980), 15; quoted in Le Grange (1987, 24).

Understandably, the documentary does not establish any causal link between the squatter camps and the older housing—it stresses only similarity. Yet,

> "A further political reason for the shortage of Coloured housing and hence squatting, is the implementation of the Group Areas Act. For instance, from 1971 to 1974 the City Council constructed 7,160 dwellings. However, only 3,581 of these houses were added to the housing stock because 3,579 of the new houses were used by the Department of Community Development for Group Areas resettlement. At times 80% of newly completed houses were used for Group Areas resettlements thereby severely limiting the supply of new housing." (Maree 1978, 6)

This is illustrated by the situation in District Six as exposed by the *Black Sash*:

> "In the light of the events culminating in the mass removals in District Six, it must be asked whether these Government policies constitute 'urban renewal' or whether they amount to blatant racial discrimination. At the time of the proclamation in 1966 there were some 29,000 people in the area that was proclaimed white. Today, [Feb. 1980] some 10,000 people are still resident in the area." (Centre for Intergroup Studies 1980, 21)

By 31 December 1980, 29,336 Coloured families had been evicted from their homes in the Cape Peninsula as from the date of the implementation of the Group Areas Act—2,736 Coloured families remained to be moved.[110]

The images and comments of the documentary can confuse the viewer into thinking that, on the one hand, squatter camps mushroom because of Black migrant workers, whereas, on the other hand, overcrowding in older housing schemes is the visually alleged result of population growth amongst the Coloureds. As the camera moves inside the flat, four generations hardly have enough space to breathe. In a small lounge, a teenager and three children are huddled on the settee; behind them is a couple with a baby, then two older ladies sitting in armchairs with a young boy at their feet and another woman standing by—eleven people in total. The bedroom with two single beds seems to accommodate the smiling teenager and the three busy children. The situation is outrageously unbearable. During the 1970s, there was a 150% occupancy rate or an average density of 3.3 people per room in the housing estates in the Cape Flats.[111] The sequence of a flat bursting with

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110. "Group areas removals in the Cape Peninsula. According to the Minister of Community Development and State Auxiliary Services, 195 white, 29 336 Coloured, and 1 506 Indian families Group Areas were moved from their homes in the Cape Peninsula from the Cape implementation of the Group Areas Act until December 31, 1980. Eighty white, 2736 Coloured, and 540 Indian families remained to be moved at that date." (Cooper and Horrell 1982, 227)

111. George Francis Rayner Ellis, *The Squatter Problem in the Western Cape: Some Causes and Remedies* (South African Institute of Race Relations, 1977), 14; quoted in Le Grange (1987, 28).

people conveys an awkward, if not derogatory, perception of the Coloureds as gregarious people with an uncontrollable reproduction rate. The impression reflects the apartheid government's obsessional concern about the birth rate of the non-white population—the Coloureds were the dominant ethnic group among the non-white population in the Cape region. In 1976 City engineer Brand significantly quoted the Theron Commission at a conference on the long-term development of the Western Cape:

> "The annual growth rate of the Coloured population ranks amongst the highest of the world. This growth rate is estimated to be about 3.0% per annum (2.2% for Whites) at the present time, and there is scant evidence that any appreciable decrease will take place in the immediate future. A high growth rate is synonymous with large family size. The average number of persons per Coloured family in Cape Town is approximately 5.61 (Whites 3.03)." (Brand 1976, 1)

As Chimere-Dan (1992, 27–33) points out, apartheid interfered with data collection and quality, demographic dynamics, and population activities and research. Fertility declined for Whites to below replacement levels by the end of the 1980s and for Coloureds from 6.4 to 3.2 during 1950–85.

While the conditions in squatter camps are said to shock South Africans, older housing schemes are claimed to "cause serious headaches"—an understatement given the shortage of space in the flat shown in the documentary. Do these "serious headaches" ironically hint at the noisy atmosphere created by the number of people, essentially children, living together? In the late 1970s, residents of older housing schemes were under intense pressure to move away from some older housing schemes through a forced filtering process. Indeed, "according to an April announcement, 2,984 council flats in Heideveld, Parkwood and Lavender Hill estates [had] been reclassified from economic to sub-economic. Occupants with a head-of-household income of more than R150 were thereby automatically disqualified and are being compelled to move" (Nash 1979, 6). In contrast, the documentary images show residents who do not move or speak; some even smile. They seem to be patiently waiting for something so that the overall impression is that the "serious headaches" are not felt by them but rather by the voice-of-god narrator himself on behalf of the authorities, who then professedly "set to work to eliminate the pressing housing shortage." Department of Community Development is mentioned, three White engineers talk and passionately gesticulate around a model project, and a travelling shot over the model crossfades into a beautiful aerial view of Mitchell's Plain. According to Younge (1982, 23–4), the development of Mitchell's Plain was partly due to the desire of the State to provide a "showpiece" to demonstrate that it was not intent on replacing old slums and older housing schemes with new ones. The quick visual passage positively conveys this feeling from the slums and overcrowded older housing schemes to the model projects then the real housing estate in Mitchell's Plain.

"Parliament voted millions of rands for housing schemes," the off-screen narrator enthusiastically claims, implying generous unlimited investment by politicians representing the South Africans who are "shocked to the core." Service delivery seems fast and orderly as he lists, "vast housing projects were launched: Eldorado Park and Ennerdale between Johannesburg and Vereeniging, Atlantis[112] on the West Coast near Cape Town, Phoenix in Natal, and Mitchell's Plain." These housing projects were all Group Area developments for the Coloureds, apart from Phoenix, an Indian township. The documentary does not dwell upon their differences, thus allowing a possible conflation. On the one hand, the relocation of the Coloureds in Northern provinces and the Cape Province could not be considered from the same perspective:

> "There is a major difference between the histories and experiences of coloured people in the Cape Province on the one hand, and coloureds of the three Northern provinces (Natal, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal) on the other. Unlike the Cape Province where they constitute the majority, the small coloured communities in the Northern provinces posed a major financial obstacle to racial segregation [...] Urban segregation for small and dispersed racial minorities was simply too expensive for the authorities. In the case of the coloured population in the three northern provinces the difficulties pertaining to segregation were further complicated: they were too numerous to be given equal access with whites to urban facilities but not sufficiently large in number to warrant racially-exclusive townships in every city and town. The state's solution was to couple urban racial segregation with achieving the economies of scale by extricating the coloured populations of the three Northern provinces from black, Indian and white areas and concentrating them in a few large regional settlements." (Lupton 1993, 37–8)

On the other hand, the construction of Atlantis, which started in 1975, a year after Mitchell's Plain, served a different purpose. Atlantis was meant to be a model industrial city. Mitchell's Plain and Atlantis had differing but complementary functions as specified by assistant City Engineer Mabin,

> "In addition to Mitchells Plain, the town of Atlantis is being built as a new growth point some 45 kilometres north of Cape Town on the West Coast. On account of factors such as the provision of land for industrial and residential purposes, the Government is promoting development of further industry in decentralised areas or so called growth point in order to discourage migration to urban areas. Such growth points qualify for concessions to encourage industrial development. Atlantis is such a growth point and will absorb some of the coloured population in the Cape Town Metropolitan Area. [...] Mitchells

112. Eldorado Park and Ennerdale are situated, respectively, South West and North East of Johannesburg. Phoenix is located northwest of Durban, and Atlantis is 40 km north of Cape Town on the west coast.

> Plain, which falls within the Cape Metropolitan Area does not qualify for growth status point… Mitchells Plain is far too close to Cape Town to function effectively as a growth point. Mitchells Plain therefore does not compete with Atlantis. The two towns complement each other." (Mabin 1977, 30)

Was the parallel construction of Mitchell's Plain and Atlantis going "to eliminate the pressing housing shortage," as indicated by the off-screen voice?

> "By the end of 1979, official estimates of the Coloured housing shortage in the Cape peninsula totalled 22,500 dwelling units, whereas the Cape City Council alone by then had 22,915 applications for housing outstanding […] The various estimates reveal that the housing shortage was a permanent problem during the period discussed. It is notable that a development of two massive projects, Mitchells Plain and Atlantis, while undoubtedly alleviating the problem could not resolve it." (Le Grange 1987, 25–6)[113]

Finally, as reported by City Engineer Brand, contrary to the other contemporaneous housing projects, Mitchell's Plain boasted two interesting innovations. These made it a specific collaborative project with design intentionality and cultural inscriptions.[114] The documentary refers to the first innovation ("a survey of potential owners' tastes and preferences [after which] the planning division of the Cape Town City Council created no less than 70 house designs for Mitchell's Plain"). It concerns the involvement of the Coloured community in the planning:

> "In April 1974 an extensive interview survey, mainly to determine preferences of dwelling type, was carried out amongst tenants in the housing estates as well as amongst applicants for houses. The outcome of this survey […] showed clearly the need to make extensive reductions in the number of flats in future housing projects to meet, as far as possible, the wishes of the future inhabitants of Mitchells Plain. […] An innovative device was used to check responses to the design of new house types by erecting and furnishing three full-size authentic mock-up dwellings at the planning offices [in 1975]. More than 500 families and numerous Coloured leaders were conducted through these houses, and their reactions, comments and advice recorded. The people were invited to express their opinions of earlier housing estates and houses, and officials explained their proposals and the attendant costs. To complete the picture it was necessary to resort to inferences from behaviour patterns. To allow for possible error, planning proposals provide for maximum flexibility by offering as large a variety of solutions and options as is practicable. One reason why it was found difficult to determine what the people want is to some extent their comparative lack of choice in the past; they simply not had the opportunity to choose the dwelling

113. Based on section "Housing in Cape Town" of Gordon et al. (1980, 22).

114. The professed concerns with positive aesthetic and social values are reminiscent of KwaThema's initial project in which African agencies were referenced within the original housing designs, as described in Le Roux (2019).

and community they desired to live in. Also in a situation of extreme shortage of housing, families tend to express opinions which they think the interviewers would prefer to hear, in the hope of getting a house sooner." (Brand 1979, 5)[115]

The second innovation was a design competition:

"Towards the end of 1976 a competition for the design of approximately 165 dwellings and their layout was sponsored by Messrs Everite Limited and promoted by the City of Cape Town. The main objective of the competition was to explore the development of alternative ways of planning high density housing for the lower income groups. It was a very demanding competition and the results achieved were most encouraging. The competition was well supported; over 40 submissions were received. In addition five Universities submitted fifteen projects based on the competition. The competition was the first of its kind in South Africa and the author believes it has made many architects aware of the extremely demanding constraints that exist in the field of housing for the lower income group. Awards were made in May 1977, the winning entry was that of Messrs Barac, Cruickshank and Hirschman of Cape Town, who were subsequently appointed in November 1977 as consultants for the execution of their winning design suitably modified." (Ibid., 9–10)

Prior to the design competition, back in 1974–5, from a short-list of six firms, the planning and design of 1,500 low-income dwellings in the first suburb of Mitchell's Plain had been attributed to three South Africa's top architectural firms Revel Fox & Partners, Lowe, Simpsons & Associates and Louis Karol Architects Inc. However, due to rapidly changing financial circumstances, only the house types prepared by Revel Fox & Partners were built.[116]

The quick visual passage from the shock-giving slums and headache-causing older housing schemes to the charming model projects and the impressive aerial view of Mitchell's Plain unfolds like a modern fairy tale. The last sequence is somehow amusingly arranged. Three city engineers bend over their model project like magicians over their contrivance (figures 2.35 and 2.36): their hands move over the model project in circles as if casting spells or invoking supernatural entities, and, as the camera zooms in on the model houses, one hand moves about it in circles. As a travelling shot goes on, Mitchell's Plain arises from the model project through a crossfade plan (figures 2.37 and 2.38). The off-screen voice takes a long break—creating an atmosphere of suspense—before revealing the name of Mitchell's Plain—music rises.

115. Other surveys were conducted, e.g. Survey by City Engineer's Department of first 855 families who purchased houses in Mitchell's Plain (October 1976) and Sample Survey by City Engineer's Department of 150 families living in Mitchell's Plain (October 1976), as mentioned in Brand (1976, 45).

116. I.e. 500 houses and associated layout designs to each firm (Brand 1978, 9). There is an interview of Revel Fox in "Thoughts of a Committed Architect" (*Financial Mail* Special Report 1978, 7).

Fig. 2.35 City engineers over model project (1)

Fig. 2.36 City engineers over model project (2)

Fig. 2.37 From the model project to Mitchell's Plain (1)

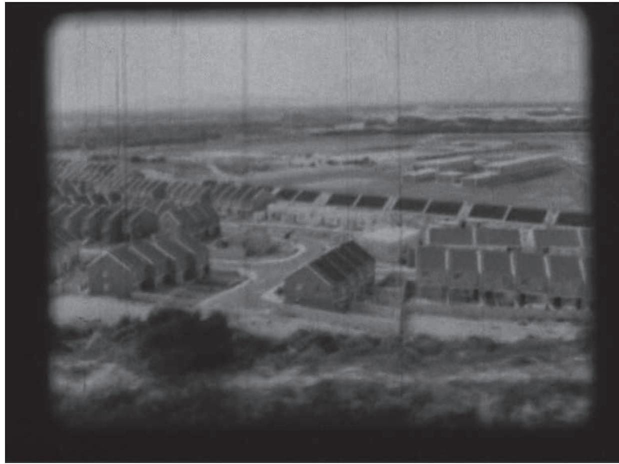

Fig. 2.38 From the model project to Mitchell's Plain (2)

As contrived, the story of Mitchell's Plain promises to be as fantastic as those of the Western countries' "incredible technology" with "ghost-like satellites" travelling into "eternal circles" around the "romantic blue ball." The reality was much less mesmerising. As soon as 1972, the first report on the development of Mitchell's Plain by Director of works Morris, explicitly recognised that "It w[ould] not be feasible to reproduce the urban environment and life style found in the best parts of District Six, Woodstock and Salt River" (Morris 1972, 23).

Chapter 3

The Miracle-like Engineering Adventure

In the "Heartland of South Africa's Coloured Community"

As Mitchell's Plain emerges from the model project through a crossfade plan, streets and houses appear through a series of aerial views, also showing the film's credits, accompanied by a lively musical theme going crescendo and functioning as a sonic frame. The music is composed within the tradition of the orchestral scoring for contemporary American television series[117] with dominant electronic sounds. The use of a synthesiser conveys a sense of modernity which echoes the distinctive nature of the housing development, subsequently highlighted by the off-screen commentator:

> "Mitchell's Plain, one of the most exciting housing projects in the world, is situated in the heartland of South Africa's Coloured community above 25 km from Cape Town and within the city's municipal boundaries. A metropolis of a quarter of a million people in 40,000 houses is being developed here by the Cape Town City Council in cooperation with the Department of Community Development, which was set up to deal with the establishment of communities and the housing of all South Africans [...] Mitchell's Plain sprang up by an extensive stretch of land with a beautiful 9 km seafront between Muizenberg and the Strand."

The reports by the City Engineer's Department do not support the idea that Mitchell's Plain was either a choice or the choicest location as romantically implied by the use of "heartland":

> "Planning studies pointed out that topographical constraints and the need to conserve prime agricultural land meant that the remaining land close to the city which could be used for housing was rapidly diminishing. The only remaining large piece of land was the 3,100 hectares of the property known as Mitchells Plain, lying at its closest point about four kilometres beyond the then limit of

117. There is an interesting analysis of the musical theme of the highly successful American TV series *Dallas* (1978–91) in Rodman (2010, 48–76).

> urban development [...] This area was accordingly chosen for the fulfilment of the program." (Brand 1980a, 1)

There were also surveys carried out before November 1974—the date of the decision to plan the first phase of Mitchell's Plain—to determine and assess socio-economic factors such as place of employment. The instructive results prompted City Engineer Morris (1972, 2–9) to stress that "if this scheme [was] ever to succeed, it [was] essential that it [got] off to a good start. Prerequisite for this [was] the timeous provision of transport facilities particularly rail facilities at reasonable cost," since "at least 43.6% and possibly even 50% of the household heads in Mitchell's Plain [would] need to travel daily to places of employment in the Central City." The commuters' percentage increased to 58.3% with Paarden Island and Maitland, going up to 70.7% with Observatory and Wynberg. The location of Mitchell's Plain was disadvantageous to a great majority of Coloured workers. In 1977, City Engineer Mabin (1977, 13–4) mentioned the results of these surveys again and repeated that "the success of Mitchells Plain [would] be largely dependent upon efficient rail transport." Cee Jay Williams moved to Mitchell's Plain in 1976. He served on the committee of the Westridge Residents' association and later became the first chairperson of the Mitchell's Plain Business Chamber: "We hated the daily exodus to our places of work, far from our homes," he says (Ommundsen Pessoa and Le Roux 2012, 34).

Employment opportunities and adequate transport were a primary concern. Only 29% of the residents of Mitchell's Plain worked in or near the township during 1980,[118] thus the costs of transportation and the commuting time involved were an additional burden to take into account. The documentary boasts railroad investments: "Right next to the city centre, the main railway station is near in completion. Altogether three stations will serve the town's 30,000 to 50,000 daily commuters." The flip side was the hardship commuters already residing in the area endured. They could not avail of a good public transport system—even though the rate of car ownership among the pioneer families was not low. Mitchell's Plain Buses Services operated regular feeder services to Nyanga railway station and the Hanover Park bus junction, from which express buses would fan out to different directions, including Cape Town. Despite demands from the Ratepayers Association, there was no direct service to and from Mitchell's Plain, although 35,000 passengers were conveyed weekly in 1978 (*Financial Mail* Special Report 1978, 31). In a dormitory town such as Mitchell's Plain, creating job opportunities (the off-screen voice mentions 5,000 jobs and ten times more commuters) was alleged to induce an adverse effect upon Atlantis. At this growth point, the government promoted the development of industries.[119] Cameron (1986,

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118. Technical Management Services (TMS) City Engineer's Department, "1980 Census Statistics" (working paper, 1987); quoted in Le Grange (1987, 61).

119. City Engineer's Department, "An Alternative Housing Policy" (1979), 22; quoted in ibid.

80) also mentions evidence showing that the Cape Town City Council, where businessmen were increasingly represented since the early 1970s, was protective towards business interests within its jurisdiction, especially the CBD: "They have been accused of neglecting job creation and industrial development in Mitchell's Plain because this would compete with their existing business interests." In 1979, the work concern was such that Mitchell's Plain residents organised a meeting of combined Ratepayers Associations to express disquiet.[120] Up to June 1980, when the train service linking Mitchell's Plain to Cape Town began operating, going to work was a labyrinthine journey. Mitchell's Plain's Liverpool-Portland Football Club chairperson Lutfeyah Abrahams recalls:

> "In 1980 my husband and I moved to Portlands in Mitchell's Plain. We were newlywed and it was difficult to buy a house. [...] We heard about houses in Mitchell's Plain, went to the housing office in Silversands and in April 1980 we moved into the house we still stay in. There was no town centre—nothing. Transport was inadequate. I had to take a bus to Manenberg and then to Nyanga station, and then a train to Epping to get to work. But life had to go on." (Ommundsen Pessoa and Le Roux 2012, 63)

The documentary situates Mitchell's Plain "in the heartland of South Africa's Coloured community" on a map of the Cape Peninsula, giving a mixed impression of the size and importance of the Coloured community. The 1970 Census established that while the Coloureds comprised 9,4% and the Whites 17,3% of the total South African population (21,794 million),[121] they respectively comprised 61% and 39% of the total population of 01 region (South) of the Western Cape (Brand 1976,1). The visual manoeuvre blurs the demographic weight of the Coloureds at both levels. The Mitchell's Plain enclave, as represented in the documentary, is more representative of their contemporaneous condition of isolation and powerlessness:

> "The coloured community was a marginal group in that it never formed more than about 9 per cent of the South African population throughout the twentieth century. Although constituting a significant minority, it did not enjoy anything like a commensurate level of influence or power under white supremacy. A heritage of slavery, dispossession and racial oppression ensured that coloured people lacked any significant economic or political power as a group and that by far the greater majority consisted of a downtrodden proletariat. Under

120. *Argus*, 6 November 1979; quoted in Le Grange (ibid.).

121. The figures are the following (SA 1970 boundaries): Total: 21,794; African: 15,340; Coloured: 2,051; Indian/Asian: 630; White: 3,773. For more details, see Statistics South Africa (2000, "1.4 Population at each census by population group and gender, 1904–1996"). As stated before, the Bantu Homeland Citizenship Act (National States Citizenship Act) of 1970 changed the status of Black people, who were required to become citizens of one of the ten self-governing territories (or Homelands). Therefore they were no longer citizens of South Africa.

white minority rule, the coloured community had no meaningful leverage to bring about change in the society, to reform it or to influence the way in which it was governed [...] Trapped by their condition of marginality, the coloured community found its options for social and political action severely constrained. Their assimilationist overtures spurned by whites, and joint organization with the African majority either not a practical or attractive option, the coloured community was left isolated and politically impotent." (Adhikari 2006, 484–5)

Fig. 3.1 Crossfading from False Bay to Table Bay (1) Mitchell's Plain & False Bay

The film suggests that Mitchell's Plain is located by Table Mountain. As the off-screen voice evokes the "heartland" of the Coloured community situated "within the city's municipal boundaries," the camera zooms in on the demarcated Mitchell's Plain area on the Cape Peninsula map, then crossfades into the magnificent flat-topped perspective of Table Mountain from Table Bay (figures 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3). A layperson (e.g. a foreign national) could infer that Mitchell's Plain is in the foothills of Table Mountain and that the picturesque Cape Town harbour with its developed foreshore area is False Bay. In this laudatory ploy, the word "heartland" and the image of the thriving bay cannot fail to impart a special status to Mitchell's Plain. Coloured housing is represented as a cultural object with an economic purpose instead of a segregated territory with a political design. Factually, the heartland is the Cape Flats, whose topographic name is much less romantic and exposes the reality of a vast monotonous expanse swept by the winds:

"The Cape Flats, some 400 square km (150 square miles) in extent, form a broad, sandy isthmus connecting the Cape Peninsula to the mainland [...] The Cape Flats are composed mainly of sand with inter-layered clay bands. The sand extends to depths of over 30 m below the surface and rests on an uneven foundation of Malmesbury rocks and granite. These surface materials were mainly deposited as beach drifts, subsequently added to by wind action." (Taylor 1972, 637)

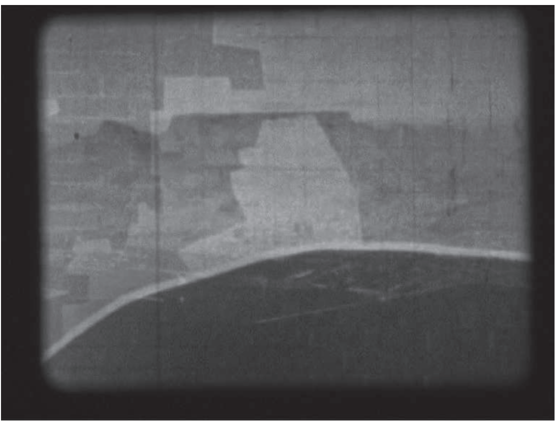

Fig. 3.2 Crossfading from False Bay to Table Bay (2) Mitchell's Plain-Table Mountain

Fig. 3.3 Crossfading from False Bay to Table Bay (3) Table Mountain & Table Bay

Experiences influence perceptions so that the faraway expanse could play on people's imagination, as in the case of Cee Jay Williams. He came to know the place in a professional capacity and acknowledges the appeal because of the socio-political context:

> "My first contact and association with the new development came through my position as employee of Central Installation Works, a plumbing company based in Athlone Industria. They won the tender to provide all the plumbing work on site. When I visited the area it resembled an oasis in the middle of the desert—white sand, fynbos and nothing else. This should have put anybody in his or her right mind off, but if you struggled the way most of us did it seemed like paradise in the wilderness." (Ommundsen Pessoa and Le Roux 2012, 33)

As the documentary unreels, Table Bay fades and gives way to a panoramic view of Table Mountain with the unmissable Disa Towers (figure 3.4) and

District Six (figure 3.5). In 1966, it was declared a White-only area, thus forcing removals to townships on the wastes of the Cape Flats and Mitchell's Plain. Du Pré (1994, 88) remembers that "In the 1960s, one of the reasons advanced by the then Minister of Coloured affairs for the removal of coloured people from District Six,[122] was that the area was too good for the Coloured people: 'Why should Coloured people live there? They don't appreciate the view. The area should be given to whites who can appreciate it.'"

Fig. 3.4 Panoramic view - Disa Towers (on the left)

Fig. 3.5 Panoramic view - District Six (empty space on the left) – Disa Towers (on the right)

122. "District Six was officially renamed Zonnebloem. The Minister of Community Development reported that when the area was proclaimed white, it was 94% coloured-occupied. 55,4% was owned by whites, 25% by coloured people and the rest by Indians" (Cooper Ensor and Cleary 1980, 499).

From the Desert to the Metropolis with Mr Dudley

Contrary to the city of Cape Town, Mitchell's Plain could not be characterised as a historical place since its construction only started in the early 1970s. Hence, the clever association of the word "heartland" (conjuring up exoticism,[123] virgin tribal lands) and the picture of Table Mountain (i.e. a sacred place for the Khoisan people and the original site of the Dutch settlement in the mid-seventeenth century). This association determines culture, tradition and heritage as essential parameters in the identity of the housing development. Mitchell's Plain was a progressive model breaking with the notorious austere and monotonous townships of matchboxes. As concisely advertised, it is offered as a state-of-the-art project combining investment and sensibility:

> "For the Mitchell's Plain project, the Department made lands available at a low-interest rate to the Cape City Council through the National Housing Fund and the Council, in turn, planned and developed the townships and sold the houses to prospective Coloured owners at a very low deposit and with subsidised bond interest rates. […] With the accent on house ownership rather than rented accommodation in Mitchell's Plain, a wide variety of designs is offered to prospective buyers. After a survey of potential owners' tastes and preferences, the planning division of the Cape Town City Council created no less than 70 house designs for Mitchell's Plain. The positioning of the houses on the stands was planned to provide the maximum variety and privacy. In addition to the shops in every township, a large central business complex is being built by the Department of Community Development. This centre, which will cost more than R15 million, will eventually form the heart of the new city. It is expected that more than 5,000 people will be employed in its shops and offices. […] Altogether, 40,000 workers are employed in building the town, and many opportunities for enterprises have been created."

The project is framed as the success story of modern man over adverse nature:

> "Mitchell's Plain sprang up by an extensive stretch of land with a beautiful 9 km seafront between Muizenberg and the Strand. Large parts of the area had to be evened out with bulldozers. Because of its sandy nature, the ground had to be stabilised with straw and rolled firmly to provide excellent building stands. When Mitchell's Plain is completed, 15 million cubic meters of earth will have been moved to make room for 160 townships with about 250 stands each. A building tempo of 700 houses a month, that is to say, 33 houses a day, was maintained […] This brickworks was built to provide the millions of bricks needed for the new town."

123. The term is used in the nineteenth-century sense of nostalgia with its tenuous link with the Orient, as analysed by Said (1978, 1): "The Orient was […] a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences."

Mitchell's Plain is thus rooted in a socio-environmental drama featuring geological conflict and technological resolution. Here an "enormous" bulldozer (rendered all the more impressive by a low-angle shot) manages to conquer a seemingly endless sandy expanse (figures 3.6 and 3.7). There, an army of ant-like workers deals with the house bases (figures 3.8 and 3.9), whereas executives are busy at the brickworks (figure 3.10). The project is staged as resourceful and exemplary, an illustration of the fundamental relationship between man and nature, i.e. the massive power of natural forces testing the abilities of people and nations to respond to them. It forms the South African version of how "mankind with his incredible technology has conquered many problems in the twentieth century" (the exclamation opening the documentary). Set against this background, the word "metropolis" contributes to the creation of Mitchell's Plain as a *robinsonnade*, namely the birth of civilisation within the logics of the rational economic man,[124] whom Mr Dudley eventually incarnates. He is the project manager of Model Development Company, building thousands of houses in a deserted and sandy location—thus bringing life to it. The figures speak for themselves:

> "Development Company has been building houses for the last 20 years, and we went in for this contract here at Mitchell's Plain, a contract of 4,960 houses. We completed that in 33 months. At present, I am busy with another 165 houses, and in the middle of this month, I intend going on to another 2,500 houses. That's our project at present in Mitchell's Plain."

Fig. 3.6 Bulldozer

124. This is often read as central to Daniel Defoe's 1719 narrative of *Robinson Crusoe*. In Grapard and Hewitson (2011), economists and literary researchers examine the uses of the mythical character in economics literature and modern texts since the publication of the novel.

Fig. 3.7 An endless sandy expanse

Fig. 3.8 Workers and house bases (1)

Fig. 3.9 Workers and house bases (2)

Fig. 3.10 Brickworks at Mitchell's Plain

Fig. 3.11 Mr Dudley (Model Development)

Meeting the challenges of nature (sandy area with dunes) and the urges of culture (organization and order), Mr Dudley (figure 3.11) exerts rational control over a project that needs to be achieved within determined objectives, evincing traditional labour's virtues (proven experience and performance).

The undeniably impressive pictures of achievement in Mitchell's Plain need some qualifications. In the late 1970s, Cee Jay Williams worked for a plumbing company and looked for a house with his wife. He evokes an illicit manoeuvre by the authorities concerning the constructions:

> "We were so excited with the prospect of owning a brick house that we went to the visitor's information centre in Dagbreek Hall week after week. Upon inspecting the building materials, I discovered that the contractors were not building according to plans. My hackles were raised. The community worker in me took over, and I started pointing out to prospective buyers that what was on the plans was not what was being built. People started getting jittery, and the officials grew irritated with me. Did this stop me? No. All the faults were rectified within a few weeks." (Ommundsen Pessoa and Le Roux 2012, 33–4)

Willie Simmers arrived in Mitchell's Plain in 1979. He was one of the founding members of the Rocklands Ratepayers Association and the Cape Housing Action Committee. He was later actively involved in forming the Mitchell Plain's Crisis line and the Mitchell's Plain Community Advice and Development Project. Like many others, home ownership was a key factor in his decision to relocate to Mitchell's Plain. He mentions the disappointing quality of the houses and some unanticipated nuisance. "The houses were not well built. Mine was a semidetached house, but it was mine. I was very proud. There were so many bushes and spiders as big as dinosaurs. We found snakes in our homes. We began to live in fear of these animals attacking us," he says, while his wife Veronica ironically adds, "I had to cross a dune from Rocklands to Woodlands to get a bus at an ungodly hour" (Ommundsen Pessoa and Le Roux 2012, 73).

Model-Morris (Pty) Limited was a prominent contractor in the Mitchell's Plain project. Model Development formed a consortium with RH Morris—the oldest contractor in South Africa—and held the controlling interests of Model-Morris. Yet, Mr Dudley's company was not the only nor the biggest contractor in house building for the project, so one may wonder why Model-Morris was explicitly chosen and cited in the documentary film. There were three main contractors. As recorded by Brand (1980a, 24), the biggest was Besterecta (5,200 houses, then 827 houses and eventually 6,440 houses), Morel-Morris came second (5,000 houses, then 165 houses and 2,500 houses), and Ilco Homes ranked third (4,600 houses then 2,500 houses). Model-Morris was the only big contractor that had always been working with Coloured people. Besterecta and Ilco Homes were working with Coloureds for the first time.[125] That difference was meaningful enough, especially within the propagandist perspective of the film, as Coloureds probably did not hold such managerial positions at Besterecta and Ilco Homes. The interview with Mr Dudley conveys the impression that the Coloured community is in charge of and managing their own project in their own territory (i.e. "heartland") up to the highest level. Paradoxically, in opposition to the other interviewees

125. This is revealed in "Contractors: All of a Sudden a Big Bonanza" in *Financial Mail* Special Report (1978, 29).

Fig. 3.12 Fred Harris (Model Development) - Financial Mail Special report on Mitchell's Plain 5 May 1978 (back page)

in the documentary, Mr Dudley's status or position is not indicated by the off-screen voice or by himself. Fred Harris headed up Model Development. He is praised in one of the articles of the 1978 *Financial Mail* Special Report (e.g. "one of the six coloured artisans himself a mere 23 years ago when the group started a building company by scraping together R216… Harris, an almost legendary success story within the coloured community, is a prime

mover for business and professional education" [*Financial Mail* Special Report 1978, 29]). Harris's smiling face adorns the Coloured Development Corporation Limited advertisement, showing a row of houses in Mitchell's Plain (figure 3.12).[126] The smartly dressed Mr Dudley does not introduce himself; he nonetheless refers to the twenty-year experience of the company using the inclusive "we," indirectly positioning himself as one of the founders. If the objective was indeed to stress the involvement of the Coloured community in their own housing development on their own lands—a visual promotion of some ongoing Coloured economic empowerment—then Fred Harris was not dark enough for the role—all the more so vis-à-vis foreign audiences.

It is worth noting that while the aerial view of Mitchell's Plain (figure 3.13) suggests a barren expense of sand, Mitchell's Plain was not built on a lifeless desert. At the Snape memorial lecture delivered at the University of Cape Town in 1980, Director of works Riley specified that soils and vegetation were of poor quality. He added, "grys and rib buck, together with tortoises abounded in the area and no effort was spared in an attempt to capture as many of these as possible for relocation in the Silvermines and Cape Point Reserves. [...] There were a number of deaths, however, from sheer fright. It was not a particularly pleasant task but the best in the circumstances" (Riley 1980, 7). Incontestably, the issue was well beyond the documentary's purpose.

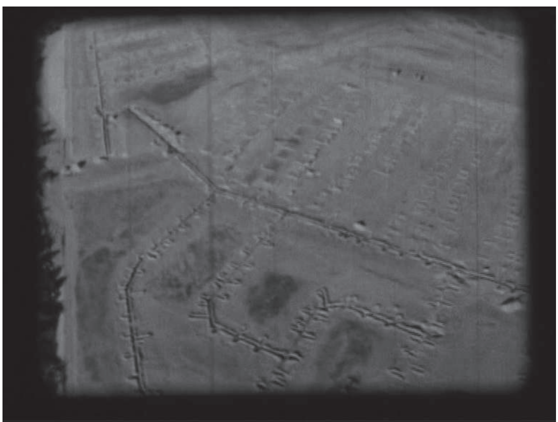

Fig. 3.13 Aerial view of Mitchell's Plain

126. "The Coloured Development Corporation was founded by parliamentary statute in 1962 to provide financial aid and technical assistance to coloured business and entrepreneurs according to a 'self-help' principle." (Lupton 1993, 41)

One may feel a sacred mystery permeating this aerial view, reminiscent of the giant bird scratched into the stark desert floor in Southern Peru and part of the Nazca lines. The impressive tableau of giant animals and plants with intricate patterns was drawn by an old civilisation that existed between 200 BC and 600 AD. These lines attracted much attention and sparked scientific debate following the release of *Chariots of the Gods* (1968) by Erich von Daniken, who saw them as airstrips for alien spacecraft. The controversial book sold about 40 million copies worldwide in 30 languages within a decade.[127] In the context of the 1970s popular culture, the Nazca-lines-looking foundations of the Mitchell plain mark the new development among exceptional places for remarkable people, a strong symbolic approach to the conclusion of the documentary, the new housing estate as "a nation's answer to a worldwide problem that is also threatening our people, thus laying *the foundations of a new society* " (my emphasis).

A Metropolis in the Promised Land

When Prime Minister Botha addressed the Transvaal National Party congress in September 1980, he stressed that civilisation, Christendom and economic strength were "the main priority facing the country" (*Dynamic Changes in South Africa* 1980, 12). He pledged, "I want to take millions of Coloured Christians in South Africa with me in my struggle against Godless Communism which will destroy everything in South Africa if it gains the upper hand in the country" (ibid.) The interviews of Mr Dudley, Mrs Rinehart, Mr Claasens and Mr Arendse are framed within this perspective so that Mitchell's Plain becomes something more inspiring than a simple set of physical attributes: it is the locus of civilisation, Christendom and economic strength.

Indeed, Mitchell's Plain results from a colossal barren and sandy area of "15 million cubic meters of earth" transformed by "40,000 workers [...] employed in building the town" with the "millions of bricks" provided by a brickworks built for this purpose. As narrated, the nascent "metropolis of a quarter of a million people in 40,000 houses" is inscribed in what looks and sounds like an act of defiance that is not devoid of Biblical overtones. It echoes the story of the Tower of Babel in the book of Genesis (11:1-9),[128] in

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127. This is stressed in Richter (2012, 228–9).

128. New Revised Standard Version: "[1]Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. [2]And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. [3]And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. [4]Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." [5]The LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which

which the descendants of Noah construct a city in a plain with references to bricks and bitumen, i.e. modern materials as opposed to old-fashioned stones and mortar. The story offers an opportune parallel with a housing development based on a new approach to planning and engineering. While Babel is planned with the sin of pride, represented by the attempt to erect a tower with its top in the heavens, Mitchell's Plain is built within the virtue of investment, a highly regarded value in the Protestant ethic.[129] Mitchell's Plain must throb and, thus, live within the glory of the economy: "A large central business complex is being built by the Department of Community Development. This centre, which will cost more than R15 million, will eventually form *the heart of the new city*" (my emphasis). The narrator repeats the same figures. Worthless sandy soil rhetorically turns into worthy and solid investment: "15 million cubic meters of earth" are moved and replaced by a business centre of more than "R15 million."

The church sequence adds another touch of the divine in the creation of Mitchell's Plain and its preservation from extinction:

> "Ample provision has also been made for the spiritual well-being [psalm singing by congregation followed by sermon told by priest:] 'If you obey the commands of the Lord your God, which I give you today, if you love him, obey him, and keep all his laws, then you will prosper and become a nation of many people.' Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven. In the spirit of this command, this church is transformed into a nursery school on weekdays, moulding the future men and women of Mitchell's Plain."

The service is held at Christ the Redeemer Anglican Church in Westridge (figures 3.14 and 3.15). It appropriately comes up towards the end of the documentary film. By then, the viewers have seen a vast sandy desert replaced by a business complex in progress and well-designed houses with pride-giving gardens. They are acquainted with Mrs Rinehart's beneficial relocation experience ("It was such a change for me coming from Bonteheuwel to Mitchell's Plain especially with my children"). They know about Mr Claasens's success

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mortals had built. [6]And the LORD said, "Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. [7]Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech." [8]So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. [9]Therefore it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth." "Focus on the Tower of Babel," *Oxford Biblical Studies Online*: http://global.oup.com/obso/focus/focus_on_towerbabel/ [archive].

129. "Calvinism produced a historically unique salvation constellation which put saving ethically above spending, investing above saving." (Ditz 1980, 627)

("Two years ago I opened a bookshop in Mitchell's Plain […] I must say that the business came very well. So much so I have decided to open one in the town centre"). The service centres on the blessings of obedience, as recorded in the Deuteronomy (Old Testament). These blessings are submitted to the Israelites when they are about to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land, after wandering in the wilderness for forty years under Moses's leadership:

> "Deuteronomy covers a period of a single month only, the last month of the wanderings of Israel. It is composed mainly of three discourses, purporting to have been uttered by Moses to the people […] History and law are brought in to enforce the writer's plea to the people to serve God faithfully." (McKee 1899, 249)

Fig. 3.14 Christ the Redeemer Anglican Church in Westridge (building)

Fig. 3.15 Christ the Redeemer Anglican Church in Westridge (congregation)

Just as Moses addresses his people for the birth of a new nation, the priest recites Moses's words to his congregation as a new housing development is born. The verse uttered in the documentary metonymically evokes the importance of decision-making, choices entailing consequences:

> "Today I am giving you a choice between good and evil, between life and death. 'If you obey the commands of the Lord your God, which I give you today, if you love him, obey him, and keep all his laws, then you will prosper and become a nation of many people. The Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are about to occupy. But if you disobey and refuse to listen and are led away to worship other gods, you will be destroyed—I warn you here and now. You will not live long in that land across the Jordan that you are about to occupy.'" (Deuteronomy 30:15-18, GNB)

As framed by the preaching, Mitchell's Plain compares to the Promised Land, an image that admirably suits the aphoristic "heartland of South Africa's Coloured community." As such, the benefits of living there—as voiced by Mrs Rinehart and Mr Claasens themselves—are subsequently based on conditions: prosperity and growth can only be achieved through faith and obedience. Within the contemporary political context, this compliance with the law cannot fail to bring to mind the commands of Botha's neo-apartheid, attractively phrased "separate development" and "plural democracy" and opposed to "Godless communism"—i.e. a destructive choice as the missing, yet discernible, part of the sermon suggests. Purposefully enough, the off-screen narrator takes over from the priest, thus ingeniously partaking of the piety of his function and transferring it to official authorities on whose behalf he speaks. He evokes "the spirit of the command" as the principle dictating the use of the premises of the church for a nursery and quotes Matthew 19-14: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Unquestionably, the classic image of the faraway place intertwining actual and imagined traits could appeal to those compelled to delocalisation under the Group Areas Act. As quoted above, Cee Jay Williams saw Mitchell's Plain as a "paradise in the wilderness" in the early 1970s. A letter describing a stroll in the past by Mitchell's Plain resident Rodney Brown, published in the 2016 edition of *The Plainsman* celebrating the 40th anniversary of the city, suggests that the new development was equated with the "promised land," the place where dreams or hopes could come true:

> "I remember it like it was yesterday. I was summoned to be up at 6am on Saturday July 24 1980. A barefoot six-year-old, missing a front tooth, living with my granny in Kewtown. However, that day was extra special—we were going to move into our new house in Mitchell's Plain. Granny asked me to navigate the truck driver from Macassar to the 'promised land' [...]. Having settled in the 'Plain holds precious memories. I didn't understand the euphoria but the excitement was insane. Growing up was easy, development was swift, and

> within months, many acquaintances and friends were made [...]. There were only four areas, Westridge, Rocklands, Portland, Woodlands and old Strandfontein. Other areas were already being built and potential for growth was huge. Our new home town was going to be famous. [...] There were only two ways into Mitchell's Plain anyway. Traffic was non-existent. People wanted to live here. It was the 'promised land.' The turning point for every young person growing up in the 'Plain was the student uprising in the mid-80s." (Brown 2016)

The documentary features moments of sweet tenderness. A gentle milkman delivers milk to an earnest-looking little girl checking the change (figures 3.16 and 3.17). Excited youngsters cluster around jam jars in a supermarket (figure 3.18). Are these scenes intended to anticipate the blessings of obedience in visually associating Mitchell's Plain with the land of milk and honey?

Fig. 3.16 Milk-man delivering milk to little girl checking the change (1)

Fig. 3.17 Milk-man delivering milk to little girl checking the change (2)

Fig. 3.18 Excited youngsters clustering around jam jars in a supermarket

There is no denying that the emphasis on the abundance of food conveys a literal meaning. There was a lack of essential stores at the inauguration of the new housing estate, even if, paradoxically enough, families had already been allotted houses and allowed to settle. Cee Jay Williams remembers:

> "I moved into my house in 1976. Soon after moving in, other infrastructural things like paving and street lights were installed. We soon realised running to the Indian corner shop was a thing of the past as there were no shops in our desert town. It was only the entrepreneurial spirit of the Indian shopkeeper and his daily travelling combi stocked with bread, cigarettes, milk and other essentials that saved our lives." (Ommundsen Pessoa and Le Roux 2012, 34)

"In the spirit of this command, this church is transformed into a nursery school on weekdays, moulding the future of men and women of Mitchell's Plain," the off-screen commentator says over pictures of singing and playing children (figures 3.19 and 3.20). He then quotes the verse that relates to the moment when Jesus blesses children who, at first, are barred from approaching him:

> "Then were there brought unto him little children that he should put *his* hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid *his* hands on them and departed thence." (Matthew 19:13-15 KJB)

Fig. 3.19 Church transformed into a nursery school (1) - Singing children

Fig. 3.20 Church transformed into a nursery school (2) - Playing children

Accordingly, the "future men and women," those who have "suffered" (as pictured in slums and overcrowded older housing schemes), have been brought by their parents to a life-changing housing development. A project conceived by a benevolent authority (as rendered by Parliament voting "millions of rands for housing schemes" after "South Africans [having been] shocked to the core by conditions like these").

The purported child-empowering move acquires all the more substantial significance as it follows the reading of the well-known *Three Billy Goats Gruff*, which fascinates a group of children in the library sequence (figures

3.21 and 3.22). In the folk tale, the billy-goats head for green pastures through a bridge and meet a troll which they eventually outsmart. It is about the progression of identity, involving physical growth (goats of different sizes) and mental growth (from patience to cunning) on the way to the other side (fertile land).[130]

Fig. 3.21 Story telling at the library (1)

Fig. 3.22 Story telling at the library (2)

130. It is similar to "The Three Little Pigs," as analysed by Bettelheim (2010, 41–5).

Although the Biblical verse names children—so reflected by the nursery scene—it is usually interpreted as also referring to those who have become like children, pure and humble at heart. It provides a smooth introduction to the smiling Arendse family whose experience follows. Accordingly, the interview of Mr Arendse is shaped by modesty and choice: "As you can see," he says, "I bought a little place, a choice I'm just so proud of." Businesswoman of the year in 2009, Venete Klein remembers feeling exhilarated when she settled into the new housing development: "We moved to Mitchell's Plain when I was 16 years old. My parents had, until then, rented properties all of their married lives. The Mitchell's Plain property was thus our very first 'owned' property. We were so proud of our new home. It was a maisonette, but it was ours" (Ommundsen Pessoa and Le Roux 2012, 24). However, the same "choice" was challenging for many. Rocklands Civic Association member Willie Simmers recollects, "Mitchell's Plain was a dormitory town—no work, no factories, families locked their kids in their yards to go to work. It was hard" (ibid., 73).

Contrary to what the audience could understand, the Christian community was not the only denomination in Mitchell's Plain. The Muslim community was well organised and then actively planning their places of worship.[131] Moosa Aysen, President of Mitchell's Plain Islamic Society, was one of the first people to move to Mitchell's Plain in 1976. He formed the Westridge Islamic Society with the 17 Muslim families who lived in his area. In order to attract the Muslim community to Mitchell's Plain, the Society "bought four plots of land for R2 each" in Westridge, Rocklands, Portland and Lentegeur to build mosques, "we couldn't let the offer pass," he says (ibid., 19). The first mosque, Majiedul Jumu'ah in Westridge, opened in 1982.

131. There is an overview of the history of the Islamic Society in Mitchell's Plain in Letter to the Editor (2016) and Van Der Fort (2019).

Chapter 4

The Perfect Place: They Moved to Mitchell's Plain and Lived Happily Ever After

Mrs Rinehart, the Caring Mother: Rewriting Education

Mrs Rinehart's interview starts with the image of a pretty bungalow boasting a neat garden full of plants and ornaments (figure 4.1)—the allegory of abundance. Sitting in a comfortable armchair—almighty—she represents the perfect mother in the sense that she defines herself by her responsibility and concern for her children, putting their needs first. The future of her daughters is the main topic of her account:

> "It was such a change for me coming from Bonteheuwel to Mitchell's Plain, especially with my children, you know. They, Adelaide and Dominique, Penny did not want to go to school there, and I thought, 'what is going to happen to these children one day?' But here, Adelaide wants to become an air hostess, even Dominique. The facilities that they have here … Dominique is going to the Far East in a few months' time, and Penelope would like to become a doctor. As far as the crime rate is concerned, there is nothing that we have to worry about. Mike is going out; he can come home any time. There is time that they forget my front door open, standing open, and nothing happens.'"

Fig. 4.1 Mrs Rinehart's house and garden

Fig. 4.2 Mrs Rinehart

Fig. 4.3 Mrs Rinehart's daughters (1) - Adelaide

Fig. 4.4 Mrs Rinehart's daughters (2) - Dominique

The interview is carefully constructed to take Mrs Rinehart at her word. She is matronly framed from breasts to head (medium close-up) in a simple dress, and her face exhibits a lack of artifice (figure 4.2). There is a figurine of a wedding couple on the shelf just behind her. It dispels any doubt as to her morality (when she mentions "Mike"), thus preventing the shadow of a single mother (e.g. the Indian weaver by her shack). She is a married woman. Her experience is expressed in a frontal view to engage the audience straightforwardly. She is a typical mother who worries about her children. These are portrayed as good traditional adolescents (figures 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5). The older girls, Adelaide and Dominique, do not neglect the codes of femininity and fashion. They all indulge in stereotypically feminine activities: Adelaide listens to music, Dominique focuses on her crochet pattern, and Penelope hangs the washing. However, like many contemporary Western girls, they are also emancipated in that, contrary to their mother, a housewife, they aim to forge specific careers. Adelaide and Dominique want to be air hostesses, and Penelope ambitiously aspires to become a doctor. There is a touching naturalness in Mrs Rinehart's conversation (e.g. "you know," "and I thought," "Penny" (Penelope), "Mike" (instead of my husband), "there is time [...] my front door open—standing open"). As genuineness and spontaneity pervade the atmosphere, Mrs Rinehart's words acquire moral power. One may even wonder if her surname with the suffix—hart, a homophone of 'heart,' is a sheer coincidence, besides echoing the location of Mitchell's Plain "in the heartland of South Africa's Coloured community."

Fig. 4.5 Mrs Rinehart's daughters (3) - Penelope

Mrs Rinehart's appreciation of Mitchell's Plain is inversely proportional to her experience in Bonteheuwel, a township of matchbox houses situated 12 km East of Cape Town. Bonteheuwel was created in the 1960s for Coloured people who were forced to move out of Cape Town from then-declared White areas and squatter camps. In the 1970s, for many Capetonians, Bonteheuwel meant the Coloured townships in general. For many Whites and middle-class Coloureds, the portmanteau name epitomised "the perceived nature of the Cape Flats: violence, unknown and to be avoided' although it was '*not* the least pleasurable of the townships to inhabit" (Western 1981, 25, 325). In 1976, Bonteheuwel became a landmark in the history of the liberation struggle in the Cape region. It was the first Coloured township to rebel in the wake of the Soweto uprising. The involvement of the Coloured community was unexpected. The *Cape Herald* titled its report "They Said it Could Never Happen," adding "Bonteheuwel, Wednesday, August 25, 1976—a day to remember. A day people said would never happen. Soweto, yes, Guguletu, Langa, Nyanga, yes. But never a Coloured township. But then it happened." 132 13-year-old and 15-year-old schoolboys Zolile Hector Pieterson and Hastings Ndlovu were the first casualties in Soweto on 16 June 1976. The first Coloured youth, 15-year-old Christopher Truter was shot during the riots in Bonteheuwel in September 1976 and died in hospital of his wounds. 133 After the founding of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) and the Azanian Students' Organization (AZASO) in 1979, school protests became more organizationally directed with incidents allegedly involving gangs:

> "Across the country, up to 100,000 children in coloured and African schools and university students on five black campuses boycotted classes between April 1980 and January 1981. *The boycott originated in Cape Town*, where it was fuelled by deteriorating conditions in the schools and the mushrooming of local organizations. The greatest impact was felt in the coloured townships of Cape Town and in Kimberley. Mr Bernard Fortuin (15) and Mr William Lubbe (19) were shot dead from an unmarked police vehicle in Elsies River in an apparent ambush on 28 May 1980. These killings resulted in a total stay away. Violence peaked on 17–18 June 1980 in the coloured townships of Elsies River, Lavender Hill and Bishop Lavis when a two-day stay away was held to commemorate the uprising of 1976. Coloured leaders had been detained in advance and meetings and gatherings banned during this time. A fare increase had also precipitated a bus boycott. There were incidents of arson, looting, and street protests, *with some speculation about the involvement of gang elements*." (TRC 1998, vol. 3, chapter 5, sub-section 15, 416 [§ 92–4] [my emphasis])

132. Gasant, Maruwan, "They Said It Could Never Happen" (*Cape Herald*, 31 August 1976); quoted in its entirety in Western (1981, 261–2).

133. Geduld (2004) reports on a recent ceremony honouring the memory of the young victim.

At the time of the documentary, Bonteheuwel was becoming a site of student political activism and very high crime rates.[134] On 29 May 1980, the principal of Bonteheuwel Senior Secondary school sent a letter to the parents requesting them to attend a crucial meeting. He referred to a "critical position which has developed" and stated that "only pupils who come for lessons will be allowed to attend the school. Pupils who do not attend lessons but gather in groups on the premises will be regarded as a gathering of boycotters."[135] It is indicative of the strained state of social and political affairs.

Of the three people interviewed in the documentary, only Mrs Rinehart says where her family used to live. Mr Arendse and Mr Claasens do not seem to have any past before their lives in Mitchell's Plain—as if they were re-born in the new housing development. Mrs Rinehart's account typically reflects the usual concerns voiced by her contemporaries. Western reckons that "the most common quality informants ascribed to Cape Flats life was the lack of physical security" and quotes a Bonteheuwel resident, who says, "the nearest police station's Bishop Lavis, a half-hour's walk. There's no telephone in any emergency, the public phones are vandalized. The people opposite have a phone, but you can't knock [wake] them up in the middle of the night" (Western 1981, 236). Fearing gangs of ruffians, people felt like prisoners in their own houses. In comparison with the classic experiences of Western's informants, the move to and life in Mitchell's Plain, defined by Mrs Rinehart as "a change coming from Bonteheuwel," sets the relocation as a promotion and brands Mitchell's Plain as the antithesis of vulnerability. Mrs Rinehart is representative of many of Western's informants who belonged to the more privileged group of Coloured homeowners. These intensively disliked townships like Bonheheuwel, specifically for their public rental areas and the fear of violence from their residents, thus making "enormous and eventually successful efforts to get out into 'more respectable,' 'safer' home-ownership

134. "In 1984, the Bonteheuwel Inter-Schools Congress (BISCO) was formed to co-ordinate the activities of the various student representative councils (SRCs) which were rallying around issues of inequalities in apartheid schooling and the repression of legitimate political protest [...] It was in this context that the 'formation of a militant body to co-ordinate and intensify revolutionary activities, especially at the Bonteheuwel High Schools' was conceived by BISCO members. At a meeting in 1985, it was decided to form a structure that would protect the community of Bonteheuwel, render Bonteheuwel ungovernable and 'hit out' against any organ of the state. This structure became the Bonteheuwel Military Wing (BMW). The vast majority of its active members were students between the ages of fourteen and eighteen years of age. While the formation of the BMW was not part of the strategic plan of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in the Western Cape, its emergence was welcomed and endorsed by the organization." (TRC 1998, vol. 4, chap. 9, sub-section 15, 280 [§ 1-8])

135. Archives of the National Library of Cape Town, South Africa, ref. AP1982-632.

surroundings" (ibid., 263–4). Like those informants, Mrs Rinehart also expresses relief at escaping the ill-reputed place. This escape could also be relative:

> "When coloured people did manage [...] to build or buy houses in pleasant upper-economic suburbs, the government refused to acknowledge their rights to a better life. It became common practice to 'Coloured' slums next to middle and upper-class 'Coloured' suburbs. Alternatively, land for middle and upper-class suburbs was only available next door to these 'ghettos.' Often the only access to these upper-class suburbs was only through the 'slums.' Thus even when 'Coloureds' managed to escape from cesspools created by the government by non-whites, the government would not allow them to totally escape their roots." (Du Pré 1994, 89)

"It was such a change for me coming from Bonteheuwel to Mitchell's Plain, especially with my children, you know," says Mrs Rinehart. Similarly, a Mowbray resident under a Group Areas injunction tells Western about political or/and gender-based violence in Bonteheuwel: "I was scared of that place, especially for my daughters, who I'd brought up nice and who were then teenagers" (Western 1981, 216). Mrs Rinehart's recollection of Bonteheuwel conveys the same concern over problematic school attendance, which can only find its meaning in the then context of protests. Her daughters' education experience in Bonteheuwel remains unclear, the linguistic blur being all the more conspicuous and subsequently suggestive: "They, Adelaide and Dominique, Penny did not want to go to school there," she claims. Did they refuse to go to school, or did they stay away from school? Did they stay at home, or were they involved in other activities? Why did the three girls make the same decision? What motivated their behaviour? The audience is not specified anything—i.e. the situation was known to or could easily be deduced by everyone, given the international reverberations of the Soweto student uprising. Mrs Rinehart's words are shaped by the traditional atmosphere of her house; the composed attitudes of the girls do not fail to give rise to assumptions about the disposition of their school fellows and the ambience of their former school. The shadow of chaos looms when Mrs Rinehart shares her past anxiety, "I thought what is going to happen to these children one day?"—violence and life-threatening concerns crop up. The nature of the events taking place in this Bonteheuwel school seems to apply to contemporaneous school unrest in South Africa (i.e. the semantic relevance of "these children" as opposed to, yet including, "my children"). Mitchell's Plain offers a counter-reflection; the interview sequence winds up with pictures of ant-like lines of smiling children orderly streaming out of a peaceful school and crossing a big empty avenue on the zebra crossing (figures 4.6 to 4.9). The new housing development exhibits peace, order, and progress in education. At the same time, the off-screen voice claims, "by the time the houses are completed, modern schools are ready to fulfil their important educational task. On completion, Mitchell's Plain will be served by 66 primary and 22 secondary schools."

Fig. 4.6 Pupils streaming out of school and crossing an avenue (1)

Fig. 4.7 Pupils streaming out of a school and crossing an avenue (2)

Fig. 4.8 Pupils streaming out of a school and crossing an avenue (3)

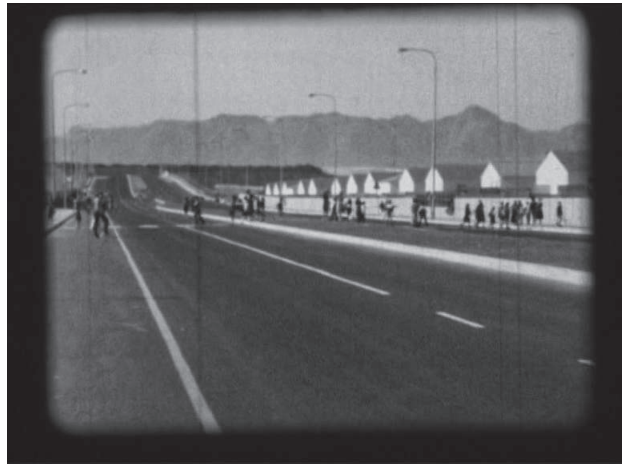

Fig. 4.9 Pupils streaming out of a school and crossing an avenue (4)

The three Rinehart girls are said to thrive in Mitchell's Plain: Adelaide and Dominique want to be air hostesses, and Penelope wishes to become a doctor. Off-screen comments complete beautiful views of high school buildings: "technical training as well as higher education" are contemplated. There is a perceptible attempt at concealing South Africa's racist education system, which featured a differential pattern of educational development for the different race groups. Unlike Blacks (i.e. Africans, Coloureds and Indians), Whites were receiving a very high level of education which was comparable with the best in the industrialised world:

> "The underdevelopment of Black education is clearly reflected in the school enrolment patterns, especially at the secondary level, in inadequate per capita state expenditure on Black education, in the lack of qualified teachers, and the relatively small number of Black matriculants and university graduates. In addition, there is, in absolute terms, an increasing number of Black adult illiterates and Black adults with post-matric qualifications comprise only a small percentage of the total adult 'population. Furthermore, the Black education system has failed to train sufficient Black people with skills. As a result there is a growing shortage of skilled and professional manpower. The system of Black education thus has deeply entrenched and chronic problems which can only be alleviated by radical qualitative and quantitative restructuring." (Pillay 1984, 30–1)

So, unsurprisingly, Whites held an overwhelmingly dominant position in specific key categories of educated or high-quality human resources. Why does the documentary refer to the medical profession? Because among the higher level occupations, doctors had the highest proportion of Blacks (Coloureds included)—although, observably enough, the percentage was still low:

Occupation	Whites	Blacks
Engineers	98,6	1,4
Architects	99,1	0,9
Doctors	89,7	10,3
Dentists	96,4	3,6
Chemists (Industrial)	93,0	7,0
Pharmacists	97,1	2,9
Accountants	98,2	1,8
Draughtsmen	94,0	6,0
Quantity Surveyors	97,5	2,5

Source: Manpower Survey no. 14 (1981). Excludes Transkei, Bophuthatswana and Venda. Blacks include Africans, Indians and Coloureds.
Source: South African Department of Labour, Central Statistical Service (CSS), "Manpower Survey no 14" (1981), in "Manpower Survey 1965–1994" (https://www.datafirst.uct.ac.za/dataportal/index.php/catalog/315/related-materials [archive]); quoted in Pillay (1984, 30).

In 1972, the first report on the development of Mitchell's Plain suggested making provision for "an extension of the University of Cape Town or possibly allowing for a second university for the Coloured Group" (Morris 1972, 11). In the film, the off-screen commentator mentions "an extramural division of the University of the Western Cape" under consideration. In the end, Mitchell's Plain hosted the Dental Faculty of the University of the Western Cape (UWC). The dental school opened in 1974. It was housed at Tygerberg Hospital—where Stellenbosch University's School of Dentistry was accommodated on another floor for discriminatory reasons—before its relocation to Mitchell's Plain in the early 1990s.[136]

The 1979 government brochure *Mitchells Plain, an Investment in People* claimed that "the department's regional representative, Mr Jan Walters, point[ed] out that Mitchell's Plain was entirely unaffected by the 1976 urban riots" (Information Service 1979, 12). However, youth unrest and boycott plans were prepared in Mitchell's Plain during the documentary's filming and at the time of its release. Strikingly enough, especially set against Mrs Rinehart's interview, some activists in Mitchell's Plain had grown up on the streets of Bonteheuwel, where they had been made aware of politics for the first time. Chief Director of Corporate Communication at Statistics South Africa, Trevor Oosterwyk, was one of them. When the Soweto riots erupted in June 1976, he attended Modderdam Senior Secondary School in Bonteheuwel: "We were oblivious to the implications of 1976. We knew about it but certainly did not understand because we were not politically

136. An overview is given by Kruger and van den Heever (2018), Communications and marketing office of UWC.

conscious. I'd never heard of the ANC or Nelson Mandela. We'd never owned a television set"—as he explains his world consisted of Bonteheuwel "I could see Langa from where we stayed, but had not been there. It was amazing how separate we were. The physical distance was negligible, but the personal distance in between was wide" (Ommundsen Pessoa and Le Roux 2012, 37). In August 1976, a boycott started in his school in solidarity with the students of Soweto. When he moved to Portlands in Mitchell's Plain in 1979, he started the Mitchell's Plain Youth Movement with other political activists, then established branches in every Coloured township in the area (ibid.). The boiling point was reached in the early 1980s. Flyers were dropped from a plane in the Mitchell's Plain area with a message signed by the "Concerned Citizens of Cape Town":

> "Dear concerned parents, according to reports in the daily press there are many of you who are indeed anxious about the education of our children. This is a significant step in the right direction. Will these instigators and organizers of the school boycotts are able to furnish our children with matric certificates at the end of the year to enable them to apply for meaningful jobs or to further their careers? Those who suffer from these distorted ideas are reminded 'not to put their trust in princes nor the sons of man in whom there is no help.'"[137]

Other flyers, written by the United Parents and Students Front in both English and Afrikaans, called for a sudden U-turn:

> "STOP‼ Because of traitors amongst us the racist police got hold of our boycott plans and therefore all our plans have been cancelled till later. Take note and pass on. STOP‼ Omdat Vervloekte verraaiers ons planne aan die rassistiese polisie verkoop het daarom word all boikot planne gekanselleer tot later. Lees en stuur aan. STOP‼" (Ibid.)

Detention and banishment soon followed,

> "In November [1980], Mr Jamoloudien Hamdulay, Mr John Issel, chairman of the Rocklands Ratepayers' Association in Mitchells Plain in Cape Town, and Mr John Ferrus, regional chairman of the Labour party, were banned. All had been involved in the school boycotts and, with others, had been detained under the Internal Security Act." (Gordon et al. 1981, 259)

Although images of restless youth and noisy mass gatherings follow Mrs Rinehart's interview, these do not relate to politics. "The facilities for the town's young people do not stop at formal education. There is plenty of space for them to exercise their enthusiasm for sports," says an excited off-screen voice while commenting on pictures of a rugby game (figure 4.10), a happy crowd (figure 4.11) and animated teams (figure 4.12) cheering runners in a stadium (figure 4.13).

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137. Archives of the National Library of Cape Town, South Africa, ref. AP1982-632.

Fig. 4.10 Sports facilities (1) - rugby game

Fig. 4.11 Sports facilities (2) - happy crowd

Fig. 4.12 Sports facilities (3) - cheering teams

Fig. 4.13 Sports facilities (4) - runners in a stadium

In the wake of the Sharpeville massacre, South Africa was excluded from several international sports competitions, starting with the country's suspension of the 1964 and 1968 Olympics and expulsion from the premier international athletic competition in 1970. By the 1980s, enforced as these exclusions were with the anti-apartheid movement's large demonstrations in many countries, "apartheid sport was becoming as sealed off as a faulty nuclear reactor encased in a concrete sarcophagus" (Nixon 1992, 79). The sports boycott lasted until 1992. It had a most significant impact since "there are few national societies in which the cultural significance, indeed centrality, of sport has been more apparent than South Africa" (Black and Nauright 1998, 1). A 1977 survey indicated that the lack of international sport was one of the three most damaging consequences of apartheid for White South Africans (cited in Nixon 1992, 75–6). Therefore, expectantly enough, sports—rugby, hurdling and baseball—are present in the film. Rugby was (and still is) a major sport in South Africa. During apartheid, it had a solid cultural and symbolic significance for Afrikaners. There was a high level of interpenetration between the rugby leadership, the Broederbond and the National Party, thus becoming the cultural battleground of the anti-apartheid movement and the South African government.

Rugby was immensely popular in many areas of the Western and Eastern Cape and significant in the Coloured community of Cape Town.[138] The documentary shows a rugby match and a hurdling competition. The scenes could counter criticism of gross inequalities in White and non-White sporting

138. Black and Nauright (1998) devote an entire chapter to analysing Black rugby and sports.

opportunities.[139] In the opinion of Secretary for Community Development Fouché, the 1976 riots served as "a reminder of the dangers in poor housing conditions which serve as a breeding ground for communism" (quoted in Younge 1982, 25). Along the same line, the film presents sports facilities as solutions provided to students' protests. By juxtaposing Mrs Rinehart's comments on her daughters' schooling and the sports scenes, it brands Mitchell's Plain as a place of intellectual and physical competition—not political confrontation.

Mr Claasens, the Self-Made Man: Rewriting Economy and Freedom

Mr Claasens's interview follows the image of the setting sun—which allegorically anticipates and inscribes the completion of his journey under the ancient alchemical symbol of gold:

> "After a hard day's work, a businessman can relax in the comfort of his own home and plan for the future. Someone like Mr Claasens: 'Two years ago, I opened a bookshop in Mitchell's Plain. The name of the shop is Westridge Booksellers and Stationers, and I must say that the business came very well. So much so I have decided to open one in the town centre. The town centre is a R20 million project, and there I can't let out. There, I intend to expand my business into another bookshop because there will be big business houses.' A peaceful supper at home made with a woman's love and a glass of good Cape wine. What more can a man ask?"

Mr Claasens's "plan for the future" is less family-oriented than based on a personal desire for business growth. His individualism is emphasised in many ways (figures 4.14 and 4.15). He is sitting alone on a large sofa in a full shot from head to toe (physical distance), reading a paper (mental distance); he stands slightly sideways when exposing his plans (depth of character). His discourse is self-centred (e.g. "I opened," "I must say," "I have decided," "I can't let out," "I intend"), evincing strong initiative. His status as a homeowner—indulging in the "comfort of his own home"- is consequently meant to be viewed as acquired through personal effort, ability and achievement. After two years, his first bookshop is already so successful that he envisages a second one as a profitable investment in the town centre, which he "can't let out," thus demonstrating that Mitchell's Plain is a land of opportunity for those who are ambitious and entrepreneurial. Mr Claasens couches his accomplishment and project in a language that manifests a sense of power and confidence. The documentary cleverly exploits the myth of the self-made man in an egalitarian society:

139. To Kidd (1988, 643–64), the campaign to isolate South African sport was enjoying widespread popular support.

Fig. 4.14 Mr Claasens (1)

Fig. 4.15 Mr Claasens (2)

"The myth of the self-made man refers, first of all, to expressive individualism and individual success [...] Second, based on the assumption of competitive equality, the self-made man has often been connected to utopian visions of a classless society, or at least to a society that allows considerable social mobility [...] Thirdly, the culturally specific figure and formula of the self-made man thrives according to all empirical evidence on the illusion that the exception is the rule." (Heike 2014, 368)

This myth is particularly relevant to labour migration.[140] Mr Claasens' discourse constructs his move to and residency in Mitchell's Plain as primarily resulting from and fuelled by a rational and opportunistic choice, therefore precluding coercion (i.e. the Group Areas Act). Yet, apartheid South Africa was no utopia. The country's discriminatory policies imposed a robust racial dimension to occupational classes, which impacted social and organizational mobility and, thus, affluence. In the late 1970s, the racial division of labour saw some changes. According to Simkins and Hindson's investigation, based on five manpower surveys from 1969 to 1977, there was evidence of "substantial and increasing penetration" (1979, 34) by Coloureds, Asians and Africans into petty bourgeois activities, (mainly clerical, white-collar and non-manual work) in the private sector of manufacturing, construction and commerce. Nevertheless, the outstanding feature remained "the predominance of Whites in both bourgeois and petty bourgeois occupations" (ibid., 44). They establish the following tables:

Table XIA. Allocation of Whites to each occupational class (%)

	1969	1971	1973	1975	1977
I	8,22	9,45	10,34	10,67	11,28
II.a	10,11	10,79	10,64	11,17	11,52
II.b	42,74	43,77	43,10	43,37	43,29
II.c	4,71	4,66	4,70	5,24	5,24
II	57,56	59,22	58,44	59,78	60,05
IIIa	22,98	22,57	22,92	22,25	22,72
IIIb	8,68	6,80	6,66	5,89	4,91
IIIc	2,56	1,95	1,65	1,41	1,06
III	34,22	31,32	31,23	29,55	28,69

140. Robin Cohen argues that the state's role defines how relations of production are reproduced. These are legitimated through the construction of an ideology supporting labour migration. According to him, "the myths of social mobility, equal opportunity, and independent proprietorship all act to support and mentally alleviate the general extraction of surplus value from those who give credence to such myths" (Cohen, Robin, *The New Helots: Migration in the International Division of Labour* [Oxford Publishing Services, 1988], 79; quoted in Ndegwa, Horner and Esau [2007, 12]).

Table XIB. Allocation of Coloureds to each occupational class (%)

	1969	1971	1973	1975	1977
I	0,45	0,53	0,57	0,59	0,63
II.a	4,47	4,22	4,75	4,76	5,49
II.b	11,12	11,79	13,51	15,16	17,16
II.c	1,21	1,35	1,55	1,70	2,13
II	16,80	17,36	19,81	21,62	24,78
III.a	9,75	10,73	11,71	12,29	12,60
III.b	36,28	36,75	36,08	33,82	29,14
III.c	36,72	34,64	31,83	31,69	32,84
III	82,75	82,12	79,62	77,80	74,58

I. The Bourgeoisie;
II. The Petty Bourgeoisie: (a) Professional and Semi-professional;
(b) Clerical, White-collar Technical and other non-manual workers;
(c) Supervisors;
III. The Working Class: (a) Skilled; (b) Semi-skilled; (c) Unskilled.

As a bookshop owner, Mr Claasens's case was representative of the penetration that took place then.

Table XB – % Coloureds by sector by occupation 1977

	Sector									
Occupational category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
01	-	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	1,7	1,7
02	-*	-*	0,7	-*	0,7	0,7	0,4*	0,5*	0,9	0,7
03	-*	1,5	0,9	-*	0,7*	2,0	-*	-*	0,9	0,9
04	-*	-*	0,7*	-*	-*	0,8	1,1	1,8	0,5*	0,8
05	-	1,4*	2,7*	1,1*	18,2*	4,3*	0,2*	2,1*	13,7	12,5
06A	-*	-*	0,5*	-*	-*	2,7	0,1*	0,8*	2,3*	2,5
06B	-*	0,9*	3,7	-*	3,4	3,6	0,5*	1,2*	1,2*	1,9
07	19,6	0,7*	8,0	0,3*	14,1	8,7	2,0*	6,7	4,7*	6,4
08A	40,0	0,6*	4,1*	-*	1,0*	2,7*	3,0*	0,2*	10,1	7,7
08B	65,0	0,2*	14,3	3,9*	5,1*	6,6*	7,2*	9,6	3,3*	8,8
09	21,9	2,3*	11,6*	4,6*	32,3	10,9	2,1*	43,2	8,8*	13,1
10	50,5	5,2*	13,4	5,9*	13,2*	14,4	6,6*	6,2*	5,7*	10,9

11	75,7	7,2*	21,0	10,9*	7,3*	16,1*	11,7*	26,7	11,5*	17,8
12	45,7	0,9*	10,1	9,5	7,5*	12,1	13,5	17,5	12,1	8,4

Sectors: **1**. Fishing ; **2**. Mining ; **3**. Manufacturing ; **4**. Electricity, Gas and Water ; **5** Construction ; **6**. Commerce ; **7**. Transport, Storage and Communication; **8**. Finance; **9**. Government, Personal and Community Services Occupations: **01**. Independent and high professional; **02**. Executive and high administration in large organizations; **03**. Professional and salaried professional; **04**. Lower executives and similar administration in large firms, civil service and executives in medium firms; **05**. Semi-professional and creative; **06A**. Owners and executives in small private firms; **06B**. Senior clerical and white collar technical; **07**. Clerical/sales/representatives; **08A**. Blue collar technical; **08B**. Supervisory and inspectional; **09**. Skilled manual; **10**. Routine non-manual, ranks in services, street and market traders; **11**. Semi-skilled; **12**. Unskilled. Note: Asterisks are placed next to entries where the proportion in the relevant sector is less than that for the relevant race group in the relevant occupation.

Some nuance is required. The first stage of development [141] in Mitchell's Plain was not intended for the poorer Coloured families,[142] even though plans changed in 1975 following a decision to provide for home ownership on a larger scale and encourage the formation of a stable community with a financial stake in its environment. Assistant City Engineer Mabin (1977, 16) reports that "the first suburb of Mitchells Plain [Westridge] would be for home ownership with a certain prestige attached, it was planned almost exclusively for the upper echelon of householders, with income from about

141. The first construction phase of Mitchell's Plain started in 1975; the second phase was in 1981.

142. "Prior to 1974, the policy of the Cape Town City Council had been one of building houses and flats at minimum cost for occupation by the many thousands of poorer Coloured families on the Council's waiting lists. National Housing funds were available only for the dwellings and basic services and the Council had been obliged to provide all amenities from its own limited financial resources. As a result, the townships lacked adequate amenities and community facilities; this was a source of considerable dissatisfaction to their inhabitants. The building of more expensive dwellings for home ownership was restricted by availability of national housing funds and this form of development received a lower priority than that accorded to the building of low cost lettings. [...] Agreement was reached with central government that Mitchells Plain would be financed entirely by the central government, including all amenities, and that it would be built to concepts of planning which were largely new to local authority housing in South Africa. The objective was to plan a series of new suburbs, each self-contained in respect of a wide range of community facilities. The decision was made to build for home-ownership as far as the market would bear and thereafter to build for rental, but to a similar standard and with the option to purchase." (Brand 1980a, 1)

R300 to R400 per month."[143] As portrayed by the interview, Mr Claasens's earnings most probably fall into the higher range of income. His case was exceptional in apartheid South Africa since the occupational categories of independent (01) or owners (06A) among the Coloured workers were in "substantial under-representation" during the decade under examination by Simkins and Hindson:

Table IXB. Percentage Coloureds

Occupational category	1969	1971	1973	1975	1977
(?) 01	2,13--	3,81--	3,68--	0,94--	1,68--
02	0,30--	0,54--	0,53--	(?) 0,31--	0,69--
03	0,50--	0,52--	0,80--	0,78--	0,90--
04	0,33--	0,43--	0,86--	0,93--	0,77--
05	12,91*	11,03*	11,97*	11,53*	12,55*
06A	2,53--	2,26--	2,53--	2,67--	2,51--
06B	1,56--	1,64--	(?) 4,04--	1,98--	1,92--
07	3,51--	3,53--	5,35-	5,31-	6,42-
08A	6,58-	6,19-	7,14-	7,27-	7,65-
08B	6,49-	7,00-	8,13-	7,67-	8,78-
09	11,05*	11,20*	12,72*	13,58*	13,12*
10	8,42-	8,15-	8,57-	10,68*	10,85*
11	21,66**	21,77**	22,06**	21,20**	17,76*
12	8,33-	8,13-	7,82-	8 ,45-	8,41-
Total	10,14	9,93	10,26	10,59	10,09

Occupations: **01**. Independent and high professional; **02**. Executive and high administration in large organizations; **03**. Professional and salaried professional; **04**. Lower executives and similar administration in large firms, civil service and executives in medium firms; **05**. Semi-professional and creative; **06A**. Owners and executives in small private firms; **06B**. Senior clerical and white collar technical; **07**. Clerical/sales/representatives; **08A**. Blue collar technical; **08B**. Supervisory and inspectional; **09**. Skilled manual; **10**. Routine non-manual, ranks in services, street and market traders; **11**. Semi-skilled; **12**. Unskilled.

143. "Although this cost structure has restricted the sale of houses to existing Council tenants to those with relatively high incomes, it has certainly established a prestige value to the area. 29% of the houses so far sold have been purchased by Council's tenants." (Mabin 1977, 16)

Notes:
(1) An asterisk denotes that the racial group is over-proportionally represented in the relevant occupational category. A double asterisk denotes heavy over-representation (twice or more the proportion of the racial group in total employment). A minus denotes under-representation and a double minus substantial under-representation (half or less the proportion of the racial group in total employment)
(2) Unfortunately, there are some fluctuations for which there is no apparent explanation other than unreliability of estimates. These are denoted by the entry (?) before the figures.
Source: Ibid. (31).

Once Mr Claasens finishes exposing his success and ambitions, his wife makes her appearance. She is not named. The audience can only guess that she is his wife by the couple's rings, perceptible when they share their evening meal (figure 4.16). She is defined through the stereotypically feminine in "the peaceful supper at home made with a woman's love." The phrase implies that a woman's love for her husband does not produce a tasty meal but a "peaceful" meal, namely a dinner in peace when they are together, thus adding the finishing touch to the myth of the self-made man:

> "The myth of the self-made man appeals to the need for defining the masculine against the feminine by presenting two negative arguments. The most specific negative appeal in a myth concerned with origins alludes to escape from the mother. A second, more subtle appeal encourages departure from the realm of the feminine, with its daily interpersonal concerns, and a subsequent movement into the mythical realm of individual and corporate battle. [...] Develop[ing] 'to its very limits the image of the man without roots, the motherless man, the womanless man.'" (Catano 1990, 426)

Fig. 4.16 Mr and Mrs Claasens (Film still used by permission of GCIS)

The "peaceful supper" comes as the symbol of a soothing reward after Mr Claasens's business speech distilling the rhetoric of aggressive masculinity, which fits the concept of the self-made man. Interestingly, the peaceful quality of this supper is conveyed in that Mrs Claasens speaks but is not heard. All the while, the off-screen (male) voice relates "a woman's love" to "a glass of good Cape wine" (e.g. "a peaceful supper at home made with a woman's love and a glass of good Cape wine. What more can a man ask?"). The scene mainly exhibits Mr Claasens's material success (there is plenty of food on the table, and there is a bottle of "good Cape wine") and its related emotional success (e.g. 'a woman's love'). His empowerment is proportional to the extent of the conquered territory (financial security and peace of mind). The perspective reflects the discriminatory position of married women under South African law at the time:

> "Prior to November 1, 1984, married women, with the exception of African women, were automatically married in 'community of property' and were subject to the 'marital power' of their husbands (unless they had an 'antenuptial contract' that specified otherwise): that is the property of the man and woman were merged into one, and the husband was the sole administrator of the joint estate. A woman in such a marriage was treated as a minor, unable to enter into contracts that bound the joint household without her husband's consent while her husband, on the other hand, could enter into contracts, including contracts alienating the marital home or other property, without her consent."[144] (Nowrojee 1995, 27–8)

The dishes are not specified or qualified (apart from the metaphorical ingredient "love"). In contrast, the wine is "good" and made in the Cape region. By drinking local wine—as opposed to foreign wine (e.g. French wine as a sign of wealth, taste and refinement)—Mr Claasens is promoting the South African wine industry, an essential contributor to the economy. The industry is overwhelmingly based in the Western Cape region owing to its Mediterranean climate (i.e. the region where Mitchell's Plain is located) and traditionally reliant on predominantly Coloured labour (i.e. the racial community to whom Mr Claasens belongs).

144. "Not all marriages were given equal recognition as they had to be solemnized in accordance with the provisions of the Marriage Act (Act no. 25 of 1961) and not 'potentially polygamous.' This means that marriages according to Muslim or Hindu rites or African customary law might not be fully recognized. The law was subsequently changed and marriages undertaken after November 1, 1984—under the Marital Property Act (Act no. 88 of 1984)—were no longer subject to male marital power and further legislation in December 1993 finally abolished the marital power of in all civil marriages of whatever date.'" Note: "The legislation also repealed a number of other discriminatory laws relating, inter alia, to citizenship, attendance at trials, dismissal of female employees if they marry, the position of the husband as 'head of household' and generally to legal capacity." (Nowrojee 1995, 27–8)

The Dutch settlers planted the first vineyards in 1655. From the end of slavery in the 1830s to the 1980s, labour arrangements on wine farms were described as "authentic, undiluted paternalism" (Ewert and Hamman 1999, 208).[145] Under apartheid, the industry was exclusively White-owned. Workers endured the "worst working conditions experienced in South Africa": they received "social dividends" (housing, electricity, water) in exchange for meagre wages and were punished for efforts to unionise or engage in collective bargaining (McEwan and Bek 2006). Although efforts were made in the 1980s to improve social conditions on farms, the legacy of apartheid-era working practices still affects labour within the wine industry (White 2010).[146] The infamous aspect of on-farm labour relations was the "dop" system, whereby workers were given low-grade wine as part of their wage package. The practice resulted in serious social problems in worker communities, including alcoholism, domestic violence and foetal alcohol syndrome (Brown, Du Toit and Jacobs 2004). Fuelled by this degrading system, drunkenness was a fundamental characteristic attributed to the Coloureds by the Whites. Many Coloureds internalised the stereotype. Western (1981, 18) cites the result of Dickie Clark's study of the 1960s, which showed that drinking too much was the most common negative trait that Coloureds felt themselves to have. He subsequently reveals that, in the 130-plus questions of his questionnaire, he received the lowest number of responses and the most evasive answers to "Where did/do you go for a drink?" In Mr Claansens's house, the "good Cape wine" symbolises success and peace. It is indirectly opposed to bad cheap wine, with its correlated drunkenness and violence. The scene suggests Black drinking[147]—and thus Black unrest—under control. It mirrors the comments of the 1979 brochure *Mitchells Plain, an Investment in People*: "Mitchells Plain was entirely unaffected by the 1976 urban riots. The active ratepayers' association is even said to have voted against establishing a liquor store in the new city" (Information Service 1979, 12).

145. Ewert and Du Toit (2005) see a kind of "neo-paternalism," a combination of "modern" and "paternalist" farm management, emerging in the post-apartheid period.

146. "[W]idespread alcoholism on Western Cape farms is a contributing factor as to why workers struggle to defend their working conditions or wages." (White 2010, 675).

147. "At the centre of leisure control were the liquor restrictions. The attempt to control black drinking is a theme that has generated a growing body of research. It is a theme which has many dimensions to it. Liquor control has been a form of cultural domination. It has been an assault on the informal sector and on the economic position of women. It has been a form of labour control and an instrument of segregation. Municipal liquor monopolies have provided the fiscal base for the institutions and mechanisms created to control the underclasses. The nature of liquor control has varied from place to place, from time to time." (Maylam 1995, 31)

When the documentary was made and released, South African products, including alcoholic beverages, were affected by anti-apartheid sanctions. These hit exports hard and prevented the exchange of vinicultural and winemaking expertise with other wine countries: "Exports, mainly of fortified wines and brandies, were reduced by informal actions from 1963 and formal sanctions from 1985, and by the entry of Britain in the European Community in 1973. Declared exports fell by about two-thirds between 1964 and 1989" (Vink, Williams and Kirsten 2004, 236). In the absence of an international market, the small local market developed and became more demanding, leading to the publication and success of Platter's guide to South African wine in 1980 (James 2013, 46). When Mr Claasens and his wife casually sip their glasses of Cape wine, South African wine is advertised as social power, targeting and branding the Coloured middle class. It also ridicules the international boycott, which looks unfounded—if not preposterous—as the drink is purchased and enjoyed by Coloureds residing in a Group Areas housing development.

The business-minded Mr Claasens is interviewed against a visible hi-fi system and a turn table (figure 4.15). In the wake of the self-made man sequence, musicians and dancers come along (figures 4.17 and 4.18). Freedom of movement follows freedom of enterprise:

> "What more can a man ask? Of course, one would also want to go out sometimes. To a dance, for instance, in the fine Westridge Community Hall, the centre of many of Mitchell's Plain's social activities. Clever design makes this hall a multipurpose venue equally suited to a boxing tournament with 12,000 spectators or the small intimate meetings of a social club. The community hall received the Institute of Civil Engineers' Award for the project of the year."

The Westridge Hall was designed by Graham Parker and won an Institute of South African Architect Award of Merit (Stoffberg 2015, 90).[148] It was completed in 1979. When Cee Jay Williams moved to Mitchell's Plain back in 1976, social life was non-existent, hence compromising its social fabric:

> "I got a few guys together and we started the Westridge Darts Club. We needed something to involve the women too so we formed the Ballroom Club from my house. As the local population increased, more and more groups were formed and we amalgamated them into one big organisation called the Mitchell's Plain Social Club. It just stood to reason that we needed to put pressure on the relevant authorities to provide sport and recreational facilities, and we organised ourselves into the Westridge Ratepayers' Association." (Ommundsen Pessoa and Le Roux 2012, 34)

148. The Institute of South African Architects, established in 1927, was renamed the South African Institute of Architects in 1996.

Fig. 4.17 Westridge Hall (1) - dancers

Fig. 4.18 Westridge Hall (2) - musicians

Stoffberg specifies that Westridge Hall was an example of the transitional structure from civic to community centre, with the gathering space at the heart of the design. Initially built to provide space for municipal services, it paradoxically offered little administrative office space, therefore functioning as a community centre rather than a civic centre. Accordingly, the off-screen commentator insists on its wide range of leisure activities—from dancing to boxing—adapted to different needs—from the "small intimate meeting" to the "busy tournament." Notably, the documentary shows images of music and dancing only. Fighting would have been antithetical to Mr Claasens's peaceful supper "made with a woman's love" and a possible reminder of the growing

anti-apartheid militancy in the aftermath of the 1976 uprising. It is worth noting that the musical image was stereotypically assigned to the Coloureds, a feature Western found significantly resented by politically aware Coloureds in his 1975 study (1981, 19). The dance scenes could provide a counter-challenge to toyi-toyi,[149] the militant dancing and singing, which was becoming an eye-catching feature of mass street protests in South Africa. Gilbert (2007, 429) argues that "in the mid-1970s, culture was not yet on the ANC's mainstream agenda. As the decade progressed, however, culture gained an increasing presence in the movement's formal discourse" within the country and abroad.

The freedom of movement that these happy gatherings at Westridge Hall seemingly celebrate in the documentary film positively denies the reality of the damaging effects of constant subjection to institutionalised racism on the mental, physical and social health of residents, especially those involved in political activism. United Democratic Front founding member Veronica Simmers and her husband Willie, a founding member of the Rocklands Ratepayers Association and the Cape Areas Housing Action Committee (CAHAC) in Mitchell's Plain, were both in and out of detention. "But our kids turned out well. They are educated. They are graduates. Some people's kids are badly affected," they reckon (Ommundsen Pessoa and Le Roux 2012, 73). In contrast, apartheid left an indelible mark in the family history of former Cape Town Mayor Theresa Solomon and her husband, Marcus Solomon. When they moved to Mitchell's Plain with the first families, Marcus had just been released from Robben Island after ten years as a political prisoner:

> "Living with someone who was banned and placed under house arrest presented many challenges. We couldn't go out as a family. Sometimes we were detained at the same time. The effect on our daughter was devastating. We made sure that she understood that we were fighting a system and not people. It was important that we did not radicalise instances and incidents for her. It was a huge contradiction for a child to understand. My first detention was difficult. I told my daughter not to cry. I now see the effects on her and I have a lot of guilt as a parent. I became an emotionless person. There was no trauma counselling. Activists didn't need that [...] or so we thought." (Ibid., 57–8)

The documentary purposefully focuses on these festive scenes distilling the lightness of bodies and minds and incarnating the spirit of wellness. A rising wave of anxiety and insecurity was then sweeping over Mitchell's Plain as a result of the degrading economic conditions felt by many—the antithesis of Mr Claasens's reality:

149. Toyi-toyi is "a quasi-military dance-step characterized by high-stepping movements, performed either on the spot or while moving slowly forwards, usu. by participants in (predominantly black) protest gatherings or marches, and accompanied by chanting, singing [of freedom songs], and the shouting of slogans" (Silva et al. 1996, 730).

> "In the Plain the smiles, enthusiasm and pride of many new home owners conceal rising anxiety, and even anguish, caused by financial stress. Even before the February 1979 petrol price hike many families were spending R 40-60 per month on petrol, mainly to get to and from work. These costs have virtually doubled in the six months since then. Where is the extra money to come from when, alas, so much is also committed to hire purchase instalments on the motor car, furniture and furnishings, electrical appliances and television set? After a brief holiday the old enemy, social stress, has reappeared—in subtler guise but no less destructive." (Nash 1979, 7)

Ironically, as Mitchell's Plain's conditions worsened and added to many other structural problems plaguing the Cape Flats, the Westridge community hall was used as the scene of protests organised by the Cape Areas Housing Action Committee (CAHAC):

> "We can stand together. We showed this in grand style on Sunday January 10 [1982], when 3,000 [people] packed the Westridge Civic Centre to show the anger at high rent increases … From as far places like Worcester, Atlantis, Ocean View and many other areas they came in a show of unity never seen before in our civic history here. This was possible because our people are joining their organizations and Cahac has united these organizations to speak as one voice." (*Cahac Speaks*, January 1982; quoted in Maseko 1997, 361)

The Arendses: Home Sweet Home in a Civilised Group Areas Development

The 1979 Information Service of South Africa advertised Mitchell's Plain as "an investment in people," an investment defined in terms of civilising mission through social mobility by the regional representative of the Department of Community Development: "If you live in Mitchells Plain you are acknowledged to have arrived socially," says Mr Jan Walters, "You *have* arrived socially. Mitchells Plain is civilisation" (Information Service 1979, 31). Mr Arendse, his wife, and his children represent this professed investment, namely the civilised family, the Coloured family eventually accessing civilisation—i.e. being converted to homeownership—through what Mr Arendse sees as a "fortunate" opportunity bestowed upon him:

> "But the modern, well-designed houses remain the cornerstone on which Mitchell's Plain's happy community is being built. Family homes, in contrast with high-density housing, which is hardly found here. This Mitchell's Plain businessman, Mr Arendse, is proud to be able to raise his children in a home like this: 'Now I was fortunate to get a job for the Mitchell's Plain Housing Sales as you can see I bought a little place, a choice I'm just so proud of because I now have a room for each of my children. And I have got onto it very easily by paying a R100 deposit and only R92 a month.' Most of the houses in Mitchell's Plain have three bedrooms, modern kitchens and bathrooms."

Mrs Rinehart, the perfect mother, is introduced after a glimpse of the orderly nature of her abundant garden. Mr Claasens, the rising star, makes his appearance at sunset. Now, the viewer meets the Arendse family in the wake of a series of images of houses boasting different designs (figures 4.19 to 4.22). The Arendses play the role of the typical—father-centred—family residing in the area (figures 4.23 and 4.24). The audience goes through their house (figures 4.25 to 4.27). As Mr Arendse works for Mitchell's Plain Housing Sales, he is the best placed to mention the terms and conditions of ownership. In contrast with the family scene in the overcrowding older housing scheme, where the lounge and bedroom were overflowing with people, the Arendses's new surroundings and residence can only illustrate the upward economic development of the Coloureds.

Fig. 4.19 Mitchell's Plain houses boasting different designs (1)

Fig. 4.20 Mitchell's Plain houses boasting different designs (2)

Fig. 4.21 Mitchell's Plain houses boasting different designs (3)

Fig. 4.22 Mitchell's Plain houses boasting different designs (4)

Fig. 4.23 The Arendse family

Fig. 4.24 Mr and Mrs Arendse

Fig. 4.25 The Arendse children (bedroom)

Fig. 4.26 Mrs Arendse (kitchen)

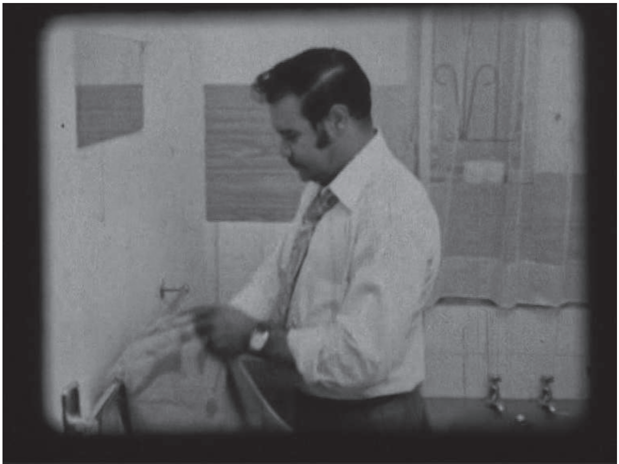

Fig. 4.27 Mr Arendse (bathroom)

In reality, the situation was not encouraging. In 1971, when assessing the preliminary requirements for the development of Mitchell's Plain, an initial socio-economic survey of families on the City Council's waiting lists for houses presented what was seen as "a depressing picture" jeopardising the development of the new project on higher standards:

> "78% of heads of households waiting to rent and 93% of those wishing to purchase housing earned less than R 100 and R 200 per month respectively. As a consequence 80% of dwellings in Mitchells Plain would then have to cost less than R 2,300 each to keep them within rent-paying capacity of the families who would live in them; even at the then ruling construction costs, this was a very low figure." (Brand 1976, 4)

In 1974 other surveys were carried out. The objective was to assess the needs of the Coloured community and consider a broader spectrum of the population—"on the basis of homes for sale to all who could afford them, regardless of whether they were on the waiting list, already housed in the Council's letting scheme or even squatters" (ibid., 6)—since data indicated an upward trend in the incomes of the Coloured people in the Western Cape,

> "the plans for the first stage of Mitchells Plain were revised in 1975 following a decision to provide for home ownership on a larger scale, so as to encourage the formation of a stable community with a financial stake in its environment. Homes would, as far as practicable, be offered, in the first instance, to tenants in low-cost schemes; the vacated homes would in turn be offered to applicants with lower incomes who were still unable to afford to buy a home. It was hoped that in this way families would be able to aspire to higher living standards as their incomes rose, and one of the major social problems associated with mass housing could hopefully be overcome." (Ibid., 12)

In 1978, Councillor Eulalie Scott, Housing Committee chairman at the City Council, was bitter about the ambitious mass housing development. It was not solving Cape Town's housing shortage: "Even now the heads of some 19,000 families for whom we are responsible, including 6,000 squatters, earn less than R 200 a month. Where are those 40,000 families able to afford to buy houses in Mitchells Plain for R 8570-R 14855 supposed to be coming from?" (*Financial Mail* Special Report 1978, 5.) The following year, Nash publicly exposed the numerous problems that plagued the new town: unsold houses, arrears and repossessions, alleged high-pressure salesmanship, reclassification of council housing, anxiety and insecurity, discrepancies in official statements, hidden interest rates, and controversial claims and achievements. In her speech, Nash (1979, 5) stressed that "despite the backlog of 25-30 000 dwelling units, the misery of squatting, desperate overcrowding in council flats and the criminogenic conditions in the Cape Flats townships, people [were] not snapping the houses as soon as they [became] available":

	Total sales	Ready but unsold
May 4	7165	1596
August 2	8365	1812

She revealed that "arrears owed 1 in 4 of the City Council's new homeowners rose from R 360 000 in April to R 572 000 by late July. 40 houses were repossessed in the five weeks to August 2" (ibid.) Then, she targeted City Engineer Brand for his partisanship: "public controversy in early August generated more heat than light, with City Engineer—not the Mayor/Chairman of Exco/Director of Housing—acting as City Council spokesman and denying all suggestion of undue difficulties" (ibid.).

Mr Arendse pays "a R100 deposit and only R92 a month." The City Council of Cape Town advertises a much higher deposit in the 1978 Mitchells Plain Special Report of the *Financial Mail*:

> "At Mitchells Plain, Coloured families have a unique opportunity to own a home in prestigious surroundings. Prices range from R 8578 to R 15000. The deposit payable on any home is only R 300. Repayment over 30 years. Immediate occupation. Employers are invited to assist their personnel by writing to: The Town Clerk, PO Box 298, Cape Town 8000 for further details." (Ibid.)

Social and political activist Willie Simmers provides more details about the process: "Houses were allocated on a Sunday," he says, "The people would gather where all the estate agents were and you had to undergo a screening process. Then you had to wait for a call to tell you whether or not you got a house and where it was." After paying a deposit of R350, Willie and his wife Veronica moved to Rocklands in January 1979. According to him, the average house would cost R11,500,

> "But people were not allowed to pay the whole amount in cash; you had to pay it off over a certain period. After all this it worked out R 22 000. People came from living in rooms, back yards and so forth, and then moved into houses for the first time in their lives. The dynamics around this were staggering. Retailers and furniture stores had a field day. Business was done on a Sunday. People bought left, right and centre and got into trouble with credit." (Ommundsen Pessoa and Le Roux 2012, 72–3)

As a Mitchell's Plain Housing Sales employee, Mr Arendse might have benefited from specific terms and conditions. Nonetheless, his advertising was part of a process to induce residential filtering, which resulted from both reclassifying council dwelling units and easing financial access to home ownership in the new housing development:

> "Several thousand council dwelling units (in Heideveld, Parkwood and Lavender Hill) were reclassified from economic to subeconomic, forcing tenants with incomes over the subeconomic limit to move out and enabling the council to house squatters in their place. In addition, a sliding scale of repayments was introduced for home-buyers in Mitchell's Plain, making initial payments easier, and *deposits were reduced to as little as R 100*."(Younge 1982, 24–5 [my emphasis])

In 1980, the South African Institute of Race Relations referred again to the economic and personal reasons preventing families from moving to Mitchell's Plain and further exposed the mismanagement and alleged fraud at Mitchell's Plain Housing Sales—i.e. Mr Arendse's employing firm:

> "It had been anticipated that the more affluent families would move to the area, creating vacancies in older schemes for families on the waiting list who couldn't afford Mitchell's Plain; but it was reported that this was not happening at the desired rate. At any one time approximately 1 500 completed homes were empty. The council stated that this was not abnormal for a scheme of this size. However, commentators pointed out that it was abnormal in the context of the housing shortage. In a survey by the council's housing committee in late 1978 it was found that only 6.5% of tenants in older schemes could afford Mitchell's Plain. Families also resisted moving from areas where they were established to a group area further away from the city centre. Later in the year there were more than 2 000 empty new houses. A further reason for this was a reorganization of the firm handling sales, Mitchells Plain Housing Sales, formed by a consortium of the companies carrying out the building contracts. Several senior staff left the firm following revelations of irregularities and accusations that some buyers had been victims of unscrupulous salesmen. It was reported that the Cape Town Council was for the first time considering the possibility of renting some of the houses, as it felt part of the problem was that too many houses were being offered for home ownership. This move was opposed by the Residents' Association [The beginning of rented housing began in 1982]." (Gordon et al. 1980, 476)

As the Arendses are the symbol of social mobility and thus civilisation, the first shot inside their home significantly frames them as a family watching

television in a friendly and cosy room (figure 4.23). At the time of the documentary's release, television was both a novelty and a status symbol, i.e. a "social power" identity marker. As noted earlier, South Africa adopted television very late compared to other advanced nations. The official opening of South Africa's national television service (SABC-TV) under the Minister of Posts and Telegraph occurred in 1976. Four years later, broadcasting fell under the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Information.[150] Data gathered for the national "All Media Product Survey" show how swiftly television penetrated the market after its introduction in 1976:

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1983
Whites	46	59	66	71	73	78
Coloureds	13	24	30	35	37	48
Indians	24	34	43	58	61	71
Blacks	1	1	2	3	4	11

Television viewing "yesterday" by race group (%)
Source: cited in Hachten and Giffard (1984, 272).

Between 1976 and 1980, the percentage of Coloureds watching TV almost tripled. It did not compare with those of the White or Indian groups.[151] It remained the privilege of an established middle class[152]—namely the targeted group for Mitchell's Plain—even if the cost of a television set had decreased:

> "The SABC is proceeding cautiously in providing any specific television services for the non-white majority. South Africa is a First World region for most of the 4.4 million whites and some of the urban blacks, 2.4 million coloreds (of mixed race) and 765,000 Asians. But it is a Third World region for most of the 19 million blacks who are excluded from television. [...] Most non-whites, who have a much lower standard of living, find the costs of a television set and license prohibitive. [...] Despite their initial high costs, television sets were quickly purchased and there are an estimated three million registered sets in operation. Before 1976, there were only 2.4 million television receivers in all of black Africa. A 26-inch color receiver, originally sold for $ 1500, now costs

150. Harrison and Paul (1976) mention the determination of South Africans to prevent what they considered the undesirable side-effects of television, namely aggressive behaviour.

151. A separate Black service was introduced for the African population on 1 January 1982, which in any case, remained firmly under the Afrikaner-dominated South African Broadcasting Corporation. See Jackson (1982).

152. The Theron Commission distinguished three groups among the Coloured: an established middle class constituting perhaps 20% of the population, a middle group of perhaps 40% between the middle class and the chronically poor and a bottom stratum of perhaps 40% perceived as trapped in a subculture of chronic and institutionalised community poverty.

about $ 690 [R 579]; black-and-white sets were first sold for $ 600 and are now about $ 155 [R 130].[153] In addition, South Africans pay about $ 50 annually for television and radio licenses." (Hachten 1979, 64–5)

In the case of Mr Arendse, a R579 colour TV set and a R130 black-and-white TV set would be the equivalent of 6 and 1.5 of his declared monthly mortgage payments—quite an expense.

The central place of television in the Arendses's family life stresses their connections with the rest of the developed western world, both technologically and culturally.[154] The sequence neutralises any impression of isolation, be it physical or intellectual, which the term "heartland" could impart. It also dispels the idea of Mitchell's Plain as a "'homeland' away from the City for coloured people," by journalist Diane Cassere on 17 November 1979 in *The Cape Times* (Cassere 1979, 17). Cassere published her paper in the wake of a tour conducted by City Engineer Brand with a party of journalists. "From the start Mitchells Plain has been a controversial subject, but whichever way you look at the development, it has always been exciting," (ibid.) she writes. "The most exciting aspects of the development were, for me, the recreational area with sunken amphitheatre and vast playing fields (certainly some exciting moments on the bus as we negotiated the narrow pathway between the seating arrangements) and the vast civic centre halls" (ibid.). The passage is overly enthusiastic as if the housing development were not a dormitory township. The image of a resort cannot fail to come to the viewer's mind when the Arendse family sequence gives way to a holiday-like beach scene with children playing and jumping into the water (figure 4.28) and men with their fishing rods (figure 4.29). Mrs Rinehart's comments:

"Mitchell's Plain is so near the beach that we can just take a walk; we walk in with our meat and our cool drinks and into the water. And when we come out of there, I start making the fireplace for the children to have their braai. It is fantastic; they will sing, and they will dance on the beach and don't cost us a thing."

153. In 1979, $1 = R0.84.

154. Although complete control over the television was exercised by the State—ensuring the ruling National Party's pluralistic policy and a positive image of South Africa—it formed part of Botha's "Total National Strategy." However, Americanisation progressed: "The second obvious terrain of Americanization in the 1970s was, of course, television. Historian Rob Nixon has explored the Afrikaner Nationalists' long refusal to keep this quintessential American medium out of South Africa, and the combination of circumstances that caused them ultimately to relent. Suffice to say, that much of what they feared—an avalanche of American commercial programs, promoting values foreign to "the South African way of life"—has come to pass. Between the high costs of local production and the South African boycott by the British union Equity, an increasing percentage of American shows appeared on South African screens" (Campbell 1998, 28).

Fig. 4.28 Beach (1) Children

Fig. 4.29 Beach (2) Men and fishing rods

The apartheid government did not envisage Mitchell's Plain as a busy and lively "metropolis" but as a segregated dormitory housing development, far removed from the White areas of Cape Town and isolated from the other racial communities. The first report about its development could not be more explicit about it: "Its character will perforce be that of a large dormitory town, almost entirely dependent, even ultimately, upon economic activity in other parts of the metropolitan area particularly the central business district" (Morris 1972, 10). Besides, the Mitchells Plain Open Space Survey conducted at the time of the documentary found that 90% of those interviewed spent

their free time at home or in the neighbourhood,[155] and criticism of the Mitchell's Plain project had not abated, as recorded by the 1980 Survey of Race Relations:

> "Professor Richard van der Ross, rector of the University of the Western Cape, said that it was the result of ill-conceived town planning based on apartheid and had been built to satisfy the Group Areas Act. The chairman of the Cape Town City Council's housing committee, Mrs Eulalie Scott, said that the council was building Mitchells Plain only because it had not been given a large block of land anywhere else and Mr Chris Stevens, chairman of the Combined Mitchells Plain Ratepayers' Association, said that Mitchells Plain had been devised to perpetuate the suffering and inequality of the so-called coloured people, thereby keeping them subservient." (Gordon et al. 1981, 259)

Under such conditions, activism seems to have developed into a way of life in Mitchell's Plain, as former Cape Town mayor Theresa Solomon points out:

> "We were some of the first people who moved into Woodlands. This is where my life as an activist began. There were a lot of issues that forced us to take action. These included the lack of schools, the lack of transport for the kids to go to schools, the washing-line campaign (maisonette living forced us to take action), no pavements, no parks for the kids to play in, no recreational facilities, no hospital, no police station in Tafelsig, and so forth." (Ommundsen Pessoa and Le Roux 2012, 57)

Civic struggles played an essential part in the demise of apartheid in South Africa as they shaped the specificities of the country's liberation movement. In her conclusion, Younge (1982, 27) notes, "the high levels of political awareness and community organization on the Cape Flats are not restricted to the poorest areas—in fact, militancy in Mitchell's Plain is as high or higher than elsewhere," thus revealing that "there is no link between home-ownership and "stability." Indeed, a year later, in 1983, the Rocklands community centre in Mitchell's Plain hosted the United Democratic Front (UDF) national launch. "This was a massive achievement—launching a non-racial movement in this Coloured homeland!" (ibid., 28), admits Ryland Fisher, Chairman of Cape Town Festival and former editor of The Cape Times, who joined his parents in Mitchell's Plain in 1981 (Ommundsen Pessoa and Le Roux 2012).

In 1980, City Engineer Brand proudly declared, "South Africa (not to mention the City Engineer's Department and the City Council of Cape Town) has received much favourable publicity in the foreign press and influential foreign circles as a result of visits arranged in Mitchells Plain" (Brand 1980a, 15). He specified that "220 foreign visitors and 760 visitors from South Africa were during 1979 officially conducted on tours around the Plains" (ibid., 16).

155. Technical Management Services (TMS) City Engineer's Department, "Mitchells Plain Open Space Survey" (1980), 34; quoted in Le Grange (1987, 61).

Three years later, a much larger crowd thronged Mitchell's Plain. A historical shift occurred in apartheid's Coloured "model" housing development:

> "On 20 August 1983, the United Democratic Front (UDF) was launched in Rocklands Mitchells Plain. Fifteen thousand people, young and old, black and white, Christians and Jews, Muslims and Hindus, people of all faiths. Representatives of almost 500 organizations were there, reflecting all the sectors of society [...] Graced by the presence of men and women of enormous stature, Frances Baard, Helen Joseph, Archie Gumede, Oscar Mpetha, who linked the present with the past, we were not just present at a historic event; we were a piece of history ourselves. It was an immense feat, under the circumstances, a triumph of organizational acumen. Through all the speeches, the songs, the poetry, the dancing and the joy, I sensed the awareness: the people were ready. South Africa's history was about to enter a completely new phase where we would again take politics to the streets." (Boesak 2009, 115)

Mitchell's Plain was chosen for the national launch of the UDF "to emphasise the UDF's appeal for the support of the Coloured South Africans" and "people would sleep in halls, churches and mosque, and hundreds of mattresses were hired" (Seekings 2000, 54). It is an irony of fate that the last comments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Information documentary film can also apply to the picture given by Boesak (2009) of the event taking place on 20 August 1983. The "living colourful picture of a happy community" in Rocklands Centre that day was also "laying the foundations of a new society" and "hail[ing] the future with confidence."

Some mixed feelings pervade post-apartheid Mitchell's Plain. Willie Simmers, formerly involved in the formation and launch of the UDF in Mitchell's Plain with his wife Veronica, confesses that "it still is essentially a dormitory town. We don't stay in Mitchell's Plain anymore and I would like to move back. But moving back will break my wife's heart. She still cannot get over the fact that, after our hard political work, the majority of the people in Mitchell's Plain voted for the National Party" (Ommundsen Pessoa and Le Roux 2012, 73). In contrast, Mitchell's Plain's Liverpool-Portland Football Club chairperson Lutfeyah Abrahams, a pioneer family member, is adamant, "I will never move away from Mitchell's Plain. We have been living here for 30 years. We are one of the four families still left from the time we moved in back in that day. You get problems everywhere. What's the difference in living somewhere else? Everything is within walking distance—the beach, shops, schools, sport. The infrastructure is fantastic. All that is missing is an industrial area. It's quiet and I'm happy" (ibid., 64).

More worryingly, mixed feelings are pervading post-apartheid South Africa, as exposed by a recent Afrobarometer study published in 2016. In the context of the long struggle for freedom and representation, it is disturbing to see a decline in people's support for democracy, from 72% of the respondents in 2011 to 64% of them in 2015, concomitantly to a breakthrough of the

authoritarian preference (*'sometimes non-democratic is preferable'*) rising from 15% to 17% (Lekalake 2016, 3). It is disconcerting to see that 6 of 10 South Africans (61%) say they are willing to forego elections "in favour of a non-elected government or leader that could impose law and order, and deliver houses and jobs" (ibid., 4).

Appendix: Transcript

***Mitchells Plain*, 1980, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Information (17:48 minutes).**
Director/Cameraman: Steve Theunissen
Production Manager: Ria Coetzer
Editor: Alastair Henderson
Script and producer: Sakkie Van der Walt

Mankind, with his incredible technology, has conquered many problems in the twentieth century. He thrusts out into space and makes ghost-like satellites to travel into eternal circles as his slaves. And when from space he looks back at his home, he sees a romantic blue ball.

And yet, back on Earth, he is struggling to provide decent living space for a fast-growing world population. All over the world, the most beautiful cities, the most prosperous peoples must still contend with annoying need for housing. 20% of the population of one of the world's great cities live in slums with no municipal service. In another historic city, two out of every three families live in a single room. Even in wealthy countries, millions of people live in sub-standard houses. More than a thousand million people in Asia, South America and Africa are homeless, albeit to a lesser degree.

Since World War II, the Republic of South Africa has experienced the same housing problem as the rest of the world. Industrial growth enticed large numbers of people to South Africa's principal cities at a faster rate than the giant housing programs could progress. Slums developed, and South Africans were shocked to the core by conditions like these. The problem was not confined to slums. In older housing schemes, overcrowding began to cause serious headaches. Parliament voted millions of rands for housing schemes, and the Department of Community Development set to work to eliminate the pressing housing shortage. Vast housing projects were launched: Eldorado Park and Ennerdale between Johannesburg and Vereeniging, Atlantis on the West Coast near Cape Town, Phoenix in Natal and Mitchell's Plain.

Mitchell's Plain, one of the most exciting housing projects in the world, is situated in the heartland of South Africa's Coloured community above 25 km from Cape Town and within the city's municipal boundaries. A metropolis of a quarter of a million people in 40,000 houses is being developed here by the Cape Town City Council in cooperation with the Department of

Community Development, which was set up to deal with the establishment of communities and the housing of all South Africans. For the Mitchell's Plain project, the Department made lands available at a low-interest rate to the Cape City Council through the National Housing Fund and the Council, in turn, planned and developed the townships and sold the houses to prospective Coloured owners at a very low deposit and with subsidised bond interest rates.

Mitchell's Plain sprang up by an extensive stretch of land with a beautiful 9 km seafront between Muizenberg and the Strand. Large parts of the area had to be evened out with bulldozers. Because of its sandy nature, the ground had to be stabilised with straw and rolled firm to provide excellent building stands. When Mitchell's Plain is completed, 15 million cubic meters of earth will have been moved to make room for 160 townships with about 250 stands each. A building tempo of 700 houses a month, that is to say, 33 houses a day, was maintained. The construction of Mitchell's Plain heralded a period of growth for many Cape industries. This brickworks was built to provide the millions of bricks needed for the new town.

With the accent on house ownership rather than rented accommodation in Mitchell's Plain, a wide variety of designs is offered to prospective buyers. After a survey of potential owners' tastes and preferences, the planning division of the Cape Town City Council created no less than 70 house designs for Mitchell's Plain. The positioning of the houses on the stands was planned to provide the maximum variety and privacy.

In addition to the shops in every township, a large central business complex is being built by the Department of Community Development. This centre, which will cost more than R15 million, will eventually form the heart of the new city. It is expected that more than 5,000 people will be employed in its shops and offices. Right next to the city centre, the main railway station is near in completion. Altogether three stations will serve the town's 30,000 to 50,000 daily commuters. Altogether 40,000 workers are employed in building the town, and many opportunities for enterprises have been created.

Mr Dudley will tell us more about it: "Model Development Company has been building houses for the last 20 years, and we went in for this contract here at Mitchell's Plain, a contract of 4,960 houses. We completed that in 33 months. At present, I am busy with another 165 houses, and in the middle of this month, I intend going on to another 2,500 houses. That's our project at present in Mitchell's Plain."

No overhead power and telephone lines disfigure the streets of Mitchell's Plain. Nevertheless, electric power and telephones are available for every house as these services are made possible by hidden underground cables. Because Mitchell's Plain was regarded, right from the start, as the establishment of a healthy, vital community rather than simply a housing project, quality

houses have been built, and much has been done to beautify the area. Residents own their homes, and they have pride in the fruits of their work in the neat gardens.

For most of them, Mitchell's Plain means not only new houses but a new life. Mrs Rinehart describes her own experience: "It was such a change for me coming from Bonteheuwel to Mitchell's Plain, especially with my children, you know. They, Adelaide and Dominique, Penny did not want to go to school there, and I thought, 'what is going to happen to these children one day?' But here, Adelaide wants to become an air hostess, even Dominique. The facilities that they have here… Dominique is going to the Far East in a few months' time, and Penelope would like to become a doctor. As far as the crime rate is concerned, there is nothing that we have to worry about. Mike is going out; he can come home any time. There is time that they forget my front door open, standing open, and nothing happens."

The National housing Commission also made loans available for the construction of community facilities. Even as the houses were still being built. By the time the houses are completed, modern schools are ready to fulfil their important educational task. On completion, Mitchell's Plain will be served by 66 primary and 22 secondary schools. Technical training, as well as higher education through an extramural division of the University of the Western Cape, are also envisaged here. But the facilities for the town's young people do not stop at formal education. There is plenty of space for them to exercise their enthusiasm for sports. Just a stone's throw from home, neat little parks with permanent playgrounds ensure that the small fry can use up their energy. At Mitchell's Plain, community services are growing with the town.

After a hard day's work, a businessman can relax in the comfort of his own home and plan for the future. Someone like Mr Claasens: "Two years ago, I opened a bookshop in Mitchell's Plain. The name of the shop is Westridge Booksellers and Stationers, and I must say that the business came very well. So much so I have decided to open one in the town centre. The town centre is a R20 million project, and there I can't let out. There, I intend to expand my business into another bookshop because there will be big business houses." A peaceful supper at home made with a woman's love and a glass of good Cape wine. What more can a man ask?

Of course, one would also want to go out sometimes. To a dance, for instance, in the fine Westridge Community Hall, the centre of many of Mitchell's Plain's social activities. Clever design makes this hall a multipurpose venue equally suited to a boxing tournament with 12,000 spectators or the small intimate meetings of a social club. The community hall received the Institute of Civil Engineers' Award for the project of the year.

Designed according to their expected traffic load, Mitchell's Plain's roads vary from broad two-lane highways to quiet cul-de-sacs in the residential areas. Customers have plenty of choice, whether in lively roadside vegetable stalls or in the modern supermarket nearby. And when the shopping is done, the baseball field and other sports grounds are within easy reach.

But the pride of many people's lives is their garden, and surely gardening in the fresh air is just as relaxing as sport. And what about exercises of relaxation to the mind? The library is a popular meeting place for old and young. Its comprehensive collection of books is attracting an ever-growing number of readers to fill their leisure hours there. [A librarian is reading a story to a group of children:] "Once upon a time, there were three billy goats who were to go up to the hillside to make themselves fat. The name of all three was 'Gruff.' And on the way up was a bridge, and under the bridge the great ugly troll…" Not a bad alternative for the cinema around the corner when pocket money runs low.

A healthy community is a happy community. Medical help and advice are at hand. And this service is avidly used. Ample provision has also been made for the spiritual well-being [psalm singing by congregation followed by sermon told by priest:] "If you obey the commands of the Lord your God, which I give you today, if you love him, obey him, and keep all his laws, then you will prosper and become a nation of many people." Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven. In the spirit of this command, this church is transformed into a nursery school on weekdays, moulding the future men and women of Mitchell's Plain.

But the modern, well-designed houses remain the cornerstone on which Mitchell's Plain's happy community is being built. Family homes—in contrast with high-density housing, which is hardly found here. This Mitchell's Plain businessman Mr Arendse is proud to be able to raise his children in a home like this: "Now I was fortunate to get a job for the Mitchell's Plain Housing Sales as you can see I bought a little place, a choice I'm just so proud of because I now have a room for each of my children. And I have got onto it very easily by paying a R100 deposit and only R92 a month." Most of the houses in Mitchell's Plain have three bedrooms, modern kitchens and bathrooms.

[Mrs Rinehart] "Mitchell's Plain is so near the beach that we can just take a walk; we walk in with our meat and our cool drinks and into the water. And when we come out of there, I start making the fireplace for the children to have their braai. It is fantastic; they will sing, and they will dance on the beach and don't cost us a thing."

Alongside the blue depth and foam-tipped crests of False Bay, Man, with his skill, is painting a living colourful picture of a happy community. Like Ennerdale, Eldorado Park, Atlantis and Phoenix, this is a nation's answer to a worldwide problem that is also threatening our people, thus laying the foundations of a new society. South Africa hails the future with confidence.

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