



**Towards a narratology of planning –
stories of a South African gold mining town**

by

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To Edwin

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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The author, whose name appears on the title page of this thesis, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval.

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SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

In the thesis **Towards a narratology of planning - stories of a South African gold mining town**, two objectives are pursued. Firstly, to add to the body of South African planning stories, and secondly, to explore the uses of narratology in planning. This study of Virginia, a Free State gold mining town, demonstrates the value and role of narrative in (1) constructing and telling stories of planning, (2) conceiving of plans as narratives, (3) "world-making" through planning, and (4) the "reading" of spaces and places. The Virginia stories are told and interpreted with the use of an innovative "varifocal lens", integrating, among others, (1) the notions of utopia and hope, (2) postmodernism as a construct, and (3) the stories of long-time residents of the town. The study makes a valuable contribution to the lesser researched area of small towns in South Africa, and confirms the value of applying the form, art and science of narrative to the field of planning.

ABSTRACT

The study had a dual objective, namely 1) to add to the body of knowledge of South African planning stories and 2) to consider the possibility of a narratology of planning.

The study considered the role of narrative in four aspects of planning, namely 1) the use of narratives as a way of telling and understanding practice stories (stories of places or planning processes); 2) the narrative or elements thereof as a structure to make plans accessible and understandable/readable; 3) the use of narratives to enable “world-making” through planning and, 4) the reading of spaces (cities and towns) as narratives.

In order to meet these objectives, the stories of Virginia, a gold mining town in the Free State gold fields of South Africa, were collected, interpreted and analysed. The study was mainly ethnographic in nature, relying heavily on personal interviews with long-time residents and former residents of the town. In addition, textual analysis was employed in a reading of the provincial and municipal plans pertaining to the town as narratives.

The Virginia stories were read against six different, but integrated elements. These are: The notions of utopia/dystopia; the concept of hope as proposed by Bloch (1995); the construct of (post)modernism (with special reference to Berman (1988)); the Apartheid history of South Africa; selected planning trends/approaches/theories and the stories of selected other South African single industry settlements (Johannesburg, Benoni, Sasolburg and Secunda).

The stories shared by the people of Virginia provided significant insights into their experience of their town and also into the many attempts made by the municipality (in earlier years) and residents of Virginia to improve the prospects of the town.

The provincial and municipal plans that have a bearing on Virginia were found to have shortcomings when read from a narrative perspective.

The Virginia study confirmed the value of applying not only the form of narrative, but also the art and science of narrative to the field of planning. While not as clearly indicated as for planning, such cross-disciplinary research was found to also have potential for the enrichment of the field of narratology.

KEY TERMS

Mining town, story, planning, narrative, narratology, utopia, dystopia, modernism, postmodernism, Apartheid, hope, future, Ernst Bloch, Marshall Berman.

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List of abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
CSMI	Centre for Sustainability in Mining and Industry
DMR	Department of Mineral Resources
FSPGDS	Free State Provincial Growth and Development Strategy
FSPSDF/PSDF	Free State Provincial Spatial Development Framework

IDC	Industrial Development Corporation
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
LDA	Lejwe-le-putswa Development Agency
LDM	Lejweleputswa District Municipality
LED	Local Economic Development
MDA	Municipal Demarcation Act
MLM	Matjhabeng Local Municipality
NRDC	Natural Resources Development Council
SADET	South African Democracy Education Trust
SMME	Small, medium and micro-enterprises
SPLUMA	Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act, 16 of 2013

“I can learn nothing from the trees, but I can learn from people in the city.”

– Socrates

“A story made and told by someone else can become deeply one’s own”

– Krogh (2013)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 The study topic

“We tell ourselves stories in order to live”, says Didion (2006: 185). We live, she (ibid) argues, “by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images, by the ‘ideas’ with which we have learnt to freeze the shifting phantasmagoria that is our actual experience”. MacIntyre (1984) similarly views stories as essential for how we understand ourselves and the world we live in. It is only through stories, and specifically myths, that we can learn to understand any society. It is therefore no surprise that, as argued by Watson (2002) and Flyvbjerg (2001), among others, narratives are the most effective way in which to convey planning practice experiences. Differently stated, based on the assumption that we learn from experience, narratives are a mechanism for learning from planning practice. The importance of narratives in this and other aspects of planning is widely acknowledged, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. The imperative of adding to our store of planning practice stories (stories of places and planning processes) is therefore well established.

Indeed, in a postmodern world where “everything solid melts into air” (Berman, 1988), where singular metanarratives no longer hold sway, it is only the narrative form (and art) that seems to be able to reflect and present a way in which to engage with the staggering and ever changing complexities that characterise the places we live in and the lives we live in places. Postmodernity has generally placed new emphasis on the value of stories as a form of knowledge and learning globally.

At the same time, Parnell and Crankshaw (2015) highlight several factors contributing to a renewed interest in the role of urban and regional planning¹. These include a call for greater involvement by governments in regulating

¹ At the same time, however, Parnell and Crankshaw (2015) emphasize that planning is not the only cause of or cure for the past, present or future spatial division of cities.

societies, climate change and the risk of disasters, urban social challenges, demands by large investors and neo-liberalism.

Expectations of planning are amplified by specificities of the South African context. That unsatisfactory progress has been made in addressing the spatial inequalities inherited from South Africa's Apartheid past is generally uncontested, whether this is ascribed to poor intergovernmental relations (Oranje & Van Huyssteen, 2007), ideological disagreements (for instance with respect to the role of "race" in spatial reconstruction and the urban/rural balance) (Parnell & Crankshaw, 2014 & 2013) or neoliberalism (Oranje, 2012). Perpetuation of some of the material conditions of life that were experienced by the majority of South Africans during Apartheid "has been met with deep disappointment and despair" (Oranje, 2012)². This in and of itself would seem to lend urgency to a renewed focus on planning and, given our postmodern context, on planning stories. As stated by Parnell & Crankshaw (2015: 22), "there is an increasingly urgent imperative to chip away at territorial segregation and advance the vision of 'the rainbow nation.'"

To make matters worse, however, the general climate and confidence in South Africa has deteriorated recently, with detailed accounts being published of state capture and pervasive corruption in all spheres of government and its agencies (e.g. Pauw, 2017; Olver, 2017; Van Loggerenberg & Lackay, 2016). Oranje (2012) paints a damning picture of deteriorating morality and rampant materialism amidst pervasive poverty and despair. He (ibid: 198) argues that the "reproduction of the past can be arrested by embarking on a process of rethinking and recalibrating the scale, complexity nature and duration of the transition". In particular, Oranje (ibid) calls for a renewed focus on municipal spatial planning.

According to Oranje and Berrisford (2012) and Oranje (2002), there was a failure on the side of the ANC government to develop, at the dawn of democracy in South Africa, a clear vision for the future. "The country was

² It is recognized, however, that many substantial and progressive changes have been made, for instance in the field of health and welfare and access to education (Oranje & Berrisford, 2012).

certain what it wanted to move away from – the Apartheid past – but it did not clearly articulate where it wanted to go and how it could get there” (Oranje & Berrisford, 2012: 64). The authors (ibid) deplore the lack of a concern with “the future” that is generally shared amongst planners. They (ibid: 69) call for the recognition that “societal transformation is an evolutionary, deliberative process located in a contested, intertwined and messy world”.

With two master’s degrees – one in Town and Regional Planning and one in Creative Writing, my academic interests can be summarised as an interest in planning and an interest in stories. Having an academic background in both literary studies and town and regional planning enables me to overcome the “mutually existing prejudices” that sometimes hinder inter-disciplinary research (Heinen, 2009: 197).

It also enables me to consider planning narratives as a means to engage with the past-present-future³ of South Africa with a view to unlocking opportunities for reimagining our spaces and places – a pressing imperative given the factors described above. Having acknowledged the prominence and promise of narrative as a means for dealing with an immensely complex reality, specifically in the field of planning, I wish to furthermore explore the possibility of developing a narratology of planning.

Taking into account that a large body of research already exists around narratives and planning, it is necessary to clarify what I mean by “a narratology of planning”.

Narratology is a well-developed science of narrative around which a vast body of knowledge has been developed (Heinen & Sommer, 2009). To call anything a “narratology of . . .” would therefore have to go beyond the mere use of the narrative form in another field (i.e. telling stories of . . .). It would imply an engagement with the *science* of narrative (for instance structural elements of narrative, narrative theory and models for the production,

³ For more on the past-present-future continuum, please see paragraph 2.5.2 in Chapter 2.

interpretation and analysis of narratives). A very important further requirement for a field of study or enquiry to qualify as a “narratology of . . .” (rather than, for instance, “narratology in” or “narratology for”) that is highlighted by Herman (2009) would be reciprocal enrichment of both disciplines.

A narratology of planning could therefore be defined as *the application of the science of narrative to planning in such a manner that it advances both the field of planning and that of narratology.*

The study considered the role of narrative in four aspects of planning, namely 1) the use of narratives as a way of telling and understanding practice stories (stories of places or planning processes); 2) the narrative or elements thereof as a structure to make plans accessible and understandable/readable; 3) the use of narratives to enable “world-making” through planning and, 4) the reading of spaces (cities and towns) as narratives. This differs somewhat from, but could at the same time be seen as building on, the taxonomy proposed by Ameen (2017) of narratives *for, in* and *of* planning.

To meet the dual objectives of the study, the stories of a specific town, namely the gold mining town of Virginia in South Africa’s Free State gold fields, were collected and interpreted, thereby adding to the body of knowledge of planning narratives. The Virginia study was also used as a basis for considering the question of whether there is scope for the development of a narratology of planning.

Why Virginia? Informed by recent developments in the mining sector and conversations with my supervisor, I contemplated at the outset of the study using a mining town as my anchor example. Virginia’s hyperbolic tale of “riches to rags” (see Sandercock, 2003) captured my imagination and I chose the town as the subject of my study although there were other possibilities closer to where I live in Pretoria.

1.1.2 Previous research on the topic

Narratives in planning research

Narratives have received much attention in planning research. This new (as opposed to the technical) way of looking at planning, has alternatively been called the “story turn” (Sandercock, 2003), the “argumentative turn” (Fischer and Forester, 1993) and the “communicative turn” (Healy, 1993 and Innes, 1995) in planning. The planner is increasingly seen participating in the purposive authoring of stories about the future (Van Hulst, 2012; Throgmorton, 2003 and Healey, 2000) and as creating space for competing and possibly conflicting stories (Throgmorton, 2003; Mandelbaum, 1991).

The degree to which planning stories have been analysed, or to which theory has been developed around narrative applications in planning, varies significantly. Notable in this regard have been a number of studies analysing planning narratives from the perspective of power, especially as discussed by Habermas (e.g., Hillier, 2002; Flyvbjerg, 1998; and Forester, 1989). As yet, in spite of the extensive body of work that exists around planning (and) narratives, no clearly defined “narratology of planning” has emerged. A narratology of planning implies bringing to bear on planning not only the narrative form, but also the very well-developed *science* of narrative in a manner that enriches both the fields of planning and of narratology.

The term “spatial narratology” is found, with different interpretations, in scholarly literature. The most common interpretation of the term is “space in literature”, as for instance in Nora Pleske’s (2014) book on the portrayal of London in contemporary novels.

Another interpretation of the term, and one that is applicable to urban and regional planning, has been pursued by a number of Chinese scholars,

including Long DiYong, Jiang Zhijie, Lin Zhu and Xhingzhu Yang. Although these publications are not accessible in English and the available abstracts are very poorly translated, it seems that in these texts, “spatial narratology” can be interpreted mainly as “the city as text”. This is one aspect of narrative applications in planning that will be considered in this thesis.

Narratology

While the origins of narratology are strongly linked to structuralism and its widespread adoption in the 1960s, it was only in 1969, with the publication of his book *Grammaire du Décaméron*, that the Bulgarian-French philosopher and humanist Tzvetan Todorov claimed the birth of a new science of narrative and coined the French term *narratologie* that was translated as narratology. As such, Todorov is regarded by some as the “father” of narratology (Cornils & Schernus, 2003; Meister, 2013).

As can be expected in a field that is in the first instance about writing, a copious amount of research has been produced in the field of narratology. Most of this focuses on every conceivable aspect of literature and many of them fall in the broad field of literary criticism. The classical focus on structural aspects (e.g., narrator, perspective, milieu, temporality, characters, plot and denouement) has made way for the cognitive turn in narratology, including the rhetorical approach to narratology, which views the narrative as an intentional communicative act (Heinen, 2009; Sommer, 2009). There has therefore been a focal shift from “the world in the text” to “the text in the world”.

Within the field of cognitive narratology, a growing body of work exists around cross-disciplinary application of narratology, especially in the social sciences. Particularly notable in this respect is the collection of essays edited by Sandra Heinen and Roy Sommer, *Narratology in the age of cross-disciplinary research* (2009).

While Fludernik (2005: 47) observes the appeal of narratology as a “master discipline” of sorts, this study prefers the approach proposed by Herman

(1999) of a cross-disciplinary socionarratology within which reciprocal enrichment of both disciplines (in this case of planning and narratology) takes place. A more comprehensive discussion of aspects of narratology that are pertinent to this study appear in Chapter 2.

Virginia

Only two earlier research projects on Virginia could be found. In the first one, a study by EH Viljoen (1994, unpublished) for a master's degree in Cultural History at the University of Pretoria, the history of the town is documented from its establishment in 1892 to 1980, a few years before the rapid decline of the gold mining activity around the town. In 1963, MP van Staden completed a master's dissertation (unpublished) on a geographical analysis of the urban area of Virginia at the University of the Free State. Van Staden's study deals mainly with the geography and settlement pattern of the town during the first ten years of its existence. While research has been conducted on Welkom, Virginia's larger neighbour that is also a mining town (e.g., by Marais (2013) and Marais & Cloete (2013)), no contemporary, and certainly no ethnographic, study of Virginia could be found.

1.1.3 How the study frame was constructed and the crafting of a “varifocal lens”

Watson (2002: 181) makes a convincing case for “contextualised practice writing” as the most effective way in which to promote learning from planning practice examples by planning practitioners and students of planning alike. The first phase of exploratory reading I undertook in preparation for this study provided broad clues as to a possible framing of the Virginia story (amidst the infinite complexity referred to above) in order to provide a philosophical vantage point from whence it could be interpreted, to situate it within a broader historical and paradigmatic context and to relate it to relevant aspects of planning history and thinking. I revisited and refined these broad outlines for framing the Virginia story as the study progressed. The different elements of the study frame (or lens, as I later explain) are discussed in detail in

Chapter 2. However, in order to orientate the reader, I present them here in brief.

The notion of utopia, which involuntarily invokes its antithesis, dystopia, presented itself as an appropriate philosophical angle from which to consider the Virginia story. Not only did accounts of the town during the mining boom seem utopian, but the garden city concept that informed the layout of the town is also widely regarded as an example of utopian planning (e.g., Batchelor, 1969; Richert & Lapping, 1998; Fishman, 1998 and Ward, 1998). Having been referred by Tarryn Paquet to the work of the German philosopher Ernst Bloch (1885 – 1977) on utopia, I discovered his exhaustive and unique treatise on hope (1995) and found it particularly applicable to the story of Virginia (and to mining towns in general). Thanks to the explicit link Bloch makes between hope and the future, the creation of the “new”, his philosophical arguments are also most applicable to planning. Bloch’s work on utopia and hope therefore became a key aspect of the philosophical framing of the study.

There were frequent references to modernity/modernism in texts I read about, for example, garden cities, the origins of urban and regional planning in South Africa, dystopia, etc. My supervisor recommended that I read Marshall Berman’s discussion on modernity *All that is solid melts into air* (1988). This proved to be a defining moment for this study. The manner in which Berman references fictional works (i.e., stories) to discern key characteristics of the experience of modernity immediately resonated with me. I furthermore found his descriptions of the characteristics of the modern world, its vaporousness and fluidity, its inherent contradictions, its pervasive interconnectedness, completely in tune with Bloch’s (1995) philosophy, with the work I have begun to read on post-structuralist (and multiplanar (see Balducci et al, 2011; Hillier, 2008, 2011)) planning, but also with much earlier work, such as that of Walter Gropius (1965), who exerted a strong early influence on planning in South Africa. Berman references many examples of literary art in his book, but I found his work to be a piece of art in itself, imaginative and full of richly poetic and original descriptions. When I therefore decided on modernity as one of

the elements for framing the Virginia story, I also chose Berman's book as a seminal reference in this regard.

Of course, no discussion of modernity can be complete without some consideration of the notion of postmodernism. Although Berman (1988) does not subscribe to the notion of postmodernism, it could be argued that his critical assessment of modernity is indeed only possible from a postmodern point of view. It is difficult within the scope of this study to do justice to the discourse around postmodernism. Allmendinger (2017) acknowledges that the multiplicity of interpretations of postmodernism makes it impossible to provide a clear definition of "postmodern planning". Furthermore, as Docherty (1993) argues, general descriptions of postmodernism rarely go beyond the superficial and populist and are in many instances simply inaccurate. Nonetheless, where it is relevant to the study, I have tried to include reflections on postmodernism.

The Virginia story could not be told without providing the local historical and ideological/political context in addition to that of the modernist world view. The history of South Africa and its gold mining industry, with particular emphasis on the Apartheid era during which Virginia was founded and during which it boomed, was therefore also included. In this regard, reference was also made to the utopian and modernist planning trends that shaped the design of the town.

The urban and regional planning perspective from which the study is conducted is that advocated by Jacob Dlamini (2009: 107), which foregrounds "the role of imagination in the production of space", thereby acknowledging that every space inhabited by people "is also a world that exists in the imagination, a world where the metaphorical is as important as the material". It is a perspective that views place "not as a bounded unit, but as always formed through relations and connections with dynamics at play in other places" (Hart, 2002: 14), whether these "other places" are physical locations or the places of the imagination, of memory and dreams. This view of place resonates with Huyssen (2003) and Throgmorton's (2003) view of urban

spaces as palimpsests⁴ that are in a continual state of becoming or, stated differently, of being “rewritten”.

As time progressed, more and more of these links became apparent and it became clear that the different elements I have identified as useful for the framing of the study were indeed closely interrelated, even integrated. As I have come to see each of the identified elements of the frame as essential to the reading (and the telling) of the Virginia story/stories, I was left with the question of how to incorporate all of them without achieving a chaotic and fragmented end result that would alienate my reader.

This problem was overcome by crafting a textual device in the form of a varifocal lens composed of six different, but seamlessly integrated (hence not a composite lens with discrete parts and definitely not seven different lenses) elements. The very similar image of a prism proposed by Parnell and Mabin (1995) as a means by which to examine the varied and complex impact of modernism on urban planning could have been used as an alternative to the varifocal lens proposed here.

These are the notions of utopia/dystopia; the concept of hope as proposed by Bloch (1995); the construct of modernism (with special reference to Berman (1988)); the Apartheid nationalist history of South Africa and its gold mining industry; selected planning trends/approaches/theories and the stories of selected other South African single industry towns.

The South African single industry towns that were referenced in this varifocal approach are Johannesburg, Benoni, Sasolburg and Secunda. References to other South African towns as well as international examples were made from time to time for purposes of comparison or illumination.

⁴ A palimpsest is writing material (such as a parchment or tablet) used one or more times after earlier writing has been erased. The term is also used to denote something having usually diverse layers or aspects apparent beneath the surface (www.merriam-webster.com).

Use of the varifocal lens produced a richer understanding of the very nuanced, granular and diverse experiences of living in Virginia that were shared by the respondents.

1.2 UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The study makes a dual contribution. The primary contribution is that it adds to the stock of narrative planning studies in an area where there is a paucity of such studies, namely small to medium towns in South Africa (CDE, 2005). It fills a knowledge gap by focusing on a town about which little research has been conducted in the past. In its study of Bloemfontein and Welkom, The Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE) (2005: 4) remarks on “the under-representation of provincial cities and small to medium-sized towns in the development research in post-Apartheid South Africa”. According to the CDE, including such towns in research efforts is particularly important because it is here where the effects of poverty are felt most. The Free State is viewed as the most neglected area in such research and it therefore represents a “notable deficiency in our understanding of contemporary South Africa” (CDE, 2005: 4). Although some valiant efforts have been made, e.g., by Marais (2013), Marais & Cloete (2013), and Hoogendoorn & Nel (2012) this remains as true at the time of conducting this study as it was in 2005.

The study is unique in its ethnographic and narrative approach and specifically in its focus on the lived experience of people in Virginia. Ethnographic studies have been conducted in South Africa on the towns of Sasolburg (Sparks, 2012) and Secunda (Paquet, 2017). While these are also so-called “single-industry” or “company towns”, no published ethnographic study of a South African mining town could be found.

Departing from the norm of a more technical approach to urban and regional planning studies, the detailed account of diverse lived experiences of Virginia is a valuable resource for an approach that places people ahead of everything else when planning settlements and which seeks to understand the impact of planning decisions on individual lives, albeit many years after the fact.

The second contribution made by the study is to consider on the basis of the study of Virginia the question of whether it is possible or appropriate to develop a “narratology of planning”, with the understanding that such a narratology has to bring to bear on the Virginia story the science of narrative and has to be mutually enriching to both the fields of planning and of narratology.

While this was not identified as one of the study objectives at the outset, the study also makes a contribution to the field of planning research methodology through the demonstrated use of an original textual device, namely, a varifocal lens consisting of a number of integrated elements (see paragraph 1.1 above). The varifocal lens allows for elements of any number or description to be used in an integrated manner for illuminating any study object, thus structuring multiple and complex topics related to the study in a way that is manageable for the researcher and readily understandable by the reader.

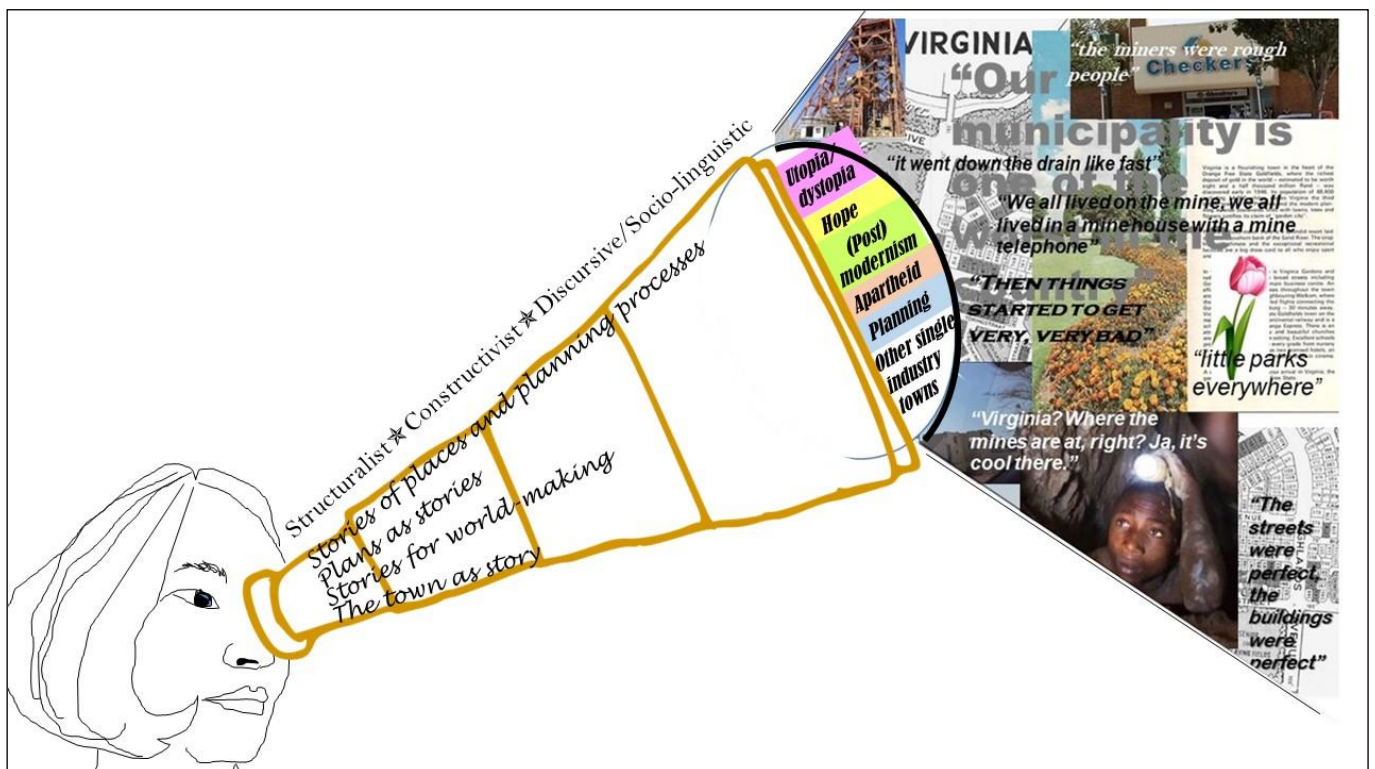


Figure 1: A narratological reading of the Virginia stories through the varifocal lens

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Two main research questions are identified for the study, namely:

Research question 1:

What insights do we gain about Virginia's past, present, and future from the stories told by its residents read through the varifocal lens and from a narrative reading of provincial and municipal plans pertaining to the town?

Research question 2:

What does the Virginia story/stories tell us about the possibility of developing a narratology of planning, with specific reference to planning stories (stories of planning processes and places), planning documents as stories, spatial world-making, and space (cities and towns) as stories?

1.4 STUDY SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study lies at the intersection of narratology and planning. As indicated in paragraph 1.1 above, the application of the narrative form to four aspects of planning will be considered. These are stories of places and planning processes, plans as stories, stories as mechanisms for spatial world-making and spaces (cities and towns) as narratives. As also indicated in paragraph 1.1 there may be other aspects of planning to which narratology can be applied that will not be covered in this study.

An in-depth analysis of technical aspects falls outside of the study scope. Only brief reference is made to quantitative markers/statistics of the impact of gold mining activity and the decline thereof on Virginia. As a largely ethnographic study, the focus is on people and the places they live and work in.

Also outside of the scope of this study are questions about the mining sector and mining, per se, including the legislation and policy governing (gold)

mining, the social responsibility of mines in respect of mining communities and settlements, and the broader economic effects of mining, including the debate about the so-called “Dutch disease” and the “resource curse”. There is a large volume of literature that deals specifically with the social responsibility of mines in developing countries such as South Africa, of which the work done by Render, 2005; Visser, 2007, 2008; Campbell, 2012; Langton & Longbottom, 2012; the International Council on Mining and Metals, 2015 and Bice, 2016, are a few examples. Corden (1984) and Ross (1999) provide a good entry point into the discourse on the “Dutch disease” and “resource curse” debates.

Although a wide range of related topics has been included in the varifocal lens through which the Virginia story/stories will be read and illuminated, the study is concerned with the story of a single town as experienced by a sample of its residents. It is of necessity also only one version of the story – as stated by Bailey and Bryson (2006) of their study of Bournville, there are thousands (or more likely an infinite number) of stories about and of Virginia that have not been recorded and will probably never be told.

It is not the aim of the study to make recommendations for actions or interventions aimed at improving Virginia’s future prospects. This has to be, as argued by Oranje (2012), a process of collective re-imagining of the Virginia’s future by political role players, officials and the residents of the town. Seemingly progressive, but random interventions will not do and I refrained from making any proposals that could be viewed as such. The process of mapping a coherent and collective future narrative for Virginia therefore falls outside of the ambit of this study and will have to be a separate focus.

1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The study is structured into six chapters.

In Chapter 1, I introduce the study topic, namely a narrative study of the mining town of Virginia in the Free State gold fields, and the use of the study

to consider the possibility of developing a narratology of planning. I consider previous research on the topic and explain the crafting of a varifocal lens consisting of six integrated elements to with which read the Virginia story/stories. I present the unique contribution of the study in expanding the knowledge base on small and medium-sized South African towns and in considering whether a narratology of planning can be developed. I present the research questions, as well as the scope and limitations of the study.

In Chapter 2, I elaborate on the topics and concepts that were used to frame the study or rather that constitute the elements of the varifocal lens. These are: utopia/dystopia; hope; modernism; South Africa's Apartheid history, selected planning trends/approaches/theories and the selected stories of the single-industry towns (Johannesburg, Sasolburg, and Secunda).

In Chapter 3, I review the existing literature on mining towns, with specific focus on mine closures, the effects thereof on those living in mining towns and how these effects can be mitigated. It is in this chapter that the abridged stories of selected other South African single-industry towns that are included in the varifocal lens are also presented.

In Chapter 4, I show that the distinguishing features of planning research described by Silva, Healey, Harris and Van den Broeck (2015) are present in this study. I furthermore qualify the study as qualitative, narrative and ethnographic. The data-collection methods, of which a semi-structured interview was the primary one, is presented, and the way in which the data were analysed explained. In particular, the research process is presented as non-linear and iterative, characterised by a variety of feedback loops. In this chapter I also discuss how the reliability and validity of the study was ensured and on the application of the study findings, which centres on the relationship with planning practice.

Chapter 5 contains the study findings. I present the stories about the past, present and future of Virginia collected from various sources, but primarily from 20 residents or former residents of Virginia. This is done with the aid of

the varifocal lens described in Chapters 1 and 2. I furthermore analyse the municipal and provincial plans pertaining to the town from a narrative perspective.

Chapter 6 is the final chapter of the study. Here the findings have been synthesized into a “last word” about the application of the narrative form to planning anchored in the Virginia story. Together, Chapters 5 and 6 present the answers to the research questions stated in paragraph 1.3 above.

CHAPTER 2: FRAMING THE STUDY – NARRATIVE, NARRATOLOGY AND THE ELEMENTS OF THE VARIFOCALE LENS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This study is conducted at the intersection of narratology and planning. This chapter starts with an introduction of the narrative both as the basic mechanism used for understanding and sharing our life experiences and as an object of study.

I then introduce the various elements that together constituted the varifocal lens referred to in Chapter 1. These are: the concepts of utopia/dystopia, hope, and modernism, the Apartheid history of South Africa, selected planning trends/approaches, and the stories of a number of other South African single-industry towns (these appear in the following chapter).

As indicated in Chapter 1, the work of Ernst Bloch (1995) was the main reference for the concepts of utopia and hope that will be applied to this study. Marshall Berman's seminal reflection on the experience of modernity, *All that is solid melts into air* (1988), formed the basis for the discussion of modernism in this chapter.

Planning is discussed in relation to the elements of narrative, utopia/dystopia, hope and modernism and as part of South Africa's Apartheid history.

For the purposes of this study, these elements are presented as integrated parts of a varifocal lens for reading and illuminating the Virginia story/stories. The elements of the varifocal lens are integrated to such an extent that it would be impossible to identify clear seams or joins between them. As is the case with an actual optical varifocal lens, the varifocal lens as a textual device is one thing, not a composite of several things. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I superficially (and not always entirely successfully) separated the different elements in order to introduce them to the reader.

2.2 STORY/NARRATIVE

2.2.1 The narrative in life and academe

Scholars such as Roland Barthes (1975) view the narrative as inherent to all human experience. According to Sommer (2009), cognitive approaches to narrative are informed by the twin premises that storytelling is prototypical and that it is ubiquitous. The oral storytelling that takes place in everyday conversation is considered the prototype of more elaborate forms of storytelling (in whatever medium and whether fictional or nonfictional). The ubiquity of storytelling refers to its presence in all cultures and its omnipresence in everyday life. Homann (2005) refers to the narrative as “the default genre of human experience”. As children, we already assume the rules of narrative (e.g., that a story should have a beginning, a middle and an ending) and learn to view the narrative as the dominant mode of explanation. People have a natural affinity for listening to and telling stories and have an inherent understanding of how stories are shaped (Webster, 1996; Culler, 1997; Jameson, 1981).

MacIntyre (1984: 216) argues that “man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal” and, moreover, “a teller of stories that aspire to truth.” He argues that narrative is an appropriate form for understanding the actions of other people specifically because we understand our own lives as living out certain narratives. In order to understand the actions of other people, we always place an episode in the context of a set of narrative histories, both of the people concerned and of the setting in which the action takes place.

The narrative is also the form in which we interrogate each other’s lives. We reciprocally give account of our own lives (narratives) and ask account of others (ibid).

MacIntyre (1984: 212) therefore states that “Stories are lived before they are told – except in the case of fiction.”

According to MacIntyre (1984), a key question for all people is to determine what stories they are part of. He furthermore argues that we enter the world with “one or more imputed characters”. These are the roles we have been drafted into, which determines how others respond to us and how they interpret our responses. It is through stories that children learn the cast of characters of the drama of the life they have been born into – an orientation without which they are left stuttering (MacIntyre, 1984).

The narrative is therefore no longer considered merely a literary genre, but has rather been given the status of a basic strategy employed by humans for coming to terms with various aspects of life.

MacIntyre sees a view of one’s life from birth to death as a narrative as a prerequisite for being able to give account, when asked, of events (actions, things witnessed or experienced) that took place at an earlier point in one’s life. In the modern paradigm, however, we are taught to think of our lives as partitioned into different segments. For instance, we draw a distinction between our work and leisure life, our public and private life, etc, with different norms and behaviours associated with each. MacIntyre (ibid: 204) pleads for envisaging “each human life as a whole, as a unity” rather than a series of individual episodes or actions, as this is an essential prerequisite for a “unity of self” (ibid: 205), without which the notion of virtue (which is MacIntyre’s overriding preoccupation) is not possible. According to MacIntyre (ibid: 218) the view of a single life as a whole, i.e., the unity of a life, is the unity of the narrative embodied in that life and “all attempts to elucidate the notion of personal identity independently of and in isolation from the notions of narrative, intelligibility and accountability are bound to fail.”

MacIntyre adds that any single life narrative forms part of a set of interlocking narratives. So, for instance, “the story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity.” Modern individualism tends towards a self that is “detachable from its social and

historical roles and statuses” (MacIntyre, 1984: 221), a self with no history. Being so cut off from the past deforms present relationships.

The study of narrative is known as narratology. While this is perhaps too simply stated, no generally accepted definition of narratology exists in the literature and the borders of the field are “highly contested and notoriously fuzzy” (Heinen, 2009: 195). Sommer (2009: 89) describes narratology as providing “systematic descriptions of the elements of narrative and their functional relationships and of the cognitive processes involved in their reception (and [...] production) within an overall framework of a general theory of narrative”.

Narratology is increasingly recognized as a “master discipline” (Heinen, 2009: 193) that can be applied in research in a wide range of disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. Czarniawska (1997: 38) describes the narrative as the “central form of the institutionalized practices and scenes we construct and reproduce in the course of interacting, coordinating and organizing”.

Heinen (2009) points out the preoccupation with the content of narratives, rather than with their form as the main difference between literary narratology and social sciences narrative analysis. It is for this reason that Heinen and Sommer (2009) argue that the fact that the role of narratives in identity construction and sense-making has become widely acknowledged does not necessarily mean that interest in (literary) narratology has increased. Narratology remains, in the first instance, the study of narrative and for this an excellent knowledge base exists.

According to Heinen and Sommer (ibid), narratological research questions are often too theoretical for scholars who merely have an interest in storytelling for a specific purpose. Furthermore, the very sophisticated models and terminology that has been developed in the theory of fictional narrative, in which narratology has its roots, are often not easily transferrable to non-fictional narratives. It is also easier for narratologists to expand their discipline to closely related humanities fields such as film, media, and gender studies.

I advocate the cross-disciplinary socionarratology proposed by Herman (1999) within which reciprocal enrichment of both disciplines (in this case of planning and narratology) takes place.

Heinen (2009) argues that narrative researchers mostly have a constructivist view, i.e, rather than mirror the existing reality, narratives are constructed in an attempt to retrospectively make sense of events or actions (see, for example, Throgmorton, 2003). There is an interesting parallel here, as planning is also perceived as a sense-making activity (see Balducci, 2011: 530). According to Heinen (2009), there is nothing inherent in a text that distinguishes fictive from non-fictive stories. The distinction is to be found in claims about the connection a story has to the (real) world and the responses to such claims (Heinen, 2009).

Sommer (2009) argues that everyone able to understand a story is able to tell a story, as telling a story and interpreting a story engages the same mental processes. At the same time, however, Sommer argues that the process to construct a narrative is the more complex of the two, but that it has not received the same attention in narratological research.

Finding that current approaches to narratology are “not sophisticated enough to account for narrative composition”, Sommer (2009: 94), turns to psychological and behavioural theories of creativity. In this regard, he favours the model proposed by Csikszentmihalyi (1997) that sees the creative process in relation to the three elements of domain, field and person. Domain-specific studies of storytelling and other creative behaviour demands expert knowledge if it is to yield results that are relevant.

Herman (2009: 71) is similarly concerned with “narrative ways of worldmaking”. He explores how storytelling practices are used to build and modify narrative worlds. His work is based on the assumption that the mapping of words onto worlds is what is fundamentally required for narrative sense making. The storyworld is mentally configured through the mapping of

discourse cues onto dimensions of what, where and when that constitute the ontology of the narrative world. Herman (ibid) applies the term “storyworld” even to narratives that have not yet been actualised, for instance stories that we contemplate telling but then do not, or a script a screenwriter plans to write in future. In face-to-face interaction, gestures and utterances contribute to the listener’s construction of the storyworld.



Figure 2: *Worlds of books of worlds* by Florence Wong
Source: Wong, undated

Referencing Goodman (1978), Herman argues that the making of storyworlds is a remaking, it is constructing one world out of another. According to Goodman, five procedures are employed in this process, namely composition (making storyworld wholes out of real world parts) and decomposition (subdividing wholes into components), weighting (i.e, making significant

aspects of the real world insignificant in the storyworld and *vice versa*), ordering (for instance using patterns or measurements), supplementation and deletion (weeding out and filling in) and deformation (that might be considered either a distortion or a correction). It would seem that most of these procedures, with the exception of supplementation, simply imply a modification of aspects of the real world and not the creation of something truly new. This can be likened to the distinction between innovations and inventions, with innovations representing a modification or improvement of an existing product while an invention is an altogether new creation.

Sommer (2009: 104) argues that “[e]fficient storytelling anticipates the participation of readers in the process of sense-making, and creates spaces for readers to engage in a process of construction and reconfiguring the storyworld”. Citing Ryan (1991), Herman (2009) sees storyworlds as possible alternative worlds that the reader/interpreter relocates to for the duration of their interaction with the narrative. Furthermore, in constructing fictional worlds, readers fill in the gaps by assuming similarities between the storyworld and their own experience. This is referred to by Herman (2009: 82) as “the process of accommodation and the principle of minimal departure”.

The role stories, whether fictional or not, can play in assisting us to gain a deeper understanding of reality is illustrated by Berman (1988) in his use of writings by authors as diverse as Goethe, Dostoevsky, Baudelaire and Rem Koolhaas, among others, to provide insight into the experience of modernity. In his voluminous work on the philosophical construct of hope, Ernst Bloch (1996) similarly draws on works of fiction (e.g., Campanella’s *La Città del Sole* (City of the Sun) (1602); and More’s *Utopia* (1516) and, like Berman, Goethe’s *Faust*⁵) when seeking insight into the human condition.

Culler (1997) refers to the epistemophilic role of the narrative as a truth seeking device. He acknowledges, however, the inherent tension between

⁵ A first version was published in 1832, but was supplemented by additional fragments throughout the 19th century.

narrative as either a form of fundamental knowledge or as a structure of rhetoric offering clarification and consolation that is at best delusory.

There is a vast variety of fields and practices in which the narrative form finds application that range from education (see Painter-Morland, 2003) to organizational change management (see Czarniawska, 1997 and Boje, 1991) to psychotherapy. Flyvbjerg (2001: 18), states that “*Where science does not reach, art, literature, and narrative often help us comprehend the reality in which we live*”.

Heinen (2009) distinguishes between three types of non-literary narrative research. These differ, in the first instance, with regard to the rationale for applying narratological analysis to the object of study.

The first of these types of research is socio-linguistic discourse analysis, i.e., where narratological concepts are applied to non-literary storytelling (e.g., analysing non-literary narratives in terms of elements such as focalisation, the use of pronouns, etc).

A second type of narrative research on non-literary narratives is concerned with how narratives are constructed by the participants in a study. Narratives are analysed according to what is cast in a story, i.e., what shape an individual’s attempt at narrative sense-making takes. One example of how this is done is Søderberg (2003) of the stories told by employees in a telecommunications company using Greimas’s actantial model⁶. Greimas claims that there are six actants in any story, namely the subject, and the object (that is desired by the subject), a power, and a receiver of the power, a helper and an opponent. In this case, narratological research is used “as a tool to identify interpretations of a given situation, to give voice to individuals and to highlight the complexity and dynamics of perspectives held in the organization” (Heinen, 2009: 201).

⁶ For more on Greimas’s actantial model, visit <http://www.signosemio.com/greimas/actantial-model.asp>.

The third type of non-literary narrative research identified by Heinen is research that “uncovers” narrative elements in disciplines where these are suppressed in order to support the discipline’s truth claims and authority. Examples are historical records, and law and medicine, where arguments are presented as purely scientific truths rather than (re)constructions of meaning.

2.2.2 Narrative in planning theory and practice

Sandercock (2003: 12) notes that “[s]tory is an all-pervasive, yet largely unrecognized force in planning practice”, a view echoed by Throgmorton (2003). She states that telling stories is “a profoundly political act” and calls for “an alertness to the ways in which power shapes which stories get told, get heard and carry weight” (ibid: 26). The so-called communicative turn in planning theory and practice emerged as part of the “practice movement” that emerged at the turn of the second millennium and was characterised by a preference for practice stories or narrative case studies (Coetzee, 2005; Watson, 2002). While focusing on communicative action in planning, and assigning a valuable role to narrative case studies, authors such as Patsy Healey, Jean Hillier, Charles Hoch, Judith Innes, Helen Liggett, Tom Stein and Tom Harper, Seymour Mandelbaum, Tore Sager, James Throgmorton (Yiftachel and Huxley, 2000) also advocate a stronger focus on practice and the practical application of planning theory. Watson (2002:185) argues that “fully contextualised stories of planning practice” may prove an effective way for planners to build up a mental repertoire of (mediated) experience upon which they can draw when faced with new situations.

With reference to the work done by proponents of the argumentative, discursive, communicative and narrative approaches to planning, and drawing on Hendler’s (1995) differentiation between three kinds of planning theory, Ameel (2017) proposes a taxonomy of narratives for, in and of planning.

Ameel (2017) uses the redevelopment of the Jätkäsaari docklands in Helsinki, Finland, to illustrate the distinction between the three types of planning narratives.

The first of these is narratives for planning. These are highly valuable experiential narratives that citizens of particular places or environments share. They constitute a resource planners can use.

In defining the second type of planning narrative, namely narratives in planning, Ameel (ibid) draws strongly on Throgmorton's (1993, 1996, 2003) presentation of planning as "persuasive storytelling", which was further developed by Van Hulst (2012). The focus here is on planning documents as narratives.

Thirdly, Ameel identifies stories of planning. These are stories generated around planning projects that are not authored by the planning agencies themselves. Examples are newspaper articles and narratives used in city branding.

Ameel (2017: 325) refers only in passing, to a reading of the city as a story. He refers to the "performative character" of the narratives found in the city's planning documents, stating that they "will translate planners' visions, and their selective synthesis of earlier narratives of this area, into the stone, glass and concrete of the built environment".

According to Ameel (2017: 325), the specific descriptions of Jätkäsaari "actively shape the world by informing the audience's and planners' vocabulary of this specific area and concretely steering the development on the ground".

Ameel draws a distinction between story and narrative that I do not think adds value. Throgmorton (2003) draws the same distinction, but then continues to use the two terms interchangeably, as I do. Ameel identifies the category of micronarrative in planning documents and makes some reference to authorship (used interchangeably with narration). While Ameel's typology of planning narratives is valuable, it does not clearly qualify as the mutually

enriching cross-disciplinary socionarratology advocated by Herman (1999), as there is no apparent advancement of the field of narratology.

Narrative planning studies have become all the more popular since the very influential account by Flyvbjerg (1998) of the Aalborg project. Other examples are the case studies by Peattie on Ciudad Guayana (1987), McLoughlin on Melbourne (1992), Nyseth on Tromsø (2011), Wilkinson on Melbourne (2011) and Boelens on Mainport Rotterdam (2011). Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that a narrative is the ideal way of conveying a case study.

Flyvbjerg (1998: 1) justified his use of the narrative form for presenting the Aalborg case as it helps readers to “*move about in the dense case material*”. In his later work (Flyvbjerg, 2001) he argues that the narrative is the ideal form for presenting the “*thoroughly executed case studies*” that he views as essential to the discipline of planning (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 87) as they are often as complex and contradictory as real life.

Hillier (2002: 16) explains that she uses practice stories for three reasons. Firstly, practice stories are used to enable planners to recognise situations similar to their own experiences. Secondly, they provide planners with more understanding of the behaviour and motives of the actors involved, and lastly, they serve as a basis for theorisation in order for “*those experiences to be shared amongst a wide range of practitioners attentive to the complexities of planning practice*”.

Throgmorton (2003: 127) sees one of the roles of planners as making space for diverse local narratives and in so doing enabling a fruitful engagement between “fellow strangers”.

Sandercock (2003) argues that there is a limited number of recognizable plots that planning stories usually conform to (plots that also appear frequently in literature, myth and folklore), for instance, that of “the Golden Age lost” (ibid: 13). One should, however, guard against an expedient classification of a practice story into one of these recognizable plots. It is argued here that the

narrative should be used precisely because of its ability to challenge and question, to subvert dominant stories, to tell the other side, to make heard marginalised and suppressed voices. The narrative is uniquely suited to presenting complex, messy and often contradictory realities.

Sandercock (2003: 11) acknowledges the value of learning about a place from someone who “knows it through immersion, through all of her senses, through empathy and love”. This distinctly feminine kind of knowing (and telling/sharing) is no less valuable than a more analytical approach. It would therefore seem that the narrative is the obvious form for presenting complex cases of planning practice.

Planning practice stories are typically dense, or so-called “thick” descriptions (Hillier, 2002: 16). They describe the “voices, feelings, actions and meanings of interacting individuals” (Hillier: 2002: 16), or, in the case of Flyvbjerg’s (1998: 1) study, “the minutiae of the Aalborg story”. It is not only the voices and actions of the different actors (characters) that are portrayed in practice stories, but also the milieu and temporal setting. As indicated by Herman (2009) cited earlier, the author of a narrative includes a large number of discourse cues to circumscribe the specific dimensions of the story world. The milieu is not only spatial, far from it. It includes cultural and social aspects and even, as shown by Flyvbjerg (1998), the power relations by which the characters are governed. Time, or the temporal setting, can be employed in practice stories, as it is in fictional narratives, to support the communicative aim of the author. For instance, time can be condensed (to allow the reader to gain an overview over a long period) or it can be expanded (allowing the author to convey the minute detail of what happened in a short space of time). Events that take place at the same time can be presented in sequence, for instance to make the minutiae of dense material more digestible for the reader. Presented in the narrative form, the “dense case material” (Flyvbjerg, 1998: 1) forms the basis of theorisation that could contribute to explaining and improving practice (see Hillier, 2002 and Forester, 1999).

Furthermore, “[n]arratives not only give meaning to our past experiences, they also help us envision alternative futures” (Flyvbjerg, 1998: 8). Throgmorton (2003: 127) simply calls plans “stories about the future” and views planning as persuasive storytelling. He calls for planners to be seen as authors of texts. “Through emplotment, characterizations, descriptions of settings, and rhythm and imagery of language, such ‘planning stories’ unavoidably shape the readers’ attention, turning it *this* way, instead of *that*” (emphasis in original) (ibid.) Following a constructivist approach, Throgmorton (2003) argues that planners transform the material of day-to-day life into planning narratives in a way that is both purposeful and selective. The choices made in constructing future planning stories are deeply connected to emotion. This narrative approach to planning runs counter to conventional planning practice and its preference for science, control and technical expertise (Throgmorton, 2003). Throgmorton (2003: 129) argues that planning can learn much from literary criticism and specifically refers to reader-response theory, which implies that “[t]he meaning of the text is contestable and negotiated between the author and its many readers”. Planners cannot assume that their plans will receive a single desired response. Matters are further complicated by the fact that planners act in a web of relationships where multiple stories are told at the same time.

Viewing strategic spatial planning as a tool for exploring prospective futures or potentialities is a strong feature of the post-structuralist planning paradigm advocated by Balducci *et al* (2011). These perspectives are best presented in the form of “paradigmatic narratives” (Hames as cited by Hillier, 2011: 517). This notion is supported by Hoch (2014: 10) when he points out the role of narrative in the development of different future scenarios: “Storytelling and the narratives that the telling inspires animate the future with characters involved in plots susceptible to modification and reversal”.

Allmendinger views post-structuralist planning as a form of postmodern planning. Referencing Beauregard, Soja and Sandercock, Allmendinger (2017) argues that, because of the multiplicity of views and interpretations of postmodernism, it is however not possible to provide a clear definition of

“postmodern planning”. Instead, there are suggestions or hints about what such a planning approach could entail.

For instance, postmodern planning would be non-linear, and would not aspire to being singular, comprehensive or even authoritative. It would be characterized by an openness that would see it embracing the social reality in all its fragmented multiplicity. As summarized by Allmendinger (ibid) Sandercock proposes a practical approach to postmodern planning focused on addressing the exclusionary nature of modernist planning. She argues for social justice that is not merely materially/economically defined, for planning processes that include all groups through discussion and for a more open conception of citizenship and community. Lastly, she advocates a shift from the “public interest” as it is defined and understood by modernist planners to a “civic culture” that refuses representation. Sandercock (1998) calls for alternative “ways of knowing” that include the telling of stories, and in particular the telling of stories of “planning the future”.

Allmendinger (ibid) warns that a postmodern approach to planning can also have pitfalls, such as relativism, nihilism and a degeneration into whimsy. Oranje (2002) adds to this list “immediate gratification”.

Throgmorton (2003) states that future-oriented planning stories are constitutive, meaning that they shape communities, cultures and how the different characters in their stories (role players in the planning process) relate to each other.

It is the infinite possibilities offered by narratives, the opportunity to craft alternative endings, that make the narrative form so attractive a vehicle for carrying the future aspirations of a town such as Virginia.

Sommer (2009: 79) argues that different genres can in part be distinguished on the basis of the protocols they employ for world-making. Could the different planning narratives perhaps also constitute a specific genre that demand “distinctive protocols for world-making”?

Ameel (2017) does not include the aspect of “city as text” in his taxonomy of planning narratives. He does, however, quote a statement by Tuomas Rajajärvi, who previously headed the Helsinki City Planning Department, calling for the city to be thought of as a story. Throgmorton (2003) acknowledges that places and buildings have stories to tell and give form to the history and identity of a city.

2.2.3 The story of the mining town as an iconic narrative of South African life

Mining and mining towns are characteristic features of the South African landscape. From the mine dumps associated with the Johannesburg cityscape to the austere coal refineries of Witbank and Newcastle to Kimberly’s big hole, mining activities are a feature of the physical environment of South Africa.

However, signs of mining activity not only pervade the physical, geographic landscape of the country, but also the inner, cultural landscape of its inhabitants. The role that mining plays in the South African economy, but also in the structure of our society, can clearly be seen in the prevalence of mining themes in different genres of literature. Just as mining towns are a feature of the physical South African landscape, fictional narratives about these towns are a feature of the South African social/psychological landscape.

Alan Paton’s *Cry, the Beloved Country* was first published in 1948. Nadine Gordimer, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1991, in an interview with *The Observer* called this book “the most influential South African novel ever written”. The novel tells the story of Stephen Kumalo, a Zulu parson from Ndotsheni in what is today Kwa-Zulu Natal, who travels to Johannesburg to find out what has happened to his only son, Absalom, who had left home to look for work on the mines. Paton was awarded the Anisfield-Wolf Saturday Review Award (1948), the Newspaper Guild of New York Page One Award (1949) and the London Sunday Times Special Award for Literature (1949) for

this novel. In the author's note to the first edition, Paton explains that, except for two, all the characters in the book are fictional, but adds "In these respects therefore, the story is not true, but considered as a social record, it is the plain and simple truth".

Swart Pelgrim (translated as *Black Pilgrim*) by FA Venter was first published in 1952, four years after Paton's *Cry the Beloved Country* and was awarded the Hertzog Prize in 1961. Echoing Paton's storyline, the black main character, Kolisile, leaves his rural community for Johannesburg, firstly to earn money, but also to look for his brother, Mfazwe, who left for Johannesburg years ago and never returned. Kolisile finds work in the mine. Van der Merwe (1994: 39, 40) describes *Swart Pelgrim* as "a novel of great historical importance".

The first English drama series to be produced for South African television was *The Villagers*. Running from 1976 to 1978, this very popular series was about life in a small mining town on the Witwatersrand. Another drama series with a mining theme, *Egoli*, was screened on the pay channel M-Net from 1992 to March 2010 (MNet, undated). It made history when it became the first programme on South African television to reach 2000 episodes. The much acclaimed soap opera series *Isidingo*, which centres on the fictional Horizon Deep gold mine and its surrounding community, has become a daily feature of many South African viewers' lives since it premiered in July 1998 and was still running at the time of the study. The Afrikaans sitcom *Orkney Snork Nie* was broadcast by the SABC between 1989 and 1992 was a farcical interpretation of life on a mining town.



Figure 3: A scene from the television series *The Villagers* (1976-1978)
Source: The South African, undated

Two recent examples of South African fiction set in a mining town are the novels *Sean, Eddie and Me*, by Paul Leger (2013) which is set in Virginia and *Going back to say goodbye: A boyhood on the mine*, by Kenneth de Kok (2016), set in Stilfontein. Both novels recall childhood years spent in a mining town.

The above are only a few strong examples of fictional mining town narratives that have become part of South African popular culture. As reality precipitates in art, which includes works of fiction in various genres and media (note again Paton's remarks in his author's note to *Cry, the Beloved Country* referred to above), these examples bear testimony to how deeply mining and the phenomenon of the mining town have become interwoven with the fabric of South African life and our collective national consciousness.

2.3 UTOPIA

2.3.1 The notion of utopia

Utopian thinking is about the yearning for an ideal society and could therefore be viewed as a normal feature of human aspirational thinking. Because of the fact that, generally, a utopian society is yet to be achieved, the notion of

utopia is strongly linked to the future (Hoch, 2016; Meyer & Oranje, 2005; Bloch, 1995).

According to Frye (1965), inherent to utopian thinking is a tension between current reality and an ideal existence, and this tension is the source of hope for the future. Bloch (1995: 479) concurs with this view when he states in a discussion of literary utopias that they all “obey a social mandate, a suppressed or only just evolving tendency of the imminent social level”. True utopian thought, according to Bloch (ibid), is therefore never merely wishful thinking. As an expression of a social ideal, utopias cannot be convincingly argued against on the basis of the current reality, as the current reality is as yet unfinished and not fully known (Bloch, 1995).

While the most commonly known utopias are those found in literature (see paragraph 2.3.2 below, Bloch (1995) considers the manifestation of utopian thought as it applies to many different aspects of life, including medicine, art and music, sport, marriage, religion, fashion and architecture. There is a strong link between utopianism and planning. This is discussed in paragraph 2.3.3 below.

2.3.2 Literary utopias

The word “utopia” was first coined by Sir Thomas More in 1516. More’s eponymous novel is one of a series of so-called “literary utopias”. *Republic* by Plato was written in 360-380 BC. Published after More’s novel are *La Città del Sole* (City of the Sun) by Tomasso Campanella (1602), *Description of the Republic of Christianopolis* (*Beschreibung des Staates Christenstadt*) by Johannes Valentinus Andreae (1619), *New Atlantis* by Francis Bacon (1627), *Looking Backward* by Edward Bellamy (1888) and *News from Nowhere* by William Morris (1890).



Figure 4: The inside cover of Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516)

Source: Menguc, 2016

In his review of *News from Nowhere* in the *The Economic Journal*, William Graham (1891) is complimentary on the literary merit of Morris's work, in particularly on the descriptions of nature, and calls his account of some of the larger social problems of the time "true and impressive". However, Graham is scathingly sarcastic in his assessment of many aspects of the Utopia described in *News from Nowhere*.

For instance, Graham points to the fact that Morris presents the past as the future, painting pastoral scenes of haymaking, for example. Graham remarks that "We are back in Rousseau's 'State of Nature' before the establishment of civil society; and on the whole its [sic] nicer than we thought" (Graham, 1891:

591). Another criticism raised by Graham (ibid) is that the apparent opulence and wealth of life in Morris's *Utopia* seem not to tally with the deficiency of work (of an agreeable and artistic nature) Morris describes.

Graham also expresses scepticism about the description of Morris's *Utopia* as a place of peace and prosperity in spite of, in fact, largely because of, the fact that all forms of government have been done away with.

There is always a risk of the storyworld of the literary utopia coming across as unconvincing, as "too good to be true". Regarding Morris's *Utopia*, Graham voices the suspicion that "life might prove a trifle insipid and monotonous; that without politics to discuss, or religion to dispute about; with foreign war abolished; few books produced; and no new inventions made [. . .] life would become somewhat stale and flat, notwithstanding widened artistic sensibilities" (Graham, 1891: 592).

In the chapter "How the Change Came", Morris describes that his utopian society came about as a result of a war between the working class and the middle and upper classes. Graham (ibid) questions the possibility that such a war could ever take place in the England of the time and states that, even if it could, the subsequent shift to communism and equality would take "from 500 to 1000 years" (Graham, 1891: 593).

The criticisms of over-simplification and lack of credibility against Morris's novel by Graham could probably be made against most of the utopian novels. Yet, there are stark differences between the utopian story-worlds created in the novels referred to above. The apparent leisure and freedom in Thomas More's *Utopia* is contrasted by the strict rules applicable to all in Campanella's *City of the Sun*. Owen and Fourier designed their utopian states according to a federalist structure, while that of Saint-Simon is centralist. Augustine's *City of God* has a purely religious basis. Nonetheless, there are certain elements that all the literary utopias have in common. Firstly, they are not philosophical treatises, but rather allow the reader to glimpse first-hand what a perfect society looks like. They "show" rather than "tell" as is to be expected of a

novel. As Fromm (in Orwell, 1981: 258) states: “what characterises Thomas More’s *Utopia*, and all the others is that they do not speak in general terms of principles, but give an imaginative picture of the concrete details of society which corresponds to the deepest longings of man”.

Of particular interest to me is the fact that the literary utopias all have a strong spatial element. In each of them the physical landscape, most often a city, is the framework within which the other elements of the utopian society are manifested. In some cases, for example in Campanella’s *City of the Sun*, where the concentric city walls are inscribed with the knowledge required by its citizens, the built environment is very directly interwoven with the fabric of the utopian society.

2.3.3 Utopianism and planning

Considering the place of utopian thought in planning is important for this study because of the possibility that utopian views played a role in the planning of Virginia. On occasion of the tenth anniversary of the town the then mayor, H. Badenhorst, is reported to have said “. . . I am convinced Virginia will become a Utopia of the North-West Free State” (*The Friend*, 29 August 1964).

The dream of the ideal city is as old as urban and regional planning itself. Bloch (1995) provides a summary of such efforts starting with Fra Giocondo’s design of a round city with radiating streets in 1505. Scamozzi, who built the offices of the procurators in St Marks Square in Venice, planned a city in the shape of a polygone that informed the later layout of Palma Nuova near Udine. The ideal city designed by Vasari il Giovane in 1598 combined a rectangular and radial layout. Piranesi (1720-1778), who influenced Soviet Russian architecture, based his plan for an ideal city on the symmetry of early classicism.

The French architect Ledoux lived from 1736 to 1806, i.e., at the time of the French Revolution. He designed his ideal city, Chaux, in a strictly geometrical pattern according to different occupations interspersed with green spaces.

Among a number of very strange ideas, the French philosopher Charles Fourier (1772-1837) advocated what is termed collaborative socialism. He saw the development of humanity as phases, with the highest being “harmony” – Fourier’s version of utopia. Fourier’s ideal community, called a phalanx (the term used for a unit of Greek soldiers) would consist of 1,620 members who would be organised according to their passions, ensuring that work would be viewed as enjoyable and playful. Phalanxes would live in garden cities called phalansteres and no restriction would be placed on human liberties including expressing any kind of sexual “mania”. A remarkable feature of Fourier’s “utopia” is that he did not believe in eradicating material inequalities between the members of the phalanx. Rather, he believed that inequalities were the result of divine ordination. Nonetheless, besides contributing their labour, all members of the phalanx would also be cooperative owners of the phalanstere and would have a say in how it was managed. While efforts by Fourier to raise funds to build his utopian community came to nought, his writings inspired the Fourierist movement, which resulted in several attempts to establish similar communities, the most well-known of which is Brook Farm, established by George and Sophia Ripley in 1841. The community was, however not sustainable and closed down in 1847 (Preucel & Pendery, 2006; Francis, 1977).

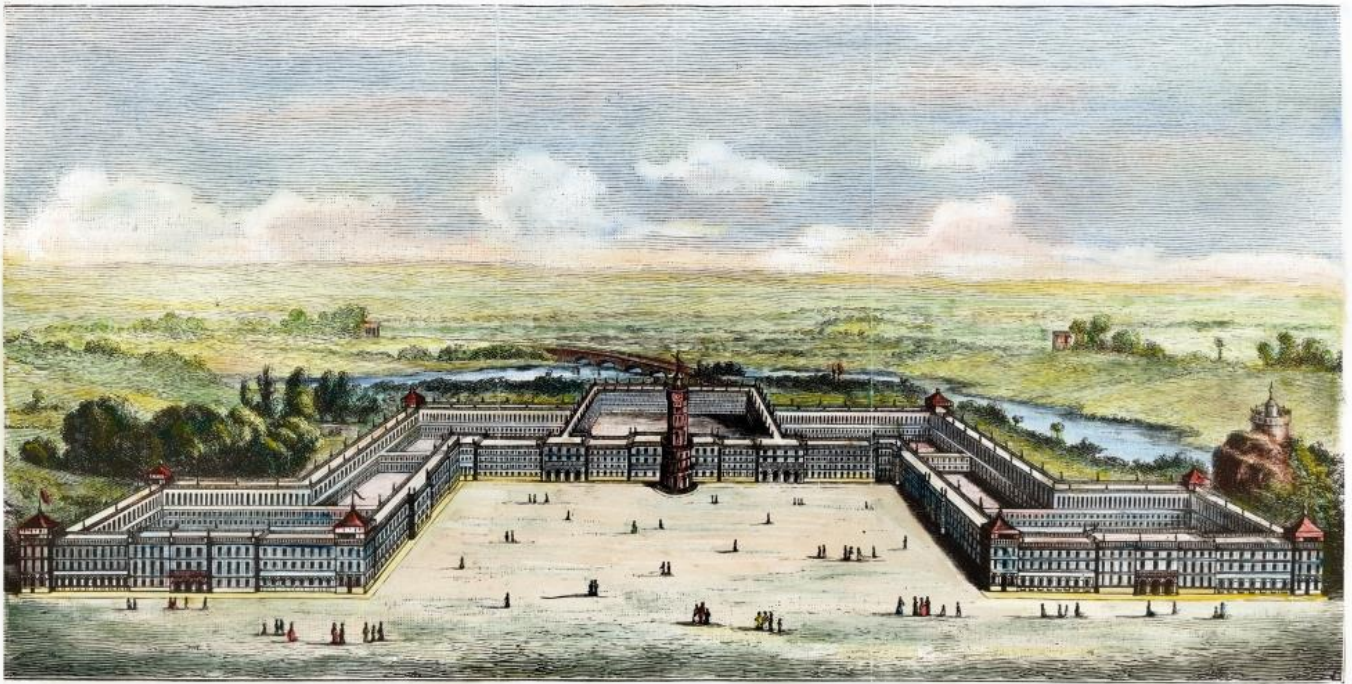


Figure 5: Charles Fourier's phalanstere as captured in a 19th century German engraving.
Source: Fine Art America, undated

The Welsh industrialist Robert Owen (1771-1858) was a contemporary of Fourier. While Owen was not a town planner, *per se*, he was nonetheless responsible for developing the utopian settlement New Harmony in Indiana, USA, after buying the original German religious settlement from Father George Rapp in 1824. Owen had a model for his ideal village, the first of which was to be developed close to New Harmony while the existing buildings would be used in the meantime. The model included a square building of which each side would be a thousand feet long. Apart from lecture rooms, a chapel and laboratories, among other spaces, the building would consist of family dwellings and rooms for unmarried residents. Children above two years of age would also be housed separately so as to enable them to be educated without being contaminated by outside influences. Spaces were provided for washing, dining, cooking, etc. The village would be provided with gas and water. Owen hoped that his reformed society would boast material prosperity and high morality. As it turned out, however, the experiment was neither an economic nor a social success and came to an acrimonious end during the first half of 1827. The communal building Owen had dreams of erecting was never built (Carmony and Elliot, 1980).

Some planners are specifically known as utopian planners on the grounds of their visions of creating an ideal environment through spatial planning. For instance, between 1899 and 1904, during a stay at Villa Médicis, the French socialist architect Tony Garnier planned an ideal city of thirty-five thousand people. Based on the ideas of Fourier referred to above, Garnier's city was an industrial city, *Une Cité Industrielle*, which is also the title of the book containing Garnier's plan that was published in 1917. Garnier is credited as being the first to introduce the concept of zoning, as he designated separate, although clearly related, areas for housing, work and leisure, etc. His proposal made provision for governmental, manufacturing and agricultural uses, but made no provision for churches, jails or police stations.

According to Pundlik (2010) "*Une Cité Industrielle* is a well coordinated and monumentally conceived plan placed in a park like setting where both the classical spirit of the academic tradition and the primitive simplicity of utopian ideas are demonstrated".

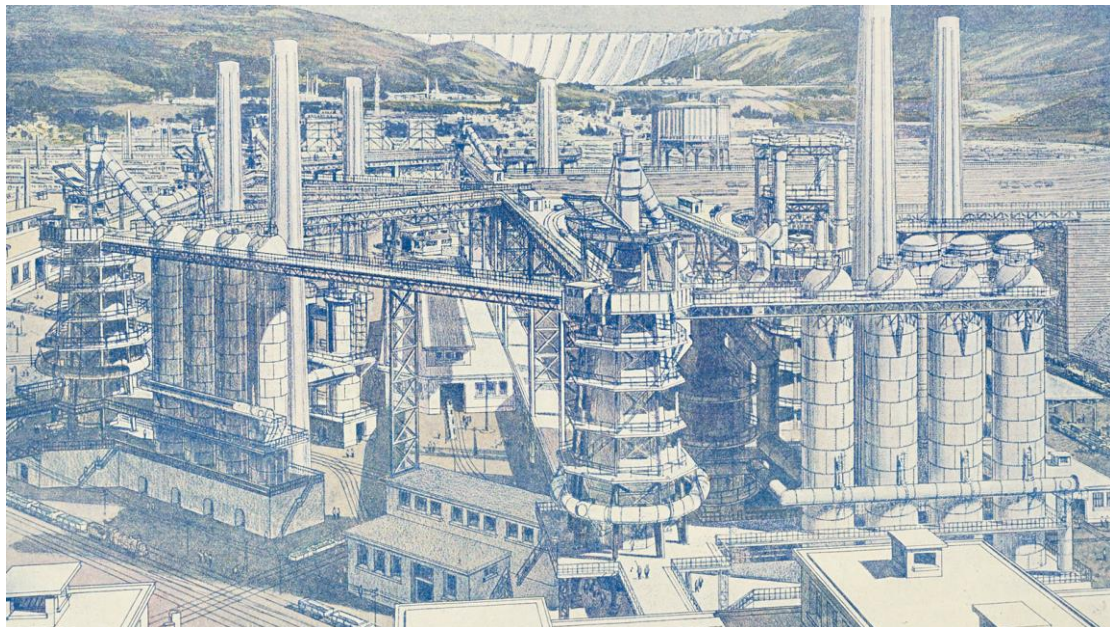


Figure 6: An illustration of *Une Cité Industrielle* by Tony Garnier
Source: The Wolfsonian, Florida International University, undated

Known for having started the garden city movement and credited by some with having started the modern era of urban and regional planning, Sir Ebenezer Howard is the author of *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (1898), which was republished in 1902 as *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* (Richert & Lapping, 1998). The garden city represents Howard's "ideal of a human-scaled community, compact and diverse in itself, embedded in a green, natural environment" (Fishman, 1998: 127). "Howard's themes of planned dispersal of large urban population growth to new towns of limited size were executed in excellent town designs by Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker. Dispersed towns like Letchworth and Welwyn Garden City exemplified Howard's formulation" (Parsons, 1998: 129).

Frederick Law Olmsted is considered by some as a utopian town planner. Faiks *et al* (2001), however, argue that Olmsted, the American landscape architect responsible for the design of a large number of public parks in the US, including Central Park in New York, was not utopian. Although Olmsted had clear social ideals, namely to provide access to green spaces to all citizens within a reasonable distance from their places of work and residence, where they could escape from the unhealthy conditions of the city and relax, he did not pursue an "ideal city" as most utopian planners do (Faiks *et al*, 2001).

It is possible, however, that Olmsted is referred to as a utopian planner on the grounds of the role he played in the design of the World's Fair: Columbian Exposition (officially shortened to the World's Columbian Exposition) that was held in 1893 in Chicago as a celebration of the 400th anniversary of the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the New World in 1492. Olmsted and his colleagues John Wellborn, Daniel Burnham and Charles Atwood, designed a prototype of what they thought the ideal city would be, following Beaux Arts design principles. The 200 buildings on the fairground, which became known as the White City, included 14 "great buildings" designed by several prominent architects. Apart from canals, lagoons and buildings in the neoclassical style, the exposition included art and music and featured the cultures of 46 countries. It came to symbolise the emerging American Exceptionalism.

In 1917, Bruno Taut, a German architect, developed thirty watercolour illustrations with hand-written annotations that portrayed a utopian city in the Alps. In 2004, these were published in the book *Alpine Architektur. Ein Utopie, A Utopia* by Matthias Shirren. Taut envisaged a city that would be built by its residents, who would form a peaceful, communal society.

Made of crystal, all the buildings in Taut's city would let in the natural light, while merging with the snow and ice of the surrounding landscape. The transparency and beauty of the city was Taut's response to World War 1 and what he viewed as a utilitarian world.

Taut's work is inspired by the German novelist Paul Sheerbart's essay "*Glasarchitektur*" (Glass Architecture) that contained a fantasy of buildings that could be completely penetrated by sunlight. While the book containing Taut's illustrations is a work of art in itself, his city in the mountains was never built (Fabrizi, 2015).



Figure 7: An image of Bruno Taut's Alpine City
Source: Shirren, 2004

The Swiss architect Le Corbusier developed a utopian city, the *Ville Contemporaine*, which he displayed at the 1922 Paris Exhibition. Designed for three million people, the city's growth was limited by a wide green belt that encircled it. The *Ville Contemporaine* was a "contemporary vision for a new metropolis: an imaginative exercise in ideal city planning, bringing into play all the then known and anticipated technological advances and building forms" (Myhra, 1974: 183).

Rexford Guy Tugwell, an agricultural economist, was responsible for the idea behind the Greenbelt New Town programme, a public housing programme initiated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) between 1935 and 1936.

The aim of the programme was to address the poverty experienced by rural American families during the Great Depression of the 1930s. It resulted in planned new towns for the resettlement of the rural poor on the edge of existing urban areas. These communities were called Greenbelt Towns. Within two years no less than three Greenbelt towns (in Washington, D.C., Milwaukee and Cincinnati) were constructed.

Although Tugwell's idealistic views caused him to be viewed by some scholars as a utopian planner, Myhra points out Tugwell's pragmatism: "Tugwell maintained that effective social policies had to be dictated by contemporary resources, techniques, and circumstances; that they had to be tuned to the times rather than to an imaginary environment in some Utopia" (Myhra, 1974: 177). In contrast to Ebenezer Howard, Tugwell did not believe in removing people from the city, he believed in the city and its development (e.g., in the development of industry to provide employment for displaced farm workers in the Greenbelt Towns), but believed that settlements had to be designed in such a manner that there was a pleasant environment around the houses.

Bloch (1995) remarks on the geometry that is apparent in most of the utopian town plans. In Bloch's view this crystalline geometry reflects and fits in with the "order of a cosmos which is seen as complete, moreover as geometrically complete", thus perpetuating what he calls a "secularized astral myth" (Bloch, 1995: 742).

Various authors either directly or indirectly acknowledge the value of a utopian approach to the future in planning (Hoch, 2016, Mabin & Oranje, 2014; Friedmann, 2002; Bloch, 1995; Isserman, 1985). In arguing for a utopian approach to the future in planning, Meyer and Oranje (2005: 28) offer two reasons, namely that a future focus is essential for developing sustainable human settlements and that utopian thinking is central to the identity of planning, which by its very nature is visionary, "offering promises of a better life". According to Wachs (2001), the future as a utopian ideal is a powerful metaphor that gives direction and purpose to plans.

Meyer and Oranje (2005) support Hyde (2000) in calling for a return of the confidence of utopian planners that planning could bring about a better future. They (ibid: 28) argue that "idealism should be at the heart of planning". However, echoing the criticism wielded against utopias in literature (e.g., by Graham, 1981), Meyer and Oranje (2005) caution against a utopian approach to planning that is unrealistic and disregards historical and contextual realities.

The utopian approach to spatial planning, which, according to Meyer and Oranje (2005: 27), consisted mainly of "dreams and visions", was replaced from the mid-1950s by the modernist perspective, which was characterised by a quantitative approach. In practical terms, this usually meant that meticulous observation was used to gather information (mathematical values) to which mathematical models were applied, leading to predicted future states, which in turn were used to inform planning decisions. "Scientific and technological development provided the field with new techniques and measurement tools in terms of spatial modelling and socio-economic forecasts to give substance and certainty to the utopian dreams that inspired earlier planners" (Meyer & Oranje, 2005: 27).

However, the proven failure of these predictions to materialise and therefore for the plans based on them to deliver on their promises, leads to the realisation that these models resulted in an “oversimplification of past and existing conditions and projecting these into the future” (Meyer and Oranje, 2005: 27). The disillusionment with modernist planning ultimately culminated in a post-structuralist planning paradigm that “does not predict or project one future, but conceptualises the generative processes from which different futures might emerge” (Balducci *et al*, 2011: 297).

2.4 DYSTOPIA

Dystopia is the name commonly given to the antithesis of utopia, namely a description of a nightmare world, or negative utopia (Fromm, 1981).

Just as there is a body of utopian literature, there are also novels depicting a dystopian world. The most famous among these (original dates of publication indicated) are probably Yevgeny Zamyatin’s *We* (1921), Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1931), George Orwell’s *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) and *1984* (1948) and *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845) by Friedrich Engels.

Fromm (1981) cites a number of factors that gave rise to the dystopian world view. The first of these is the First World War. This was followed by the perceived betrayal of socialism by Stalin’s state capitalism, the holocaust in Germany and finally the World War II that brought with it the atomic bomb and the threat of the annihilation of humanity. These events have led to what Fromm (1981: 259) describes as a “pervasive mood of hopelessness”.

The negative utopias present a picture of a world where people are dehumanised, sometimes by violent and drastic means (e.g., the lobotomy performed on citizens in Zamyatin’s novel). They express a mood of hopelessness and powerlessness that is in direct contrast to the confident and hopeful mood expressed in the utopian novels.

Baeten (2002) argues against the use of a Western notion of urban dystopia to drive urban policy. Instead of problematizing the city from a Western (white, male, middle-class) perspective, Baeten (ibid) argues for an approach that sees difference, conflict and opposing interests as a potential source of creativity. He points out how planners, academics and politicians espouse dystopian narratives of urban society to justify their professions and refers to Peter Hall (1988) who credits the very birth of urban planning to the late Victorian middle classes discovering the underclass and all the evils (disease and revolution) that accompanied it.

Baeten (2002: 105) shows how a dystopian view of the urban environment is used to stereotype all who live there. The basic premise is that people living in these neighbourhoods are deprived because they are inferior to the middle classes based on their culture, beliefs, habits, etc. Such a view is used to justify “patronizing, repressive and discriminating policies towards those who are in fact victims of persisting urban inequalities and far-reaching prejudices”.

Modern urban dystopias are produced by both those on the left and those on the right of the political spectrum. In conservative discourses, dystopia arises from moral deprivation and an undermining of society’s basic values by members of the “underclass” living in deprived neighbourhoods of the city. In progressive circles, the social ills and inequalities characterising dystopian images of the city are the result of capitalist exploitation (Baeten, 2002).

The notion of an urban dystopia is useful in different ways. Firstly, identifying the city and its residents with deviance can be used to promote conventional norms – norms associated with suburban living such as heterosexuality, regular employment, membership of the middle class, etc. “The urban dystopia serves to legitimise the suburban utopia” (Baeten, 2002: 111).

Secondly, the urban dystopia is what attracts mainstream society to the city. Members of mainstream society yearn for the “imagined exoticism, radicalism and freedom” of the city. The slum culture roots of musical styles such as

jazz, rock and soul are exactly what gives them their appeal among the bourgeoisie (Baeten, 2002: 111).

In the third instance, urban dystopias are useful because they legitimise urban regeneration policies. The urban dystopia has justified numerous grand development schemes, “from garden cities to new towns to wholesale demolitions of inner-city quarters” (Baeten, 2002: 112). Baeten does not deny that urban misery is real and that there have probably been urban renewal schemes that genuinely improved the lives of city residents. He (Baeten, *ibid*) argues, however, that in many cases projects premised on urban deprivation have yielded little more than profit for the developers.

Lastly, Baeten (2002) argues that the social dystopia is used to mask structural causes of economic and social inequality. Following this approach, urban space, rather than bourgeois society itself, is blamed for social misery. Inner city neighbourhoods thus become spatial metaphors, or euphemisms for “social inequalities for which the bourgeoisie will not and cannot take responsibility” (Baeten, 2002: 112).

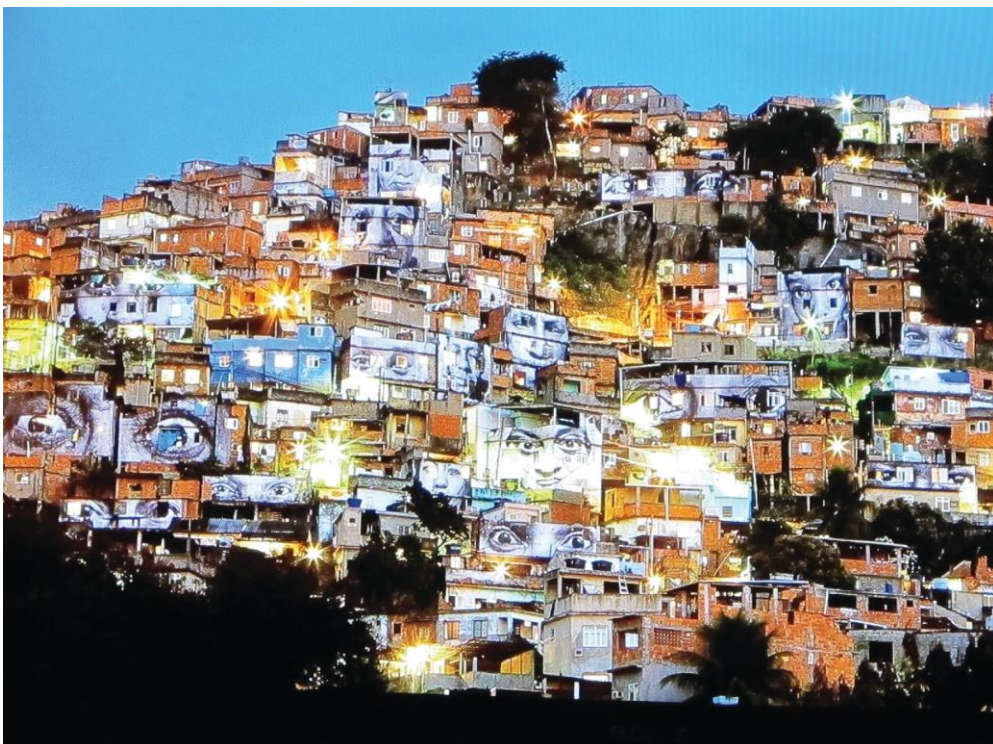


Figure 8: Favelas as a canvas for the dystopian urban artist JR. Photograph by Anaïs Moisy
Source: Moisy, 2014

While the city provides an inexhaustible source for the middle-class productions of the urban dystopia, it is also a safe haven for society's "others". In fact, over the centuries, the modern city has proven to be a site of liberation for the suppressed (Baeten, 2002). The city is therefore just as much a site of liberation as of oppression. It is precisely the contradictions and conflicts of the city that hold the potential of creative renewal.

Baeten (2002: 114) is critical of "'hypochondriac' geographies of the city" that over-emphasize urban decay, as these often achieve the opposite of what their proponents wish for. He pleads instead for an empowering discourse that stresses the city's contradictions and emphasize its potential to turn these into creative forces.

Merrifield (2000: 473) highlights (as does Berman, 1988) the contradictions inherent in modern cities, arguing that they "express the best and worst that human civilization has to offer". Merrifield (ibid) elaborates on an aspect of urban dystopia that Baeten (2002) only refers to in passing, namely that "there is a perverse allure to urban horror and pain and squalor". He (Merrifield, ibid) illustrates this by considering the work of a number of "dystopian urbanist" writers. This perversity resonates strongly with aspects of the postmodern aesthetic, for instance Virilio's description of the aesthetic of war (Docherty, 1993). Merrifield (2000: 474) argues that we, and particularly those of us on "the Left", are subject to an attraction-repulsion dialectic in that we experience "a lurid fascination with the dystopian city".

Merrifield (2000: 476) cites Baudelaire and Dostoevsky as dystopian urbanists depicting the city (Paris and St. Petersburg, respectively) as "beyond good and evil", i.e., where the "boundaries between good and evil" have been "smudged irrevocably". For Baudelaire, his city is one of "dreadful delight", and, as far as Dostoevsky is concerned, humans crave pain and suffering and even derive a perverse pleasure from it. Just like Dostoevsky's character in *The Underground Man* needs suffering to "feel more alive" (Merrifield, 2000: 477), Karl Marx, in his *Economical and philosophical manuscripts* of 1844 argues that one has to feel pain, to suffer, in order to be passionate.

Like Baeten (2002), Merrifield (2000) sees a role for conflict in keeping alive urban spaces such as London's King's Cross and New York's Times Square and Lower East Side. He considers the planning approaches advocated by Jane Jacobs and Lewis Mumford and finds that both fail to truly embrace the dystopian city, thereby missing an opportunity for a real urban adventure. At first glance, Jacobs does seem to advocate for the urban neighbourhood with all its spontaneous diversity and seeming disorder. She is criticised, however, for her focus on safety and "village intimacy". Mumford, on the other hand, proposes a city that can only be sustainable if its growth remains within certain limits. Once these limits are exceeded, the planner has to break the city down into smaller and more manageable units. Mumford romanticises the past and in particular the Greek city. Merrifield (2000: 482) describes Mumford as an old school urbanist with small-town values "who has no truck with dystopia".

2.5 HOPE

2.5.1 A philosophical perspective: Ernst Bloch on hope

The German Ernst Bloch (1883-1977) considered the notion of hope in great detail⁷.

Born two years after the death of Karl Marx, Bloch is outspoken in his support of Marx's teachings. The tension between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie pervades his work on hope and utopia, with the ultimate hope that of a revolution that will bring about a utopian socialist society. Bloch's opus magnum, *The Principle of Hope*, was written and revised between 1938 and 1947 in the USA and published in German as *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* in 1959.

⁷ Bloch is one among many philosophers who have considered the notion of hope. Godfrey (1987) claims, however, that "For the most part, philosophers treat hope *en passant*", but recognizes Bloch, Kant and Marcel as exceptions to this statement. Hope is a topic of particular interest in a theological context, and one of the earliest authors to consider hope from a religious perspective is St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274), who dedicated a chapter in his seminal work, the *Summa Theologiae* (also known as the *Summa Theologica*) to the topic (Cartwright, 2004). More recently, comprehensive works on hope have been published Josef Pieper and Joseph J Godfrey (Schumacher, 2003; Godfrey, 1987).

The first English (American) translation was published in 1986 and the translation referenced in this study in 1995.

Spanning three volumes and almost 1 400 pages, Bloch's work covers a dizzying variety of topics, including that of hope, which is mostly addressed in parts of Volume 1.

Bloch remarks on the general lack of philosophical consideration of hope. He states that "Hope [. . .] does not therefore occur in the history of the sciences, either as a psychological or as cosmic entity" (Bloch, 1995:6) and adds that "Longing, expectation, hope therefore need their hermeneutics, the dawning of the In-Front-of-Us demands its specific concept, the Novum demands its concept of the Front" (ibid: 7). According to Bloch, it was, however, not possible to develop the concept of hope before the advent of the modern age: "Only our present age possesses the socioeconomic prerequisites for a theory of the Not-Yet-Conscious and whatever is related to it in the Not-Yet-Become of the world" (ibid: 141). Bloch credits Karl Marx with introducing the concept of hope to philosophy and bringing "future within our theoretical and practical grasp".

Bloch considers the nature of hope at length and uses the term interchangeably with others such as longing, dreaming, wishful thinking, expectation and even "anticipatory consciousness" (ibid: 45). He explores different kinds of wanting and yearning experienced by humans from very young to old age. In a convoluted, hyper-detailed way characteristic of his writing, Bloch considers the different nuances of compulsion, distinguishing between, for example, "striving", "craving", "urging". He suggests that there is a sequential progression from striving to urging to craving and longing, which when focused, becomes searching. He states, for instance, that wishing is "more extensive, ads more colour than craving" (ibid: 46). All wanting, Bloch argues, is preceded by wishing. He explains that "In wishing there is not yet any element of work or activity, whereas all wanting is wanting to do" (ibid: 46). He views humans as a complex of incessantly changing drives: "In short,

we realize that man is an equally changeable and extensive complex of drives, a heap of *changing* and mostly badly ordered wishes” (ibid: 50).

The kinds of wishes, dreams, yearnings he discusses include the wish to be important, wishes for revenge, for comfort as well as more far-fetched dreams such as dreams of immortality. He considers the basic human drives such as hunger, the sex drive and the “will to power” (ibid: 57).

Bloch considers the emotions, as distinct from imagination and sensation, and the notion of a sense of self with reference to the work already done in this regard by Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Descartes, Spinoza, Dilthey, Hegel and the reactionary psychologist, Scheler.

Bloch’s findings after all of this is that emotions can be divided into two “series” namely “filled” (for instance greed, envy, admiration) and “expectant” emotions (such as fear, anxiety, belief and hope) (ibid: 74). Bloch distinguishes the expectant emotions from the filled emotions by their “incomparably greater anticipatory character in their intention, their substance and their object” (Bloch’s emphasis) (ibid). Of all the expectant emotions, Bloch views hope as the most important, as “the most authentic emotion of longing and thus of self” (ibid: 75). It is, the “most human of all mental feelings”, and “refers to the furthest and brightest horizon”.



Figure 9: A tongue-in-cheek representation of Bloch's progression of expectant emotions

For hope (expectation, striving, etc.) to lead to change Bloch views planning as essential. “In order to remove what is difficult, not only knowledge is necessary in the sense of an excavation of what was, but knowledge in the sense of a planning of what is becoming; knowledge is therefore necessary which itself decisively contributes to this becoming, becoming which changes for the good” (ibid: 132). He makes the point of the importance of planning by referring to the distinction Marx makes (in *Das Kapital* I, Dietz, 1947: 186), between the work done by humans and that which looks like work that is performed by, for instance, a spider spinning a web or a bee building a honeycomb. The difference identified by Marx is that the human worker sets out to achieve an ideal that he/she has already imagined. From this, Bloch concludes that: “Therefore it follows: before a builder – in all areas of life – knows his plan, he must have planned the plan himself, and must have anticipated its realization as a brilliant, even decisively spurring forward dream.” (ibid: 76). Bloch therefore identifies the competency of planning as a major distinguishing characteristic of humans and he clearly draws the link between planning and “the wishful element” (ibid: 76). Bloch continues to consider how plans originate from “dreams of a better life” (ibid: 76) and

spends some time discussing the difference between daydreams and night dreams, drawing, of course, heavily on Freud and, to some extent, on his pupil Jung. He disagrees with Freud and others that waking dreams, also referred to as daydreams, or reverie, are merely a different form of the nocturnal dream. Bloch credits daydreams, which he also refers to as “forward dreams” (ibid: 117) with being the origin of all art and improvement in the world.

As an expectant emotion, hope is directly related to the future in Bloch’s work. Rather than to view the future in temporal terms, Bloch views it as an as yet unrealized state of being, which he refers to as the Not-Yet-Become, the Not-Yet-Conscious, the oncoming, the Novum, the New, the Ultimum. Bloch also uses spatial terms to describe the future, such as “front” and “horizon”. In fact, space and time becomes intertwined when he states that “Just as time, according to Marx, is the space of history, so too the future mode of time is the space for the real possibilities of history, and it invariably lies on the horizon of the respective tendency of world occurrence” (ibid: 247).

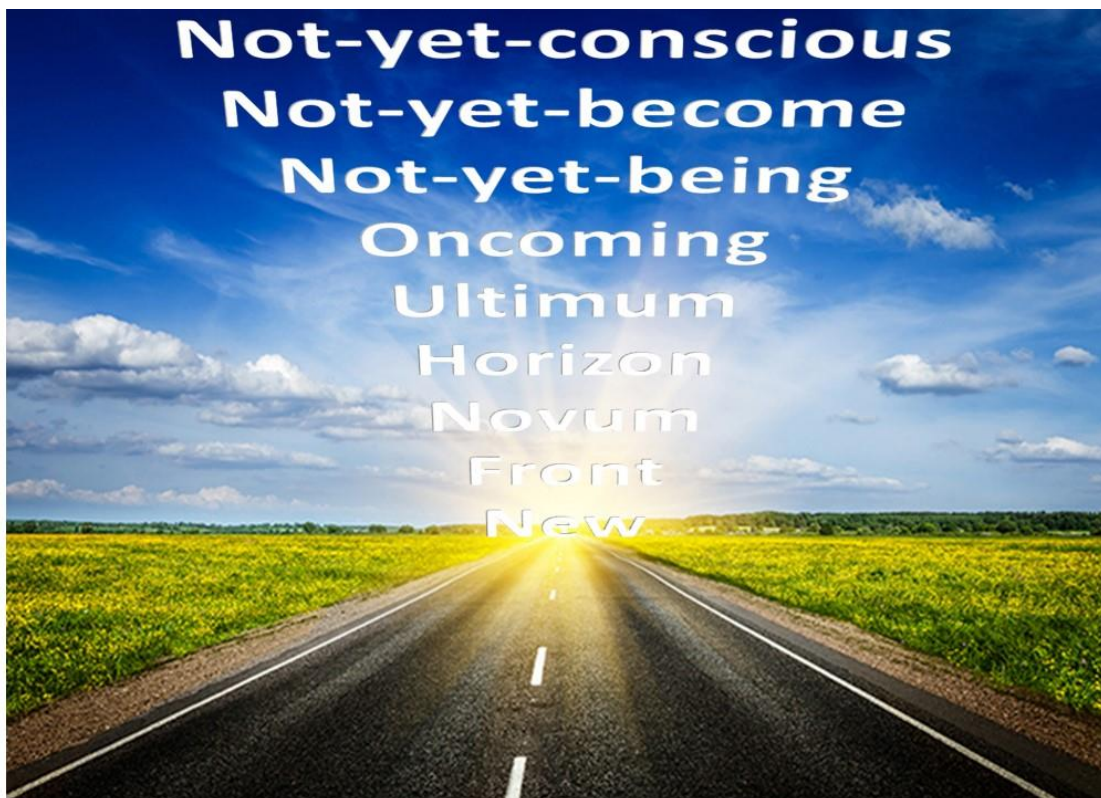


Figure 10: The different terms for the future (closely linked to hope) used by Bloch

There is some resonance between Bloch's discussion on the future as "becoming" and the thinking of Krogh (2013), who is concerned with the project of moving South Africa beyond the "now" to a vocabulary of hope. Krogh (ibid: 196) puts forward the notion of "interconnectedness-towards-wholeness", which boils down to a world view that one can only become one's fullest self with and through others. This is perhaps most aptly captured in the African concept of "Ubuntu" in terms of which one depends on others to be, or differently stated: a person is a person through people (Ogude, 2014). Van Binsbergen (2001: 57) recognises the "utopian and prophetic" nature of Ubuntu. Within the notion of interconnectedness-towards-wholeness, Krogh (2013: 197) sees forgiveness and reconciliation as follows: "They are not only closely linked, but are also mutually dependent: the one begins, or opens up, a process of becoming, while the other is the crucial next step into this becoming".

Bloch (1995: 119) points out that a future consciousness, particularly among the youth, is most prevalent in times of change, or revolutionary times, when "man distinctly feels that he is not an established being, but one which, together with his environment, constitutes a task and an enormous receptacle full of future".

Bloch observes the same fluidity and vaporiousness that Berman (1988) identifies as characteristic of the modern age. For instance, Bloch sees no clear division between the past and the future. He states that "[t]he rigid divisions between future and past thus themselves collapse, unbecome future becomes visible in the past, avenged and inherited, mediated and fulfilled past in the future" (Bloch, 1995: 8-9) and "[i]f being is understood out of its Where From then it is so only as an equally tendential, still undisclosed Where To" (ibid: 18). The real dimension of hope, according to Bloch, only opens up once we bid "farewell to the closed, static concept of being" (ibid: 18). While Bloch views romanticising the past as a block to the Not-Yet-Conscious and is derisive of attempts to offer as new something already existing in a new guise, "for example something forgotten, something rememberable that has been,

something that has sunk into the subconscious in repressed or archaic fashion” (ibid: 11), he acknowledges the interwoven nature of the past, present and future and views “the New as something that is mediated in what exists” (ibid: 4) that is achieved through a process “which is unclosed both backwards and forwards” (ibid: 9). He states that “[e]ven a real new creation will and must – as such – also have antiquity within it, working with and continuing to work beyond it, obviously, not copying it” (ibid: 386). He is strongly critical of a view of the world as pre-ordained, as an ultimately finished entity that is illuminated bit by bit as new insights are gained. Instead, Bloch puts forward the notion of a Not-Yet-Being, of a future that is still to be created.

The future Bloch refers to is a utopian one (see paragraph 2.3 above). One of the many terms he uses as alternatives to “hope” is “utopian will” (ibid: 16). In Bloch’s view, “we need the most powerful telescope, that of polished utopian consciousness” in order to gain insight into “the just lived moment in which everything that is both drives and is hidden from itself” (ibid: 12).

By stating that “Thinking means venturing beyond” (ibid: 5), Bloch hints, again in spatial terms, at the mental effort that is required to achieve something new. Nothing is achieved by the mere fanatical visualisation of abstractions. Bloch argues that “the genuine utopian will is definitely not endless striving” (ibid: 16), and sees the utopian imagination as anticipating the “Real-Possible” (ibid: 144). He acknowledges that “to be revealed the New demands the most extreme effort of will” (ibid: 4). Hope as Bloch defines it has an element of intelligence, it is “consciously illuminated, knowingly elucidated” (ibid: 146), but it is also “ultimately a practical, a militant emotion, it unfurls banners” (ibid: 112). The fulfilment of hope lies in “the final act of productivity, in the agonizing, blissful work of *explication*” (Bloch’s emphasis) (ibid: 125).

2.5.2 Spatial planning and hope

The relationship between planning and hope is ultimately about the relationship of planning to the future. Oranje (2014: 8) refers to planning as “a

profession that has talked about changing the world since its first breath". Isserman (1985) laments the fact that late 20th century planning lacks the ability to enchant and inspire planners, politicians and other role players. When highlighting the same inability twenty years later, Meyer and Oranje (2005) ascribe it to "our lack of focus on the future, but subsequently also to our skewed relationship with change", arguing that planning seems to be a process of accommodating rather than bringing about change. This view is corroborated by Mabin and Oranje (2014).

Inherent in planning is the promise of a better future (Blowers & Evans, 1997). Forester (1989: 20) quotes Stephen Blum's description of planning as "the organisation of hope". Planning, states Bryson and Crosby (1996: 463), makes "hope reasonable".

In putting forward a post-structuralist approach to planning⁸, Balducci *et al* (2011) answer the plea by Meyer and Oranje (2005: 27) for the "inspirational and visionary" role of planning, i.e., the role of bringing hope by "telling stories of a better life", to be restored by enhancing or establishing a "conscious relationship with the future".

Hillier (2011: 514) describes the role of mapping/diagramming in (multiplanar) strategic planning as follows: "Diagrams create possibilities; imaginary alternative worlds which promise something new; a hope of living otherwise".

It is important to note, however, that Hillier's alternative future worlds are not divorced from the past. She (Hillier, 2008: 26) seeks with a multiplanar approach to planning to "stretch the horizons of space-time into the shadow worlds of past, present and future about which we can never be certain". In

⁸ Balducci *et al* (2011: 487) argue for post-structuralism as frame for the conceptualisation of the complexities of urban environments that is essential for creative strategic planning. They describe post-structuralism as follows: "Post-structuralist thinking typically does not reject structures (such as capital, class or linguistics), but argues that structures are not primordially determinate. They are always incomplete. Post-structuralist thinking is, therefore, concerned with structuring processes and the undecidable relations or connections between structures and agencies, which could always be otherwise".

this respect, Hillier's thinking seems to be aligned with the open and broad approach taken by Bloch (1995) and echoed by Berman (1988) in his exploration of modernity that allows for dialogue between the past, present and future and sees them as a single dialectic process, expressed as "past-present-future" (Hillier, 2008: 41). Hillier (2008: 44) quotes the description by Rajchman (1998: 109) of the past as "indeterminate", which can be taken not only to refer to the past as ultimately "unknowable", but also as indefinite in terms of having no determinable end point. This view is supported by Huyssen, who sees the need for past and future to come together in the act of political imagination that is necessary to create a new world in the present. Huyssen (2003: 8) states that memory "is always more than only the prison house of the past".

This essentially postmodernist view sees history not as a single line, but as "a network of forces which all proceed in their own directions, heterogeneously" (Docherty, 1993: 18). This has implications for the modernist distinction between, for instance, the Third and First World. The postmodernist understanding is that there are many different worlds, lived at different speeds. The view of cities proposed by postmodernist thinkers such as Virilio (in Docherty, 1993: 18), is that they are "not punctual, but eventual".

The "shadow worlds" Hillier (ibid) refers to remind us of the view held by Berman (1988) of the modern world as a world in which everything suggests, and even gives rise to, its opposite – a world that is at once thrilling and dreadful, filled with great promise and the threat of total destruction, one that is characterised by "a great emptiness and absence of values" and "a remarkable abundance of possibilities" (Berman, 1988: 21).

Hillier (2008, 2011) draws on the work of Deleuze and Guattari to develop a new planning approach suitable for a world in which "situations are fluid and contingent, action consequences cannot be reliably predicted and satisfactory outcomes cannot even be defined in many instances" (Hillier, 2008: 38). It is, in the words of Karl Marx that are so memorably considered by Berman (1988), a world in which "all that is solid melts into air". Hillier (2008) argues

for a fearless approach to spatial planning – one that explores, rather than denies and suppresses tensions, conflicts and contradictions, as well as risks and opportunities. This becomes an interesting perspective when viewed against the backdrop of the view expressed by Bloch (1995) that hope is the opposite of fear.

2.6 MARSHALL BERMAN'S MODERNITY AND BEYOND

Berman's iconic book *All that is solid melts into air – the experience of modernity* (1988), takes its title from a phrase used by Karl Marx in his *Communist Manifesto*. Berman (1988: 35) states as the purpose of his book to give back to his readers a sense of their modern roots, as this “can help us connect our lives with the lives of millions of people who are living through the trauma of modernization thousands of miles away, in societies radically different from our own – and with millions of people who lived through it a century or more ago.”

Berman rejects the notion of “post-modernism” as anything other than a variety of modernism. If, however, postmodernism is a questioning, a critical assessment of the basic tenets of modern thought, Berman himself can be seen as a postmodernist. Docherty (1993: xiii) describes postmodernism as a “rethinking of modernity”, while Lyotard (ibid: 15) refers to it as “rewriting modernity”. Docherty (1993) points out the problematic nature of the “post” in “postmodernism”, as this would suggest that postmodernism has succeeded or replaced modernity. In fact, postmodernism should be seen as part of the modern. “[I]t is not modernism at its end, but in its nascent state, and this state is constant” (Docherty, 1993: 44). This view is shared by Oranje (2002), who cautions against viewing postmodernism as the opposite of modernism. In many ways, argues Oranje (ibid), postmodernism should be seen as a continuation, and in some cases as a radicalisation of some of the ideas of modernity. Berman, however, sees what the likes of Lyotard, Docherty and Oranje describe as postmodernism, as different and new modernisms. He states that “remembering the modernisms of the nineteenth century can give

us the vision and courage to create the modernisms of the twenty-first” (Berman, 1988: 37).

In his contemplation of the modernisms of the past, Berman (1988) uses fictional narratives (for instance by Goethe, Dostoevsky and Baudelaire among several others) to illustrate aspects of life in the modern age. Berman’s reflections on modernity, as well as the fictional works he refers to, are strongly situated in urban spaces (Paris, St. Petersburg, New York). Throughout his text, it is illustrated that the urban environment is both shaped by modernity and in turn gives shape to it.

2.6.1 Development as tragedy with reference to Goethe’s *Faust*

Berman uses Goethe’s *Faust* to discuss the overpowering of noble development ideals (as embodied in the character of Faust) by capitalist avarice (personified in the story by Mephisto). Berman’s view of the modern world as one in which all things suggest, and possibly even birth, their opposite, is confirmed when he captures the tragedy of the story as follows: “Goethe’s point is that the deepest horrors of Faustian development spring from its most honorable aims and its most authentic achievements” (ibid: 72).

Docherty (1993) echoes this view when he describes civilisation and barbarism as the two faces of modernity, which reminds of Marx’s ambiguous view of the bourgeoisie as both despicable and worthy of admiration. From a postmodern perspective, development can no longer be called progress and the idea that freedom and rationality are progressing has similarly disappeared (ibid).

Initially identifying Faust as the “public planner”, Berman later places society at large in the Faustian role. He (ibid: 85) writes: “As members of modern society, we are responsible for the directions in which we develop, for our goals and achievements, for their human costs. Our society will never be able to control its eruptive ‘powers of the underworld’ if it pretends that its scientists are the only ones out of control”.

Sandercock (1998) sees modernist planners as Faustian heroes who, armed with technical knowledge and the belief that they can objectively assess the public interest, want to change the world. They therefore rely, among other things, on an instrumental rationality, which they use to develop future visions after carefully evaluating alternative options.

While modernity saw sciences as the answer to all problems, Berman clearly joins the self-declared postmodernists in questioning science, or at least recognising the dangers thereof. Yet in his discussion of Faust, the Cartesian assumption of a split between a (knowing) subject and an inert object is still apparent (Waugh, 1992). From a postmodern point of view, knowledge is uncertain, and, more than that, the subject of consciousness itself, the “I”, has been thrown into doubt.

2.6.2 Karl Marx – critical insights and radical hopes

In the second part of his book, Berman (1988) observes how Marx paints the world of the bourgeoisie as one in which “prolonged social stability” is the greatest threat: “In this world, stability can only mean entropy, slow death, while our sense of progress and growth is our only way of knowing for sure that we are alive. To say that our society is falling apart is only to say that it is alive and well” (ibid: 95). It is the kind of world in which people have to learn to delight in change and renewal and relinquish their nostalgic yearning for fixity and certainty.

Berman shows Marx’s vivid and complex use of imagery in exploring key themes of modernism. This includes placing the glorious dynamic energy of modernism in intimate juxtaposition to its disintegration and nihilism, and recognizing the fluid and ever changing nature of all values and facts as well as “a basic uncertainty about what is basic, what is valuable, even what is real; a flaring up of the most radical hopes in the midst of their radical negations” (ibid: 121). It echoes Docherty’s description of the postmodern world as a fun and catastrophic implosion of contemporary culture.

Reading modernism from a Marxist perspective, Berman recognizes its characteristic and insatiable hunger for progress and growth, its commoditising and exploitative influence, the destruction of anything that is not seen to have a market value, but also the ability to exploit crises as opportunities for more development, the ability “to feed itself on its own self-destruction” (ibid: 121).

Berman closes his section on Marx by stating that Marx’s gift lies not in providing answers, but rather in his questions, not pointing to a way out of the contradictions and ambiguities of modern life, but rather to a way deeper into them, seeing that “the way beyond the contradictions would have to lead through modernity, not out of it” (ibid: 129).

2.6.3 A Parisian perspective on early modernism with reference to Baudelaire

Using the writings of Baudelaire, who he views as “a first modernist” (ibid: 133), Berman argues for the “spiritual” notion of modernism and the “material” structures and processes of modernization to be seen as a unified whole. While Baudelaire has written much on modern art and life, his writings reflect the elusive nature of the concept of modernity. Berman points out that Baudelaire’s views on modernity are not consistent, but that they shift, for instance, between pastoral and anti-pastoral perspectives.

There are echoes of Bloch’s philosophy in Berman’s (1988: 135) quote from Baudelaire’s preface to *Salon of 1846* stating that the rationale for the establishment of “immense enterprises” by the bourgeoisie is “to realize *the idea of the future* in all its diverse forms – political, industrial, artistic” (my emphasis). This call for something truly new seems to be a pervasive theme in Baudelaire’s work. In his review of the Salon of 1845, he says: “Next year let’s hope that the true seekers may grant us the extraordinary delight of celebrating the advent of the *new!*” (emphasis in original) (ibid: 143).

The notion of the “*avant garde*” receives much attention in (postmodernist) debates around modernity, for instance the essays by Andreas Huyssen, Peter Bürger, Jean-Francois Lyotard and Achille Bonito Oliva contained in Docherty’s (1993) seminal reader on postmodernism. What the *avant garde* aims to deliver is “the shock of the new” (Docherty, 1993: 16), which is an impossibility and a manifestation of true individuality. The key problems highlighted in respect of the *avant garde* is firstly that anything that is new over time becomes conventional or a mere pretense at being new and secondly that only history can reveal whether something or someone was truly *avant garde*. This relates to Lyotard’s notion of future anteriority, which is also discussed by Lukács and Ferry (Docherty, 1993: 17).

Docherty (ibid) describes an attempt to grasp the new as a move away from scientific knowledge to what he considers a form of narrative knowledge. The postmodern prefers “the event of knowing” over “the fact of knowledge”, advocating a shift “from text to event” (Docherty, 1993: 25).

With reference to Baudelaire’s *The Painter of Modern Life*, which paints a pastoral picture of modern life as a spectacular fashion show, Berman (1988) highlights one of the pervasive features of the modern world, namely that it is a world of outward show. In a later essay, *Heroism*, Baudelaire’s portrayal of the “fashionable” modern life is no longer pastoral. Rather, it is presented as linked to the underworld, to dark desires and crime. In her study of Secunda, Paquet (2017) refers to Lefebvre’s identification of fashion as a tool used to dispense symbolic violence in so-called “terrorist societies”. As is to be expected in a modernist world, there is an inherent contradiction, in that citizens are both victims and perpetrators of this violence. Paquet (2017) shows how fashion becomes part of an ever-changing code of respectability embedded in the physical space of the town (see paragraph 3.7.4 in Chapter 3).

Baudelaire comes to the conclusion that the unique beauty of modern life is inseparable from its misery and sees the incessant modern pursuit of

progress as a source of eternal self-inflicted despair, like a scorpion stinging itself.

Berman introduces Baudelaire's view of modern heroism as being embedded in everyday life. Bailey and Bryson (2006: 179) are inspired to tell their "people tales" of Bournville, UK, by a similar view taken by Michel de Certeau, namely that "the ordinary person is the common and overlooked hero of urban life and that such heroes are an essential aspect of spatiality that has been absent in much planning theory" (ibid: 187).

Next, Berman moves to a discussion of two of Baudelaire's prose poems from the collection *Paris Spleen*, namely *The eyes of the poor* (1864) and *The Loss of a Halo* (1865) that were originally published as *feuilletons* in daily or weekly French newspapers. Baudelaire attempts through his prose poems to create "a new kind of language" suited to modern life thanks to both its flexibility and ruggedness. According to Baudelaire (as quoted in Berman, 1988: 148) it was the exploration of large cities and their infinite connections that inspired this form of writing. The physical urban space plays a central role in both the prose poems discussed by Berman.

In *The Eyes of the Poor* an encounter between a couple having dinner at a recently built Paris café and a poor family watching them from the street, confronts the reader with modern spaces (here the boulevard) where people can for the first time be intimate in public and where rich and poor are thrown into the same space. Berman's discussion of Baudelaire's *The Eyes of the Poor* show us how modern life opens up spaces and brings people together, forces us to confront, to react to, "the other". Berman's argument is called into question by the postmodernist acknowledgement of the ultimate unknowability of the "other", captured in debates around the notion of alterity (e.g., by Heidegger, Levinas and Ricour) (Winkler, 2016). Berman's analysis makes us of the dualities of modernity that postmodernism challenges (e.g., us/them, rich/poor, male/female) (Docherty, 1993).

The city's streets that are the backdrop to modernity's individualism and consumerism, but these same streets also become the site of protest towards a new order. At the same time, however, Berman (ibid: 165) highlights urban space as the primary space where new ways to "mask and mystify conflict" have been devised in the 20th century. He (ibid: 168) states that "[t]hus modernist architecture and planning created a modernized version of pastoral: a spatially and socially segmented world – people here, traffic there; work here, homes there; rich here, poor there..."

2.6.4 St. Petersburg – repressed modernism

The specific manifestation of modernism that developed under the repressive government in St. Petersburg gave rise to a rich literary tradition that also produced a number of enduring symbols of modernity, namely "the Little Man, the Superfluous Man, the Underground Man, the Vanguard, the Crystal Palace, and finally the Workers' Council or Soviet" (Berman, 1988: 175). Considering three different periods in the development of St. Petersburg (its establishment, the 1860s and the nineteenth century) Berman discusses a number of "brilliant explorations of modern life" inspired by the city. He traces the revolutionary history of St. Petersburg from the quashed efforts of the "Decembrists" in 1825, to the suppression of the peasant uprisings under Nicholas I, to the climax of the revolution on "Bloody Sunday" on 9 January 1905 and beyond.

The unique modernism that arises from underdevelopment and backwardness in St. Petersburg is, according to Berman (ibid) a warped modernism built on fantasies of modernity and intimacy with ghosts and mirages. This is apparent from the surreal quality of the work of the St. Petersburg writers.

As does Baudelaire, the St. Petersburg writers (such as Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Chernyshevsky, Biely and Mandelstam) create so-called "primal scenes" of modernity that are uniquely, sometimes even brutally, shaped by the urban setting they are located in. These scenes mostly depict the "little man" fighting for his rights in a unique form of presentation arising from

Petersburg's warped modernity, namely "the one-man demonstration in the streets" (ibid: 231). What is being addressed here, is one of the abiding questions of postmodern history, namely "the rethinking of the temporal and spatial categories within which social and political being is possible" (Docherty, 1993: xiv).

At first, these attempts are at best ludicrous and futile, but over time, although the "little man" remains the victim (most often of his own fears and insecurities) there is a growing boldness, as, however awkwardly, he thumbs his nose or sticks out his tongue at and asserts his place in the modern world. As Berman (ibid: 285) summarises: "somehow they find the strength to pull themselves up from the fatal depths of their inner Neva, and to see with luminous clarity what is real, what is healthy, what is right: stand up to the officer, throw the bomb in the river, save the man from the mob, fight for the right to the city, confront the state".

2.6.5. Modernism in New York

2.6.5.1 Robert Moses

In Part V of his book, Berman considers the modernism(s) of the city he grew up in, New York. He points out the symbolic value of construction in New York, stating that development projects in the city were not only meant to meet economic and political needs, but were at the same time intended "to demonstrate to the whole world what modern men can build and how modern life can be imagined and lived" (ibid: 289).

Berman reflects on the work of Robert Moses, who was responsible for the decimation of Berman's childhood neighbourhood, the Bronx, through the building of the Cross-Bronx Expressway from the late 1950s to the early 1960s.

Berman shows how the inherent contradictions of Moses's persona contributed to him gaining an almost mythical public image. Considered

“probably the greatest creator of symbolic forms in twentieth-century New York” (ibid: 289) he was a brilliant visionary, but at the same time obsessive and megalomaniac. Berman shows how Moses used the image that New Yorkers had of themselves as progressive to convince them of the need for the developments he advocated. He states that “Moses struck a chord that for more than a century has been vital to the sensibility of New Yorkers: our identification with progress, with renewal and reform, with the perpetual transformation of our world and ourselves – Harold Rosenberg called it ‘the tradition of the New’” (ibid: 295).

In the 1920s, before the building of the Cross-Bronx Expressway, Moses was responsible for the building of the Jones Beach State Park on Long Island just outside of New York City and of the Northern and Southern State Parkways which lead from Queens to Jones Beach and beyond, examples of what Berman calls “the modern pastoral” (ibid: 298). Berman points out, however, that the underpasses of the parkways were intentionally built too low to allow buses to clear them. “Moses used physical design as a means of social screening, screening out all those without wheels of their own” (ibid: 299).

In the 1930s, under the New Deal, Moses embarked on a massive programme of regenerating the city’s parks and developing new ones. Harnessing an army of thousands of workers, “[h]e carried on the overhauling of Central Park, and the construction of its reservoir and zoo, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week: floodlights shined and jackhammers reverberated all through the night” (ibid: 300). This not only had the effect of accelerating the work, but was also an example of the showmanship that characterises the modern age. During the same period, Moses also built “a system of highways, parkways and bridges that would weave the whole metropolitan area together” (ibid: 301).

It was after the war, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, the last phase in Moses’s career, that “things went horribly wrong”. Moses’s work in this phase spoke of a seeming indifference to the human quality of what he constructed –

“sheer quantity – of moving vehicles, tons of cement, dollars received and spent – seemed to be all that drove him now” (ibid: 308).

Berman identifies as a possible reason for Moses losing touch with the people of the city in his later years his view of “the public” as an abstract, faceless mass, rather than as real, individual people.

Berman acknowledges that Moses never intended the devastation caused by some of his projects and could not have foreseen the long-range negative impact that many of them had. “His public works, whatever we may think of them, were meant to add something to city life, not to subtract the city itself” (ibid 307).

Berman furthermore shows how the argument made by Robert Caro that the central Bronx would have survived on its own if left undisturbed by the likes of Moses is undermined by the pervasive ideal of young people to move “up and out” of the neighbourhood. According to Berman, this pressure to leave in order to progress in life “was breaking down hundreds of neighbourhoods like the Bronx, even where there was no Moses to lead the exodus and no Expressway to make it fast” (ibid: 327).

In his discussion of the contribution to New York made by Robert Moses, Berman shows how the dynamic modern economy, characterised by an endless creative drive, and the culture it gives rise to “annihilates everything that it creates – physical environments, social institutions, metaphysical ideas, artistic visions, moral values” (ibid: 288). In Berman’s discussion of the influence Moses had on New York, we again see Baudelaire’s image of a scorpion stinging itself. The obsolescence that unavoidably accompanies the modern hunger for constant renewal results in grief becoming endemic to modern life. This maelstrom of constant change, of modernities making way for new modernities, “forces us all to grapple with the question of what is essential, what is meaningful, what is real” (ibid: 288).

2.6.5.2 Jane Jacobs

An alternative to what Berman calls the modernity of the expressway, was found where the modernists living only a decade before would never have thought to look for it, namely in the ordinary life of the street. Berman views Jane Jacobs's book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* as a perfect expression of the modernism of the street of the 1960s.

Writing from a vantage point described as "modernist humanism" by Berman (ibid: 314), Jacobs uses the modern art genre of urban montage to present everyday life in her neighbourhood of West Village. Apart from changing the orientation of city planning to focus on the community, Berman also recognizes the crucial role Jacobs's book played in the development of modernism by conveying the message that the meaning modern people were looking for was to be found in their immediate surroundings, on the sidewalks and streets of their neighbourhoods. It is also one of the first female perspectives on the city.

Jacobs describes the vibrant, bustling diversity of urban life, which Berman has shown to be one of the oldest themes in modern culture. This type of street, however, came under threat from post-World War I architects and planners, of whom Le Corbusier was the poster child. This anti-street modernism precipitated strongly in the large scale reconstruction that followed World War II. Now, streets were being abandoned in favour of highways that linked dormitory suburbs to industrial parks and shopping centres. In fact, the life of the street that Jacobs describes was regarded as disorderly and obsolete, not reconcilable with the new modernity. Jacobs, however, disagrees, claiming that in the "old city" (i.e., the modern city of the nineteenth century) the seeming disorder is underpinned by a "marvellous order" (ibid: 317) that nourishes the experience and values of modernity. This includes the freedom, perpetual change, intense communion and face-to-face interaction characteristic of modern life. Therefore, while it may sound paradoxical, "for the sake of the modern, we must preserve the old and resist the new" (ibid: 318).

Berman criticises Jacobs for the fact that the city she presents is essentially a heterosexual world and, furthermore, represents “the city before the blacks got there” (ibid: 324). He suspects that she, like many modernists, “moves in a twilight zone where the line between the richest and most complex modernism and the rankest bad faith of modernist anti-modernism is very thin and elusive, if indeed there is a line at all” (ibid: 324). Yet Berman does not believe that these criticisms and suspicions are sufficient to nullify Jacobs’s claims about the value of the vibrant urbanity of the “old city” she espouses.

2.6.5.3 Modernism and the past

Berman shows that a significant change relating to the role of the past came about in the early 1970s when the economic boom that followed World War II finally came to an end. The modernity of the 1960s was that of an annihilation of the past to make space for the new, or as the literary critic Paul de Man saw it, “to wilfully forget the past in order to achieve or create anything in the present” (ibid: 331). Under the economic constraints of the 1970s, however, this approach was unaffordable. Therefore “the modernists of the 1970s were forced to find themselves by remembering” (ibid: 332).

Berman is at pains to explain that when modernists engage with the past, with their childhood homes, it is not mere sentimentalism. Rather, it is “to bring to bear on their past the selves they have become in the present, to bring into those old homes visions and values that may clash radically with them and maybe to re-enact the very tragic struggles that drove them from their homes in the first place” (ibid: 333).

Berman points out that the past that modernists yearn to grasp, is a past that is disintegrating and elusive. In trying to grasp it, we “find ourselves embracing ghosts” (ibid: 333). Modernists, he argues, “can never be done with the past: they must go on forever haunted by it, digging up its ghosts, recreating it even as they remake their world and themselves” (ibid: 346).

Taking into account the fact that our relationship with the past is at the same time antagonistic and intimate, this is not an easy process.

Rejecting the notion of having to relinquish an ethnic identity (being Jewish, black, Italian, etc.) as was thought in the 1960s, the modernism of the 1970s, Berman argues, was one that saw “the rehabilitation of ethnic memory and history as a vital part of personal identity”, of which he views Maxine Hong Kingston’s book *Woman Warrior* (1976) as an excellent example (ibid: 333).

Apart from rehabilitating ethnic memory, another theme of 1970s modernism highlighted by Berman is that of recycling, “finding new meanings and potentialities in the old things and forms of life” (ibid: 337). He discusses this using an example of urban recycling, namely that of the SoHo neighbourhood in lower Manhattan.

Berman shares how the neighbourhood was saved from being demolished for yet another Robert Moses expressway. The affordable loft space that became available in this way saw an influx of thousands of artists in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The area was thus turned into a leading art producing centre, with a special appeal thanks to the dialectic between two modernities, that of the nineteenth century streetscapes and the twentieth century art produced and displayed in it. However, as the SoHo district grew in popularity, property values and rent increased, driving out “many artists who could not hope to afford the prices that their presence helped create” (ibid: 338).

The essay ends with a proposal by Berman for generating a dialogue with his own past through the destroyed neighbourhood of the Bronx where he grew up. Drawing on the media of “earthworks” or “earth art” and the historical mural, Berman proposes the development of a massive mural depicting the past of the neighbourhood on the retaining walls running alongside the Cross-Bronx Expressway. Where the road runs or on above ground level, the receding walls will afford the driver a view of the present day ruin of the Bronx to alternate with the scenes of its past depicted on the mural.

Finally, Berman shows how the South Bronx is being reclaimed as a neighbourhood for a mostly Puerto Rican immigrant community in a joint effort between the government and the community members. A brightly painted steel sculpture several stories high by Rafael Ferrer, with the title of *Puerto Rican Sun* that suggests two palm trees leaning together in an arch, serves as a symbol of and in the space. To Berman, “it symbolizes the ways, different but perhaps equally valid ways, in which the people of the South Bronx, working within their new forms, can bring the world to life” (ibid: 345).

For Berman (ibid: 345), to be modern “is to experience personal and social life as a maelstrom, to find one's world and oneself in perpetual disintegration and renewal, trouble and anguish, ambiguity and contradiction: to be part of a universe in which all that is solid melts into air”.

2.7 APARTHEID AND MODERNITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.7.1 Introduction

Apartheid is the term used to describe the system of social engineering based on race that was institutionalised in South Africa after the National Party won the elections in 1948 (Posel, 2011) and remained as such until the country had its first democratic elections in April 1994. Berman (1988) shows different manifestations of modernity in Paris, St. Petersburg and New York. South Africa similarly had a unique experience of modernity, one that cannot be understood without also gaining an understanding of the state ideology of Apartheid which, much like the modernist world view, pervaded every aspect of life in South Africa in the period following World War II.

A vast body of literature exists on South Africa's Apartheid past and the aftermath thereof. These include the comprehensive works by Posel (2011), Welsh (2009), SADET (2006 & 2004), Gilliom (2003), Thompson (1995), Sparks (1990), and Wilson and Thompson (1971).

A very extensive body of work also addresses specific aspects of Apartheid, such as education, labour and the economy and, most often, aspects of the struggle against Apartheid. The latter category includes a large number of biographies of role players in that struggle. Therefore, rather than the/a story of Apartheid, there are many and, as Posel, 2011 points out, sometimes incongruous, stories about Apartheid. For purposes of this study, I will provide a short overview of Apartheid as a unique manifestation of modernism, focusing in particular on its spatial effects.

2.7.2 Ideological and economic drivers of Apartheid

Although race had long been regulated in colonial and modern Western states (Davies, 1981; Posel, 2011; Mabin & Oranje, 2014), the Apartheid state in 1948 went further by explicitly adopting a system of systematic legal racial exclusion and segregation that permeated every facet of life.

The reasons for Apartheid can be classified as ideological on the one hand, and economic on the other. In terms of ideology, the main driving force behind Apartheid was Afrikaner Christian nationalism. Strongly religious, the majority of Afrikaners⁹ believed that God created white and black people different and that miscegenation was therefore sacrilegious. They furthermore saw themselves as God's chosen people and therefore superior to all other races (Gilliomee, 2003). Welsh (2009), Sparks (1990) and Davies (1981) point out that Afrikaner self-identity was influenced by value systems inherited from Europe, especially the German nationalist romanticism, which formed attitudes towards other population groups and their role in the social system (e.g., based on the German "Rassenkunde" (Gilliomee, 2003)). Black people were seen not only as a threat to the racial purity of the Afrikaner, but also, because they were deemed inherently criminal, as a threat to the safety of whites. It was this fear of the "swart gevaar" (black danger) that drove the

⁹ In his comprehensive biography of the Afrikaner nation, Gilliomee (2003) describes the Afrikaners as descendants of a group of immigrants from Europe who came to the Dutch East India Company's settlement at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652. Enlisted as sailors or soldiers, these settlers later became free burghers who made a living from farming in the Cape and later dispersed over the whole of South Africa. The term "Afrikaner" came to be reserved for white Afrikaans speakers in the mid-twentieth century.

violent manner in which Apartheid was enforced and any resistance suppressed. This became the full-time occupation of an enlarged police force (with links to the army), the Reserve Police and also the Bureau of State Security (Posel, 2011; Welsh, 2009; Thompson, 1995; Sparks, 1990).

It is important to note that, while the majority of Afrikaners were seen to support Apartheid (as indicated by the percentage of the Afrikaners who voted for the National Party from 1948 to the early 1990s), there were a number of important exceptions. Prominent Afrikaner opponents to Apartheid included Bram Fischer, Alex Boraine, Hein Grosskopf and Beyers Naudé, who was a minister in the Afrikaans Dutch Reformed Church and based his activism in the struggle against Apartheid on his Christian faith (Ryan, 2005; Clingman, 2005; Boraine, 2000; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2000). Another Afrikaner who came from a theological background was Carl Niehaus, who became the ANC spokesperson after the first democratic elections in 1994 (SA History Online, undated). Afrikaner voices opposing apartheid included artists, notably the so-called *Sestigers* (“Sixtyers” or artists of the 1960s), among whom were the likes of Breyten Breytenbach, André P. Brink, Jan Rabie and Etienne Leroux (McDonald, 2008). A number of Afrikaans journalists, of whom the best known is probably Max du Preez, former editor of the *Vrye Weekblad* also actively and publicly opposed apartheid (Du Preez, 2003).

From an economic perspective, Apartheid was designed to ensure the economic advancement and well-being of white South Africans and in particular the Afrikaner. A major project of Apartheid was to ensure the economic upliftment of the so-called “poor whites” (Posel, 2011; Sparks, 1990). In the mid-1950s there was a renewed drive to reserve certain categories of work for white people. This led to African workers by the end of the 1950s not being allowed to do skilled work in many sectors. Furthermore, no black (African, Indian or Coloured¹⁰) worker was allowed to be in a position

¹⁰ The racial classification of “Coloured” has its origins in the Population Registration Act of 1950. While “Coloured” broadly denoted someone of mixed race (i.e. a mix between the “pure” white and black African (“native”) races), the actual classification of people into this category was done by way

of authority over a white worker. Whites also enjoyed higher wage rates than black workers for similar work (Davies, 1981; Posel, 2011).

Through the efforts of the Broederbond, a powerful and later secret society dedicated to promoting Afrikaner interests, the public service was “colonised” with white Afrikaners, and employment for Afrikaners was created on a massive scale (Posel, 2011; Welsh, 2009; Gilliomee, 2003; Wilson & Thompson, 1971).

While South Africa enjoyed sustained economic growth over the two decades from 1950 to 1970, Posel (2011) argues that the growth rate was not impressive when compared with other developing countries. In particular, economic growth was stifled by the skills shortage resulting from job reservation for whites and poor quality education for blacks. Low wages for black people and limited access to technology, as well as constraints on black people regarding trade and the establishment of industrial undertakings, also meant that the domestic consumer market remained underdeveloped. Apartheid’s economic engineering project resulted in deepening economic inequalities along racial lines by imposing structural poverty on blacks (Posel, 2011; Davies, 1981).

The vast numbers of black people that moved into the cities as labour in white-owned industries soon after the National Party, led by DF Malan, came to power in 1948 in turn threatened, through sheer force of numbers, white supremacy. This tension between the segregationist principle of Apartheid and the need for black labour, referred to by Posel as Apartheid’s “demographic conundrum” (ibid: 324) is also highlighted by Welsh (2009) and Wilson and Thompson (1971).

of a value judgement taking into account physical features as well as language, employment, socio-economic status and lifestyle.

2.7.3 Apartheid and modernism

Apartheid and modernism are inextricably intertwined (Mabin & Oranje, 2014; Sparks, 2011; Posel, 2011; Parnell & Mabin, 1995). The first two decades of Apartheid, in particular, were characterised by the large scale state interventionism that was a feature of western capitalist modernism. This was made possible by the global economic upswing that followed the World War II (Posel, 2011). The modernist preoccupation with empirical science manifested during Apartheid in an obsessive (racial) classification (through the Population Registration Act), ordering (especially through separate areas for African, coloured, Indian and white South Africans) and measuring (meticulous records were kept, for instance of the movement of black people into and out of towns and townships) (Posel, 2011; Welsh, 2009; Mabin & Smith, 1997; Sparks, 1990)

This obsession with surveillance and control is referred to by Posel (2011: 345) as “Apartheid’s modernist dementia”.

Under Apartheid, the modernist ideal of improving society (see Berman, 1988) manifested in a welfarist inclination (Posel, 2011). Parnell and Mabin (1995) argue that modernisation of the western world was accompanied by a drive towards improving urban living standards. According to them (*ibid*), racial residential segregation should not be considered from a narrow racial focus, but should also take into account finer processes and forces that contributed to the shape of South African urban spaces. These include “the rise of local government and the influence of modernism” (Parnell & Mabin, 1995: 48). A focus on interventionist activity to solve urban problems, of which practical examples are sewerage and public housing, was not unique to South Africa, but was in fact an international development linked to the modern movement.

The implementation of separate “native housing” projects was often presented as sincere attempts at improving the living conditions of black citizens (Mabin & Oranje, 2014; Posel, 2011; Japha, 1998). This “benevolent paternalism” (Sparks, 2014) became a pervasive characteristic of Apartheid rule. A

concern for the welfare of the black population was used as an excuse to interfere in even the most intimate aspects of people's lives. An example is the application of two of the earliest Apartheid laws, namely the Immorality Act of 1949 and the Mixed Marriages Act of 1950.

Linked to the pretense of benevolence by the Apartheid government, was a kind of pseudo-democracy. The implementation of Apartheid was governed by laws that had been passed in parliament, lending legitimacy to even obviously unjust actions such as forced removals (Posel, 2011; Welsh, 2009; Sparks, 1990). To exclude black people from the political arena while maintaining the pretence of a democratic ethos, the South African Indian Council and the Coloured Representative Council were established in the mid-1960s under the Separate Representation of Voters Act (1956) (Posel, 2011).

Parnell and Mabin (1995) highlight the critical coincidence of South African urban and regional planning emerging at the height of the modern movement in planning and architecture and of the call for segregation on South African urban centres. These two powerful forces came together during and after World War II amidst massive growth in population and production in cities. As such, there is value in an understanding of the interwoven nature of the construct of racial categories and "the need for expanded and better coordinated planning" as a means to address urban problems (ibid: 56).

The British urban and regional planning approach of developing communities separated by green belts and of planning different sites for residential and employment uses, was easily translated into separate racially differentiated zones in the South African context (see the illustration of the "Apartheid city" in figure 11 on page 80 below) (Parnell & Mabin, 1995). Forced removals were also by no means a South African invention. Parnell and Mabin (1995) refer to Patrick Abercrombie's plan to decentralise Greater London that entailed forcing people to relocate from Central London to settlements on the periphery of the city. However, what distinguished the practice of forced removals in the South African context was its racial focus. Parnell and Mabin (ibid) highlight the contradictions inherent in modernism that are also

highlighted by Berman (1988). For instance, there is a contradiction between the commitment to improving the quality of life in urban centres and individual and collective suffering and distress caused by interventions to achieve this. Both Apartheid, and the opposing ANC, made use of what Parnell & Mabin (1995: 60) call the “general modernist means” of interventions by a large and powerful state.

The pervasive commodification of all aspects of life that emerged as a key trait of modernity, was apparent under Apartheid. While it could be argued that white workers were also mere commodities for the large corporations, it was particularly the black workers who were dehumanised and exploited as a source of cheap labour. With the improvement in quality of life of the white population under Apartheid came a growing consumerism. Consumerism soon became a basis for sense of self and identity for South Africans across ethnic divides (Posel, 2011).

The trend of a more “open” society thanks to the blurring of class lines and diffusion of lines of authority that accompanied modernism and capitalism elsewhere in the world was notably absent in Apartheid South Africa. Also, the majority of black South Africans did not experience the mobility (social, economic and physical) that characterised modernism in the Western world. In fact, for blacks, the Apartheid years saw a reduction rather than an increase in mobility (Davies, 1981).

Parnell and Crankshaw (2015) caution, as did Parnell and Mabin (1995) twenty years earlier, against a view of modernism that focuses monolithically on modernism as the root cause of dysfunctionality and structural inequality in contemporary cities. According to these authors, such a narrow understanding of modernism is characteristic of accounts from the global south, while accounts of modernism in the north tend to present a more balanced view, highlighting not only the negative impact of modernism, but also positive contributions, such as advances in medicine and engineering.

2.7.4 Spatial implications of Apartheid

The framework for the establishment of “racialised geographies” (Posel, 2011: 329) in South Africa started with the proclamation of the Land Act in 1913 and the Natives (Urban Areas) Act in 1923. Shortly after the National Party came into power in 1948, two laws were promulgated in 1950 that would create the legal framework for a system of racially demarcated living spaces. These were the Group Areas Act and the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act (Posel, 2011; Davies, 1981). This was a response to the fact that black people were found in the 1946 census to be the majority in all South African cities. Furthermore, their numbers were growing much faster than that of whites (Mabin & Smit, 1997).

Apartheid had spatial implications at the national, city/town and neighbourhood level. Nationally, Apartheid resulted in white towns and cities with black reserves, or later self-governing areas, and still later independent homelands/Bantustans in the rural hinterland. At the level of individual cities and towns, these centres were seen as white areas where black people were “permitted” to stay for varying lengths of time. The structure of cities and towns progressed from what Davies (1981) calls the “segregation city” to the “Apartheid city” following the passing of the Group Areas Act in 1950. The primary feature of the Apartheid city was spatio-racial segregation achieved mainly through the creation of black townships on the periphery of white urban centres. At the neighbourhood level, all public buildings and amenities, including public transport, were racially segregated in terms of the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953.

2.7.4.1 *The Apartheid city*

The narrative that informed the spatial organization of the Apartheid city, as proposed by Davies (1981) was that racial and cultural differences were incompatible and that harmonious co-existence between different ethnic groups could only be achieved by reducing to a minimum the points of contact between them, i.e., through spatial segregation.

In terms of the Group Areas Act, plans were approved by the Group Areas Board and the responsible minister for all South African cities and towns (Davies, 1981). Through the mechanisms of retrospective planning and radical zoning, Apartheid cities and towns emerged in line with these plans. The Apartheid city was highly structured into different quarters according to race as indicated in figure 11 below. Different group areas were separated by physical barriers or buffer zones. Transport routes were planned in such a manner that, where possible, residents of different group areas did not have to move through areas designated for other groups (Davies, 1981).

In response to a critical shortage of urban housing for blacks, mass public housing projects were undertaken in the implementation of group areas. Development of group areas and housing schemes for blacks usually took place on low-value land located on the periphery, far from the CBD, demanding higher transport costs and more effort of residents of these areas, thereby translating spatial disadvantage into social and economic disadvantage (Davies, 1981). Furthermore, black residential areas typically have a much higher density and cover a smaller land area than the white residential areas (Davies, 1981). "Black areas" were treated as undesirable, but necessary areas, rather than as homes to communities (Mabin & Oranje, 2014).

Davies (1981: 71) states that the "spatial clarity" of the Apartheid city not only reflected the Apartheid social relations, but also perpetuated those relations.

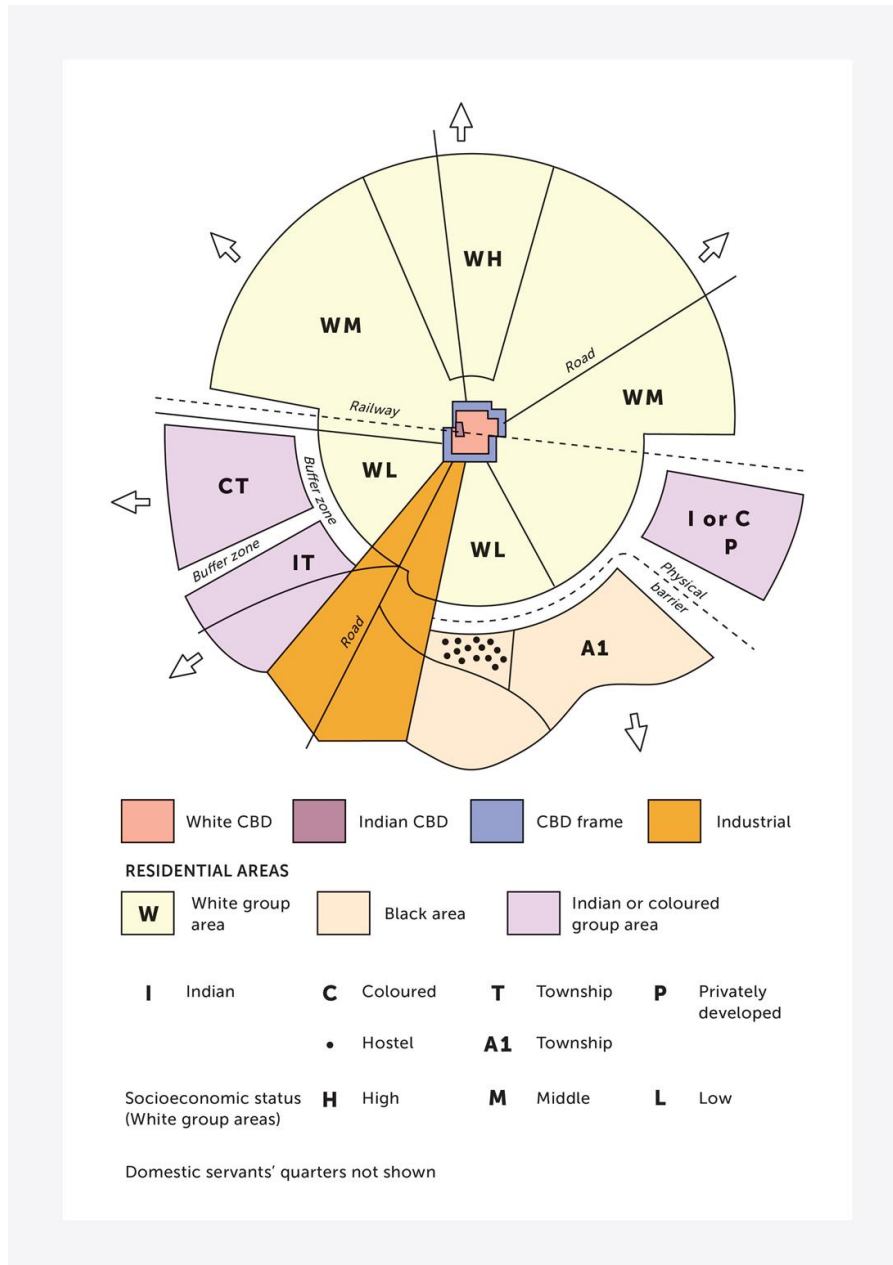


Figure 11: The Apartheid city model

Source: Davies, 1981

Posel (2011) points out that Apartheid simultaneously produced spaces of racial segregation (e.g., in the form of separate residential areas, schools, clinics, community halls, etc., for black people) and of interracial contact (e.g., mines, factories, or white homes where black women worked as domestic workers). Domestic service was a specific example of the complexities brought about by Apartheid – dependency, even intimacy, co-existed with totalitarian power relations.

Through these “geographies of distance and proximity” Apartheid institutionalised “an intimacy of strangers” characterised by ignorance, fear and temptation (Posel, 2011: 329). However, it was also in these regulated spaces of interaction between races that allegiances would form that would eventually contribute to the demise of Apartheid.

2.7.4.2 Planning before, during, and after Apartheid

From the 1920s, a small group of architects, land surveyors, engineers and municipal health officials called for legislation and town plans to curb uncontrolled development in the larger cities in South Africa. This trend was influenced by development in America, the UK and the British colonies, especially after World War One.

Mabin and Oranje (2014) argue that, while planning legislation for the state meant ensuring and maintaining racial segregation and restricting uncontrolled development, role players from the different professions that participated in the newly formed urban and regional planning associations each had their own aspirations. For the land surveyors, urban and regional planning meant large scale assignments and work; for the older architects and engineers it meant a way to ensure better functioning and more beautiful settlements, and for the young architects who saw themselves as modernist heroes, it held the promise of realising their utopian ideals of what cities could become (Mabin & Oranje, 2014).

A group of these younger architects, known as the Transvaal Group, were associated with the Wits School of Architecture and played a leading role in an alignment called the South African Modern Movement. Their leader, Rex Martienssen, and another member, Norman Hanson, were known for their world-class designs of modernist buildings. Both Martienssen and Hanson were strongly influenced by Le Corbusier (Mabin & Oranje, 2014; Japha, 1998). A strong interest in modernism was also developing at the school of

architecture at the University of Cape Town, led by Leslie Thornton White (Mabin & Oranje, 2014).

In 1938, a group of fourth-year students at the Wits school including Kurt Jonas, Roy Kantorowich and Paul Connell produced a thesis with “native housing” as its topic, which was published and favourably reviewed (Mabin & Oranje, 2014; Japha, 1998). Drawing inspiration from Le Corbusier’s *Ville Radieuse*, the thesis proposed a design for a satellite town of 20 000 people, which included various community facilities. This “Model Native Township” showed “genuine, albeit paternalistic, concern for “the ‘natives’” for whom the ‘township’ was designed” (Mabin & Oranje, 2014). Mabin and Smit (1997: 202) remark on the typically modern ambiguities of the congress, such as the tension between the “frequent pleas for radical social change” and the “acceptance of the prevailing order of segregation”.

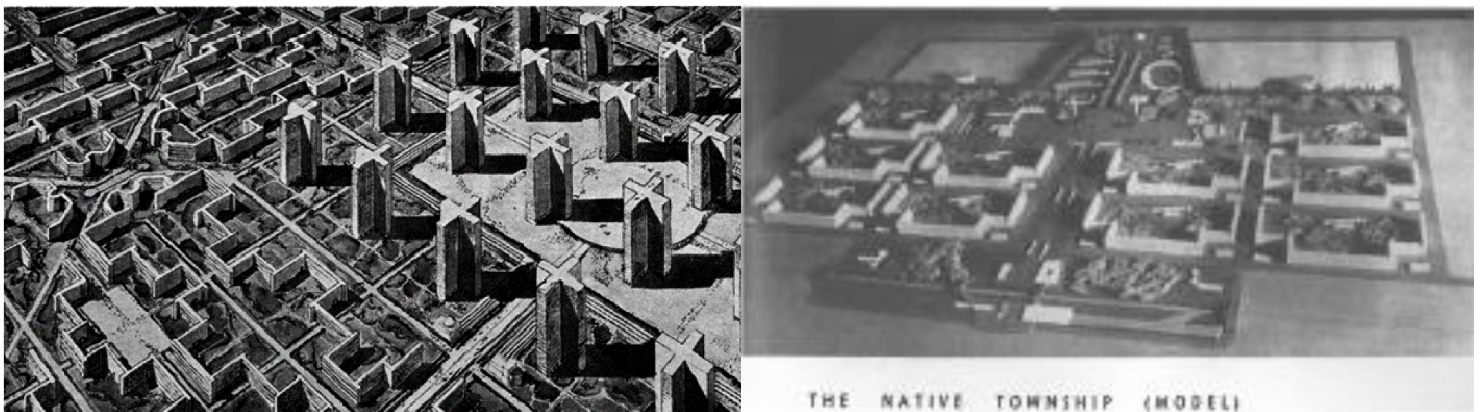


Figure 12: Le Corbusier’s *Ville Radieuse* and the “Model Native Township” displayed at the 1938 exhibition

Source: Zahiri *et al*, 2017; Mabin & Oranje, 2014

Jonas and his fellow students subsequently organized the 1938 Town Planning Exhibition and Congress in Escom House, a new modern building in the Johannesburg CBD. Students from the Cape Town school were invited to participate. The exhibition consisted of international work (mostly that of Le Corbusier), the “Model Native Township” housing proposal and a proposed city redevelopment scheme for Cape Town. The accompanying congress drew full houses on each of the three evenings it ran (Mabin & Oranje, 2014; Japha, 1998).

Some of the members of the group involved in the 1938 exhibition and congress saw architecture (and its latest focus, urban and regional planning) as a social science and, holding strong Marxist convictions, dreamt of a classless society (Mabin & Oranje, 2014). Mabin & Oranje (2014: 106) argue that the exhibition was part of “the struggle for the soul of planning in an era that was ripe for radical departures from set paths, and in which there was a belief that planning could affect these”. They (ibid) also express the view, however, that the exhibition was the point at which the very fruitful engagement of architecture with urban and regional planning started to taper off and that it signalled “the fading of a crucial and deeply missed utopian strain in planning in the country”. Mabin & Oranje (2014) state that the South African planning profession never hosted a public exhibition related to planning again (even after 1994) and that, as urban and regional planning became a distinct profession, it lost the creative and critical dynamism that characterised the 1938 exhibition.

Japha (1998) reports that in 1943 an exhibition with the theme of Rebuilding South Africa was sponsored by the Transvaal Provincial Institute and put together in collaboration with the Witwatersrand School. The exhibition, in which Norman Hanson played a major role, attempted to propose new planning ideas that reflected a more realistic engagement with South African problems, which included the housing crisis. Following an earlier rejection of Le Corbusier because of suspicions that his work displayed fascist tendencies, the ideas put forward at the exhibition were inspired most notably by the work of Lewis Mumford and Walter Gropius.

Gropius is known for his role in establishing the Bauhaus school of architectural design in the 1920s about which he wrote a spellbinding and poetic treatise titled *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus* (published in English in 1965). Inspired by the possibilities held by new materials such as concrete, steel and glass (as opposed to masonry), Gropius called for a break from the heaviness, axial symmetry and ornamentalism of the old building styles. Gropius strongly advocated standardisation, which for him meant the use of so-called “type-forms”, and mass production for the “enormous

economies” he believed would result from it. Although he rejects the “rules”, such as symmetry, associated with the old building styles, Gropius imposes new rules in the form of norms and standards and the “deliberate restriction to certain basic forms used repetitively” (Gropius, 1965: 85). These restrictions, he argues, are founded on “a most thorough and conscientious series of investigations” (ibid: 111).

His commitment to a scientific, almost mathematical approach, can be seen from figure 13 below in which he develops a proposal meant to solve the problems of noise and a lack of light and space in urban centres. The proposal consists of a system of rows of apartment blocks. In each consecutive row the number of blocks decrease, but the height of the buildings increase.

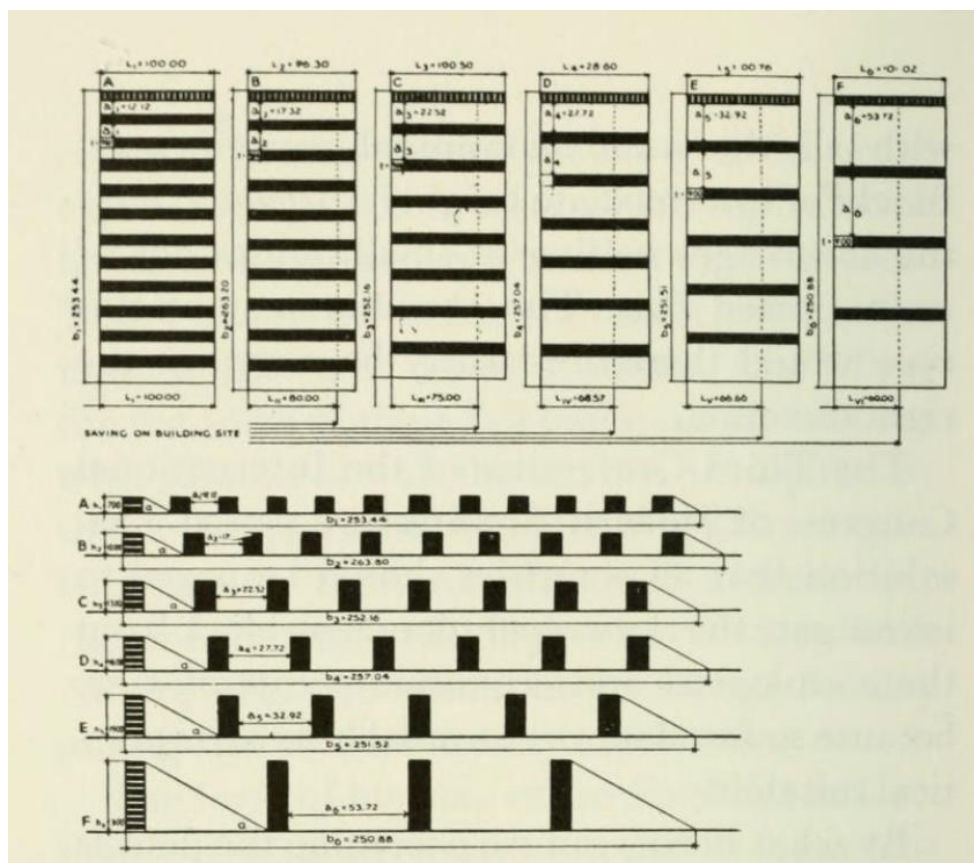


Figure 13: Walter Gropius's plan for a development consisting of rows of apartment blocks of different heights

Source: Gropius, 1965

For Gropius, urban and regional planning is “the most burning and baffling problem of all” (ibid: 99) and he spends much time considering what the best way would be to house “the bulk of the population” (e.g., houses with gardens, blocks of flats of medium height, or buildings of 8-12 storeys). Gropius (ibid: 110) sees the role of the architect/planner as providing a solutions to the “chaotic disorganization” and “noxious anarchy” that reign in the towns and cities of his time. The aim should be spacious and sunny cities, with residential, commercial and industrial districts separated from each other by transport routes. Bringing town and country closer together should be the goal of the modern town planner (Gropius, 1965).

Due to his own opposition to the Corbusian variant of urbanism, Mumford became a natural reference for South African architects following their disenchantment with Le Corbusier. Mumford’s regionalism, which was strongly related to Howard’s Garden City and Perry’s neighbourhood unit, was particularly appealing. Japha (1998: 428) argues that the fact that Mumford’s seminal book *The Culture of Cities* advocated in some respects for the continuation of modernist practice “must have seemed to offer the possibilities of both continuity and regeneration; the recovery of ‘authentic modernism’ rather than its loss”. In line with Mumford’s regionalism, the proposed unit of spatial organization of residential areas became the neighbourhood unit (Japha, 1998).

The support for a science-based approach to architectural practice remained strong. The 1943 exhibition suggested that “the scientific status of the discipline rested not only on its command of technical issues, but on a design method in which the act of design would be directed by objective analyses from the disciplines of economics, sociology and psychology” (Japha, 1998: 429).

In the paper he presented at the conference that was held alongside the 1943 exhibition, Hanson indicated an awareness of the danger of the new planning model being used to promote economic inequality, something he argued vociferously against.

After the 1943 exhibition, Hanson was appointed to serve on the National Housing Council in 1944 and on the National Housing and Planning Commission (NHPC) the year thereafter. At first, the NHPC focused on providing housing for ex-servicemen, and not on native housing (Japha, 1998).

Also in 1944, the Social and Economic Planning Council (SEPC), a body set up by the then Prime Minister, Jan Smuts, to advise the cabinet, published a report on "Regional and Town Planning", known as Report No. 5 (Mabin & Smith, 1997; Oranje & Merrifield, 2010). Drawing on British reports, the SEPC proposed that planned neighbourhoods, separated from other neighbourhoods by green belts consisting of parkland and cultivated land, should be the principle for developing new and reviewing existing townships (Mabin and Smit, 1997).

In October 1947, the Natural Resources Development Council (NRDC) was established by the United Party government under Jan Smuts. Created with wide potential planning powers, this regional body first focused on the development of towns in the new gold fields in the northwestern Free State, the eastern Transvaal highveld and the western Transvaal. The NRDC had powers to control other planning bodies and had to approve all development in "controlled areas" such as the new gold fields (Mabin & Smit, 1997).

Meanwhile, against the backdrop of the fast developing field of housing research, the Department of Commerce and Industry had established a Building Research Unit (which would later become the NBRI) under which an architectural division had been created by 1946. The brief of this division was to conduct housing field experiments for the NHPC in collaboration with the universities and the Institute of South African Architects (ISAA). Paul Connell, who was one of the authors of the 1938 thesis, was appointed as the Architectural Research Officer (Japha, 1998).

In typical modernist vein, the focus of the research became the scientific determination of minimum space and social requirements – which by 1947 had turned into the issue of standards. The CSIR, within which the NBRI was situated, was appointed to coordinate a major research project on housing standards. The interim reports of the main committee and various subcommittees, on which members of the South African Modern Movement were well represented, were published in 1949. Two main aims were addressed, namely to “develop the basis for a *non-racial*, scientific minimum standard of space for housing in South Africa” (my emphasis) and to “enshrine the neighbourhood planning concepts of the 1943 exhibition in local housing practice” (Japha, 1998: 431). These interim reports finally recommended further research into specific aspects of providing future housing in accordance with the proposed standards.

Following the National Party’s election victory in 1948, the NBRI established a number of new committees to implement the recommendation for further research made in the interim reports. According to Japha (1998: 432), “[t]hese new committees developed fully the elements of the ‘native township’ of the Apartheid state, as applied for the first time in Witbank and KwaThema.” The final phase of the research was conducted concurrently with the development of an increasingly coherent urban ‘native’ policy by the newly elected government. The policy clearly linked an urban housing programme to the successful implementation of Apartheid (Japha, 1998).

The paternalistic, welfarist inclinations of the Apartheid government are clear from a statement by Verwoerd, then Minister of Native Affairs, and Eiselen, the Secretary for Native Affairs, quoted by Japha (1998: 432): “This scheme to house all workers under control, co-ordinated with the control of influx, which must be made effective by means of the labour bureaux . . . will radically improve the conditions of the Native populations of the towns”. The architectural profession’s housing research was appropriated to serve these political ideals as a matter of course (Japha, 1998). Referring to a statement issued by the chief planner of the Natural Resources Development Council (NRDC) in 1952, Mabin and Smit (1997) similarly report that, for many

planners there was no clear distinction between planning for Apartheid and other aspects of urban planning. The reconstructionist vision held by planners in the mid-forties had therefore been perverted to serve the ends of the new government (Mabin & Oranje, 2014).

Re-engineering the provision of African housing in such a manner that financial losses were eliminated became a focus of the National Party. This resulted in “an increasingly technicist practice” driven by an almost exclusive focus on “the rationalization of the individual house as the unit of production” (Japha, 1998: 435). Mabin and Smit (1997) identify the roots of technicist planning much earlier, with the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923, which distinguished between planning for so-called “locations” and planning at the national scale. This, they (ibid: 199) argue, “underlay the division of planning as a technical exercise from the social reformist vision that had inspired its founders internationally and its apostles in South Africa”.

As a decision on standards was required before any cost calculations could be made, the interim reports submitted in 1949 were reviewed by a joint committee of the Department of Native Affairs, the NHPC and the NBRI. The outcome of the review was that a drastically reduced set of standards would be made racially applicable (Japha, 1998).

The adopted standards were published as *Minimum Standards of Accommodation for Non-Europeans* in 1951. They became the template for all subsequent state housing programmes, including the design for the typical NE 51 series of township houses (Japha, 1998).

A significant reduction in the cost of township housing was indeed achieved, with costs decreasing by more than 25% between 1944 and 1954, in spite of inflation. Japha (1998) points out, however, that this was mainly due to the replacement of white artisans (whose jobs were previously protected by law) with low-earning black workers (Japha, 1998). Township housing provision increased significantly after the 1950s. Mabin and Smit (1997) cite the example of the provision of township housing in Johannesburg: From an

average of 800 houses per year before 1950, the figure went up to an average of 4 000 houses per year thereafter. In 1957/8, the figure peaked at 11 074 houses per year.

The process of arriving at the specific manifestation of “native housing” in South Africa is described by Japha (1998: 437) as a “quintessential modernist project”, due to the modernist imperatives it displays of “industrialisation and welfare [and] the project to regulate society through art and science”.

During the 1950s and 1960s, white municipalities were responsible for managing and controlling black townships. To address tensions developing between some municipalities and the central government over the implementation of Apartheid policies, government moved to centrally control all black townships. Bantu Affairs Administration Boards were established in the early 1970s to fulfil this function, among others. The drive towards centralisation also led to the establishment of a national Department of Planning in the mid-1960s to succeed the Natural Resources Development Council (NRDC) (Mabin & Smit, 1997).

As for the development of urban and regional planning as a profession in South Africa, the economic growth in the country led to a growing demand for planners who saw themselves as “technicist-built-environment professionals” (Mabin & Smit, 1997: 208) and saw the establishment of planning schools at seven universities from 1965. At four of these, no black students were allowed. The other three only recruited black students (who required permits to study there) from the end of the 1970s. “Planning thus remained in white hands in a country whose urban population was largely and increasingly black” (Mabin & Smit, 1997: 208). Furthermore, the profession remained concerned largely with private development in the white areas it helped define as such.

An important turning point for the planning profession was the establishment of the Tricameral Parliament to include coloured and Indian representation in 1983. The racial division of the three houses of parliament that was thus

created caused considerable confusion and fragmentation. Nonetheless, a substantial amount of planning was undertaken by these administrations, as well as by the so-called independent homelands, and black planners were engaged in significant numbers to undertake this work. Thus, in spite of these structures being regarded as illegitimate creations of the Apartheid government, they resulted in the planning profession for the first time including a black proportion (Mabin & Smit, 1997).

Mabin & Smit (1997) show, however, that progressive planners, including practitioners, academics and students, had been providing technical support to the so-called “civics” (civic organizations that formed in townships across the country around issues such as rent and transport from the late 1970s). In the mid-1980s this support became more structured in the form of several non-government organizations such as Planact, the Built Environment Support Group and the Development Action Group. A South African Institute of Town and Regional Planners conference in 1985 became the first platform for planners to openly debate political issues since the 1930s. The conference revealed that a significant number of planning practitioners had become disillusioned with Apartheid planning.

A number of these “progressive” planners started to construe a vision of a reconstructed urban South Africa after the fall of Apartheid. This took place partly in discussion with the ANC (which was still banned at the time) in Zimbabwe and elsewhere (Mabin & Smit, 1997).

South African planning was finally freed from the imperative of racially divided space with the removal of a range of discriminatory laws through the promulgation of the Abolition of Racially Based Land Measures Act, no 208 of 1991. Through the newly established Independent Development Trust, public funds were used to deliver services to 100 000 sites, specifically for the “poorest of the poor”. Furthermore, community participation was made a prerequisite for the allocation of these funds. Similarly, planning processes at all levels were being opened up to wider participation and urban policy became the subject of national debate. In 1996, a new South African Planning

Institution was formed by merging the South African Institute of Town and Regional Planners (SAITRP) and the Development Planning Association that was established in 1993.

Coetzee (2005 and 2012) presents a comprehensive discussion of the complexities the urban and regional planning profession was faced with following the dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994. New municipal demarcations and unification of local authorities that had been divided under Apartheid along with the demarcation of the country into nine new provinces, resulted in municipal planning departments to some extent being integrated.

Van Huyssteen and Oranje (2008) describe the positive changes the democratic transition in South Africa held for planning. The first of these was the shift away from a narrow preoccupation with land-use planning towards integrated development planning. The key characteristics of this new planning approach were that it was participatory in nature and sought to integrate different sectoral, e.g., social, environmental, economic, strategies. The aim of such a holistic approach was to ensure that scarce resources were allocated to the greatest effect. Legislation was passed that made provision for the preparation of an Integrated Development Plan (IDP) in line with these principles by every municipality in a five year cycle with annual reviews.

However, Van Huyssteen and Oranje (2008) find that municipal IDPs did not deliver on their mandate to guide municipal budgeting in order to address inequalities and ensure sustainable economic growth. The reasons they (ibid) identify for this include the fact that municipalities were faced with infrastructure backlogs and capacity constraints and that the envisaged interaction between officials in different municipal sectors proved difficult. Parnell and Crankshaw (2013) concur, stating that, at the local level, spatial imperatives were simply ignored in Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), which focused solely on municipal service delivery.

Writing in 1997, twenty years before I wrote this thesis, Mabin and Smit (1997: 218), also express reservations about the success of urban reconstruction

programmes following the demise of Apartheid. Their reservations are informed by “the persistence of older social and physical forms” on the one hand and their observation that past attempts at urban reconstruction “have tended to be overtaken by the realities of power and its limits, which have often perverted the idealism and vision of reconstruction to less attractive ends.”

This is supported in a more recent article by Parnell and Crankshaw (2013). They similarly argue that spatial planning was slow to be reformed following the advent of democracy in South Africa, in particular if one considers the important role planning played in the implementation of the Apartheid project. The fact that the ANC government failed to develop a collective long-term plan for the country as soon as it took office in 1994, is viewed as a major missed opportunity by Oranje (2012). According to Oranje (ibid) government thinking following the transition remained focused on the Apartheid past rather than on a different future. After Apartheid, argue Parnell and Crankshaw (ibid: 592), South Africa was “in a decade-long spatial logjam, unable to dislocate from the imprint of the past and unclear about how space related to the development aspirations of the future”.

This is in spite of a slew of urban and regional planning and municipal governance related legislation and policy documents that were prepared during this time (see Oranje, 2012; Oranje & Merrifield, 2010; Oranje & Van Huyssteen, 2007). Of note is the National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP), which was prepared by The Presidency and adopted by Cabinet in January 2003 (a revised version was adopted in 2006). Rather than a plan, the NSDP was a guiding spatial perspective or logic, which provided a set of normative principles to guide decisions on development and infrastructure spending by the three government spheres. The NSDP had a strong focus on people and advocated infrastructure investment only in populated areas with high economic potential. In areas where such potential did not exist, the focus would be on state spending on education, health care and making available information on job opportunities elsewhere, i.e., on investing in people rather than in places (Van Huyssteen & Oranje, 2008).

The NSDP was initially not well received, and further work resulted in Cabinet adopting the Harmonisation and Alignment Framework early in 2005. The Framework was aimed at achieving greater harmonisation in planning and expenditure across the three government spheres.

It was envisaged that the high-level debate facilitated in terms of the Framework and the ensuing shared understanding and agreement between the different spheres of government would inform the district and metropolitan IDPs.

In spite of all the effort invested in putting in place a new planning system, successful implementation thereof remained elusive (Van Huyssteen & Oranje, 2008). The Presidency subsequently, in 2006, decided to implement a pilot project in 13 of the country's 52 municipal districts. The aim of the project was to popularize and apply the NSDP in district planning.

Notwithstanding these measures to ensure the successful implementation of the NSDP, it failed to result in a coherent approach to spatial development or policy making by the different line departments or spheres of government (Parnell & Crankshaw, 2013). Furthermore, the Regional Industrial Development Strategy developed by the Department of Trade and Industry contradicted the NSDP as it advocated for rural development as opposed to the focus on investment in areas of population and economic growth in the NSDP. Parnell and Crankshaw (2013) ascribe the fact that there was no wholesale adoption of the NSDP to these two divergent viewpoints, namely 1) a race-based view that conflated "black" and "rural" interests and therefore demanded investment in rural areas irrespective of economic potential and 2) the non-racialised approach to state investment based on economic potential advocated by the NSDF.

Parnell and Crankshaw (2013) argue policies implemented by the Mbeki administration such as the housing and infrastructure subsidies advanced

rather than rectified racial segregation of residential areas and resulted in settlements that were environmentally unsustainable.

A major breakthrough towards a single national system for planning and land use management for South Africa was achieved with the promulgation of the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA), Act 16 of 2013 and its regulations. The Act aims at redressing a situation where different planning laws applied to different areas and where some areas were excluded from formal planning and land use management systems. Land use management and spatial planning are clearly linked, with land use management seen as the tool for implementing spatial plans and the SPLUMA principles¹¹. Strong emphasis is placed on social and economic inclusion and sustainability. The act integrates social, economic and environmental considerations in planning and land use management, with the ultimate aim of achieving functional and efficient human, and humane, settlements. The Act applies to all spheres of government. It emphasizes the importance of sound intergovernmental relations and delineates the responsibilities of the different spheres of government (Nel, 2015; Van Wyk and Oranje, 2014; RSA, 2013).

The Act regulates the processes and structures applicable to all aspects of land development and, most importantly, it is outspoken on the principles that land development decisions should be based on, namely: “spatial justice, spatial sustainability, spatial resilience, efficiency and good administration” (Nel, 2015: 2). At the core of the principle of spatial justice is the redressing of past inequities by improving access to land and the use of land. The principle of spatial sustainability is about promoting development that is within the means of South Africa in a fiscal, institutional and administrative sense, protecting prime agricultural land, limiting sprawl and complying with environmental legislation. The principle of spatial resilience is about ensuring that plans, policies and land use management systems are flexible enough to ensure that communities most likely to suffer environmental and economic

¹¹ Nel (2015) expresses concern about using zoning schemes as the implementation mechanism for spatial plans, arguing that such schemes have proven to be rigid and exclusionary.

shocks have sustainable livelihoods. Efficiency is related to the optimisation of existing infrastructure and resources and minimising negative impacts, whether social, economic or environmental (RSA, 2013).

Promulgated in 2013, SPLUMA only came into force in 2015, and at the time of writing this thesis, not all provincial acts have been drafted or rewritten to align them with SPLUMA. The development of a National Spatial Development Framework is at an advanced stage. It is therefore too early, except on a conceptual level, to judge the real impact of SPLUMA on the ground. Consideration needs to be given to the indicators that would be used to determine such impact.

2.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter I introduced the narrative form and the field of narratology. Like narratives, plans are used for sense making and world making. Narratives play an important role in planning, in particular in practice stories/case studies, but also in the activity of planning itself, where plans can be developed around different possible stories of the future, and in a reading of space (cities and towns) as narrative. Stories of mining towns were shown to be iconic narratives of the South African consciousness.

I then proceeded to present a detailed introduction of the elements of the varifocal lens through which the Virginia story was read.

The notion of utopia in literature as well as the long history of utopian planning was discussed. This was followed by a discussion of dystopia with special emphasis on urban dystopias not only as a focus of modernist literature, but also as a construct with utility for politicians and urban planners. Utopia plays an important role in Ernst Bloch's philosophical perspective on hope, and so does the notion of the future and the "new". As a future oriented activity, hope is also an important concept to bring to bear on planning.

Marshall Berman's seminal book was used to provide a broad introduction to the key concepts and questions of modernity and postmodern thought, which are important paradigmatic vantage points from which to consider the Virginia story.

Lastly, I discussed the phenomenon of Apartheid as a form of modernism with serious implications for the South African spatial form. An overview was provided of the development of the urban and regional planning profession South Africa and the role it played before, during, and after Apartheid. The story of Virginia cannot be considered without the context of South Africa's Apartheid history and the manner in which it manifested in the spatial form of towns such as Virginia.

CHAPTER 3: MINING TOWNS IN TRANSITION – A REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This review focuses on the literature on mining towns, specifically on the effects mine closures have on such towns and ways in which mitigation of these effects has been attempted. The purpose of the review is not to contribute anything to the existing body of knowledge on mining (and) towns, as that is not the aim of this study, but rather to add further specific context to the Virginia story. While the focus of this review is primarily on the effect of mining on towns (and then specifically the effect on the socio-economic rather than on the natural environment), it is acknowledged that much of what has been written about mining towns can be applied to other single industry towns.

The broader area of sustainable development and the social responsibility of mining companies throughout the lifecycle of the mine (examples of which are the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE) (2005) study of development challenges in the Free State and the work of Marais (2013) and Marais & Cloete (2013) that focuses prominently on the town of Welkom) will not be addressed here.

The legislative and policy environment governing mining in South Africa and globally is a broad and dynamic topic of study that will similarly not be covered in this thesis.

At the end of this chapter, a selection of concise narratives of other single industry towns is presented. Booth (2015) argues that, in spite of the obvious dangers and difficulties of engaging in comparative planning studies, there is an almost irrepressible urge to do so. I agree with the statement by Håkansson (2015: 184) that “human understanding is organized by always understanding something by something else, making analogies to the known”. The inclusion of narratives of other mining, or single industry towns in this

review is done with the caveat that, due to the specificity and uniqueness of the local context, if not for more obvious reasons such as different histories and sizes of towns, no simple or conclusive comparisons between different cases are possible. A concerted effort was made to avoid the practice highlighted by Pinel (2015: 169) of planners continuing to “transfer practices from one place to another without sufficient attention to the role of context in outcomes”. In this study, at best, reference to other stories serves to enrich the discussion and thinking on the case under investigation.

3.2 WHEN WHAT A (MINING) TOWN IS ABOUT CHANGES

Macmillan (2012: 548) articulates the concern over mine closures shared by many scholars when he states that “Minerals are wasting assets and their exhaustion may leave huge social and environmental problems, including urban unemployment and rural impoverishment, as well as toxic dumps and polluted water supplies”.

However, radical shifts in the economy of a town are not limited to mine closures. Similar transitions commonly occur when towns move from an agricultural economy to alternative economies or from any kind of industrial economy, of which a mining economy is but one example, to a post-industrial economy (Hoogendoorn & Nel, 2012). In fact, any town with an undiversified economy is guaranteed to be significantly affected whenever there are shifts in the primary economic sector. Such single sector settlements that are heavily dependent on forestry, energy or mining (referred to by Jackson and Illsley (2006: 166) as “resource-based staples”) are characteristic of the Canadian economy. Already in 1995, Harold Innis found settlements following the “staple development pathway” vulnerable to fluctuations in the staple market and identified the failure to adequately develop other sectors as a key shortcoming (Jackson and Illsley, 2006: 165).

Keyes (1992: 31) sees mining history as cyclical, dependent on cycles in the general economy as well as in the minerals sector, but also influenced by “settlement patterns, technology, investment, and government programmes”.

Mine closure, he points out, is not a case of the resource as such having been depleted, but of the profitability of extracting the resource that has dropped below a level of acceptability. Macmillan (2012) adds to the cyclical nature of mining the dimension that it is largely a speculative industry.

Taking into account the above, the question can then be asked whether a single sector town, and in particular one that was planned as a “complete” settlement, such as Virginia, Welkom, Sasolburg and Secunda in South Africa, as opposed to a town that grew organically over a longer period, can be considered a town in every sense of the word, and in particular in the social sense (*civitas*). If it can be concluded that such settlements are in fact not “real” towns, i.e. that they lack certain characteristics associated with towns that developed “naturally”, wishing to force upon such a town a life beyond its original purpose might indeed be futile. The few cases where mining or other single sector towns have proven to be sustainable e.g., Benoni, (see Humphriss & Thomas, 1968) then become anomalies and any attempt to replicate them unlikely to succeed.

Much has been written about mine closures from the perspective of the mine (see Saxena, 2008; Starke, 2008; Hiyate, 2018 and Krzemień *et al*, 2016). These authors mostly have a preoccupation with environmental effects and the rehabilitation of mining land. There is another body of literature that focuses on the effect of mine closures or the effect of other dominating industries on the affected settlements. This includes detailed case studies of the effects that mine or company closures have had on individual towns. Examples include the study by Bradbury (1983) of Schefferville in Quebec, Amundson’s (1995) study of Jeffrey City, a Wyoming uranium mining town, Leadbeater’s (2008) study of Sudbury in Ontario, Gooley’s (2004) account of Lyon Mountain, an iron mining town in northern New York, and Hoagland’s (2010) work on the copper mining towns of Michigan. Yet, in spite of the substantial body of literature on different aspects of mine closure, Marais and Cloete (2013: 78) point out that “international experience currently suggests that those with a role in mining are ill-prepared for mine downscaling and closure”.

An extreme response to the question of what to do with regard to a mining town that has outlived its usefulness is demolition. An example is the so-called “D”-village policy that was developed for County Durham in the United Kingdom in the 1950s after the decline in the British coal mining industry (Pattison, 2004).



Figure 14: The coal mining town of Marsden Village, County Durham, UK, that was demolished in the early 1960s after being declared a Category D village
Source: Metal and Dust, 2016

Often, however, rather than being demolished as was the case for towns placed in category “D” in County Durham, towns that had sprung up around mines simply become deserted once the mining activities subside. One example is the small uranium mining town of Jeffrey City that experienced a drop of 75% in its population within two years in the early 1980s. According to Kamete (2012) several Zimbabwean mining settlements, among them the town of Shackleton in the Mashonaland West province, collapsed to the point

of becoming ghost towns following mine closures in the 1980s and 1990s. Andreassen *et al* (2010) present a poignant photographic account of Pyramiden, a Soviet coal mining town in the High Arctic that was abandoned in 1998. In Pyramiden, the contents of buildings was not removed when the inhabitants left, creating the impression that life in the town had merely been paused.



Figure 15: The abandoned coal mining town of Pyramiden in the Russian High Arctic
Photographer: Elin Andreassen
Source: Andreassen *et al*, 2010

In the case of the diamond mining town of Kolmanskop on the coast of Namibia, only the shells of buildings remain. Whereas Pyramiden is being taken over by frost and mould, picturesque Kolmanskop is being reclaimed by wind and sand.



Figure 16: Images from the deserted diamond mining town of Kolmanskop, Namibia
Photographed by Lana Pieterse

In South Africa's Northern Cape province there are a number of ghost towns, including Burgerville, Deelfontein, Sydney on Vaal and Putsonderwater. Situated on the banks of the Vaal River between Delportshoop and Barkly-West, the town of Sydney on Vaal was established in 1902 by the Vaal River Diamond Exploration Co Ltd. More than 66 730 carats of diamonds were extracted here within a period of 18 months around 1902. Today the town is privately owned and, although not inhabited, it is still well maintained (Van der Merwe, 2017). Pilgrim's Rest in the Mpumalanga Province is another example. In this case, the town has been revived as a tourist destination developed around the theme of the gold rush. This is probably what Berman (1988: 78) would see as similar to American towns that were converted, "in the standard urban success story of the 1970s, into glossy airbrushed antique-stained parodies of their old selves", although, at the time of writing, Pilgrim's Rest is anything but glossy and whether it is a success story is debatable.



Figure 17: The historic gold mining town of Pilgrim's Rest in Mpumalanga, South Africa
Source: Jenman African Safaris, undated

Although their study focuses on small towns in Africa, the statement by Hoogendoorn & Nel (2012: 21) that "many towns have found new roles in the post-industrial era as tourism and retirement centres, while others appear to

be in a long-term spiral of economic decline” seems to be generally applicable. Having said this, larger towns seem to be more resilient in the face of economic transition – Reynolds and Antrobus (2012) indicate, again in the (South) African context, that towns with populations above or close to 70 000 seem not to experience the same economic decline smaller towns do.

The Free State town of Parys and that of Cullinan in Gauteng are examples of settlements that once had single-industry economies (agriculture and mining, respectively). Following the decline of the industries they depended on, various initiatives were undertaken to strengthen the economic sustainability of these towns. This included promotion of tourism (e.g., through arts and culture initiatives) and creating lifestyle living opportunities, e.g., for retirees and the affluent (Pelser *et al*, 2012: 60).

Kamete (2012: 598) identifies a post-mining typology for mining towns that is perhaps unique to Zimbabwe, namely that of a “haven” for internally displaced persons. Mining towns that had been limping along following the decline of mining activities since the 1980s witnessed an influx of internally displaced persons (former farm workers and poor urbanites) following land reform and “urban clean-up” programmes implemented by government. However, the economy of the towns was never restored. The new residents joined the informal sector or did menial jobs paying very little. Some took up gold digging and others traded across the border. Some simply took up a life of crime. The income level was generally very low and poverty remained rife. In spatial terms these “haven” towns were characterised by physical neglect and large scale decay. Spatial planning for the growth of these settlements is virtually non-existent, mainly because the local planning authorities do not have jurisdiction over mining land. National minimum standards for housing and infrastructure have never been applied in Zimbabwean mining towns. The fact that the “haven” towns represented sprawling squatter settlements scared off potential investors who might otherwise have had an appetite for investing in the existing chromite and copper mines.



Figure 18: Artisanal gold miners in the mining community of Kwekwe in the Zimbabwe midlands

Source: Zimbabwe Situation, undated

Along with the social and economic sustainability of human settlements around mines, mine closure is a critical time in terms of the physical sustainability of such settlements. The fact that the lifetime of a mine can be 20 to 30 years (Buxton, 2012), makes foreseeing or predicting the wellbeing of the community at mine closure very difficult, particularly as the individuals who have been involved in initial projects to establish or uplift the community are unlikely to be involved at the point of mine closure. While much work has been done in terms of developing guidelines for mine closure, e.g., the guideline document commissioned by Coaltech (CSMI, 2010) and the Anglo American Mine Closure Toolbox (Anglo American, 2013) there is as yet no national strategy around the closure of mines, with the focus of the Department of Mineral Resources firmly on legal compliance in the issuing of closure certificates (DMR Strategic Plan 2014/19).

In cases where a mining settlement is not demolished, the mine often embarks on a process of transferring the settlement to the local municipality. In these cases, recreational facilities are transferred to the community and houses are offered for sale to the former mine employees and other buyers.

Public facilities such as schools and healthcare facilities are transferred to the relevant provincial department. Laduma (2007: 21) found that:

The period of transition, between transference of fixed property from the mine to the new owners is critical to ensure that the property is physically maintained and its security is not compromised. In cases where there has been a gap in ownership during the period of transfer of ownership, property has either been vandalised (through theft of material from the houses), destroyed (through fire, breaking windows or doors), or have been illegally occupied (and in the process the property is vandalised or destroyed).

Laduma (2007) highlights the difficulties experienced by former mine workers when the mine closes. In many cases, the mine provides accommodation, transport to and from work and medical care for workers. Workers who live in hostels are even provided with meals. When their employment by the mine comes to an end, these workers find it difficult to accept that they have to pay for electricity, water and municipal rates, as well as rent, where applicable. As it is difficult to find sources of income equal to what they earned working for the mine, former mine workers struggle to make ends meet. Some, however, simply occupy houses unlawfully, refusing to pay rent or service charges as they are of the opinion that their years of service to the mine have entitled them to free accommodation and services.

In her article on declining coal mining villages in Eastern Kentucky in the USA, Beth McMurtrie (2017) summarises the challenge faced by regional and state leaders as finding a way to bring decent jobs to a region that lacks the infrastructure and skills to support large employers. She notes that there is wide-spread scepticism about prospects for reviving the local economy. For the time being, the value of efforts by community colleges, non-profit agencies and government to retrain laid-off coalminers seems mainly to be that they enable former mine workers to seek employment elsewhere.



Figure 19: In Eastern Kentucky in the US, community colleges train laid off coal miners to find alternative employment, for instance as linesmen
Source: McMurtrie, 2017

While mines often know long, usually years, in advance when they will be closing, based on financial and geological results, stakeholders such as the Department of Mineral Resources (DMR), municipal structures and, most importantly, employees are routinely informed only as little as three months before closure. Such short notice makes it difficult for the DMR to intervene in order to ensure compliance with the social and labour plan and gives the municipality insufficient time to take into account aspects such as inheriting mine infrastructure in its annual planning. Of even more concern is the fact that such a short horizon does not leave adequate time for reskilling employees or finding alternatives to mitigate the loss of mine jobs. This is bound to have a devastating effect on the quality of life of the mine workers and their dependants (Laduma, 2007).

While it can be argued that mines sometimes delay communication about closure in order to avoid causing employees distress, which may impact negatively on productivity, giving inadequate notice of closure will result in higher levels of stress and even anger. This anger can be one reason for

mine property being vandalised following closure and for workers being unwilling to participate in reskilling initiatives (Laduma, 2007).

During 2006, Coaltech researched the way that 36 closed coal mines approached the problem of former mine communities during the post mine closure period (CSMI, 2010). Phillip Frankel, who developed a mine closure toolkit for the Coaltech 2020 project, argues against mines using mine managers as project leaders for the mine closure, as these managers do not understand the community's needs. While using in-house staff to manage the closure is the cheapest route for the mine, these staff members lack the specialist knowledge of developmental and sustainability aspects that sociologists, for instance, have (Kolver, 2009).

The challenge in avoiding economic entropy when the mine closes is ensuring sustained employment of community members. History has shown that it is not only the closure of mines, but of any large employer, that can have devastating effects on a human settlement. The negative impact of the closure of ISCOR on the city of Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal is an example¹². It is clear that this issue relates closely to the notions of resilience and adaptability – in order to be sustainable, a mining town has to be able to adapt to the changed circumstances after the closure of the mine.

In South Africa, strategies for the economic revitalisation of mining towns following the closure of the mine rarely go beyond agricultural and tourism strategies that focus on the establishment of SSMEs, mostly arts and crafts/cottage enterprises, and cooperatives (Laduma, 2007).

Small mining “company towns” are particularly vulnerable to mine closures (Pelser *et al*, 2012: 47). Concurring with Strongman (2000), the authors cite weak local government, low labour productivity, low non-mining income and minimal labour mobility as factors that exacerbate the negative impact of mine

¹² The number of people employed by ISCOR declined from 13 000 in 1977 to 3 000 in 1999. The resultant economic stagnation and decline was exacerbated by the downsizing of other heavy industries, particularly in the 1990s (Todes, 2001).

closure. The higher the dependency on the mine, the more severe the social impact when the mine closes (Pelser *et al*, 2012).

3.3 EFFECTS OF MINE CLOSURE

Marais and Cloete (2013: 78) state that the impacts of mine closure are both manifold and complex. Broadly, these impacts can be categorised as economic, social and environmental effects. A number of the most prominent impacts of mine closure as identified through a review of literature on the topic are briefly discussed below.

3.3.1 Drop in property values

In their study of the town of Welkom, Marais and Cloete (2013: 81) found that privatisation of housing units by the mining companies after the gold price plummeted in 1989, had led to a “massive decline in house prices”. By 2012, house prices in Welkom were on average 50% lower than in comparable urban areas, often resulting in owners not being able to sell their houses. This is confirmed by Denoon-Stevens in his report for the South African Cities Network (2017).

3.3.2 Unemployment

Fluctuations in levels of employment in mining towns are a consequence not only of the cyclical nature of mining referred to above, but also of the life cycle of the mine. Macmillan (2012) points out that mines generally employ more people during the construction than during the production phase. He furthermore points out that in established mining towns, even those that can be regarded as “company towns”, more employment is provided in formal and informal services than in mining *per se*. Clearly related to this is the argument by Jackson and Illsley (2006) that downscaling or closure of the mine or other primary industry not only leads to unemployment of former mine workers, but also to unemployment in secondary activities. Jackson and Illsley (*ibid*)

ascribe this to the decrease in local spending power, but it obviously also stems from a decreased demand for services to support the mining activities.

3.3.3 Social conflicts

In their study of the closure of the Stekenjokk mine in North-West Sweden, Nygren and Karlsson (1992) map a web of conflicts between the different role players, including the mining company, residents, the local government, etc., that came to the fore due to the mine closure.

3.3.4 Pressure on the municipality

Mine closure can be a big blow for local authorities (Pelser *et al*, 2012). Apart from losing the tax income from the mine, the resultant job losses put pressure on government aid programmes aimed at indigent community members. In the midst of these losses and pressures, the local municipality has to maintain infrastructure¹³. The knock-on effect is that such a municipality can become dependent on financial assistance from the provincial or even from the national government.

Marais and Cloete (2013) point out that, in cases where the mine owned most of the housing units, and the municipality had become used to rates and taxes being paid in full and in advance by the mining company, privatisation carried an increased risk of defaulting on these payments, particularly in the light of job losses as a result of the mine closure.

3.3.5 Environmental impacts

The lasting impact on water quality seems to be the major concern when it comes to the adverse environmental impact of gold mining. Slimes dams cannot be rehabilitated, owing to the risk of radiation. Acid mine drainage also holds a risk, particularly for the quality of sub-terranean water sources (MLM

¹³ In fact, in some cases, the local government even has increased responsibility in respect of service delivery and maintenance as it takes over functions previously provided by the mining company.

IDP, 2017-2022). Marais and Cloete (2013) add polluted rivers and dust to the list.

3.3.6 Failure to maintain existing infrastructure

Marais and Cloete (2013) identify failure to optimally use and maintain the existing infrastructure that was developed or subsidised by the mining companies as one of the negative effects of mine closure.

3.4 MITIGATING THE EFFECTS OF MINE CLOSURE

3.4.1 Economic diversification and revitalisation

It is generally acknowledged that economic diversification is key to successful mitigation of the effects of mine closure on the economy of affected towns (Kamete, 2012). In this regard, it is important to note the two types of diversity Keyes (1992) distinguishes between, namely vertical and horizontal diversification. Vertical diversification in a mining town implies that the economic base is expanded through mining related businesses, e.g. transport and processing. Martinez-Fernandez *et al* (2012) argue that mining centres in Australia have become hubs of innovation and knowledge intensity. They (*ibid*) advocate for these highly innovative aspects of mining to be absorbed into the local economy as a strategy for mitigating against the shrinkage of mining towns.

Horizontal diversification, on the other hand, is diversification into sectors that are not related to mining. While Pelser *et al* (2012) argue that vertical diversification perpetuates the reliance of the town's economy on mining and that horizontal diversification should therefore be pursued in order to ensure the sustainability of mining towns, the Benoni case clearly belies this. In Benoni, the vertical diversification that gave rise to businesses that could in later years expand their product base and markets played a significant contributing role in ensuring the town's success after the mines closed (Humphriss & Thomas, 1968) (see paragraph 3.7.2 below). It would therefore

be more accurate to state that mining towns should make optimal use of the opportunities posed by the mine for vertical diversification, while at the same time pursuing opportunities for horizontal diversification.

The model proposed by Liljenas, and cited by Nel *et al* (2003) for a town's response to mine closure consists of four stages that follow each other in a linear fashion. First, there is an attempt to preserve the town's existing economy; then the economy is diversified by finding and expanding existing alternative, i.e. unrelated to mining, jobs; thirdly, new economic activities are developed, e.g., SMMEs, tourism, etc., and lastly, the economy of the affected town shifts into high-tech sectors. Apart from supporting the view of Pelsler *et al* (2012) that this model seems unlikely to apply to small mining dependent towns, I also question its linearity.

Pelsler *et al* (2005) remark that, while the mine is still in operation, diversifying into alternative economic activities is usually not high on the agenda of the local authority. In many cases, it only receives attention after closure. They argue strongly for a proactive approach including long term planning for the necessary diversification by way of the municipality's Integrated Development Plan (IDP) well ahead of mine closure.

Often, the response by local government to mine closure and the ensuing unemployment, takes the form of a local economic development (LED) strategy, or specific LED projects. Hoogendoorn & Nel (2012), distinguish between two kinds of local economic development, namely pro-market and pro-poor initiatives. They argue that the latter, which had been the main focus of the South African government since 1994, were generally less successful.

The limited success of local economic strategies has been widely reported on. It is therefore easy to concur with Pelsler *et al* (2012) that, even using LED strategies focused on economic diversification and the different aspects of SMME development, e.g., training for entrepreneurs, credit provision, etc., local systems are unlikely to have the capacity to address large-scale unemployment resulting from job losses in the mining sector. The question is

how to achieve job creation at the level required for ensuring the sustainability of the town.

Pelser *et al* (2012: 46) suggest a “socio-technical approach (STA)” that will provide the information necessary for single-resource towns to plan for economic diversification in their Integrated Development Plans (IDPs). At the heart of this approach is an information repository in which continuously gathered information on the town itself, the primary industry and case studies of comparable towns that have successfully been diversified can be stored and from which such information can be accessed for planning purposes. The authors state that:

Such a database of information provides the basis for making the best possible predictions and decisions about the socio-economic impact of the respective industry on the local community. Thus, decision-makers can quickly and pro-actively position and steer the town towards sustained development and growth in the period following the demise of the core industry.

The role of sufficient information in ensuring the sustained development of a town, should, however, not be over-emphasized. Such development depends on the complex interplay of various factors. Reynolds and Antrobus (2012) identify seven growth drivers for (small) towns, namely infrastructure, location (natural resources, amenities, access to markets), municipal leadership, local entrepreneurs, and existing industries. Keyes (1992: 38) concludes after studying the effect of mine closures on towns in Canada, that “the success or failure of diversification depends on a multitude of variables – location, size nature of existing economic base, transportation links, availability of government help, corporate dynamism, community spirit, entrepreneurial abilities, and advance planning. Each town is different.”

Kamete (2012: 591) is the only author to place the relationship between national government and the market at the centre of the well-being of mining towns. He states that “How well the mining industry – and ultimately mining

towns – copes is a function of the interaction between national governance and global market forces”.

Maude & Hugo (1992: 93) acknowledge that differences in the economic structure, size and location of towns and particularities of the regional labour market will cause different municipal areas to be affected differently by mine downscaling or closure. They argue that “This variation must be the starting-point for the evolution of state, union, and mining company policies for handling mine closure and downsizing.”

Keyes’s study of mine closures in Canada (1992) also shows that it is probable that different approaches to economic diversification will succeed in small towns, depending on specific contextual factors, for instance in Atikokan in Canada, which had only 5200 residents at its peak, the town was sustained thanks to the establishment of a variety of complementary businesses rather than one large alternative employer. However, it seems that in all instances the best chance of success is achieved through a 1) well-planned approach that 2) involves all the role players and is 3) implemented well before the actual mine closure. This view is supported by Marais and Cloete (2013). The requirement for all role players to be involved in post-mining diversification strategies is discussed in more detail in paragraph 3.5 below.

There are vastly different perspectives on the role of mining companies in ensuring the sustainability of mining settlements beyond the life of the mine. Macmillan (2012: 540) is scathing in his view of mines as exploitative, “with the profits of mining capitalists subsidised by rural families”. He adds that the development of cities with permanent black and white populations, such as Johannesburg and Kimberley, was “in spite of mining capitalists, governments, pass laws . . .”. Sparks (2012: 7) views the exploitation of black workers as a feature of the Apartheid social order not limited to the mining sector when he states that “[c]heap hyper-exploited black labor and the ‘Apartheid modern’ were inextricably bound together”.

While the problematic nature of migrant labour for mines is undisputed and the exploitative nature thereof is the subject of much academic and popular debate, Macmillan's view is belied by the clear role played by mining companies in the broader sustainable development of Johannesburg and Benoni among others (see paragraphs 3.7.1 and 3.7.2 below).

3.4.2 Amalgamation

Reynolds and Antrobus (2012) refer to the New Economic Geography (NEG) theory, according to which smaller towns will tend to amalgamate with larger urban centres as soon as transportation costs reach a certain level. They point out, however, that the weakness of this theory is that it relies too heavily on transportation costs and does not take into account the complexity of other factors impacting on the growth or decline of small towns and argue, therefore, that small towns may be able to avoid economic decline and amalgamation under certain circumstances.

It would certainly seem that location theories such as the Central Place Theory, Growth Poles and Spatial Clustering (Reynolds and Antrobus, 2012), favour larger over smaller towns when it comes to the probability of economic growth and development. This could facilitate a trend of smaller towns being amalgamated with larger regional centres, provided that they are in close enough proximity to each other (relating to the transportation cost factor identified by the NEG theory referred to above).

3.4.3 Demolition

It is almost unthinkable in a country with a severe shortage of formal housing such as South Africa¹⁴, that infrastructure established for mining communities can simply be abandoned, or, worse, demolished, after the closure of the mine. It could be assumed that it would be sensible to repurpose unused mining infrastructure to meet housing or other social, e.g., educational or

¹⁴ According to the 2011 census, there were about 1.9 million shacks and informal dwellings in South Africa – 13% of the total number of households in the country.

healthcare, needs. Yet in a study commissioned by the Mpumalanga Department of Economic Development and Planning on the revitalisation of dying mining towns, Laduma (2007) proposes the demolition of so-called non-sustainable mining villages that are no longer required. In respect of new mines, the recommendation is that residential development should be concentrated in the nearest existing centres.

In his study of mine closures in Canada, Robert Keyes (1992) refers to examples of mining towns – Gagnon, Clinton Creek and Pine Point – that have been demolished or “cleared”. Keyes (1992: 39) concludes that “this waste of originally expensive infrastructure is unfortunate, but subsidising a continued minimum existence is probably worse”.

Demolition may be a contested option as community members value their settlement and are unwilling to relocate. This was found by Pattison (2004) in his study of coal mining villages in County Durham in the United Kingdom.

3.5 THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN RESPONDING TO MINE CLOSURES

According to the Bench Marks Foundation (discussion documents, undated), a meaningful relationship between the mining company and the community is important throughout the lifecycle of the mine, which can be broken down into three stages, namely: inception, mining and closure. However, during the closure stage, when it is most vital for discussions with the community around job losses, pollution, health and safety issues and the continuation of community upliftment projects should take place, this is often not the case (ibid).

Much of the work done around mine closure still focuses almost exclusively on technical aspects relating to wrapping up the mining operations (finances and human resource aspects) and managing the environmental impact of the mine following a cessation of such operations (e.g., Peck, 2005; Starke, 2008, and Krzemień *et al*, 2016). MMSD (2002) argues that taking into account the

socio-economic impact of mine closure on the affected communities is a fairly recent phenomenon.

The mining company Anglo American has developed a Mine Closure Toolbox (2013) that is aimed at achieving sustainability and a positive legacy in addition to the conventional financial and rehabilitation consideration. Anglo American (2013:3) acknowledges that communities were often left out of the loop in the process of mine closure. It states that: “Mines now need to look to community ownership of the post-closure goals as it is the communities that will be left with the post-closure initiatives when the mine no longer exists.”

In arguing for mining to have “durable benefits”, MMSD (2002: 220), expands the scope of planning for mine closure substantially when it states that “mine closure planning needs to include a plan for the transition to the post-mining economy”. MMSD (ibid: 224) adds that “communities need to own this process and organize themselves accordingly”, while at the same time acknowledging that “the community itself may need help in building the capacity required for full participation in decisionmaking”.

3.6 THE ROLE OF A DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Development agencies are sometimes established to facilitate development in (former) mining towns. Development agencies were first established in Europe to deal with the effects of war damage and de-industrialisation, but have since become a popular mechanism the world over for pursuing local development strategies. Clark *et al* (2010) show significant variance between development agencies in respect of their size, mandate, operations, resources, governance and accountability. South African examples of successful development agencies are the Cape Town Partnership, which was established to stabilise the inner city of Cape Town, and the Johannesburg Development Agency, which seeks to promote development in specific areas of Johannesburg, also with a specific focus of revitalising the inner city (Clark *et al*, 2010). While the establishment of a development agency was strongly

supported by respondents in the study of Graaff-Reinet¹⁵ conducted by Spocter (2012), the Lejwe Le Putswa Development Agency established by the Lejweleputswa District Municipality (within which Virginia is located) in 2005 had not progressed beyond planning potential development projects for the area (<http://www.lejwelda.org.za>).

3.7 SELECTED NARRATIVES OF OTHER SINGLE INDUSTRY TOWNS

In this section, short narratives of single or dominant industry towns or cities, or ones that originated as single industry towns, in South Africa are presented to enrich and inform the reading of the Virginia story. The centres included in the selection are Johannesburg, Benoni, Sasolburg and Secunda. Single in-depth studies were used as the source of these narratives.

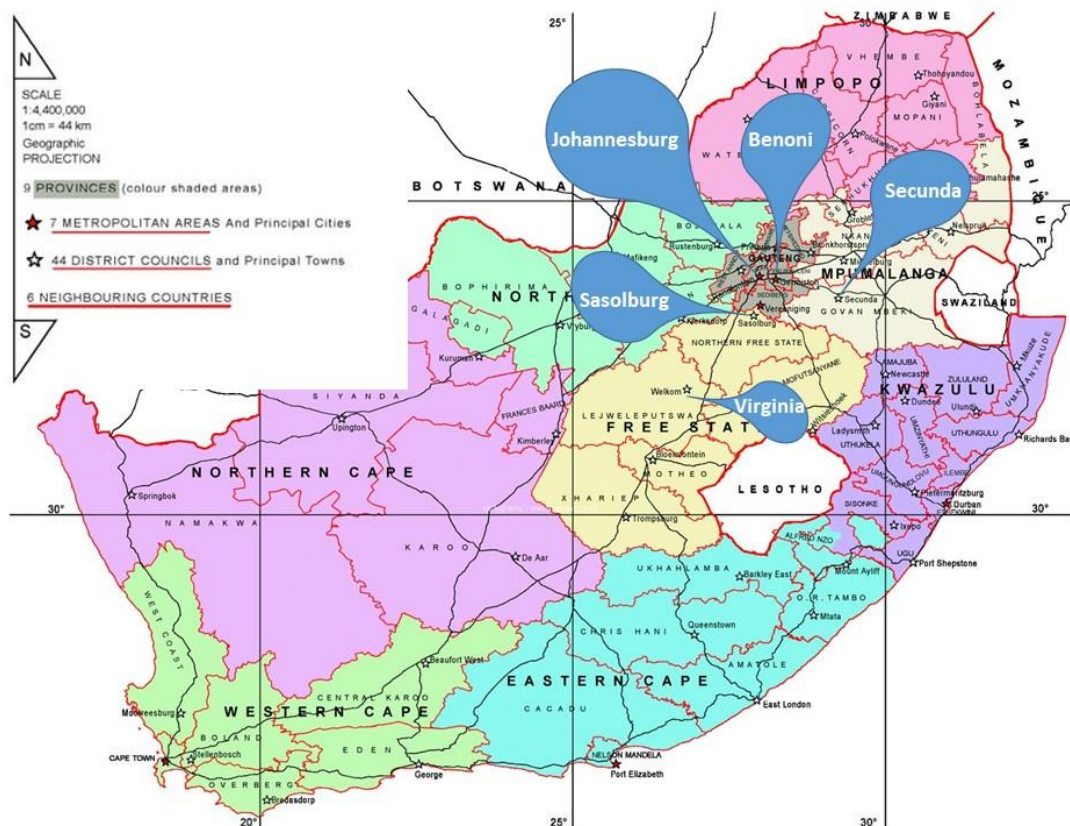


Figure 20: Map showing the location of the single industry towns discussed.
Source: Adapted from Orange Smile

¹⁵ According to the 2001 Census, Graaff-Reinet had a population of 32 467.

3.7.1 Johannesburg

Johannesburg is one of few world cities (other examples are Melbourne and San Francisco) that have “transcended the boom-bust scenario of a minerals-based economy and evolved into a diverse and competitive agglomeration” (Harrison & Zack, 2012: 551).



Figure 21: Johannesburg, city of gold. Photograph by Heather Mason showing the Telkom tower, an iconic feature of the city's skyline
Source: Arup, undated

Of value for this study is considering why Johannesburg, in contrast to most of the other (former) mining towns referred to in paragraph 3.2, continued to grow and flourish beyond the end of the gold mining boom. It is important to consider this, as aspirations to become “another Johannesburg” seem to be a pervasive characteristic of booming mining towns in South Africa.

Johannesburg was proclaimed as a mining settlement in 1886 around the Central Rand gold field, the first area where deep-level gold mining took place in South Africa. Amid various fluctuations in the fortunes of the town, its contribution to the country's gold output declined from 80% in 1911 to 3% in 1980 to close to zero in 2012 (ibid.).

In the absence of small-scale or artisanal mining in the area, the Central Rand Goldfield was dominated by a handful of mining houses owned by the so-called “Randlords”. The early history of the town (1886-1948) was dominated

by issues surrounding labour. After the Anglo-Boer War, 60 000 indentured Chinese mine workers were imported to South Africa. These workers were repatriated again in 1910; from 1910 to 1928 two-thirds of black mine workers came from what is now known as Mozambique, but capping of numbers by the Mozambican government led to migrant workers also being recruited from what is now Malawi, Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Zambia. Labour issues, specifically the replacement of expensive white labour with black African mine workers after the price of gold dropped sharply in 1921, led to one of the watershed events in the history of the town, namely the 1921 rebellion by white mineworkers, which was violently suppressed at the cost of several hundred mineworkers' lives.

Another issue that played a dominating role in the early history of Johannesburg as a mining town was the price of gold. As gold mining was expensive, and the price of gold was fixed as a result of the gold standard, it was not guaranteed that the Witwatersrand gold mining industry, or the town of Johannesburg for that matter, would survive. Supporting Keyes's (1992) argument that the nature of mining is cyclical, Harrison and Zack (2012) describe the ups and downs experienced by gold mining in the Central Rand Goldfield, and by association by Johannesburg as a result of factors such as technical challenges (extracting gold from the pyritic ore that was struck in 1998), the Anglo-Boer War, and the price of gold (which rose steeply when the gold standard was abandoned in 1932 and again in 1971 when the US left the gold standard that had been reinstated by way of the Bretton Woods Agreement in 1944) and refer to it as a "turbulent roller coaster [...] with peaks of optimism and troughs of despair" (ibid: 555).

What was it, then, that caused Johannesburg not only to survive the decline in the gold mining industry referred to above, but to flourish and develop into the economic hub of South Africa? From Harrison and Zack's (2012) analysis of the events that shaped Johannesburg, a number of factors played a role in the city's successful economic diversification.

In spite of the fact that gold mining in the Central Rand gold fields had just about ceased by 2012, mining companies, especially Anglo American, later amalgamated with London-based Minorco, retained their links with the city, causing it to become South Africa's corporate, rather than physical, mining hub.

In the early days of Johannesburg's development, mining companies created a demand for manufacturing, e.g., construction materials, explosives, steel and chemicals. The manufacturing sector was given a further boost when imports were disrupted during World War I causing domestic manufacturing to increase. The mining companies played a key role in the economic diversification of Johannesburg, establishing a wide range of industries not only related to mining, such as the South African Paper and Pulp Industries (SAPPI), the Portland Cement Company, South African Breweries and clothing and food factories. Notably, in 1906, the Victoria Falls and Transvaal Power Company was established with the support of the Chamber of Mines, which supplied the mines with electricity until the founding of the Electricity Supply Commission (ESCOM) in 1922.

As a result of the need for capital to finance production, finance houses emerged alongside of the mining companies, "with interlocking directorships" (Harrison & Zack, 2012: 557). This started a trend of banks and building societies being established in the city from the 1880s, with the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) being formed in November 1887 to support the mining industry's equity requirements. Anglo American held significant equity in major banks, including Standard, Nedbank, and Barclays.

One would assume that the location of the OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg also had a major impact on the city's sustained economic growth. However, Mokhele, 2016, points out that airport-centric development in Johannesburg was the result of rigorous attempts by the municipality to promote manufacturing following the decline of the gold mining sector. Although the Airport (initially known as Jan Smuts Airport) was built in 1952, such developments only emerged significantly in the 1970s.

As can be seen from figure 22 below, if employment is considered a proxy for economic contribution, the growth in the manufacturing sector more than made up for the decline in mining. And, although growth was momentarily stilted in the 1980s when manufacturing, in turn, declined, finance and also insurance and real estate continued to grow and over time outperformed the other sectors. As stated by Harrison and Zack (2012: 564):

Present-day Johannesburg, with the economic structure and growth performance of a successful post-primary and post-industrial city, is far removed from its mining origins. However, Johannesburg remains deeply connected to its mining past, with its new flagship sector, finances, having evolved from the financial needs and power of mining.

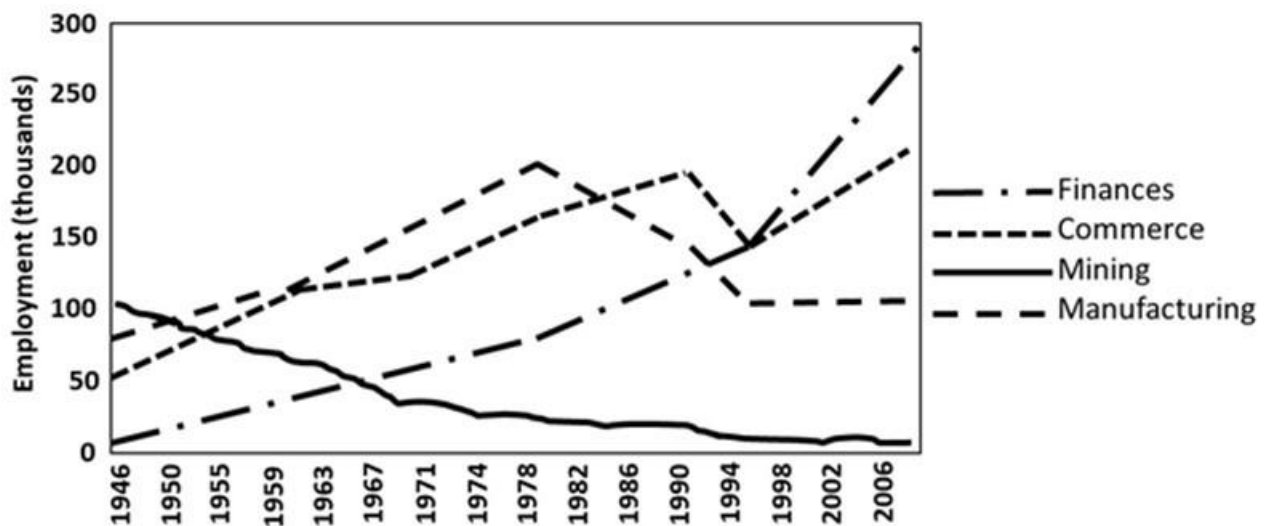


Figure 22: Johannesburg: Employment by sector, 1946 to 2009
 Source: Beall, Crankshaw & Parnell, Quantec
 Data sources: Beall *et al*, 2002; Quantec

The above summary of the history of Johannesburg shows that its success as a financial hub was a consequence of it being the first large mining town in South Africa and therefore the “natural” location for the mining headquarters and associated financial institutions. The growth and economic success of Johannesburg is therefore the result of unique circumstances that cannot be replicated elsewhere in the country. This is not to say that other mining towns

cannot succeed or have not succeeded in flourishing beyond their mining roots. In those cases, however, other factors came into play than those evident in Johannesburg. Benoni is one example.

3.7.2 Benoni

The Town Council of Benoni published a book on the history of the town in January 1968. Although not an academic work in the truest sense, academic rigour of the book was ensured by the editorial board, consisting of role players within the Town Council and the editor of the local newspaper, the *Benoni City Times*, soliciting the participation of scholars from the University of the Witwatersrand and that of Pretoria respectively. A public participation process was also undertaken to provide an opportunity for members of the public to supplement or correct information in the manuscript before publication. In the acknowledgements, the authors commend the municipality “and in particular the Chairman and members of the Board, on supporting their efforts to write an objective and unprejudiced history of the town” (Humphriss & Thomas, 1968: xii). They furthermore state that including sections critical of past Councils in the publication indicates that Benoni “no longer has the defensive mentality of a small mining *dorp*, but that the town and its management have come of age” (Humphriss & Thomas, 1968: xii).

The objective of the book is stated as follows: “This local history attempts to analyse the problems met by the people who established a gold-mining settlement and lived through its painful and sometimes violent transition to a modern multi-racial industrial complex” (Humphriss & Thomas, 1986: iv). This summary creates the impression that the main focus of the book is the transition of the town’s economy from one that is dominated by mining to one that is not. While this is not the case, because the bulk of the book is devoted to historical events not directly related to this transition, valuable insights are nonetheless gained into aspects of the transition process.

A reading of this very detailed history of Benoni shows that the planning that is required for a town to thrive beyond the lifetime of the mines responsible for

its establishment, has to take place quite some time before the actual closure of the mine(s).

The real influence of municipal planners on the spatial development of a settlement is often questioned, with some scholars claiming that the shape and growth of a settlement is for the most part, or exclusively, caused by market forces. The Benoni case challenges this view. While it is true that most mining towns start “with a prospector’s pit” (Humphriss & Thomas, 1968: 258), ensuring Benoni’s economic future beyond the gold mines was due in large part to the foresight of municipal planners.

As in the case of most mining towns, mining companies in the Benoni area played a significant role in the early spatial development of the town. Humphriss & Thomas (1968: 271) state that “Benoni has good reason to be grateful to the mining companies for the manner in which they operated as land-owners and estate developers.” The interest taken by the British born mining magnate George Farrar in the early township development of Benoni, led him to be known as the founder of the town. After convincing the Kleinfontein Estates and Township Company in September 1902 that the township that had already been approved by the Kruger Government should be relocated from the northern section of the Kleinfontein farm to the north-facing slopes of the valley next to the Kleinfontein Dam, Farrar was appointed as a one-man committee with the responsibility of designing a new town and naming its streets. In this endeavour, Farrar was inspired by memories of his hometown, Bedford.

Indeed, in this early period of the town’s development, the initiative for expanding the town came solely from so-called estates companies, often part of the mining companies, by way of applications for township development on land they owned. In almost all of these cases (Westdene, Northmead, Rynfield) approval by the Town Council was preceded by protracted wrangling, usually about the issues of municipal services and the cost of providing such.

In 1917, the Benoni Town Council started a programme of attracting industry to the town when it sought to obtain land for industrial sites. After two failed attempts to buy land, the government granted a request by the Council for the remaining portion of the government-owned farm Benoni which was not used for mining. The then mayor of Benoni, one WH Balfour, described this as one of the most important events in the history of the municipality (Humphriss & Thomas, 1968). According to Humphriss & Thomas (1968: 280), "Benoni owes much to those whose foresight made the establishment of industries possible at a time when the mines in the area were still at the height of their prosperity".

In 1920, following a request by the Council, the Government diverted the main railway line in such a manner that it skirted the industrial area and increased its attraction for businesses. Nonetheless, it would be only about ten years later that the development of the industrial area really got off the ground. The reasons why there was such a long delay in spite of the sites being offered very cheaply, are identified by Humphriss & Thomas as a reluctance by the Council to provide services such as roads and telephones, a four-year delay in building a railway bridge to provide direct access to Main Reef Road, and an unimaginative advertising campaign, which failed to recognise and promote the town's potential as a centre for heavy industry.

When development of the industrial area did take off, however, it was at such a pace that, in November 1937, the Council applied for an extension of the industrial area.

Industries in Benoni were greatly benefited by the demand for war materials such as bomb casings and rifle barrels during the two World Wars. Humphriss & Thomas (1968), however, contend that it was the influx of industrial firms in 1947, after World War II, "which at last made the town independent of the mines". Among these firms were heavy industrial giants including the likes of General Electric and English Electric, as well as welding and metal works companies.

Apart from the accessibility granted to the industrial area thanks to the railway line and the bridge to Main Reef Road referred to above, the fact that the area between Benoni and its neighbouring town, Boksburg was “claimed as the most heavily industrialised in South Africa” (Humphriss & Thomas, 1968: 283) was another spatial aspect contributing to the town’s success, as many of the people working in Boksburg chose to live in Benoni.

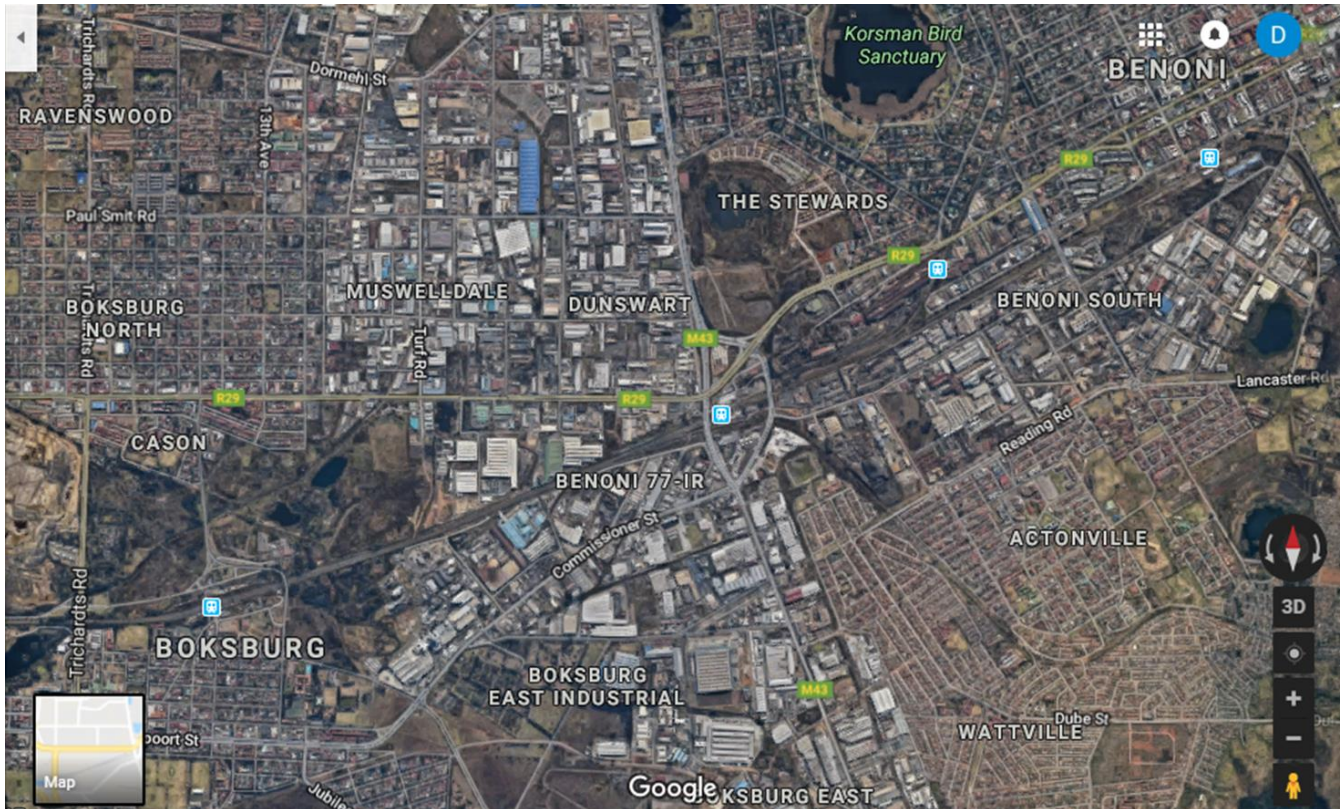


Figure 23: Satellite image showing the massive industrial development between Benoni and Boksburg (Last Modified: January 21, 2019)

Source: Google Earth

The last of the seven main Benoni mines, namely the Modderfontein East Gold Mining Company, ceased operations in 1962. By 1964, the 210 industries in Benoni were already employing more people than had been employed by the mines – in fact, by that time the situation was such that a shortage of skilled as well as unskilled labour had become one of the main concerns faced by the industries. If adequate employment opportunities are taken as the main measure of the soundness of a town’s economy, it can

therefore be said that, by 1964, Benoni had achieved sustainability beyond the lifetime of the gold mines to which it owed its establishment.

3.7.3 Sasolburg

Two comprehensive studies of Sasolburg are available. The first is by Mark Oranje in the form of a paper delivered at a symposium on “Planning and planning personalities” hosted by The Planning History Study Group in 1996.

The town is also the topic of study of Stephen Sparks’s (2012) combined anthropology and history doctoral thesis. Sparks considers Sasolburg as a company town and a site for elaboration on what he describes as the “Apartheid modern” (ibid: 4). The aspiration of the Apartheid government to not only establish a modern state, but to also demonstrate modernity nationally and internationally, is considered in terms of certain practices that the government considered befitting of a modern state. These included striving for a totalizing orderliness, insatiable information gathering about the population that it governed, a pioneering spirit and an obsession with measurement and rationality that precipitated in large-scale technology projects, such as SASOL, and with so-called “respectability”.

Sparks (ibid: 9) furthermore states that “[c]heap, hyper-exploited black labour and the “Apartheid modern” were inextricably bound together”.

Making reference to Mabin and Parnell (1995), Evans (1997) and Japha (1998), Sparks (ibid) finds that modernist thinking is well-suited for the Apartheid paradigm and furthermore states that the modernist town planners behind South Africa’s segregated cities were influenced by the likes of Howard, Le Corbusier and Mumford.

It was the mining company Anglo-Transvaal Consolidated Investment Corporation (Anglovaal) that first showed serious interest in the establishment of synthetic fuel production in South Africa around 1935 (Sparks, 2012). In his earlier study, Oranje (1996) points out a link between the history of Sasolburg and the Free State gold fields, as it were the large financial obligations it had

in the gold fields that prevented Anglovaal from raising the ten to fifteen million pounds that was initially estimated to be required for building an oil-from-coal factory.

Quite typical of the Apartheid government's *modus operandi* (see Posel, 2011, and paragraph 2.7.3 above), the establishment of the first Sasol plant was preceded by the promulgation of legislation by government, first under Jan Smuts and then, after 1948, under DF Malan's National Party government (Oranje, 1996). It was with the promulgation of the Industrial Development Amendment Bill in 1951, that the project became a government undertaking controlled by the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) (ibid). The funds received from the IDC for the Sasol plant were also used for the development of the town of Sasolburg, a fact that was seen by the opposition as yet another example of the National Party's continued disingenuity around the project. The site for the town was chosen on the basis of proximity to the Witwatersrand, to large deposits of low-grade coal and to a source of water in the form of the Vaal River and Vaal Dam (Oranje, 1996).

Max Kirchhofer was appointed on 22 February 1951 to plan the town of Sasolburg for no more than 10 000 white residents, which reflects Mumford's views on limiting the size of settlements. Kirchhofer's work on the design of Sasolburg was so highly regarded that, when it was decided in 1974 to build another Sasol plant in the then Eastern Transvaal, he was asked to also design the new town (Oranje, 1996).

Kirchhofer, by his own admission, took a rational approach to planning, relying heavily on surveys and statistical analyses. At the same time, he regarded aesthetic aspects as very important. Thousands of street trees were planted, the exact type and position of each which were indicated in Kirchhofer's plans (Oranje, 1996). The landscaping of the new town of Sasolburg was regarded as very important, and Sasol employed a horticulturalist, Aart Jurriaanse, for this purpose (Sparks, 2012).

Kirchhofer, through his association with Prof Wilfred Mallows, was influenced by American New Towns such as Radburn and Sunnyside and in particular by Clarence Stein's book *Towards New Towns for America* (1949) (Oranje, 1996).

From the outset, the approach was to take a holistic approach to the town, which implied developing it as a self-contained unit. Sasolburg was “planned to consist of neighbourhood cells, each with its own primary school, local shopping centre and recreation club, separated from other cells by main traffic routes” (Oranje, 1996: 278). In Sasolburg, the park areas provided in keeping with the American tradition were designed as “a green system with pedestrian and cycle paths” that widened in places to provide play areas for children. While the parkways contributed greatly towards making Sasolburg attractive, fears expressed by the Townships Boards that they would prove a burden to the local authority and would be unsafe, turned out to be well-founded (Oranje, 1996).

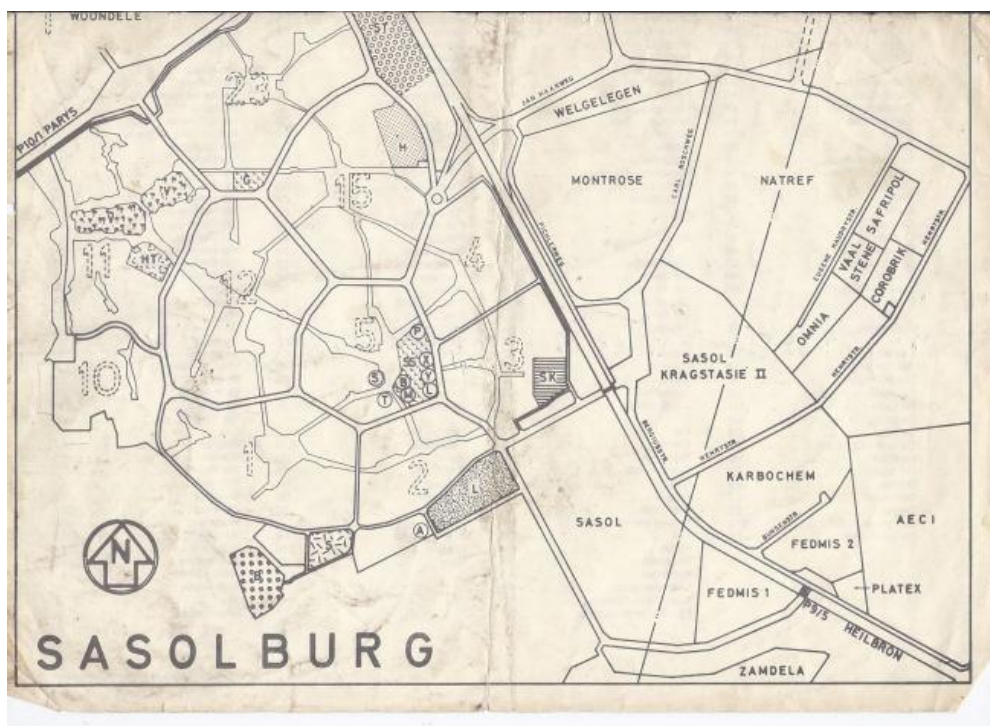


Figure 24: An early map of Sasolburg, showing the residential areas and the location of the SASOL plant. Part of the black township of Zamdela can be seen in the bottom right hand corner

Source: Sasolburgblog, undated

As the sole owner of all land in the town, Sasol exercised strict controls. According to Oranje (1996: 272) “when Sasol said everything was to be controlled, they meant everything: From who lived in which house, according to position, income, educational qualifications, marital status and number of children [. . .], to the issue of which shops would be located where and in which numbers, the appearance of the shops and the lettering on the sign boards . . .”. Along with these strict controls, however, Sasol also provided everything it thought would be required for the wellbeing of the residents and would attract skilled people to the town. This included a library, sport fields and a sport stadium, a botanical garden, a theatre and a recreation facility at the river (Oranje, 1996).

Segregation was understood as part of the plan for Sasolburg from the start. Kirchofer believed that the black residents had essentially the same needs as the white residents and took as much care with the design of the black township, Zamdela as with the rest of Sasolburg. Sasol also followed a policy of housing black employees in well-constructed houses as they believed that this would contribute towards creating a “happy community” (Oranje, 1996: 282).

Zamdela was separated from Sasolburg by the factory. The building of the township was delayed by a high level of interference on technicalities by the Department of Native Affairs and even by the Minister, none other than Hendrik Verwoerd. One of the sticking points was the Department’s insistence that there should be no “mixed” roads, i.e. roads that would be used by both black and white residents (Oranje, 1996). According to Oranje (1996: 282) Sasolburg is, not without reason, “often regarded as one of the best examples of Apartheid planning in South Africa”.

Sasol became a bulwark against the oil sanctions imposed against South Africa during Apartheid (Sparks, 2012). Sparks (ibid: 79) makes elaborate reference to the so-called “techno-nationalist” propaganda that was produced around Sasol in the form of the *Sasol Nuus/News* publication and the showcasing of the project at shows and festivals such as the annual Rand

Easter Show, a festival held in Sasolburg in 1956 and the Republic Festival held in Pretoria in 1966. Images of Sasol also appeared on the two rand note, which has since been discontinued, and on a special commemorative postage stamp (Sparks, 2012). According to Oranje (1996: 269), the National Party's view on Sasol was that it "would prove to the world something about the courage and spirit of enterprise of the country, and of the National Party Government". It was perhaps this objective that drove the high standards of work at Sasol and made it an environment characterised by strict controls and no tolerance for mistakes.

The notion of "respectability" features strongly in Sparks's (2012) study of Sasolburg. Sparks defines the respectable citizen of Sasol as economically independent and privileged, Christian, well presented, and clean living both in the literal and figurative sense.

Among other things, he touches on the fact that many of the white men brought to Sasolburg as lower income workers in the oil-from-coal plant were considered unrespectable, and were referred to as "backvelders" (ibid: 26) that had to be transformed into respectable sophisticates as part of the Apartheid project.

Oranje (1996) reports that interviews with long-time Sasolburg residents indicated that the residents accepted everything decided upon and implemented by Kirchhofer and Sasol in the early days without question. He speculates on various possible reasons for this. Firstly, the Afrikaners, who were the majority of the town's white population, mostly had a strict upbringing that implied respect for authority. Secondly, the young residents of the town were enjoying its benefits and had no cause for complaint. Thirdly, most of the residents were committed to seeing Sasol succeed and therefore supported everything the company or its agents did. Fourthly, the immigrants from the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark were not likely to complain about how things were done in their new country. Lastly, the black residents of Sasolburg (or, rather, of the black township, Zamdela) had no standing whatsoever and

what they felt about the town or how it was managed was of no consequence. It should be noted, however, that reports in editions of the *Sasol News* (the official Sasol newsletter) of the early days indicated that the “natives” enjoyed a good life in Sasolburg (Oranje, 1996).

3.7.4 Secunda

Paquet (2017) considers the town of Secunda in the Mpumalanga province, the site of South Africa’s second “oil from coal” plant, from a feminist ethnographic perspective. The town is the second company town (Sasolburg was the first) that belongs to Sasol Ltd, a company established by the then National Party to manufacture oil from coal through a process that is unique to South Africa.

The first soil was broken in Secunda less than two weeks after one of the most significant events in South Africa’s Apartheid history, namely the Soweto uprising of 16 June 1976.



Figure 25: The Sasol Plant in Secunda
Source: Centre for Environmental Rights

Developed as a new town, Secunda embodied a modernist utopia that is clearly captured in the following quote translated by Paquet (2017: 121) from a newspaper article referring to Secunda as “the wonder town of the Republic”: “A modern wonder of development without equal in the entire Republic and most likely the whole world...In Secunda one brick is placed upon another according to a master plan that, even in its foetus-stage, lay complete on the table, the work of the best brains in all aspects of modern urban design.”

The conceivers of the town were hailed for their expertise and the new town was depicted as superior to other towns in the region (this was also the case with Sasolburg, the first town developed by Sasol Ltd, see 3.7.3 above). *“In light of the political turmoil faced by ‘white’ South Africa, Secunda would symbolise an outpost of Afrikaner independence, determination and strength”* (Paquet, 2017: 121).

Also in keeping with the National Party’s Apartheid ideology, Secunda was seen as the peak of Afrikaner prowess, with the town being reported to be largely Afrikaans in character. Press reports at the time implied that the Afrikaans nature of Secunda would ensure even greater success for the town than Johannesburg, which was perceived to be mostly English-speaking at the time. The town’s perceived superiority was reinforced by the militarisation thereof, with uniformed guards visible in large numbers to protect the Sasol plant from unauthorised entry.

Like all Apartheid towns, Secunda was designated for white people only, with the residential areas for “other” races located about 20km from the town – further away than the black townships serving other Apartheid towns.

Paquet (2017) states that a rationale of “maintaining order” and of “serving the public interest” was often used to justify the displacement of “the other” in Secunda.

At the first Sasol plant in Sasolburg (Sasol I), black employees were only used for unskilled labour, while there were no jobs for Asian, Indian or coloured people. By contrast, skilled black employees were appointed at the launch of the Sasol II and III plants in Secunda. “The establishment of a black middle-class at the Secunda complex was used by Sasol as a stabilising tool in a tumultuous political economy and assisted in maintaining a skilled labour force” (Paquet, 2017: 125).

Of the amount budgeted for the Sasol II plant, seventy to eighty million rand was set aside for the town of Secunda, and only R12 million for the black township of Langverwacht, later known as eMbalenhle. This hierarchy was reinforced by the different densities that applied to Secunda (20 people per hectare) and Langverwacht (38 persons per hectare). The densities approved for the Indian and coloured townships at Kinross were respectively 33 and 36 people per hectare.

The R12m was seen as a big investment, and Langverwacht was hailed as a “dream black township” in the press (Paquet, 2017: 124). The township boasted what was considered to be an exceptional level of facilities, which included a community centre, bus depot, post office, police station, clinic, beerhalls and crèches. There was also a smaller version of the recreation club in Secunda. This should be seen against the backdrop of the townships at Vanderbijlpark, a company town of ISCOR (now ArcelorMittal), where houses did not have running water or electricity connections in the kitchens and no baths.

Sasol employees could build their own houses on plots bought from the company, or they could lease or buy houses. The company stood surety for bank loans for those wishing to purchase houses. While the main aim of the policy was “to ensure a permanent skilled workforce, it also contributed to the establishment of what has later been called white privilege in Secunda” (2017: 126). However, due to the company’s dependence on black skilled workers, the housing policy was also extended to these employees.

Spatial segregation and finer housing were the markers of the elevated status enjoyed by company managers and their families. Senior employees were looked up to as examples of respectability and for setting the standards for the rest of Sasol's workforce. For Sasol, "engineers largely embodied (and embody) this idealised citizen due to their important role at the factory" (Paquet, 2017: 152).

Paquet (2017: 150) argues that "[t]he social engineering of a status-based and idealised society is ubiquitous amongst model company towns: accomplished by means of hierarchical and patriarchal ideology through design". In these towns, paternalism was traditionally exercised by way of subtle control exerted through housing and social policies and even perks such as "free beer and food". As was the case in Sasolburg, the social *status quo* was upheld in Secunda according to certain codes and gender roles that have as their aim "to maintain an industrial efficiency valuable to Sasol's production capabilities" (Paquet, 2017: 148).

As indicated above in the section on Sasolburg, Max Kirchhofer was also the chief architect-planner responsible for the design of Secunda. Inspired by the garden city and new town concepts, he designed the town to have an extended network of green spaces. These, according to Paquet, assisted with the legibility of the town. Kirchhofer's goals with the green network were to contain sprawl and protect pedestrians while accommodating the increasing use of motor vehicles. The result was a number of self-contained neighbourhoods and separation of pedestrians and motor vehicles. The large tracts of green in the town were further expanded through wide road reserves. Along major routes, these were 30 meters wide.

Interviews with residents of Secunda conducted by Paquet (2017) indicate a past in which children could safely traverse the entire town on their bicycles using the green areas and in which they could be catch crabs and small fish in the streams running through them until the Sasol alarm when off at 18:00.

In spite of the above, Paquet (ibid: 165) found that, “Although the town was depicted as a modern utopia by the media, accounts from residents indicate that the everyday experience was not as utopic as depicted”. For some respondents, however, living in Secunda was made worth it by the high salaries paid by Sasol to retain its staff and the relatively low cost of living in the town.

The trees planted in the town were seen to reflect the pioneering, modernizing drive of Sasol and their sturdiness represented “the determination needed to build the Secunda complex (as an oasis and icon of independence strong enough to resist opposition to white domination” (Paquet, 2017: 134). Along with the keys to a new house, residents of Secunda were handed a voucher for trees which would be selected from the nursery and paid for by Sasol.

Urban landscaping and gardening in Secunda played a role in community-building. Paquet (ibid) furthermore observes how well-kept gardens in Secunda became part of a social code linked to “respectability”, much as it was the case in Sasolburg. Poorly maintained green areas were an affront to most of the residents interviewed.

Paquet (ibid) attributes the poor maintenance of green spaces to the cost and effort of maintaining such areas having been underestimated at the time they were established and to the municipality, which “has experienced increased pressure since the amalgamation of twelve municipalities under one administration, requiring that the equipment initially provided by Sasol for Secunda is now shared amongst the green spaces of twelve urban areas” (Paquet, 2017: 138). The municipality has attempted to address this problem by earmarking some green spaces for residential development.

It is clear from the cited responses from the participants in Paquet’s (ibid) research that there is indeed a significant lack of trust in the municipality, with the perception that Sasol has to step in where the municipality fails to deliver.

Apart from a lack of municipal maintenance, crime is a major concern for the residents of Secunda interviewed for Paquet's study and is linked to poorly maintained green areas and the presence of the racial 'other'.

Paquet found that consumerism, or rather, the ability to consume, plays a significant role classifying contemporary individuals as middle-class. She adds that, in Secunda, an individual's status is often signified by the type of car owned. Public transport is therefore not consistent with a middle-class identity. So strong is consumerism as an identity affirming force in Secunda, that Sasol spearheaded the development of a regional shopping mall and private school in order to ensure that its employees, but more especially the housewives of Secunda, are more positive about the town.

While whites constitute only 16% of the population of the municipal area, 7% of that of the Mpumalanga Province and 9% of that of South Africa, in Secunda (excluding the township of eMbalenhle) 74,2% of the population was white at the time of the 2011 census¹⁶. According to Paquet (2017: 175),

[t]he enormity of Secunda's ongoing segregation, its history as one of the greatest attempts at white domination by the Nationalist Party [...], and an increasingly consumerist identity [...] that has informed the values of whiteness over time, makes it a valuable case study of the 'systems' that maintain racial segregation – especially that of white privilege”.

It is against this backdrop that some white residents of the town experience it as a loss when previously “white” spaces are desegregated.

¹⁶ For Virginia, the corresponding figure (i.e. percentage of the population of the town (excluding Meloding) that is white) is 29,75%.

3.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Any major change in an industry that dominates the economy of a town has a traumatic effect on the town, impacting the social wellbeing of the residents, the physical environment and relationships between different stakeholders.

In terms of mitigating these effects, an extreme option is demolition. However, as can be seen from the case of the coal mining villages in County Durham in the UK (Pattison, 2004) this strategy is not at all uncomplicated. Even in the face of dire economic conditions and with no prospect of improvement, there is resistance from residents to leaving sites earmarked for demolition for often ill-understood reasons that have to do with memory, identity and familiarity.

Another option for mitigating the effects of mine closure or dominant industry decline is amalgamation. While amalgamation theoretically holds substantial benefits in terms of economies of scale, it is clear that the location of a town in relation to larger urban centres in the area may preclude this option.

The least disruptive option following mine closure is to ensure a new lease of life for the town through economic growth in other sectors. The examples of single industry towns discussed in this chapter show, however, that the ideal of economic diversification is an elusive one at best. We have yet to clearly understand why a town such as Benoni succeeded in securing a life beyond gold mining while Virginia, where much the same strategies were employed (see paragraph 5.7.2 in Chapter 5), failed to do so. More richly detailed and contextualised practice stories (see Watson, 2002 and Oranje and Berrisford, 2012) are required for us to understand not only the unique factors that play a role in individual towns, but perhaps also a few more general principles that may be applied to promote economic development of single industry towns as a specific urban typology.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the blueprint or strategy that was followed in executing the research project. As suggested by Du Toit (2015: 62), I was guided in the design of the study not only by proven good research practice as it is advocated by planning and other social science scholars, but also by my own experience and intuition.

My unique combination of academic interests (urban and regional planning and creative writing) coupled with maturity and an empathic personality contributed significantly to the choice of study and the study methods selected. This was the main reason for choosing a slightly unusual dual approach to the study questions and objectives.

Furthermore, thanks to these attributes, I qualify for the “shadow passport” that is required to explore “the unfolding, fragmenting, decomposing and increasingly shadowy realities of modern life” (Berman, 1988: 257) in Virginia, or, as Oranje (1996: 265) states it, to “discern the background noises and silences” on the margins of the stories.

In their ground-breaking book on research methods in planning, Silva *et al* (2015) claim that research in the planning field has distinguishing characteristics. These include: a focus on practice, on knowledge application and therefore on the future of places; an interest in the complex relations and forces that shape the quality of places, which often demands attention to different disciplinary and research traditions, and lastly, a sensitivity to the broader socio-political context of the research and to ethical considerations.

All of the above characteristics certainly apply to the study at hand, which seeks on the one hand to understand the real-world problem of the effects of mine closure on mining towns and the people who live in them and on the other to consider whether narrative applications to urban and regional

planning research indicate the possible development of a narratology of planning that result in reciprocal advancement of both the field of planning and that of narratology.

Making recommendations for improvement has not been identified as an outcome of this research. Yet, the deep understanding I seek to gain is a prerequisite for future attempts at making such recommendations. This tallies with the view expressed by Thomas and Lo Piccolo (2015: 76), that “Regarding research as intended to help us understand the world better, and hence differently, has additional sets of normative implications, particularly for a discipline like planning, because understanding the world a certain way suggests ways in which it can, and should, be changed.” More is said on the “normative implications” of the study design in paragraph 4.7 below.

Drawing on post-structuralist planning, and in particular on Jean Hillier’s (2008, 2011) Deleuzoguattarian-inspired multiplanar theory of planning, this study focuses strongly on the activity of tracing, of determining how things, i.e., the Virginia of today, came to be, taking into account “path dependencies, transformations and ruptures” (Hillier, 2011: 509). In this regard, a narrative perspective, described in more detail in paragraph 4.5.1 below was followed.

It is acknowledged, as stated by Hillier (*ibid*), that tracing can never be “complete”, either in the sense of being absolutely comprehensive or of being finished or done. Within the endlessly complex web of interrelated forces and relations, any tracing exercise has to be bounded, by “selecting some lines to follow, rather than others” (*ibid*).

In this study, the “lines” that were followed were the elements of hope and utopia, South Africa’s Apartheid history and the aftermath thereof, modernism, selected planning trends/approaches/theories and four stories of other single-industry towns/cities that I used to craft a varifocal lens through which to read and illuminate the Virginia story/stories. The varifocal lens as an innovative textual device employed for looking at or reading the Virginia stories is

described in detail in Chapter 1 – see paragraph 1.1.3 and also figures 1 and 61.

The study includes, following a narrative approach (see paragraph 4.2.1 below), an attempt at what Hillier (2011) calls “mapping and diagramming”, namely to make visible the intersecting lines; to mark the territory – not as a merely descriptive exercise but with a view to the future, to a possible becoming (note the strong parallels with Bloch’s description of hope and “the new” as presented in section 2.5.1 in Chapter 2). In this sense, mapping and diagramming should be seen as an exploratory, interpretive, and suggestive activity. It is important to note that the terms “tracing”, “mapping”, and “diagramming” are only a few among many that could be used for the messy process of piecing together the Virginia story, arriving finally at a “dispositif” (a term Hillier (2011: 510) borrows from Foucault), or an ensemble of a wide range of different elements such as discourses, the built form, regulatory and administrative structures and measures, etc., etc.

It was understood from the outset, as argued by Ng (2015: 158) that the theoretical framing of a study had to be flexible, both because of the fluid nature of the phenomena under study and conceptual limitations of the researcher’s initial construct, and that there should therefore be room for “modification as the research and reflections on research findings proceed”.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

4.2.1 A specific kind of case study research

This study could be considered a case study in as far as it focuses on a particular town, Virginia. It would be more accurate, however, to say that the study tells the unique story (or rather, stories) of Virginia, than it would be to say that it presents a case study of the town. The exact nuances of this distinction are difficult to articulate, although it probably lies in the focus on the lived experiences of residents of the town rather than on technical details, statistics and proven historical data. Nonetheless, there are strong similarities

between the approach taken to this study and that which would typically be considered as case study research.

Silva *et al* (2015) view case study research as particularly relevant to planning and argue that such studies have greatly increased the understanding of planning and development processes within complex normative agendas. As stated by Pinel (2015: 170), place-based social science research is required in order to understand the interplay between social, cultural, economic, environmental, and political factors that influence the outcomes of spatial planning.

The study approach also bears strong parallels to ethnography. An ethnographic study is usually an in-depth empathic study of a small sample group. It relies heavily on interpretation and is comfortable with unstructured data (Herbert: 2000). In his defense of ethnography against criticism that it is unscientific, subjective and overly dependent on interpretation and that ethnographic studies are impossible to replicate, Herbert (2000: 564) argues that “[n]o other methodology enables a researcher to explore the complex connections that social groups establish with one another and with the places they inhabit, cultivate, promote, defend, dominate and love”. While I was not a participant observer to the level, for example, of living in Virginia, as is the case with most ethnographers, I took pains to immerse myself in the object of my research (Virginia) to an extent that would allow the detailed emphatic understanding sought through an ethnographic study.

This study takes an ethnographic approach to telling and interpreting the story/stories of Virginia in depth and primarily from the perspective of the people living in the town. The study seeks to uncover both the dominant and/or typical narratives of Virginia, which could also be called “master narratives” (see Dlamini, 2009), and stories that contest or contradict these. These narratives are then analysed both from a structural and a constructivist narrative perspective (see paragraph 4.5.1 below). The narrative analysis was not only brought to bear on the stories told by the respondents, but also on the provincial and municipal plans pertaining to Virginia.

The specific kind of “case study” conducted can be described as a narrative case study and more specifically a phronetic case study as described by Flyvbjerg (2001). As such, the study does not use as a point of departure theoretical assumptions. The basis for the study is rather “an interest in a particular phenomenon that is best understood narratively” Flyvbjerg (2001: 137).

The narrative was an integrated and integral part of the study. Narrative constituted part of the content of the study (through the focus on narratology), and was also the main device (along with and integrated into the varifocal lens referred to in paragraph 1.1.3 and elsewhere in this chapter) that 1) guided the scholarly investigation of the subject matter, 2) structured the presentation of the findings and 3) facilitated interpretation of the findings. As vital aspect of the study, the narrative is discussed in detail in Chapter 2, Framing the study, see paragraph 2.2. Of particular interest is for the use of the narrative as a study method, is paragraph 2.2.2, which considers the use of the narrative in planning theory and practice.

Booth (2015: 92) aptly likens a qualitative planning case study to a piece of investigative journalism, or a forensic investigation – clues from various sources are collected and analysed with a view to piecing together what could be deemed an accurate presentation of the case under investigation.

4.2.2 A qualitative study following a mixed-methods approach

The research approach was informed by the research problem as set out in Chapter 1. As the study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of a complex phenomenon, it was important to illuminate it from various angles and sources. In the light of the nature of the information that was sought, the study relied to a large extent on qualitative information, information relaying the experience and perceptions of people involved with the town of Virginia in various capacities.

No study has to date been conducted into how residents of Virginia experienced their town during the gold mining boom and its aftermath. Similarly, the specific question asked in this study regarding the appropriateness of considering the development of a narratology of planning has not previously been addressed. In these respects, the study can be considered exploratory (Du Toit, 2015: 63).

That which is explored is of necessity described, but the purpose of the research is not primarily descriptive. Rather, it is interpretative, focussing specifically on interpretation of the inputs obtained from the residents and on the provincial and municipal plans for Virginia as narratives, while viewing them through the varifocal lens.

In this manner, a deep understanding of the story of Virginia was achieved and a considered view could be presented regarding the feasibility of developing a narratology of planning.

4.3 DATA COLLECTION

As indicated in paragraph 4.1 above, in the processes of tracing, mapping and diagramming, I drew on various sources of information, both primary and secondary, and therefore hybrid, (Du Toit, 2015: 66) in order to reach the study objective.

4.3.1 Framing of the study and literature review

In most studies, the philosophical framing of the study and the literature review are not dealt with under the heading of data collection, which is understandable as the literature review usually precedes the chapter on research methods in a thesis. These aspects are seen as part of the preparatory work for the research, rather than as a source of data. This view, however, does not support an integrated approach to the study topic and holds the risk that chapters are presented as discrete sections, without ever achieving true synthesis of the study material.

In conducting this study, therefore, the background on the elements of the varifocal lens, i.e., the narrative form, the philosophical constructs of utopia and hope, the notion of modernism, different planning trends or approaches and narratives of other South African single-industry towns, as well as the scholarly work on mining towns and the effect of mine closure on such towns, was dealt with as an integral part of the study. The active engagement with this information in presenting and interpreting the Virginia narratives is evident from the intersectional manner in which the main research findings are presented in Chapter 5.

4.3.2 Secondary data collection

To a lesser extent, apart from scholarly literature, national, provincial and municipal legislative and policy documents, reports and strategies were considered, as well as documentation from the mining companies. Some reference is made to relevant media reports. Information obtained from the sources mentioned above, whether digital or in hard copy, can be considered the “secondary data” that was made use of in the course of the study.

4.3.3 Primary data collection: Sampling and data collection instrument

4.3.3.1 Sampling

The primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with key role players (or “key informants” as they are referred to by Pinel (2015: 173)) in Virginia. These role players were the focus of the primary data collection on the grounds that they are the custodians of essential local knowledge, referred to as *metis* by Scott (1998) or as “knowledgeable agents” by Herbert, (2000: 551).

The aim was not to obtain expert knowledge about urban and regional planning, mining, local economic development or any related issues, but to gain an understanding of the “lived experience” of a specific locus in space

and time (i.e. Virginia from the early 1970s to date). During the interviews, close attention was paid to what the respondents said, focusing on listening, rather than merely hearing. As stated by Krogh (2013: 133) “[a] more intentional form of hearing is ‘listening’. One listens because one wants to understand”.

In a sense, the respondents self-reported their eligibility for inclusion in the study, as they are people who are (or rather have made themselves) known to have a significant relationship with Virginia. Among other things, this could be through being vocal about or actively involved in issues affecting the town, or through making a particular contribution to the town, possibly over many years. Most of the respondents were identified through word of mouth referrals and social media, in particular the two active Facebook groups *Virginia Meloding Information* and *Virginia OFS, My dorp, my trots* (Virginia OFS, My town, my pride).

Although not entirely successful (as no black women were interviewed), an effort was made to ensure diversity of the sample, which was purposively selected to best serve the objectives of the study as explained above in respect of gender, age and race. The sample group was relatively small, comprising only 20 people as the in-depth nature of the investigation, both with respect to data collection and the analysis thereof, did not lend itself to a bigger group. Limiting the sample group in favour of a more detailed investigation is in line with the ethnographic approach taken to this study (see also Herbert, 2000).

In addition to that of residents of Virginia, the views of role players from the mining sector and from within the Matjhabeng Local Municipality were also solicited.

No sampling of the plans analysed for the study was required, as all the plans pertaining to Virginia that existed at the municipal (the Lewjeleputswa District Municipality and the Matjhabeng Local Municipality) and provincial (Free State Province) level at the time of the study were analysed.

4.3.3.2 Primary data collection instrument: semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews as a data collection method in qualitative research as advocated by Silverman, 2015: 149; Pinel, 2015: 173 and Håkansson, 2015: 185 were used as the instrument for collecting the primary research data. This provided a standardised guideline for purposes of comparability, but at the same time allowed for probing and follow-up questions to explore clues yielded by a specific discussion. Where face-to-face interviews were not possible due to geographical or time constraints, telephone interviews were held or the interview questions were emailed to respondents as a questionnaire to complete.

4.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Much has been written on research ethics and it would add no value to the study to debate the various arguments regarding the ethical considerations that should be taken into account when conducting a study of this nature.

The research was conducted in accordance with the widely accepted principles of integrity, voluntary participation and informed consent, avoidance of harm and confidentiality (Thomas & Lo Piccolo, 2015).

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Although this is not often described in this manner, analysis starts very early on in the process of conducting any research project. It begins when the researcher considers a variety of possible research themes and topics from the universe of possibilities he or she is exposed to. In conducting the literature review, also, the researcher analyses a vast amount of information in order to structure the review into sections according to identified themes and sub-themes. While some themes are typically identified before embarking on the review process, the list is added to or refined in the course of the review. Analysis similarly plays a part in creating an appropriate research design, right down to the level of selecting a research instrument (an interview

in this case) and structuring the individual questions. Lastly, the research findings are analysed to identify themes and meaningful patterns that relate to these themes. In fact, there is an on-going cycle of exploration and analysis, with iterative feedback loops involving the “examination and re-examination of data” (Silverman, 2015: 141) that ultimately gives the thesis its final shape. As stated by Thomas & Lo Piccolo (2015: 75) “Writing up research can be considered part of the analytical process. Writing clearly involves choices – of evidence, interpretation, and language – as researchers make out a case as to what they believe they have established”.

The following diagram is self-reflexive as it not only depicts a certain process, but is in itself a manifestation of that which it depicts. It can be explained as follows: The diagram on the left was drawn at the outset of the study, around March 2015. Almost a year and a half later, in August 2016, after I have read the work of Balducci *et al* (2011) on post-structuralist planning and of Hillier (2011) on multiplanar planning, the diagram was reworked to look as it appears on the right of the below image. It continued to be refined up until the final submission of the thesis in 2018. The evolution towards the second diagram proves the iterative process described by the first.

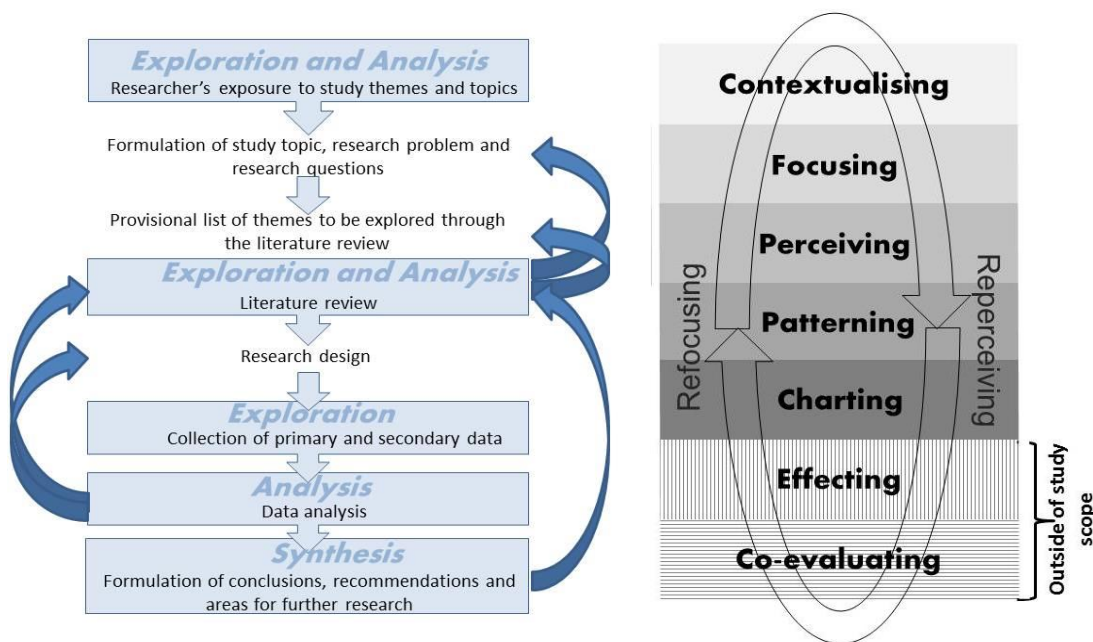


Figure 26: Two alternative simplified representations of the research process and feedback loops created by the author

While striving to show the iterative nature of the research process, the diagram above may seem to suggest that it is a structured and linear process, which, at least at the outset, it is not. It can rather be described as organic. Although not linear, the process is indeed systematic – an attribute identified by Silva *et al* (2015: xxv) as a distinguishing characteristic of research investigation. Systematic investigation, they claim, “implies careful and thoughtful design of the processes by which data is gathered, a clear conceptual framework to guide collection and analysis of data, and a general sense of rigour and craft in the overall conduct of research activity”.

Campbell (2015) describes research as a messy and uncertain process, while Healey (2015b: 60) states that “[r]esearch work is full of surprises, and flashes of understanding, along with the potential for wrong turnings and confusion”. This is no different from the strategic navigation process described by Hillier, “which allows disparate points of view”, “indeterminate essences rather than ordered ones” and “intuition and uncertainty, multiplicity and complexity” (Hillier, 2011: 523).

Metaphors for the research process abound, with the most popular probably being that of a “journey of discovery”, clearly resonating with the Foucauldian metaphor, built upon by his contemporaries Deleuze and Guattari, of navigation or piloting that is used by Hillier in putting forward the multiplanar theory for strategic spatial planning (Hillier, 2011) referred to in section 4.1. An equally appropriate metaphor for research if not for planning is probably that of coming upon an intriguing heap of tangled knitting yarns of different colours and thicknesses, choosing a few for the item you want to knit and then painstakingly disentangling those yarns from the rest, only at the very end taking up your needles and knitting them together in the pattern of your choice. You do this all the while knowing that your knitting teacher may complain about the stitch you have chosen, the consistency of the tension, stitches that have been dropped or knitted together, or even the yarns and needles you chose in the first place. Sometimes you, yourself, will realise that different yarns, stitches or needles from what you have originally chosen

would be better suited for the project. This process of refutation is described in detail by Webster (2015: 112). Often the only remedy is to undo part or all of the knitting and start over. Indeed, this thesis is one complete product among several projects that were abandoned along the way, never to see the light of day.

The different steps in the research process in a qualitative study, as opposed to a study approached from the positivist paradigm, are neither discrete nor sequential and neither is it the ideal that they should be thus (Thomas & Lo Piccolo, 2015: 75). Furthermore, keeping to the knitting metaphor, I concur strongly with the view held by Silva *et al* (2015) that planning research is a craft – it is a creative activity that relies not only on intelligent observation, but also on imaginative analysis and requires well-honed skills of interpretation.

4.5.1 Narrative and discourse analysis

As indicated earlier, the life stories of the people of Virginia and the plans pertaining to the town were analysed as narratives related to four different aspects of planning. These are: The use of narratives as a way of telling and understanding practice stories – stories of places or planning processes; the narrative or elements thereof as a structure to make plans accessible and understandable/readable, the use of narratives to enable “world-making” through planning and, lastly, the reading of spaces (cities and towns) as narratives.

These narratives were read with the help of the varifocal lens crafted of six contextual elements as described in Chapters 1 and 2.

The narrative analysis conducted was structural, constructivist and discursive. I briefly discuss each of these aspects below. For more on the form in life and academe, with specific reference to the use of the narrative in planning, consult paragraph 2.2 in Chapter 2.

The **structural** analysis of the stories considered the structural elements that together constitute the story-world. The list of structural elements I considered in my analysis was informed by that of Throgmorton (2003) and consist of narrator/narration, plot, character, setting, and point of view.

The **constructivist** analysis of the narratives drew on Goodman's (1978) five procedures for constructing story-worlds, namely composition and decomposition, weighting, ordering, deletion and supplementation (see also paragraph 2.2.1).

The **discursive** aspect of analysis consisted of identifying words or phrases that were often used, referred to as signal words or phrases, or that conveyed certain meanings. By linking signal phrases to certain topics or interview questions, while taking into account their frequency and the category of respondent they occur in, deductions about the perceptions and experiences of the respondents were made.

While verbal clues were important in the analysis of data for this study, the value of non-verbal clues should not be underestimated. As the preferred data collection instrument for this study, face-to-face interviews allowed me to observe non-verbal clues that assist with interpretation, in particular where I did not speak the interviewee's home language and the interview therefore had to be conducted in a second language of myself or the interviewee or both of us (Booth, 2015: 92, 93). I took special care to avoid the pitfalls of translation highlighted by Booth (ibid) and by Krogh (2013). Krogh considers the sometimes devastating results of errors of translation (and interpretation) in testimony given before the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission from 1996 to 1998.

4.6 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

4.6.1 Limitations of a qualitative approach

Choosing a qualitative rather than a quantitative study approach of necessity means that one sacrifices aspects of comparability and the ability to replicate the study in favour of a deeper understanding of an individual case (see Yin, 1999, for an in-depth discussion of tests for reliability and validity).

I agree with Paquet (2017) that consistency and transparency enhance the reliability of an ethnographic study. Throughout the study, I have endeavoured to be consistent by doing everything that I undertake to do in the study (for instance focusing on people's lived experiences, presenting not only dominant but also contradictory stories, refraining from making specific, concrete action recommendations, etc.) and also in the consistent use of terminology. Transparency was assured by making explicit and visible in the text all assumptions and choices regarding the study, for instance in the elements I chose to include in the varifocal lens and in all aspects of the study design and methodology.

4.6.2 Bias

According to Yin (1999), reliability is achieved by minimising errors and the level of bias in a study. In respect of bias, there are also specific limitations related to the narrative analysis of the stories told by the informants that has been chosen as the core of this study. As indicated by Taylor (2009), people use narratives or discursive action to do so-called "identity work", i.e., a speaker will present a selective picture of events and emphasize certain aspects of events in order to present themselves as belonging (or not belonging) to a certain group. If this is accepted, the study is indeed subject to a double jeopardy in that the information presented by the informants is filtered through the subjective, identity-seeking perspective of the person that was interviewed, but subsequently also through my own subjective lens as the researcher. Arguing that this lens will play no role in the presentation and

interpretation of the research findings would be fruitless. As observed by Booth (2015: 90), “the idea of the wholly neutral observer does not accord with the reality of empirical research”. I support the premise that “however material and ‘real’ is the world in which we humans live, we can never fully grasp this reality because of the limits of human sensibilities” (Silva *et al*, 2015: xxxiii). Nonetheless, as can be expected from an interpretative social science study such as this, I subscribe to a subjectivist ontology, and the pragmatic acceptance of multiple social realities (see also Du Toit, 2015: 64, 65).

The most I could do is to undertake to be “intellectually honest at all times” (University of Pretoria, 2007: 2), and furthermore, to be consistent throughout the study in terms of my academic approach, level of diligence, etc. Facts were verified, as far as possible, through the triangulation of information obtained from various sources as indicated in paragraph 4.2.

However sincere the attempt that is made in this thesis to give an honest account of the story or, rather, stories of Virginia, there can be no claim that this telling represents a singular “truth”. Peattie (1987: 5) states it aptly when she says that “every telling represents a different way of seeing. We see from where we stand; and why would we look unless we care about how the story comes out?”

4.7 APPLICATION OF THE STUDY FINDINGS – RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Silva *et al* (2015) highlight an action-orientation as a distinguishing factor of planning research (see also Ng, 2015: 22). This study seeks to make a contribution to the practice of planning and planning research.

Firstly, it is hoped that the research will enhance the understanding of those involved in any aspect of local governance and mining of the impact their decisions have and the factors that enhance or detract from such impact. Perhaps participation in the study alone will already promote such awareness.

Those who participated in the study will also receive an email with a link to the thesis once the research has been completed. This is done with due cognisance of the fact that, as explained by Healey (2015a: 9) “there is no simple linear relationship between a research study and a practical outcome” and “[s]ome impacts occur on much longer timescales, as a new generation of students reads the work of a previous generation”.


In the second instance, I humbly attempt to make a contribution to the vast discourse about narrative applications in planning, calling for further consideration of the notion of a narratology of planning that will be truly cross-disciplinary in the sense that it enhances both the field of planning and of narratology.

With regard to the Virginia story/stories, it is appropriate here to refer again to paragraph 1.4 in the introductory chapter and to confirm that a summarised generalisation that could be applied to other mining towns is not the envisaged outcome of this study. The “craving for generality” (Bevir and Rhodes, 2006: 172 as quoted by Balducci et al, 2011: 489) is resisted in this study as it is by Balducci, Nyseth, Boelens and Wilkinson in their 2011 studies of Milan, Tromsø (Norway), Mainport Rotterdam and Melbourne respectively. Notwithstanding this, I concur with the statement made by Watson (2002:179) in advocating for planning practice stories as a means of learning, that “highly specific, context-bound accounts of planning activity are able to bridge the gap between theory and practice and are able to give better insight into the nature and possibilities of planning practice than previous theories were able to do”.

In this respect, I concur with Flyvbjerg (2001: 84-87) when he cautions against the pursuit of “*conceptual closure*” that can tempt the researcher to sacrifice detail. He argues that “the narrative itself is the answer”. This approach is clearly aligned with Hillier’s (2008, 2011) multiplanar methodology. “Rather than seeing specific ‘problems’ which require a particular ‘solution’, multiplanar planning would regard problems as opening up multiple fields of possibilities for discussion of what might be different” (Hillier, 2008: 35).

CHAPTER 5: THE VIRGINIA STORY – PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the study findings, namely the many narratives that together constitute the Virginia story, including the provincial and municipal plans for the town, read as stories, are presented. The narratives are constructed from information gained from in-depth interviews with people living and working in, or otherwise involved with the town (primary data) as well as from a wide variety of secondary sources as set out in Chapter 4. This was supplemented with the impressions gained during three site visits to Virginia. More about these visits appear in section 5.3 below. As the findings are presented, they are interpreted (read) from a structural, constructivist and discursive narrative perspective through the varifocal lens described earlier, consisting of the notions of utopia/dystopia and hope, modernism, Apartheid and selected urban and regional planning approaches. To assist the reader in navigating the document, these interpretations are presented in a different font to the rest of the thesis and introduced by an icon representing a pair of spectacles ()

5.2 BACKGROUND ABOUT THE TOWN OF VIRGINIA

5.2.1 Location, municipal governance, and size

Situated in the north-western Free State province, Virginia is the southern-most town in the Free State gold fields, situated about 143 km northwest of the provincial capital, Bloemfontein, at 25°05' S and 26°50' E at an average height of 1 325m above sea level. The closest towns to Virginia are Welkom and Hennenman (see figure 26).

The town is located in the Matjhabeng Local Municipality, which in turn forms part of the Lejweleputswa District Municipality. The seat of the Mathjabeng Local Municipality is the city of Welkom, which is located just under 20km by road from Virginia. The other towns in the Municipality are Odendaalsrus, Hennenman, Allanridge and Ventersburg.



Figure 27: Map showing the location of Virginia in the Free State province
 Adapted from: Free State Province, 2013

According to the 2011 census figures, Virginia has a population of 66 208, while the 2016 Community Survey estimates the town’s population at 91963, which means it can be regarded as a “small town”¹⁷. Table 1 below shows the distribution per population group of Virginia’s population.

Table1: Distribution of Virginia’s population per population group
 Source: Matjhabeng Local Municipality, undated

Virginia*: Percentage of population per population group	
Black African	88.7
Coloured	0.6
Indian or Asian	0.4
White	10.3

*Including Meloding

¹⁷ The 1995 RSA Urban Development Strategy classifies towns with a population of less than 100 000 as small towns (Reynolds & Antrobus, 2012).

Meloding, the historically black township just outside of Virginia, is separated from the historically white part of the town by a 7km long road flanked by mining ground and the industrial area. Meloding has a much higher density (i.e., smaller stand sizes) than the rest of Virginia.

The table below shows the different land uses in Virginia/Meloding. Of interest is the large number of erven demarcated as parks in Virginia and the relatively large number of erven for educational use in Meloding. Informal development is limited to Meloding.

Table 2: Land use in Virginia/Meloding
Source: Matjhabeng Local Municipality, undated

TOWN	TOTAL ERVEN	BUSINESS	CEMETERY	EDUCATIONAL	GOVERNMENT	INDUSTRIAL	INSTITUTIONAL	PARKS	RESIDENTIAL
VIRGINIA	6431	306	1	19	11	184	32	168	5710
MELODING	10774	100	4	80				62	1052
SUBTOTAL	17205	406	5	99	11	184	32	230	1623

The most notable natural feature of the town is the shallow Sand River, which flows more or less through the centre of the town.

5.2.2 History

The history of the town of Virginia is very well documented from its establishment in 1892 to 1980 thanks to the study by Viljoen (1994) referred to in Chapter 1 and is not discussed in detail here.

The buoyancy and optimism around the discovery of gold in the north-western part of what was then known as the Orange Free State province stemmed from the fact that, in the months preceding World War II, it had seemed that the country had reached its capacity in terms of gold production. There had

been fears that gold production, the country's primary source of wealth, would gradually decline as the mines on the Witwatersrand neared the end of their productive lifespan (Anglo American Corporation of SA Ltd, 1957).

The discovery of gold in the Free State followed half a century after that on the Witwatersrand. This is ascribed to the reef being covered by a layer of Karoo and Ventersdorp stone that varies in thickness from 91m to 533m. There are also coal deposits, but these are too deep and of too poor a quality to make extraction feasible. Secondary limestone deposits occur widely in the Kroonstad-Hennenman-Virginia area and have been extensively excavated (Viljoen, 1994).

The fact that the newly discovered gold fields were sparsely populated and consisted of little more than maize and cattle farms, presented a development opportunity the scope of which was unrivalled in South Africa up to that point in time:

This called for the greatest single programme of planning and development in the Union's history. Regional control of the change of use of land was undertaken by a government-appointed body; and town-planners, engineers and architects provided the blueprints for the new towns of Welkom, Virginia and Allanridge, in an area where previously there had been only two hamlets and a lonely railway halt. (Anglo American Corporation of SA Ltd, 1957: 3-4)

According to Viljoen (1994), in planning Virginia, as was the case with its larger neighbour, Welkom, the aim was to create examples of ideal urban and regional planning (of utopia?), not only in South Africa, but globally. The town planners, Major JC Collings¹⁸ and partners, strove to create a coordinated and harmonious development that would ensure health, safety, orderliness, friendliness, comfort and general wellbeing and which would be efficient and

¹⁸ Collings was appointed by the Virginia Land and Estate Company Ltd, a non-profit organisation founded by Anglo Transvaal Mines Consolidated (the Anglo-Vaal Group) and the Central Mining and Investment Corporation Ltd to purchase all possible land on the site where the new town Virginia was to be developed (Viljoen, 1994).

economical. The size of the town was planned according to its estimated gold mining potential, taking into account the location of the Sand River and the potential surface area that would be taken up by mining activities. In the design of Virginia, which initially included only the “white” part of the town, high-lying areas were earmarked for residential, commercial, administrative, educational and industrial purposes, while the low lying areas, especially in the flood plain of the river, were indicated for recreational facilities and sewerage works.

Apart from a central area, the town initially consisted of four residential areas, namely Virginia Central and Merriespruit south of the river and Harmony and Saaiplaas to the north of it¹⁹ and an industrial area. While each of the residential areas was placed close to a mine shaft, the intention was to not only provide for the white mine employees, but also for their families and their needs. Each area would have its own schools, churches, shops, community centre, police station and recreational facilities (Viljoen, 1994). The suburbs were therefore linked, but not integrated.

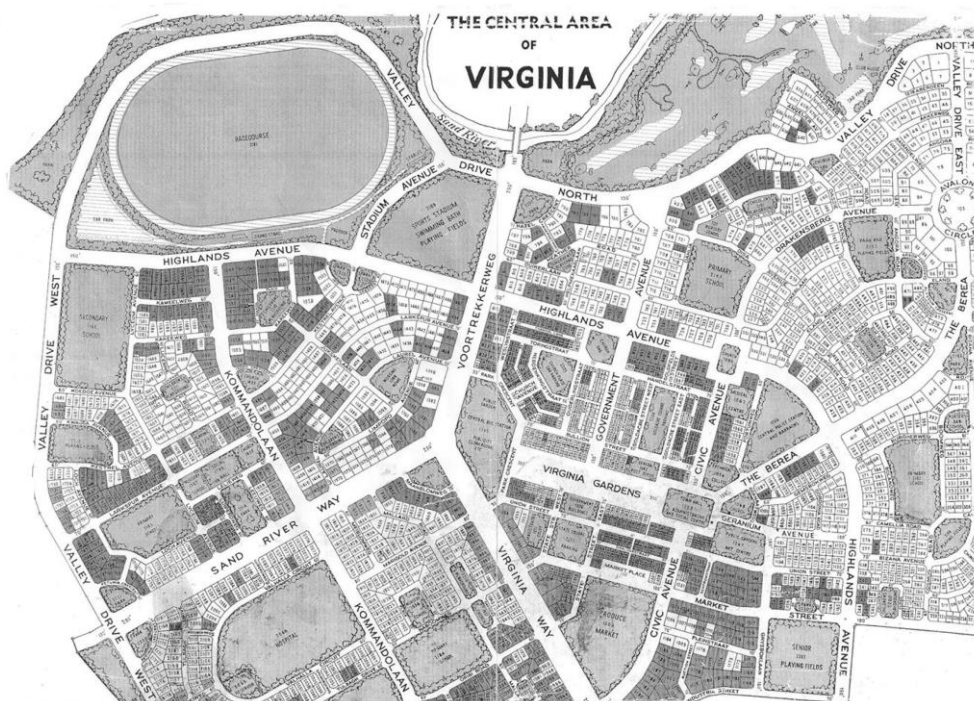


Figure 28: 1959 map of the central area of Virginia showing the many parks and green spaces

Source: Mauer, 2013a

¹⁹ Kitty was added as a suburb around a new mine shaft to the west of Merriespruit on the other side of the R73.

Sparks (2012: 104) sees the design of Sasolburg as “a response to the emergent car-centric consumer economy of the early Apartheid period”. If the broad streets are anything to go by, Virginia was certainly also designed with the private car in mind. Viljoen (1994) reports that the first building to be erected in the town centre was a movie theatre. As the road network had not been developed at the time, cars would converge on the theatre from all directions.

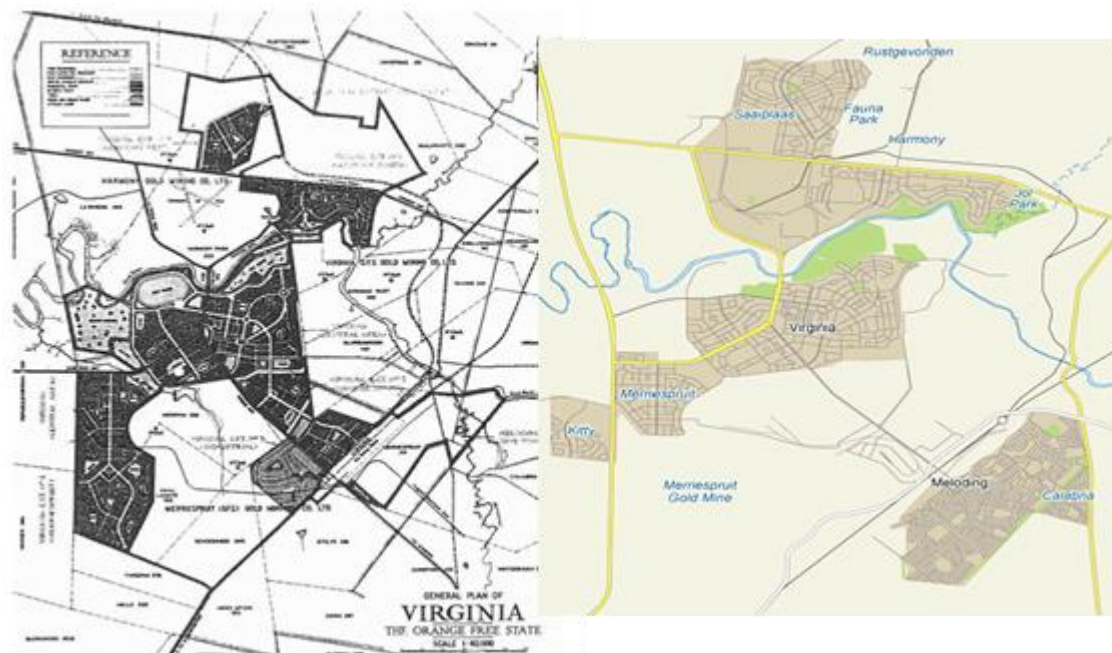


Figure 29: The original town plan for Virginia and the present-day layout of the town
Source: Viljoen, 1994; Mapstudio, undated

Looking back from the time of writing this thesis, it is difficult to believe that, in 1960, there were ambitions for a university to be established in Virginia (Viljoen, 1994) and for large industrial and infrastructural developments such as an aeroplane factory and a race track to be located in the town (see section 5.5.4.2 for more on the latter two projects).

That the idealism underlying all utopian thought was also prevalent in the early days of Virginia is perhaps best illustrated by the country-wide competition that was launched by the township developers in 1959 to design a characteristic house for the Highveld and the rest of the country. With a cash prize at stake, the design had to be for a three bedroom home that

would not cost more than £5000 to build. Architects from all the then four provinces of South Africa and even from other countries entered. LR Flynn submitted the winning design, which was innovative in several respects: It was built of wood and therefore could be moved; it had a cruciferous design, which linked the interior of the house with the outside; fibreglass between the wooden panels made it sound proof; new electrical devices were designed specifically for the house, such as a switch that could turn on more than one light at once. In addition, new styles of furniture and wall decorations were designed for the house²⁰ (Viljoen, 1994).



Figure 30: The Highveld House
Source: *The Friend*, 29 August 1964

In its heyday, Virginia not only captured the imagination of its residents and visitors who came to the town to take wedding pictures in its parks (according to respondents Angus and Bettie). So inspired was the world renowned French hairdresser, Alexander, of the Harriet Hubart Ayer group, by the new town of Virginia, that he created a hairstyle, the *Virginie*, in honour of it (Viljoen, 1994) (see figure 30 below).

²⁰ The house won a gold medal at the Jubileum Rand Show in 1960, where it was viewed by more than 200 000 people. According to Viljoen (1994), while it is reported that the house stimulated interest in Virginia, there is no evidence that it influenced the architecture of houses in the town on the whole.



Figure 31: The Virginie hairstyle created by the French hairdresser Alexander in honour of the town of Virginia
Source: Viljoen, 1994

According to Viljoen (1994), the new town of Virginia was a tourism magnet shortly after its establishment. Tourists from all over the world visited the town thanks to its modern layout and the opportunity to go down a gold mine. The South African Information Service also brought tour groups to the town on a regular basis (Viljoen, 1994).

At the height of the mining boom, Virginia had much in common with the Zimbabwean mining towns during their heyday under colonial rule. Kamete (2012) describe mining towns such as Mhangura, Alaska and Maturashanga during this period as areas of prosperity where people earned reasonable wages, and in addition enjoyed free housing and services. Some mining companies funded local initiatives such as sporting clubs and mining towns boasted very good schools. Mining towns benefited from national initiatives

such as free primary education and health care and the introduction of a statutory minimum wage following independence.

According to an assessment made by the Centre for Development Enterprise (2005), by the late 1980s, the economy of the Free State gold fields was almost entirely (90%) based on the primary economy, namely mining.

☞ The story of the establishment of Virginia has strong utopian undertones. Viljoen (1994) shows that Virginia was designed with the ideal in mind of creating an environment in which residents would experience harmony and wellbeing. From reports of the early history of Virginia (ibid) one gets a sense of aspirations to create an “ideal” or “perfect” town on what were previously the bare plains of the Orange Free State province.

The careful thought about how the built environment would support society (the structure and activities thereof) that characterises the utopian story-worlds referred to in section 2.3.2 in Chapter 2, and also the utopian settlements planned by Fra Giocondo and Ledoux, among others, and later by Garnier, Howard and Olmsted (see section 2.3.3) also characterised the planning of Virginia.

Yet, the story of Virginia’s establishment, a story that is “written” in the spatial form of the town, contests the claims by the founding fathers of the town (as captured by Viljoen, 1994) that people were the first priority. The layout of the town, which still prevails today, was determined in the first instance by where the mining shafts were.

The metanarratives of modernity and Apartheid provide the subtext (or supertext) for the Virginia story. That the establishment of Virginia was a modernising effort is clear from the prominence enjoyed by professionals such as engineers, architects and town planners (Anglo American Corporation of SA Ltd, 1957), coupled with a quantitative, scientific approach (the size of the town was determined by projections around the mining operations) and a pre-occupation with creating order. The layout of the town (separation of living and working spaces, particularly as far as the central business district is concerned) makes it impossible to achieve the urbanity Jane Jacobs (1961)

idealises. It is Berman's (1988: 168) modern pastoral: "a spatially and socially segmented world – people here, traffic there; work here, homes there".

A tangible symbol of the modern values that underpinned the design of the new town of Virginia and the prominence given to scientific and technological knowledge (to the exclusion of other forms of knowledge, as described by Berman, 1988; Docherty, 1993 and Waugh, 1992) is the Highveld House, where technology was used to set a new standard in modern comfort and convenience. The house can be seen as a metonym for progress and the Apartheid regime's commitment to technological advancement, which is also visible in the stories about Sasolburg and Secunda (Oranje, 1996; Sparks, 2012 and Paquet, 2017). The Highveld House was transported to the Rand Easter Show where it was displayed as the epitome of modern living – the project was therefore not only about using technology to improve the lives of people, but also to display, or show off, technological prowess and progress. This echoes a theme of the metanarrative of modernity highlighted by Berman (1988), namely that of "outward show".

Apartheid can be viewed as a uniquely South African manifestation of modernity, a "modernity of underdevelopment" (viz Berman, 1988) of a special kind. Major JC Collings, who designed the town, was a member of the main Research Committee on Minimum Standards of Accommodation appointed in 1947 under the CSIR. His response to the (non-racialised) housing standards proposed by the relevant subcommittee was to insist that, in the interest of affordability, lower standards should be employed for "native housing". Collings and his partners even proposed an additional standard for "Coloured Housing for families whose status and earning capacity is above that of the native" (CSIR, 1949). This response provides an enlightening glimpse into the racist pragmatism that became spatially manifested in, for instance, the difference in stand sizes between Meloding and the rest of Virginia (see figure 28).

Different (and to a certain extent conflicting) urban and regional planning approaches are evident in the design of the town of Virginia. Technician or functional considerations are certainly evident from the location of individual suburbs close to

specific mine shafts, thereby for the most part forfeiting any feeling of the town as a coherent whole. Furthermore, the size and layout of the town was based on a triangulation of projected growth of the mines on geographical features and surface area of available land – displaying a technicist inclination that is diametrically opposed to the intuitive, experimental approach suggested by Hillier and other post-structuralist planners (Balducci *et al*, 2011). On the other hand, in the description by Viljoen (1994) it is clear that there were strong social considerations, i.e., a concern for the wellbeing of mostly the white residents in the design of the town. The garden city and neighbourhood planning influences highlighted by Japha (1998) are apparent in the layout of the town, in particular in terms of the many green areas, wide roads and wide road reserves.

Beauty, and the loss of beauty, is a theme that is encountered often in the stories told about Virginia by its people. This theme is mostly evident in the stories about Virginia’s erstwhile “garden city” status (see paragraph 5.5.1.1). However, the seemingly trivial story of the Virginie hairstyle, and in particular the visual image of it, creates a powerful link between the town and beauty. Of course, this is a specific definition of beauty, and about that alone one can write a book. Fortunately, this has already been done to much critical acclaim by Smith (2005).

5.3 RESPONDENTS

Twenty respondents were identified for the study, following the sampling method described in paragraph 4.3.3.1 in Chapter 4. Most of these were residents of Virginia. Among them were three married couples and two colleagues from a school in the Virginia township, Meloding. These respondents were interviewed together. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with all but two of the respondents – with these two, telephone interviews were conducted, supplemented with email correspondence.

The table below summarises the respondent information. As indicated on the table, pseudonyms were chosen for each of the respondents. This was done

both to protect the identity of the respondents and to enable the reader to more easily identify the different respondents when they are referred to in the text.

Table 3: Respondents

No.	Description	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Race	Date and duration of interview	Mode of interview
1.	Retired couple of which the husband worked for the mine*	<i>Bettie & Angus</i>	Male and female	61	White	4 January 2016 90 minutes	Face-to-face (follow-up via email)
2.	Municipal official from Meloding	<i>Kabelo</i>	Male	36	Black	4 January 2016 90 minutes	Face-to-face (follow-up via email)
3.	Married couple of which the husband is a municipal councillor*	<i>Piet & Ansie</i>	Male and female	54 and 50	White	5 January 2016 60 minutes	Face-to-face (follow-up via email)
4.	Virtual business owner*	<i>Sally</i>	Female	32	White	5 January 2016 45 minutes	Face-to-face (follow-up via email)
5.	Lawyer*	<i>Ben</i>	Male	27	White	6 January 2016 45 minutes	Face-to-face (follow-up via email)
6.	Daughter of a mine official	<i>Liz</i>	Female	64	White	6 January 2016 70 minutes	Face-to-face (follow-up via email)
7.	Entrepreneur (Service industry)	<i>Lucas</i>	Male	63	White	5 January 2016 120 minutes	Face-to-face (follow-up via email)
8.	Business man* (Consulting)	<i>Sias</i>	Male		White	26 May 2017	Telephone (follow-up via email)
9.	Entrepreneur (Tourism)	<i>Larry</i>	Male	26	Black	7 July 2017 45 minutes	Face-to-face
10.	Librarian	<i>Michael</i>	Male	43	Black	7 July 2017 45 minutes	Face-to-face

No.	Description	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Race	Date and duration of interview	Mode of interview
11.	Entrepreneur (Clothing design and manufacture)	<i>Tshepo</i>	Male	38	Black	7 July 2017 60 minutes	Face-to-face
12.	Teachers at a school in Meloding	<i>Jack and Isaiah</i>	Male	43 and 42	Black	7 July 2017 60 minutes	Face-to-face
13.	Entrepreneur (Talent scout)	<i>Sipho</i>	Male	24	Black	7 July 2017 30 minutes	Face-to-face
14.	Business owner* (alternative medicine)	<i>Rika</i>	Female		White	8 July 2017 60 minutes	Face-to-face
15.	Historian who spent her early childhood in Virginia	<i>Beth</i>	Female	50	White	21 September 2017 90 minutes	Face-to-face
16.	Married couple who left Virginia in 1987	<i>Molly and Wayne</i>	Female and male		White	3 October 2017 150 minutes	Face-to-face

* These interviews were conducted in Afrikaans – quoted responses have been translated.

In addition to the above interviews, I also obtained responses via email to questions sent to one of the gold mining companies active in Virginia and had face-to-face conversations with Rob Smart, an academic formerly associated with the Mining Resilience Institute at the University of Pretoria; Stephen Sparks, an academic at the University of Johannesburg who did his doctorate study on Sasolburg, and Natasha Christopher, a fine arts photographer and academic at the University of the Witwatersrand who has a specific interest in garden cities, urban decay and mining.

5.4 SITE VISITS

Three site visits to Virginia were undertaken, one on 7 August 2015, one from 3-7 January 2016 and one from 6-8 July 2017. During the first visit a resident of Virginia who wishes to remain anonymous took me through the town in his vehicle to show the current state of the mining infrastructure. I went to Virginia

thinking (naively it later proved) that the town would boast a large number of mining assets that could be utilised in various ways to the benefit of the town and its people now that they were no longer used by the mines. It was therefore disappointing to see that many buildings had been demolished or vandalised to an extent that rendered them useless. This not only applied to the top structures of the closed mine shafts, but to hostels, post offices, recreation clubs and even a sizeable hospital, and also to buildings that were not built by the mine, such as those in the Virginia industrial area. The extent of the wastage and deterioration was distressing to see.

The purpose of the second visit was mainly to conduct interviews. This visit also provided an opportunity to explore the central area of the town, including the municipal offices.

The third visit was to conduct additional interviews and visit two large mining-related projects, namely the upgrading and conversion of the Masimong 4 (close to Welkom) and Merriespruit 3 (in Virginia) hostel complexes into family rental units.

While the infrastructure and buildings of the town of Virginia are dilapidated and under-utilised, and seemingly no development has taken place in the town in more than two decades, Merriespruit 3 is a massive development project between the Virginia town centre and the Meloding township. Merriespruit 3 is the second site on which community rental units (448 of them) have been developed on land made available by Harmony Gold Mining Company through a public private partnership between the mining company and government.



Figure 32: The Merriespruit 3 hostel before the conversion into rental units started
Source: Infrastructure News, 2013

The development targets tenants earning approximately R3 500 a month and monthly rentals range from R800 to R1 400 depending on the size of the unit (Tancott, 2013). Merriespruit 3 is the second such project, with Masimong 4, situated between Virginia (Saaiplaas) and Welkom being the first. Completed in 2012, the Masimong development has been the site of bitter disagreements between the residents and the Matjhabeng Municipality around issues such as maintenance and the provision of facilities. During a site visit to the Masimong development the general neglect of the complex, as could be seen from the unkempt communal gardens, broken fascia boards and general lack of maintenance, was apparent. While the Merriespruit development is slightly less isolated than Masimong 4, it is also only accessible by car.



Figure 33: The location of the Merriespruit 3 development (Adapted from Google Maps)

☞ The story of Virginia is being written in bricks and mortar and in words simultaneously. An example of this is the hostel redevelopments of Merriespruit 3 and Masimong 4. I perceived a glimmer of utopia when visiting Merriespruit 3, which was brand new at the time of writing this thesis. It was easy to believe that the development would not only create a new community, but would create an opportunity for upward mobility to former township residents. It was not a stretch to imagine a future story that includes children playing in the communal areas, happily growing up in a clean and safe environment. The visit to Masimong 4, which had been developed a few years prior to Merriespruit 3, succeeded in dashing these hopes through the neglect of the physical environment and indications of social conflict (a letter calling residents to protest about service levels stuck to one of the buildings).

Read against the metanarrative of modernity, these developments reflect the modernist tendency to recycle and renew (see Berman, 1988). Seen against the many

former mining hostels in Virginia of which only ruins are left today (i.e., against the possibility of letting large and expensive infrastructure go to waste) they could be considered a positive step. After all, the new developments offer family units as opposed to the single-sex compounds that were the model of urban segregation in South Africa since the beginning of the twentieth century (Mabin & Smith, 1997).

A real concern, however, is that the residents of Masimong 4 are exclusively black and, as the need for housing in Virginia exists almost exclusively among the town's black residents, it is feared that it will be the same for Merriespruit 3.

As a result of this and their location outside of Virginia, these developments do nothing to improve the viability or density of the town and can only perpetuate its Apartheid spatial development pattern. As such it is difficult to believe that any urban and regional planning in the creative, imaginative sense required by post-structuralist planning was at play here. In fact, it would seem a perpetuation of the myopic, technicist and neighbourhood based planning that Japha (1998) credits to have given rise to the specific typology of the South African black township. There is a disjuncture between the national narrative of spatial reconstruction and integration, as most clearly captured in SPLUMA, and the story that is being written by development on the ground in Virginia.

The images below give a visual impression of the three site visits.



Figure 34: Derelict mine buildings, including offices, a hospital and hostels



Figure 35: What is left of the Virginia industrial area

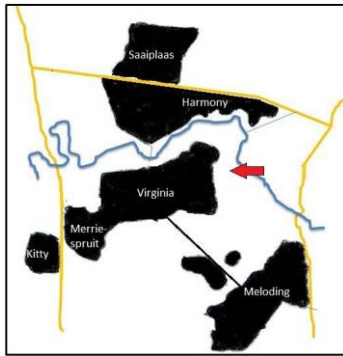


Figure 36: The empty parking lot in front of the once vibrant recreation club of the Virginia Mine and the rubble across the street from it that used to be administrative buildings



Figure 37: This example from Welkom shows existing businesses being taken over by immigrant proprietors



Figure 38: The inside and outside of the municipal offices in Virginia

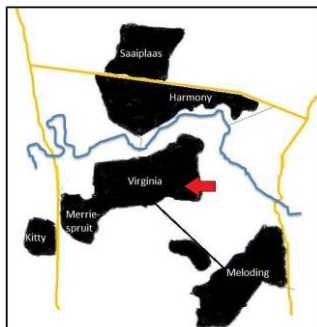



Figure 39: Broad streets with very little traffic, Virginia Gardens, which according to Ben is now the Virginia desert (although Liz said 90% of how the town looked at the time of her interview was due to the weather) and Checkers, viewed by some as the heart of the town

5.5 STORIES ABOUT VIRGINIA: PAST AND PRESENT

The Virginia stories are presented in a loose temporal sequence, namely stories of the past (the “boom” stories), stories of the present (the “bust” stories) and stories of the future of the town. The latter category include the plans for Virginia as “stories about the future” (Throgmorton, 2003: 127) and stories about the future of the town told by the residents.

In this section the stories about the town’s past and present are presented. As indicated earlier, the stories were interpreted by applying the varifocal lens (see Chapters 1, 2 and 4), signalled to the reader by the  icon.

5.5.1 Stories about Virginia during the boom

The mining boom in Virginia spans roughly 25 years, from the mid-1960s, when the town celebrated its 10th birthday, to the early 1990s, when mines in the Free State gold fields downsized and retrenched staff on a massive scale (Marais, 2013). Stories about Virginia during the boom are organized here according to the themes of the town’s status as the “garden city of South Africa”, business, the housing, amenities and benefits provided by the mine as the “big daddy”, the experience of racial inequality and oppression and the pressure to be “respectable”. These are the themes that emerged from the respondents’ descriptions of their experience of Virginia during the mining boom.

5.5.1.1 *The garden city of South Africa*

To a large extent, in particular in the interviews with white respondents who experienced Virginia during the boom, descriptions of the town during this time centre on the fact that Virginia was known as the “Garden City” (“Tuindorp”) of South Africa. Several of the respondents made reference to the official Virginia visitors’ guide, commonly referred to as the “garden city brochure” that was published, probably in the 1970s, to promote the town (see figure 40 and 41 below). References to Virginia’s “Tuindorp” status were

made by almost all of the white respondents, namely Ben (the lawyer), Liz (the mine official's daughter), Bettie and Angus (Angus having worked on the mine for many years until he retired), Piet and Ansie (the municipal councillor and his wife), Lucas (the entrepreneur), and Molly (who left Virginia in 1987 after spending her childhood and early adult life there).

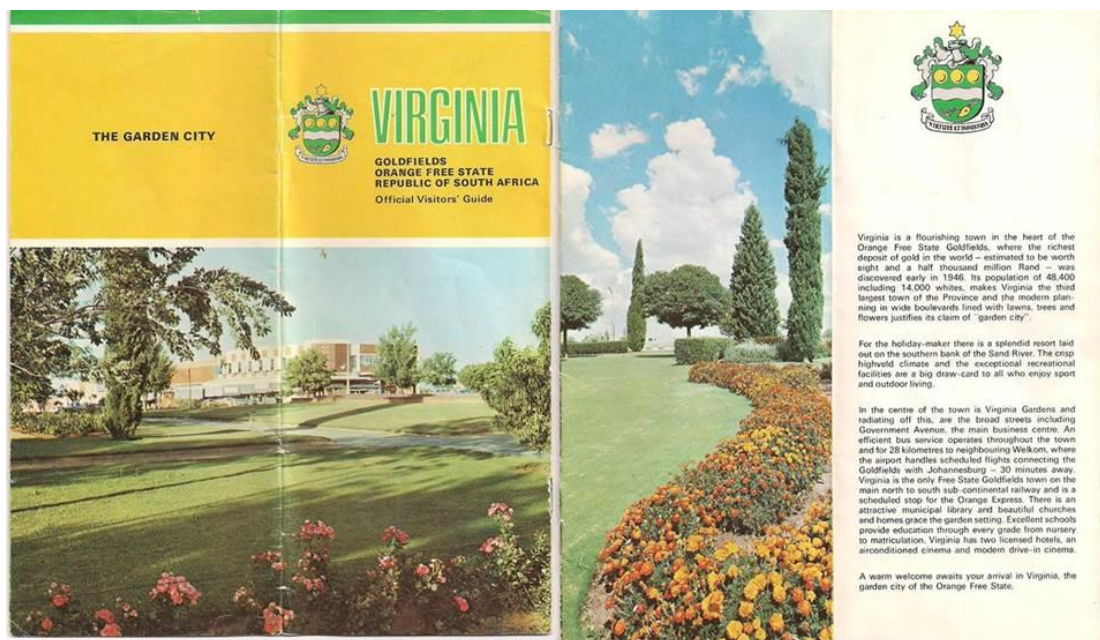


Figure 40: The front cover and first page of the brochure that was printed to promote Virginia as the garden city of South Africa
Source: Mauer, 2013

The picture painted by the white respondents is one of street trees that were regularly watered, of garden competitions, the winner of which was allowed to collect plants from the mine's nursery, and of parks and road reserves that were so spectacular that people visited the town to photograph them (according to Liz, Bettie and Angus and Ben).

The extent of the attention given to the town's public gardens becomes clear when one listens to the account by Liz, the mine official's daughter:

“ . . . as a child, all the gardens, we had garden competitions, flower competitions and it was huge about what the town looked like. This island here, the town horticulturalist was a Dutch guy with the name of Henk Huysenga. He planted tulips by the thousands on these

islands. And heaven helped you if you walked on one of the flower beds, you know.”

The lawyer, Ben, also remembers a time when the town was more attractive:

“The town was full of little parks everywhere, it was maintained; it was really very pretty. The reserves in the middle of the road were fantastic. You can still see it now, there are many old trees in Virginia if you drive around. Back then it was just part of the municipality’s job to do that stuff. You know, I’m also talking about a time before the 1994 elections, you know, that time when my [...] and them were still governing the place²¹ it was their objective to attract investors to Virginia. And in order to get that done, they had to be able to market the town. And to market the town the town had to be in a good condition.”

The Sand River, which flows through the town and is its main natural feature, was a vibrant recreational asset where, according to Ben, national waterskiing competitions were held.

Angus, the retired mine official remembers it as follows:

“You will not believe how beautiful and enjoyable the place was when we came here. We swam in the river, we ski-ed, we went fishing with tubes.”

²¹ One of Ben’s family members was the Mayor of Virginia when the town still had its own municipality.



Figure 41: Pages from the garden city brochure showing Virginia Park accommodation and recreational use of the Sand River
Source: Mauer, 2013

The specific use of the term “tuindorp” or “garden city” in the residents’ stories about Virginia during the mining boom is telling of the powerful effect of the “official” narrative about the town, captured in the garden city brochure. At the time of writing this thesis, more than forty years later, “garden city” is still used to describe what the town was then.

Within the broader Apartheid narrative, the garden city brochure was targeted only at white readers, which probably explains why none of the black respondents used the term when describing the town while the mines were still in operation. This is in addition to the fact that the garden city concept was never stated to include the town's black township, Meloding.

The pre-occupation with the town's appearance can be read in different ways. Virginia's gardens, street trees, parks and landscaped traffic circles displayed an extent of mastery over the environment, consisting of the bare Free State plains on which the town was situated. This mastery over nature is a recurring theme in the metanarrative of modernity and, particularly in as far as science was used to achieve it, of the Apartheid manifestation thereof (see Berman, 1988 and the accounts of Sasolburg by Oranje (1996) and Sparks (2012) and of Secunda by Paquet (2017)). The beauty of the town was also in stark contrast with the aesthetically unappealing mine infrastructure (shaft towers, mine dumps, slimes dams and hostels). In the construction of the garden city narrative, this aspect of the mining activity around the town was downplayed, even deleted (see Goodman, 1978). No reference is made to unattractive mining activity or infrastructure in the brochure, only to the exciting and positive discovery of the country's richest deposit of gold in the area. Furthermore, there is an exaggerated emphasis on leisure and recreation, and almost none on work, in spite of the fact that the main objective of attracting people to Virginia was to ensure a skilled workforce for the goldmines.

The garden city brochure therefore constructed a Virginia storyworld where the town's beauty reflected and contributed towards an ideal, almost perfect, lifestyle, echoing the utopian storyworlds referred to in Chapter 2. In a special supplement to the *The Friend* newspaper on occasion of the town's birthday in 1964, the then Mayor of Virginia, Mr Roma Badenhorst, stated: "I am convinced that Virginia will become a Utopia of the North West Free State."

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

IN 10 years, a town has been built of which we can all be justly proud.

Virginia's general and Bantu revenue accounts for 1963/64 are R1,158,134 and R191,545 respectively. The financial position of the Village Board of Management is fundamentally sound.

If one considers that Virginia is a "new town" and that services such as roads, electricity and sewerage had to be provided in an "expensive" period, then the town's taxation and tariff structure compares exceptionally favourably with those much older towns.

Concessions

In fact, the Board will, in the new future, be able to make further tariff concessions. The Board is trying to make con-

★ ★ ★

Mr H.
Badenhorst

★ ★ ★

ditions as favourable as possible for the establishment of industries in Virginia. The property tax on industrial premises under development was reduced to 3 cents in the rand from April 1, last year. To large consumers of electricity, power is being supplied at Escom tariffs and, in addition, the Board is now negotiating for water for industries.

The Board may take over 100



★ ★ ★

industrial even and make them available to industrialists at nominal prices.

Although there has been an increase in its duties, the municipal service is sound and efficient.

Can be Utopia

But, let us not rest on our laurels. We must make the fullest use of the potential, geographic situation and natural beauty of our environment and so develop a modern, well-equipped and attractive town which can offer every facility to the resident and investor.

I am convinced that Virginia will become a Utopia of the North-West Free State. All is well with VIRGINIA.

Figure 42: The Mayor's message in the supplement published in *The Friend* on occasion of Virginia's 10th birthday

Source: *The Friend*, 29 August 1964

The story told to the outside world about Virginia as a town of superior beauty, which offers a superior lifestyle, reminds of the propaganda around Sasolburg referred to by Sparks (2012). The modernist tendency towards outward show or projecting a favourable image that was very apparent during the Apartheid era in South Africa is closely related to the notion of "respectability" (refer to Sparks, 2012 and paragraph 5.5.1.7 below). Residents of the town identified with the garden city narrative and actively participated in creating it on the ground, seeing to the upkeep of their gardens and participating in the gardening competitions.

The term "garden city" was by no means a neologism in the Virginia context. The urban and regional planning approach taken to the development of the new towns in the Free State gold fields, e.g., Welkom and Virginia, as well as Sasolburg and Secunda, established around the Sasol I and II plants, was strongly influenced by the work of Clarence Stein, which in turn, was strongly influenced by the principles underpinning the garden city movement of Ebenezer Howard (Parsons, 1998; Oranje, 1996; Sparks, 2012; Paquet, 2017). These included the incorporation of parks and other green spaces in the layout of the town. It can therefore be said that the structural layout of the town, the official propaganda and the actions of residents on the ground all contributing to enforcing the "garden city" identity of Virginia.

None of the respondents used the word “hope” when they referred to Virginia’s garden city status during the mining boom. This might be as a result of the fact that hope is, as Bloch (1995) argues, a forward-looking, future-oriented emotion and that the respondents are looking backward into the past as they tell the garden city stories. Looking at the garden city brochure and listening to the stories of the respondents about the appearance of their town during the boom, it does, however, seem to have been a hopeful era in the Virginia’s history.

5.5.1.2 Booming business

The high level of employment in the town during the mining boom was mentioned by Angus, Ben, Liz and Tshepo.

In spite of the obviously discriminatory context within which the mines in Virginia and the gold mining industry in general operated at least until the late 1980s, when the imperative to transform became obvious to the mining houses, Tshepo fondly remembers the status that black people working on the mines enjoyed:

“In closing school times I would go to Qwa Qwa and we would visit Qwa Qwa. [People would ask] Hey man, where you living now? I’m living in Virginia. Where’s Virginia? Virginia in Welkom. Yoh, Welkom, Virginia? Where the mines are at, right? Ja, its cool there. And then the way I dressed, it shows, my attitude, my self confidence. It was bright, it was like . . . wabon²²? Because of the mines. It was New Shaft, it was H3 there, and you understand, it was Merriespruit. And Merriespruit was even cooler. If you were a kid and you were living in Merriespruit, then, wow, we know that your parents are working in a mine and either they are miners, or they are a shift boss, you know, and you would come to school with transport, you know. And, if you come to school with transport it is, wow, your family is doing good from the mine, you know? Actually, like look, we had teachers in

²² Colloquialism meaning “you see?”.

Virginia, neh, we had teachers, we had nurses, we had correctional services, but . . . but the mineworker would overpower them, because mine it was something like you know what, if you were working at the mine, you were cool.”

Angus and Bettie, Tshepo, Molly and Kabelo all describe the town during this period as a shopper’s paradise, with a wide variety of retailers and a busy town centre.

There is an undeniable link between the high rate of employment and the flourishing state of business in Virginia at the time of the boom. This is perhaps described best by Lucas, who at the time of the interview had been living in Virginia for 35 years. He came to Virginia to develop properties his father had bought as an investment in Saaiplaas. When this proved difficult as a result of the prime lending rate that increased very sharply over a period of two years, a friend suggested he open a business to serve the mine employees (references to the kind of business Lucas owned have been removed in the interest of anonymity):

“And I opened a [business] and I never looked back. Within a year, I was working average 20 hours a day . . . except Fridays. And then, by the following year, I bought another three [such businesses] and that is where I got my 56 workers and at that time I had, let’s call it the monopoly of [such] factories in Virginia. Then there were still about 4 or 5 other [such businesses] coming from Welkom and Hennenman collecting in the mines here. We carried on, right, and I bought more property, I bought this property here . . . and, yes, going back to engineering with a thousand two hundred rand a month to getting about R30 000 a month net profit from the [business] . . .only stupid people would go back there.”

At the peak of mining prosperity in Virginia, Lucas owned several businesses in town as well as 20 shops that he rented to other businesses.

Tshepo paints a vivid picture of the town he and his brother came to from QwaQwa in 1992, when he was in standard two:

“Virginia life back then was so easy – even this place we are in here [the library] – to be inside this place was like, Yoh, I’m in something – there was life, you know, because of the economy of Virginia back then – trust me, trust me, it was cool – Milady’s, Madisons, Edgars, Sales House – if you were back then wearing clothes from Sales House or Edgars, you were even cooler.”

Isaiah provides insight into how people living in Virginia, even those who were not formally employed, made a living while the mines were in operation:

“During those times there were a lot of opportunities, as [Jack] has alluded to, industrial area where the firms were supplying the mines with different things. Also, is that, you know, when you look at the location, during that time we had people who were not working, but because there were a lot of people who were from outside, one of the ways in which they were generating money is, you know, there were tenants who’ll be hiring houses and then they would pay at the end of the month. That was one source of income. Also, you know, one could say that, you know, we had people who were vendors selling things around town here . . . and people were buying.”

☞ The stories that the respondents tell about a flourishing business sector as a feature of the town during the mining boom should be read against the significance of consumerism within the metanarratives of modernity and Apartheid. In the modern, capitalist paradigm (see Berman, 1988) and throughout South Africa’s Apartheid history (see Posel, 2011) consumerism became a marker of identity, and specifically of status in comparison to others for black and white South Africans alike. This is clearly evident in Tshepo’s narration of how “cool” he was perceived as when returning to QwaQwa for the school holidays.

Related to the active business sector in the town during the boom was employment,

both in the formal and (as is clear from Isaiah's remark I quoted) informal sector. Being joyfully engaged in meaningful work for fair reward is a feature of life for the citizens of many of the literary utopias as well as some of the conceptual utopian city plans and Rex Tugwell's Greenbelt Towns referred to in Chapter 2. How vitally important the availability of employment was to especially the black residents of Virginia is clear from paragraph 5.5.2.3 below.

There is another factor that is captured in residents' descriptions of the bustling economic activity in the town during the boom that sometimes escapes attention because it is difficult to measure or record. It is the sense of vibrant activity, the special "buzz" that one feels in a busy town. This is the vibrant urbanity Jane Jacobs conveys in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* and it is what Tshepo refers to when he says "there was life, you know, because of the economy of Virginia back then".

5.5.1.3 Housing

In older gold mines, white workers were never all housed by the mining company. However, "in the newer mines, situated far from the main urban centres, the companies found it necessary to build houses – indeed whole towns – for their white employees" (Wilson, 1972: 59) Subsidised housing was one of the strongest incentives for attracting workers from the established centres to the more rural areas of, for instance, the Orange Free State. In areas where mines were developed after 1945, housing was provided for all white mine workers at rents far below the cost price (Wilson, 1972).

Wilson (1972) presents a description of mine housing that Harry Oppenheimer provided in 1950 in response to an ironic accusation by the then Minister of Labour that mining companies took pains to keep their black labour force satisfied, but did not necessarily do the same for their white employees. Oppenheimer stated that none of the houses provided by the newer mines of his group were smaller than 1 150 square feet (107 m²), and all were built on a stand of at least a quarter of an acre. The houses had at least three

bedrooms, a bathroom and separate toilet, a kitchen, lounge and dining recess. The houses furthermore all had an enclosed back yard, a garage and servant's quarters. They were fitted with built-in cupboards, a geyser that supplied the kitchen and bathroom and an electric stove.

The table below shows the different housing options that were made available to white mine workers according to rank, as well as the extent to which the rent of the housing units was subsidised.

Table 4: Example of allocation of mine housing to whites, 1965

Source: Wilson, 1972

HOUSING SUBSIDY FOR WHITES,^a 1965				
Type of housing	Area (sq. ft.)	Rent paid	Economic rent ^b (rand per month)	Subsidy
			⏟	
Cottages and flats ^c	1,200	10.0	51.0	41.0
Junior standard staff houses ^d	1,500	12.6	65.0	56.4
Senior standard staff houses ^e	1,700	14.0	115.0	101.0
Senior officials' houses ^f	1,800-2,000	15.0	130.0	115.0
Assistant mine manager's house	2,400	20.0	n.a.	n.a.
Mine manager's house	3,500-5,000	20.0	350.0	330.0

^a On the new mines of one group.

^b The amount that would cover cost and interest, amortising over 15 years.

^c For day's pay men.

^d For shift bosses and junior officials

^e For mine captains, accountants, assistant heads of departments.

^f For underground managers, reduction officers, engineers, etc.

Bettie and Angus, Liz and Sally all lived in mine houses. Bettie and Angus and Sally tell how they moved to better houses as Angus and Sally's stepfather respectively were promoted to higher ranks in the mine. Liz remembers being among the first families to move into the Harmony mine houses:

“ . . . then, we, they built the houses in the Harmony mine village, which were very posh, we all had these very grand houses . . . ”

It was not only the houses that were provided to white mine workers, but also maintenance services.

“Everything was provided. The garden was mowed, trees would be pruned, the house would be painted, globes would be changed – and that was for everybody [. . .] We all lived on the mine, we all lived in a mine house with a mine telephone that was free (if you phoned in Harmony). [. . .] There was someone in the garden, two ladies in the house [. . .] Everybody had one, but we were four children, so I think the one lady just did ironing.” – Liz

When a family moved into a new mine house, the mine would first do a maintenance blitz. Molly explains:

“As soon as I was pregnant we could apply for the next house, which was now one step up. It was ridiculous. We didn't think so at the time – that's how it was. And when you moved into a mine house, say you were allocated that house, you were given a few, but you chose that one, the mine would pull in there, totally, totally redo the house – paint it, do the floors and everything. You never got a house that was carpeted, it was those parquet floors, it was beautifully done, so you moved into a very nice house.”

In contrast to the luxurious facilities provided to whites working on the mines, black mine workers, who were mostly migrants, lived in so-called “compounds” that resembled all-male dormitories or boarding schools. Only a fraction of black mine workers (about 1% according to Wilson (1972), or 3% according to Anglo American Corporation of SA Ltd (1957)), those who held secretarial and administrative posts, had family housing.

While Wilson (1972) remarks on the inappropriateness of no family housing being provided for workers in an industry such as mining, which is not seasonal, the Anglo American mining company prided itself on the level of

accommodation provided to the “native” workers it employed. The company commissioned a detailed enquiry by a “committee of experts”, which together with the company’s extensive experience, was used to develop the hostels for the “native” mine workers. “As a result, the Native hostels of the six Anglo American Corporation Group mines provide facilities that mark a fresh step forward in the care and welfare of Native mineworkers” (Anglo American Corporation of SA Ltd, 1957: 35).

Wayne, an engineer who worked in the mine for a while, describes the compounds as follows:

“It, it was not nice. The conditions they lived under were far from ideal, you know, the hostels had these rooms, probably the size of a three by three bedroom, with six beds in, like concrete bunks. In the middle was a konka where they made fire for heat. There was no electricity and no lights in these rooms, and they would live pretty dirty, and there was a lot of homosexuality going on, because they were away from their families and wives in Malawi or Lesotho. A lot of migrants there, Mozambicans, and they were there for nine months before they were allowed home.”

☞ Housing provided by the mine featured strongly in the stories told by the white respondents. The provision of mine housing was probably the most prominent example of the mine’s benevolent patriarchy. It is significant that, in looking back, Molly recognizes, as did Liz in my interview with her, that this level of “parental care” by the mine was exaggerated and unsustainable (*“It was ridiculous”*). The exaggerated benefits received by white mine employees (which included the provision of black domestic workers – see Liz’s comments above) stand in juxtaposition to the description of the single quarter hostels where the black workers were housed.

The remains of single-sex hostels for black mine workers that can still be seen around, but not in, Virginia continue to tell this story of difference. It is regrettable that developments such as Merriespruit 3 (see paragraph 5.4 above) serve to reinforce rather than rewrite this story in the physical landscape of the town.

The descriptors used by the white respondents for the mine houses are very positive: “posh”, “grand”, “everything”, “beautifully done”, “nice”. Yet the allocation of different sizes of houses for different levels of employees also played a role in maintaining the strict hierarchy of the mining community. This is no different from the dispensation that applied in Sasolburg and Secunda. In the latter case, Paquet (2017) reports that the elevated status enjoyed by the Sasol company managers was marked by spatial segregation and finer housing. Yet, in the stories told by the respondents (e.g. Molly and Angus) this aspect is related uncritically and as something the mine employees participated in willingly. This echoes the uncritical acceptance of the controls imposed by Sasol in Oranje’s (1996) tale of Sasolburg.

This tendency to categorise and classify is a theme not only of modernity and its affinity for empiricism (what can be counted, matters – see Berman, 1988, and Waugh, 1992) but is also very prominent in the Apartheid metanarrative.

When Molly shares that she and her husband qualified for a better house when she was pregnant, it reflects the welfarist involvement in the intimate lives of citizens and employees that was pervasive during the Apartheid period (see Posel, 2011 and Oranje, 1996).

It is in the provision of so-called “native housing” by the mine that the commoditisation of people is blatantly apparent. It is not that the white mine employees were not commodities, but in their case, it was cloaked in a veil of respectability (see 5.5.1.7).

Sparks (2012), however, claims that paternalistic cultures such as those evident in mine compounds and at Sasol are co-produced between employers and workers²³. According to Sparks (ibid: 24), “The undeniable centrality of paternalistic practices on South Africa’s mines since the late nineteenth century until the 1970s cannot therefore be dismissed as the product of the ideological fantasies of white managers

²³ For instance in the case of workers preferring food and accommodation in stead of wages because staying in a compound protects them from falling prey to temptations of the urban setting that would cause them to neglect responsibilities to care for their kin and rural homesteads.

alone, however iniquitous the context”.

Freund (1986) makes a similar point in respect to the migrant labour system, stating that migrant labour in some cases provided young men and women with a chance to escape a patriarchal order and was supported by some members of rural African society because of the gains it yielded. According to Freund (ibid: 135) simplified narratives around migrant labour mask “an extremely varied content”, i.e., personal stories that vary substantively from the dominant narrative.

From the mine’s side, the provision of housing for both black and white employees was dressed up in welfarist propaganda²⁴ – a typical feature of the specific manifestation of modernity during the Apartheid era. In respect of the housing for white employees, the emphasis was placed on the size and amenities of the houses, while in the case of black mine workers, the emphasis was more directly on their physical care (see for instance Anglo American Corporation of SA Ltd, 1957). Housing provided by the mine was at the same time a benefit to employees and a means of control by the mine.

5.5.1.4 Amenities, benefits and lifestyle

Tshepo remembers the town when the mines were still operating in Virginia as “perfect”:

“The streets were perfect, the buildings were perfect, the library, the post office, taxi rank was buzzing. On month end, it was amazing. Money wasn’t an issue back then.”

Viljoen (1994) describes how the mines did everything in their power to draw white people to the isolated area of Virginia to work on the mines. This led to the establishment of a number of recreational clubs and the development of sporting facilities. Hotels were built to accommodate international and South African visitors.

²⁴ Sparks (2012) argue that the welfarist narrative was regarded as the truth by members of the Sasol management. I believe this was also the case in the Virginia mines.

Angus was one of the people drawn to Virginia by the many benefits offered by the mine. Wilson (1972) indicates that for white miners, in particular, benefits and allowances constituted a large portion of their earnings. The so-called “cost of living allowance” that was paid to all white mine workers at one stage constituted a quarter of the cash earnings of these workers. White underground mine workers earned bonuses when certain targets for the amount of ore extracted by the black workers under their supervision were reached (Wilson, 1972).

For those who wished to pursue to study further towards becoming a mine engineer, as was the case for Angus, there were equally attractive incentives – the mine paid the tuition fee and allowed employees paid time off to complete their studies.

The recreational facilities provided by the mine – which consisted of a “club” for each mine and therefore for each suburb of Virginia – features strongly in the reminiscences of the respondents about the time of the mining boom. According to Wilson (1972), recreational facilities for whites consisted of heavily subsidised club amenities. In 1953, the 46 000 whites working in the gold mining industry in South Africa had use of 63 football fields, 37 cricket fields, 20 golf courses, 83 bowling greens, 255 tennis courts, and 38 swimming pools. While recreational facilities were also provided for the 291 000 black workers working on South African gold mines, these were financed from the sale of cigarettes and sweets in the dry canteens in the compounds. For these workers, there was a bar lounge in every compound, as well as 101 playing fields and 55 dance arenas. Black workers in family houses, who were less than 1% of the total black workforce on the mines, also had the use of tennis courts and, in some cases, swimming pools. Mines also offered free voluntary literacy classes.

Ben, who is an avid golf player, remembers the golf club in its prime:

“If you take the Sand River Golf Club, which sure as hell still is a beautiful golf course, but back then when there was money, it was a fantastic golf club . . .”



Figure 43: A satellite image of the Sand River Golf Course
Source: Google Maps

According to Liz, “swimming was big” during the time of the boom, with the four mines arranging inter-club galas among themselves. For a town the size of Virginia, there was a large number of “public” swimming pools. Molly also remembers visiting the various swimming pools in Virginia with her friends as a favourite childhood pastime. Piet remembers:

“Yes, if you think about it, I think there was one municipal swimming pool and one, two, three, four mine swimming pools with clubs in the area . . .”



Figure 44: Patrons enjoying the Virginia Park swimming pool during the early 1980s
Source: Redcliffe, 2012

Kabelo, who now works at the Matjhabeng Local Municipality, grew up with his grandfather, who started working for Harmony Gold in 1957 as a driver transporting food to the mine kitchens. He describes how the benefits of his grandfather's employment by the mine trickled through to the rest of the community:

“ . . . we knew that every day there was meat and there was this and that . . . and hence I said we had a very, personally I had a very you know like comfortable childhood. Everything was readily available, we had no problem with food, as a result most people, most families used to come home for food to come and eat or get stuff. And my mom used to prepare parcels because food were in abundance. She used to prepare parcels for, ja, no relatives and neighbours. [. . .] Every person that worked in the mine had a ration, they called it ration, it was a bag of everything, meat and everything, so, especially in areas called Skoonplaas. Every time they left, they would have it, especially areas such as Veto they had free access to the kitchen, they could take the left-overs. And in New Shaft next to Meloding, ten minutes walking distance from there. We used to go there after gym, because I was playing soccer there. We used to go after training to go and have mageu, to have meat, they called it makakarani and jayi-jayi, those were the food.”

Tshepo, whose mother got a job in the Harmony mine hospital through the doctor for whom she worked as a domestic worker, has similar memories:

“It was cool, because life was easy, I got to go to school with large box of meat from mine, because my mom got leftovers from the hospital, the lunchbox now is much better. Me too, I was cool, because my mom was working a full time job, and not just a job but a job from the mine.”

Wilson (1972) lists food as part of the in-kind wages received by black gold miners. Workers on the diamond mines had to buy their own food. Anglo American Corporation of SA Ltd (1957:36) gives the following account of how the nutritional needs of black workers on the gold mines in the Free State gold fields were met:

In charge of each kitchen is a trained European dietician, who regulates the calorific and vitamin content of the food according to the recommendations of the Group’s Medical Adviser. These recommendations go considerably beyond the requirements of government regulations for Native feeding on the mines, and the nutritive value of the food provided is shown by the rapid rate at which men gain weight within a few weeks of arriving at the mines, while employed on heavy manual work.

Wayne, who worked for the mine while studying in the early 1980s, has a completely different view of the mine kitchens that were at the centre of Kabelo and Tshepo’s nostalgia about the mining boom and rejects the mine’s claims quoted above as blatant propaganda:

“The kitchens – I did part of my internship in the hostels and those kitchens – I think we would vomit having to eat there and know what’s going on in those kitchens. It was slop, it was like pig slop. You know, the food was there, but it was not, I wouldn’t say it was human grade food. Maybe I just have a sensitive stomach, but I would not eat there. The dustbin areas were just stuff thrown there and . . . flies . . . I wouldn’t say it was hygienic.”

White respondents who grew up in Virginia during the boom share stories of a carefree childhood where all manner of recreation was provided for. Liz gives a glimpse into how she experienced the mining life as a child:

“The club, the meals at the club and everything just free – not free, but I mean it was like virtually free. You had a club membership card and you could do everything [. . .] As kids you could get up in the morning, go and swim, go and play squash, then go and play golf and not ever have to spend money.[. . .] So we grew up surrounded by what children thought was, you know, like paradise, because everything was there”

In spite of the strong hierarchical structure of employment on the mine, as was reflected in the allocation of housing, both Liz and Sally remark on the fact that as children they were unaware of rank within the mining community, because the mining facilities were “for everybody . . .” (Liz) and, for all intents and purposes, free. Liz remembers the mine Christmas tree function as a highlight of her childhood in a mining community.

Molly recalls the Christmas parties in graphic detail:

“End of the year if you were on the mine, you went to a huge Christmas party. You would go and your parents would know that, for a boy of five you could go to this warehouse, and you could say I have a son of five and a daughter of three. So the five year old boys’ gifts were there so you would choose your gift and then it would be something like R5 or not even R5, you probably paid R2 for it, or even R1 and then these gifts were wrapped up and then your three-year old you could choose from here and then on the day of the Christmas party, it was at the Joane Pim park, which is in Harmony, that park was set up by Joane Pim . . . it was beautiful. She set up this beautiful park and there was this dam and that. And at the Joane Pim park they would set up this Christmas party and there would be little trains on tracks, you know. The kids could hop in, everything was there. And I mean

there were lucky packets and there was spookasem [candy floss] and it was all there, you just went.”



Figure 45: The Joane Pim park – site of the mine Christmas parties Molly remembers
Source: Wroblewska, 2009a

Wayne views paternalistic gestures by the mine such as the Christmas parties referred to above as attempts to mask the harsh realities of mining life, notably the poor living conditions of black mine workers and the very dangerous underground working conditions (see also Leger, 1992).



Figure 46: A mine Christmas party at Harmony Stadium in the 1960s
Source: Janse van Rensburg, 2011

Again, Liz provides a vivid glimpse of the benefits provided by the mine to white employees:

“And, and, when we grew up, just to give you an example, I studied in Jo-burg, but if I wanted to come home for a weekend, very often the mine plane would fly me down and then you’d fly back on a Monday morning. So we grew up surrounded by what children thought was, you know, like paradise, because everything was there, you know, there was school buses that took us to the schools that picked us up at our, literally at the corner of our homes, . . . and, and you know, so as a child we were totally immersed in this mining opulence. Even if you weren’t on the mine, you know.”

The statement by Liz that the mine benefits were for everyone who lived in the town is supported by Tshepo:

“Even if your mom or your parents weren’t working there, you could go there. You would go there and you just go to the kitchen and get phuzamandla. We would walk from the township to New Shaft just to have a bath, come to think of it. They had these showers, neh, and the showers was brilliant. We would walk from the township to New Shaft and have, just to have a bath. You know, the way things were easy. It was so simple, it was easy. If we were hungry, we used to play soccer in Newshaft soccer fields, you know, and after we play soccer we would just get in the mine kitchen and we would go to the kitchen and we would eat. And everyone would do that, not just because our parents were working there. That’s how life was easy in Virginia back then. You would find food everywhere, you would find transport everywhere everywhere.”

Tshepo makes the point that rather than political activism, it was the enjoyment of the benefits of the mine that occupied him and his classmates living in Meloding in the 1990s:

“Politics at that time, it wasn’t much, what, popular, you know. Politics was something difficult. If you talked about politics you

were like, yoh! man, wait a minute, you are cramping our style, we want to have fun, we want to go to the community hall and have some function, Mr Meloding, or Mr whatever, you know. And we didn't have time for politics, it was fun, fun, fun. And, the fun that we had back then in Meloding it was responsible fun. Because we would walk from township to New Shaft to have a music concert with New Shaft Choir, and you know, the No 3 Choir would come, and we would meet at New Shaft and have fun, all night, it will start from Saturday night until Sunday morning and at 12 o'clock on Sunday we start again, you know. And it will go on until 6 o'clock then everybody goes to their own house, and that time, when we do that, we have that functions in New Shaft, the kitchen staff would bring food, they would dress tables like this and they would just bring food and bring them there, and we would just grab a drink, whatever drink you want, and, without any payment, remember, that's how Virginia life was easy."

Michael, who grew up as the child of a migrant mine worker from the Eastern Cape reports being shielded from the Apartheid system by living in a mine residential area (Merriespruit) and attending a mine sponsored primary school. In spite of attending the "black" Harmony Primary on the way to Welkom rather than the "white" school by the same name in Virginia, Michael reports that "life was good" and tells of the many activities they participated in:

"The school was under the auspices of the mine, so we had feeding schemes and everything, so we didn't go hungry or anything, and we had prize giving ceremonies, and we partook in competitions, with all other schools under the auspices of Harmony Gold Mine, be it sports tournaments, we would hold them together in one place, ja, and even creative arts, because I remember at one moment I won a regional tournament on, ja, portraying Jesus with his disciples. I portrayed that and happened to win. Ja, those were some of the privileges we had. Amongst our, it was a first then, amongst our teachers, some were whites.

Yeah, and in a way it helped us a lot to be comfortable with English and Afrikaans.”

Jack also remembers the positive role the mine played in the lives of the children living in the Meloding township:

“Also recreation – mines had recreational facilities where township children had opportunities that took them away from the streets.”



Figure 47: Pages from the garden city brochure showing sports facilities, the library and hospital during the boom
 Source: Mauer, 2013

Being very aware today of the Apartheid story and the exploitative nature of the gold mining industry that applied during the mining boom in Virginia, it comes as a surprise that both the black and white respondents tell stories of that time that are tinged with utopian nostalgia; words that are used include “paradise”, “opulence”, “easy” and “brilliant”. It should be kept in mind however that, because of the time at which this study is conducted, memories of the boom are for most of the respondents memories of their childhood and therefore probably less problematic than adult memories would have been.

Although the memories of both black and white respondents are positive, there are different nuances in terms of what was important to both groups, with black

respondents focusing very strongly on the food and community activities (art competitions, choir festivals, beauty pageants) and white respondents focusing on the more individual and unstructured recreational activities (golf, swimming, squash, meals at the club).

The big difference between the accounts of the mine kitchens by Tshepo and Kabelo, for instance, and that by Wayne, could perhaps be an indication of the different worlds black and white people lived in under Apartheid.

It is clear from the stories shared by the respondents that how leisure time was spent is a significant aspect of their memories of a childhood spent in Virginia during the mining boom. The many opportunities for leisure activities in Virginia publicised by way of the garden city brochure are characteristic of a modern utopia where residents have ample leisure time.

The Anglo American propaganda regarding the mine kitchens for black workers is a chilling example of how the modernist emphasis on science was employed in the service of the Apartheid project. While presented as a welfarist endeavour (meeting the nutritional needs of the mine workers based on the principles of science and medicine), the reference to “Native feeding” hints at black mine workers being viewed as dehumanised resources used in the production of gold.

Related to the scientific approach that featured prominently during Apartheid was an exceptionally high level of organization of different aspects of ordinary life. We are given a glimpse of this by Molly’s description of the preparations for the annual Christmas party hosted by the mine. As was the case with the broader structuring of life during the Apartheid era, this was underpinned by a system of classification, e.g., “boy”, “girl”, “five-year old”, “three-year old”.

Several of the respondents remarked that benefits of the mine (food from the kitchens, use of the sports and recreational facilities, public transport) was available for use by all the children living in the community, regardless of whether their parents worked on the mine or not. “The mine” therefore loomed large in the consciousness of everyone who lived in the town.

5.5.1.5 The mine as the “big daddy”

Liz remembers how pervasive the mine was in the life of the town, with “favours” being done by the mine the order of the day:

“The mine would mow the school lawn, the mine would provide tents for the church bazaar. The mine was the big daddy. So even if you were not a mining person, you were never far from the overspill of the generosity of the mining life. So, you know, I cannot as a child draw the line of what was done by the mine and what was done by the municipality. The mine would even send equipment to dig graves if it had rained too much and the ground was wet.”

Molly, who attended St Mary’s convent in Virginia, remembers the mine’s generosity in much the same way:

“If the nuns wanted soccer fields, done, whatever child’s parents would be on the mine, it would be organized. Soccer posts were being built. Everything was done by the mines, everything. So our, our school was beautiful, everything was beautiful, we had beautiful buildings. If we needed anything, the mines did it. Because we would have like Mr [X]. He was on the mine and his kids were there. So it was always, whatever bigwig was on the mine, he would just organize it and it would be done. The boilermakers would come and put up goal posts. If you wanted grand stands, the mine made it, and it would just be delivered. The mine did everything like that.”

Ben tells of school excursions to the mine’s training centre where learners were shown how dynamite was used and how gold was smelted. According to him, young people could find work on the mines very easily at the time of the boom, which kept them off the streets, resulting in a lower crime rate than was the case at the time of the study. According to Liz, children of white mine employees could all work in the mine offices during holidays to earn pocket money.

The revenue of the gold mines was such that they could afford their paternalistic benevolence (or seemingly benevolent paternalism) towards the Virginia community. The exponential increase of revenue obtained by Anglo American, for instance, from the Free State gold fields is documented by Wilson (1972: 25): “Over the seven years which began with the declaration of the first Orange Free State dividend in 1954, the investment income of Anglo American Corporation alone trebled from R5.2 million to R16.4 million. Another seven years later, by 1967, the figure had risen to R28.6 million.” By 1960, the Free State, then known as the Orange Free State, accounted for almost a third of the country’s total gold production (ibid).

☞ Molly tells of a powerful mine employee who could “organise” support for their school. This is a typical character in stories of a mining town, which I encountered in casual discussions with several people who grew up in mining towns. He is a complex character, because, while the actions of such individuals benefited the recipients, in this case the school, it also served to display the power of people with high positions in the mine and by association of the mine. According to Paquet (2017), in Secunda, senior company employees were looked up to as examples of respectability and for setting the standards for the rest of Sasol’s workforce. In Sasol, as in Virginia, engineers, in particular, were held in high esteem.

The mine’s extraordinary generosity during the boom in Virginia can be understood if it is read against the global economic upturn following World War II, but also within the Apartheid narrative of channelling economic benefits to certain geographic areas to the exclusion of others. J.A. Hobson (1926) is quoted by Wilson (1972: 32) as follows: “nowhere in the world has there ever existed so concentrated a form of capitalism as that represented by the financial power of the mining houses in South Africa, and nowhere else does that power so completely realise and enforce the need for controlling politics”.

Childhood experiences can become part of the stories that shape our lives (see Jansen, 2011). The effect of the annual Christmas parties in building loyalty towards the mine should therefore not be underestimated. From a young age, the mine was also

identified as a logical and easily accessible career path. School children could earn pocket money by working in mine offices during the school holidays, and in so doing were groomed for future employment on the mine. This was also the case in Sasolburg and Secunda (see Sparks, 2012 and Paquet, 2017).



Figure 48: Staff of the Virginia mine uranium laboratory, ca. 1970s
Source: Duggan, 2013

5.5.1.6 *Apartheid and racial discrimination*

When the respondents shared their experiences of Virginia at the height of the mining boom, they mostly highlighted positive aspects. These utopian stories are, however, subverted by the Apartheid subtext, which lurks in the background of any conversation about the history of Virginia.

When gold mining started in Virginia in 1950, it was a mere two years after the formalisation of Apartheid. The stark distinctions made between white and black, or so-called “European” and “Non-European”, mine workers are very clear in literature about mining published at the time of the gold mining boom

in South Africa (e.g., Anglo American Corporation of SA Ltd, 1957; Wilson, 1972).

South African gold is deep underground and the ore is of a low grade. This together with the fact that the price of gold was internationally fixed made it of primary importance for the mining companies to keep labour costs as low as possible. This was done by imposing taxes (for instance a “poll tax” and a “hut tax”) on rural black communities, forcing black men to go and work on the mines. Black mine workers had to sign contracts, typically for nine months, a breach of which was deemed a criminal offence. At the same time, the duration of the contracts was too short for black workers to effectively negotiate better working conditions and pay. The Native Lands Act (1913) prohibited black people from owning or even renting land in areas designated as white by the government.

The Mines and Works Act that was promulgated in 1911 and amended in 1926²⁵, stipulated that only whites, and for certain occupations, coloureds, could obtain competency certificates for skilled trades in the mines. Black workers were paid a tenth of the wages earned by white workers. Most of these meagre earnings were spent in the area of the mine, while the women left behind in the rural hinterland were left looking after the children and the elderly. In this way, the rural economy was suppressed, which fed the stream of cheap black labour to the mines, not just from within South Africa, but from the neighbouring countries as well. By the time Apartheid was formally implemented in 1948, many restrictions had already been imposed on black South Africans in order to ensure a steady flow of cheap black labourers to the mines (Wilson, 1972; Freund, 1986; Sparks, 2003; CJPME Foundation, 2014).

Black workers worked longer hours than white mine workers, and enjoyed few of the benefits that raised the earnings of white workers to far above the

²⁵ Note that this was long before the institution of Apartheid as formal state policy by the National Party in 1948.

minimum wage applicable to them. A black worker who became permanently disabled due to an accident on the mine received a once-off lump sum of R 1 228, while a white worker received an annual pension of R 1 800 which was paid in monthly payments (Wilson, 1972).



Figure 49: Molly remembers seeing black workers injured on the mine riding around Virginia on hand-driven tricycles

Source: Winter *et al*, 2009

There is no information comparing the wages unskilled workers could earn elsewhere, e.g., as farm workers or on the railways, but Wilson (1972) argues that seasonal work on the mines offered rural South Africans an opportunity to supplement their income. Furthermore, “free food supplied to black workers has long been regarded as a form of earnings in kind and is indeed an important factor in attracting labour to the mines” (ibid: 63). For migrant workers, the attraction is clear, as similar opportunities were often not available in their home countries. In 1955 it was estimated that Mozambicans could earn twice as much on the South African gold fields than they could working in the agricultural, manufacturing or transport sector in Mozambique (Wilson, 1972).

Wilson (1972) shows that, between 1889 and 1969, the wages of black workers have not increased at all in real terms, but seem to have actually fallen. In contrast, white mine employees saw at least a two-thirds increase in real earnings. Due to superior bargaining strength as a result of well organized white labour unions, white mineworkers were able to appropriate

for themselves the lion's share of the gains of increased productivity, regardless of who was responsible (e.g. mostly black or mostly white workers) for the increase.

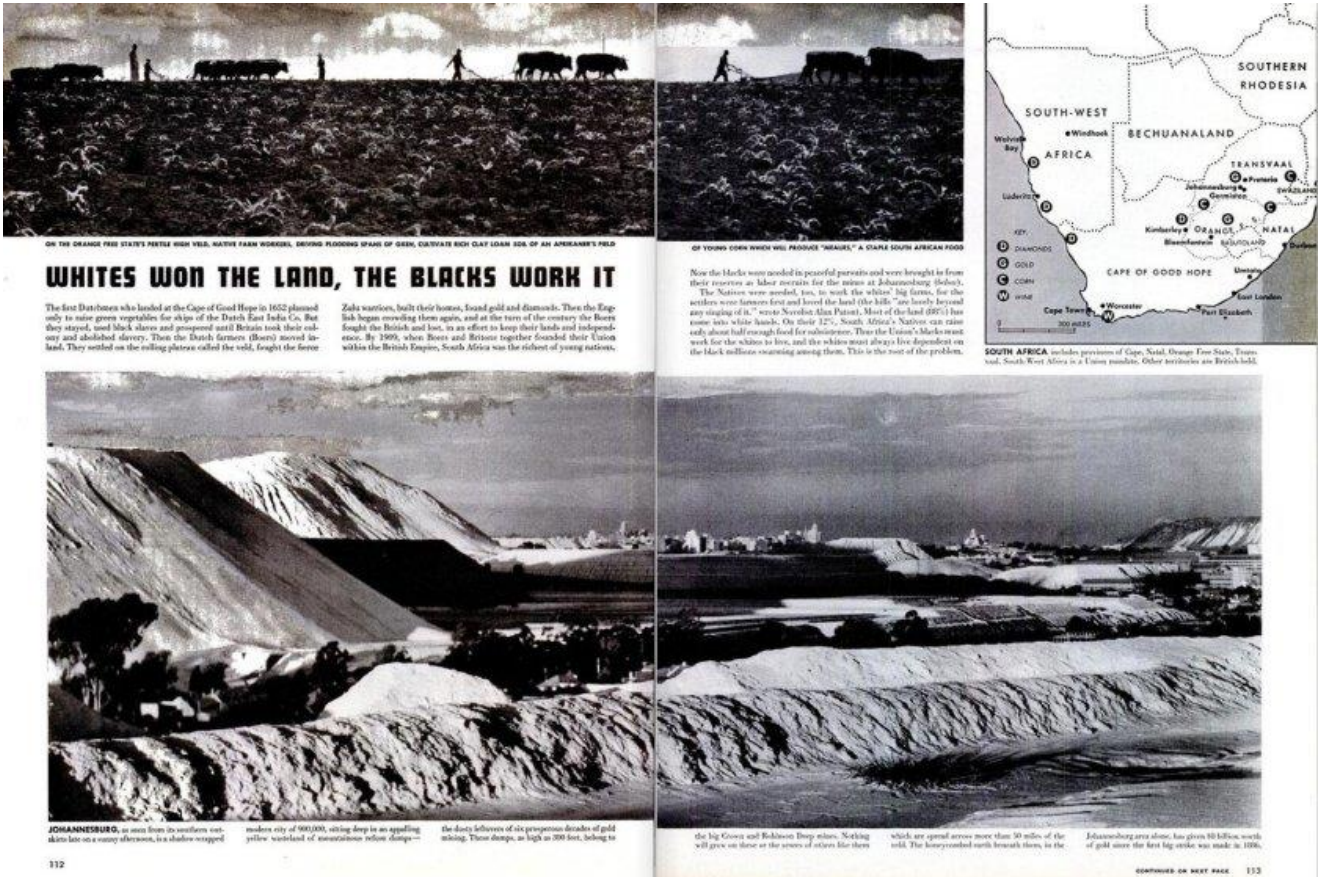


Figure 50: An article that appeared in Life magazine in 1950

Source: *Life/Time Magazine*, 1950

According to Wilson (1972), wages for black mine workers were so low that it would have been impossible for a black mine worker to support a family in town (as opposed to in the rural hinterland), where there was no means for the family to support itself and the cost of living was higher.

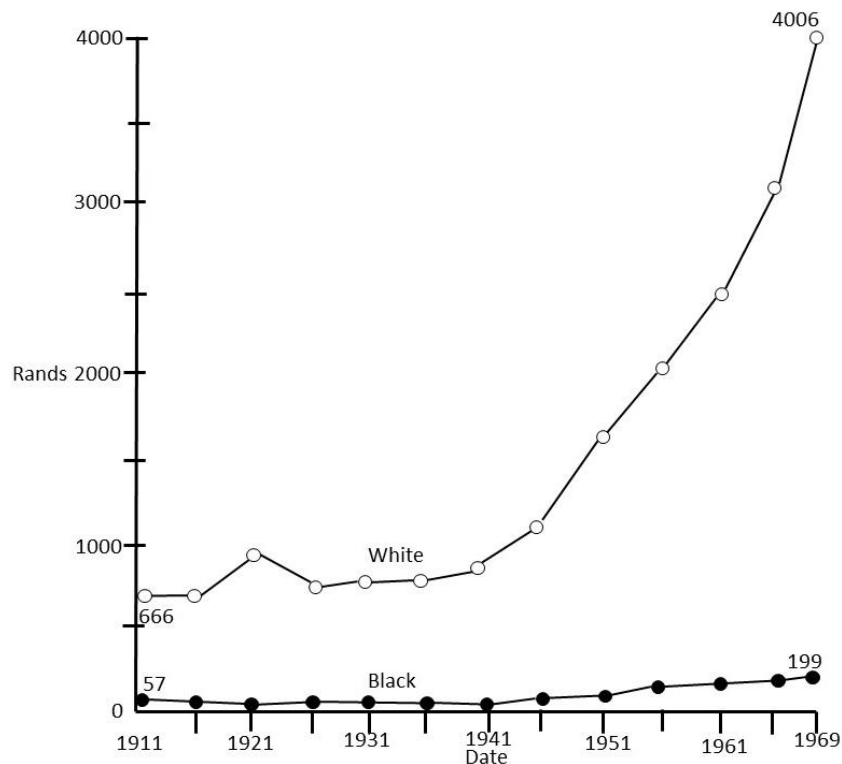


Figure 51: Annual cash earnings of black and white mine workers at current prices from 1911 to 1969
 Source: Wilson, 1972

Kabelo shares how his grandfather would transport people involved in the struggle out of the country in the night, reporting to duty for his work at the mine in the morning again. His grandmother was banned from studying owing to her political involvement. One of his brothers was buried alive and it is not known where other family members allegedly murdered for their political involvement are buried.

Kabelo, whose grandfather started working for Harmony Gold in 1957 and worked as a driver transporting food to the mine kitchens, tells how their home in Meloding was the only house used to accommodate visiting family members of Sotho, Xhosa and Shangaan speaking migrant mine workers free of charge. These male mine workers were not allowed to have their families with them in the hostels and were allowed to return home only once a year.

Seeing that Kabelo's grandfather refused to get the necessary permit that had to be obtained from the municipality whenever one was planning to receive visitors who stayed over (known as "lodgers") at your home, he was arrested

several times, sometimes leading to him being incarcerated for months at a time. As a result he lost his employment at the mine and had to re-apply to be employed again.

Michael tells how he attended one of two Harmony Primary Schools, the one for black children that was situated “on the outskirts of town where you are just about to get to Welkom” whereas the Harmony Primary for white children was located in the town. Yet, in spite of this, he claims that politics, or the struggle against Apartheid, did not play a significant role in their lives as children growing up in Virginia.

South Africa’s Apartheid history is the metanarrative that forms the *de facto* backdrop of all the Virginia stories. Yet, except for Kabelo who had a very direct experience with Apartheid growing up, the respondents made almost no mention of Apartheid when telling me their stories. While this could still to an extent be expected of the white respondents, who were the beneficiaries of Apartheid and isolated from its negative consequences, it is a surprise that the black respondents were also silent on Apartheid as a factor impacting their experience of the town. It is understood that these workers were manipulated by the mine as the “big daddy”, that their goodwill was, in a sense, “bought” by benefits such as free food and social events organized by the mine. Yet the discriminatory and unfair treatment suffered by black mine workers was so harsh that I would have expected it to play a stronger role in the stories black residents of Virginia tell about the town during the mining boom. This is especially so as South Africans, however duped they were by the propaganda of the Apartheid state and its lackeys, which may have included the gold mining industry, are now assumed to have a better understanding of the true state of affairs at the time.

This seems to prove that, just as the story of Apartheid as a state strategy is not a linear coherent whole, but is rather a complex and uneven history, characterised by fluidity and internal fractiousness (Posel, 2011) the experience of Apartheid by black South Africans was also highly diversified and uneven.

5.5.1.7 Class, social pressure and the yoke of respectability

In the narratives shared by respondents who grew up in Virginia (Liz, Tshepo, Kabelo, Sally) about their childhood one is given the impression that there was not much awareness of class distinctions in the white community because the mine facilities were available for use by “everyone” free of charge. Yet, the experience of adults during the mining boom was that, against the backdrop of the Apartheid dispensation²⁶, there were distinctions of class and status within both the black and white communities of the town.

Tshepo and Kabelo both remember the status people who worked on the mines enjoyed (see 5.5.1.2 above) and the markers thereof (e.g., transport to school and a lunchbox full of mine food).

Molly remembers the distinction between mine people and people who were privately employed in Virginia, a distinction that was also spatially demarcated:

“We lived in Virginia [Central]. Virginia was like, more protected. Virginia was more the private, Merriespruit was mining, Harmony was mining, Saaiplaas was mining. Anything private was in Virginia. So sometimes the Harmony people would, like, we didn’t get on, because we were this side of the Sand River, but all these things happened on that side of the river. That’s where the miners were, the miners were rough people.”

Wayne confirms the view of white miners who had underground jobs as uneducated, rough and tough.

Beth, the daughter of a white underground mineworker, lived in Virginia until she was six and has a scholarly and personal interest in the history of the town. She shares the following about class distinctions at the time:

²⁶ I.e. from 1948, when Apartheid became government policy to 1991, when the Apartheid legislation was abolished.

“ . . . it was just a few streets, and you knew exactly when you were crossing into these different class areas amongst whites and you couldn't, you had to greet people respectfully, like for example, if a town clerk or the mining manager, or a senior insurance assessor or someone came into the store, the wife of that person, you had to be deferential.”

Among the many ways in which white people were classified during Virginia's heyday, was their church affiliation, as remarked by Beth:

“Then there was a church issue, whether you went to the big Dutch Reformed Church or the little Methodist of the even tinier Catholic Chapel – there you also got socially ranked.”

Molly's memory of the different religious groups attending St Mary's convent (then the only English language school in town), supports this:

“In the convent also, we were the Catholics, we were the Protestants, and then the Jewish girls were separate.”

Consumerism fuelled much of the social pressure experienced by residents of Virginia at the time. Beth had the following to say about this:

“People like my mom's neighbours would frequently at the end of every month . . . my mother would tell me the shame of it . . . every Friday night at the end of the month, trucks would appear and they would collect people's furniture, like their radiogram, or their electronic piano, or their car, or other household items. They would be taken off until people had paid the arrears. And she said it was like, everyone, to keep the dignity of their neighbours would stay inside and pretend not to notice. And then you knew that, for the next month or two you couldn't pop over to Sheila's house to get sugar or whatever, because then you would notice the gaping hole of furniture. So women would sit out on their stoeps. So there was this immense pressure. So if you were a poorer white person, I don't think you experienced Virginia as a pleasant town. You

experienced it, at least in my mother's view, as a town where there was enormous social pressure to keep up."

Molly also remembers the effect of unchecked spending:

"Virginia and Welkom are full of pawn shops, they originated there. They [the white underground miners] would have so much money from their bonuses, you know, making target, they would buy cars and boats and all kinds of things and then not have the wherewithal and knowledge to know how to manage their money, blow it all on drink and holidays and fast cars and then in the middle of the month have nothing. So then they go and pawn that, so the pawn shops used to be full of stuff."

Virginia during its heyday was a highly stratified community as was the case with all of Apartheid South Africa. It would be a mistake, however, to assume the privileged class of white South Africans was a homogenous group. The stories told by the respondents show that white residents of Virginia were classified, whether formally or informally, in terms of the kind of work they did (private sector or on the mine, underground mine worker or engineer), their religious affiliation, their financial situation and lifestyle. These classifications were often spatially demarcated (e.g. this side and on the other side of the Sand River or of a specific street in town).

We see that the very consumerism that made Virginia attractive during the mining boom often also became a burden to residents of the town.

As indicated in section 3.7.3, Sparks (2012) devotes much attention to the notion of "respectability" as a white preoccupation that characterised the Apartheid modern. According to Sparks, in Sasolburg, the external markers of respectability were "neat gardens, clean yards and proper comportment" (ibid: 96). It is very clear from the obsession with both private and institutional gardening in Virginia that this was also a marker of respectability here. Other measures of respectability as perceived by Sparks in Sasolburg include "economic independence, tidiness and cleanliness, Christian piety, sobriety and sexual restraint" (ibid: 97). The social pressure to be seen as

respectable, is also evident in stories about Virginia's past.

As was the case in Sasolburg, well-kept gardens and Christian piety, the main marker of which was going to church on Sundays according to Molly, were certainly also associated with respectability in Virginia. The remark by Beth that "You had to wear gloves and a hat when you went out, people dressed up to keep the town smart" indicates that the "proper comportment" referred to by Sparks was also a requirement for respectability in Virginia.



Figure 52: Respectable ladies of Virginia at the time of the town's tenth birthday:
Chairpersons of the Harmony Women's Guild and the Virginia Women's Social
Club, and the Mayoress
Source: *The Friend*, 29 August 1964

As for sobriety, Molly and Beth remarked on the phenomenon of white underground miners spending much of their earnings on drink. Says Beth: "If your husband was a teetotaler, didn't drink alcohol, the women of those men walked around very proudly because they had much better relations with their husbands."

The way in which respectability was qualified in terms of cliques (pioneers, municipal and company elites) that is described by Sparks (2012) as peculiar to a company town can also be seen in the white community of Virginia during the boom years. Privately employed or self-employed residents of Virginia saw themselves as more respectable than the "mine people" (Molly) and within the white mining community, the "engineers" (above ground mine employees) enjoyed significantly more status, i.e., were more respectable, than the "miners" (underground mine employees) (Wayne).

Sparks (2012: 97) summarises the notion of respectability as it applied under the Apartheid modern as “At a general level, respectability was a synonym for whiteness inflected with particular class and gender emphases”. It should be noted that, according to the richly detailed narratives of Dlamini (2009) of the township of Katlehong, respectability also played a role in black class distinctions, with the high society being referred to as “amarespectables” (Dlamini, 2009: 78). The references made by some of the black respondents to the status that working on the mine lent members of the community could perhaps also be related to the notion of respectability. There is not enough information from which to draw an authoritative conclusion, but some markers that conveyed, if not respectability, some measure of esteem in the black community at the time of the boom were transport to school; food (including a lunchbox), and clothes from a chain store.

5.5.2 Stories of Virginia after the boom

The gold-mining boom came to an end as gold prices steadily declined from 1987 to 1992 as a result of a shift in the balance of supply and demand. With the global liberalisation of foreign exchange markets, more flexible and sophisticated financial products became available that offered investors alternatives to gold (Natrass, 1995). Furthermore, sharp increases in gold production by the US (sevenfold), Australia (tenfold) and Canada (double) caused South Africa’s share in the world’s gold production to decrease by more than half (from 66,6% to 32,8%) between 1981 and 1993. This was due in part to the declining grade of South African ore, which contributed to the overall net profit rate of mining in South Africa dropping from 40,3% in 1981 to 7,7% in 1992 (ibid).

Marais and Cloete (2013) point out that the drop in the gold price was not the only factor in the decline of the mining industry in the Free State gold fields. Other factors included labour reforms that led to higher wages for mine workers, increased risks of deep level mining, increased mechanisation and globalisation, meaning that previously exclusively South African companies could now consider international options. As Sparks (2003) points out, the

demise of the gold mining industry coincided with the advent of democracy in South Africa. As Jack says:

“And automatically that thing happens after 1994. It is then that everything goes to the drain. So that’s why then you could just ask yourself: Why?”

When sharing their perceptions of the town of Virginia at the time of this study, the overall impression conveyed by the respondents is one of neglect. In the words of Kabelo, the municipal official:

“Virginia it’s a I would say a dying town, neh. It’s a town, there is a silent cry from both white and black people who call Virginia their home. You know, it’s like seeing your child ill and seeing those stages, signs of being ill and a person in the process of dying. And all this happens under you and there’s absolutely nothing, you feel defenceless. There is absolutely nothing that you can do. And that’s the trauma that most people feel.”

As a proud resident of Virginia, Sally had difficulty expressing her views on the state of the town at the time of the interview:

“Virginia isn’t really a town to be proud of any more. Virginia’s, ag, no, I am proud of Virginia, but I think what people describe to you of the younger days and what Virginia is today are miles removed from each other, you cannot believe it.”

Tshepo paints an almost apocalyptic picture of the demolition of New Shaft, the mine shaft just outside the township of Meloding that had played such a significant role in his life and in the lives of all who lived in Meloding:

“You know the saddest part was when the, you know there was this tower where, where, in every mine there’s this tall tower, that building, the tall building. Well, reality checked when that tower was destroyed. Look, everybody was there to watch that tower when it went down. And I’m telling you most of us, not only older people, but youth, we were in tears, to see . . . because that tower, it’s a history, it was a history of Meloding. It went down, we were

sad. And the saddest part, we were never informed. We were never informed that tower is going to be destroyed. People . . . it's that tower and it's the tar road that comes from town to Meloding. The cars would stop in the middle of the road. People would phone people who were in township to come and see, the miracle, the sad experience. We would go with our phones. I still have it here in my phone when it was like, going down, we would take photos, we took videos. And, after it went down, dust settled down, we watched it. It's like. . . it's gone. We were like – Virginia is done.”

An interesting observation made by Liz is that Free State towns such as Theunissen, Hennenman, Brandfort and Senekal, that never had mines, are better off today than Virginia. While they never experienced a boom, she is of the opinion that they also did not suffer the deterioration Virginia did. Her point of view is supported by Tshepo when he says:

“Example: Venter²⁷, Venter is next to Virginia, Venter there is N1²⁸ in Venter. . . . Virginia was way, way, way better than Venter, in terms of economy and, ja, neh. But right now, I'm telling you, Venter is above Virginia – proven, it's proven, I'm not guessing, I know so, because N1, the Venter N1, is being renovated now there is going to be a mall there. They've realised that there is N1, so, for us to pick up Venter's economy, let's do this development. And now, Venter is better than Virginia.”

Jack also views Virginia as worse off in comparison with other towns or regions:

“Take Bethlehem now. They don't have mines, but when you go to Bethlehem you could see it is flourishing because of those people are having ideas. Like, let's take an example Joburg they are not depending on mining. Even Kwa-Zulu Natal they did not have mines, uyayibon'.

²⁷ Ventersburg, one of Virginia's neighbouring towns.

²⁸ The N1 highway.

But at least they have things that they are developmental and then they are giving hope to people.”

☞ Kabelo’s story of Virginia as a dying child is powerful because of the emotion of helplessness and hopelessness it evokes. The metaphor depicts the residents as caring parents who are powerless in the face of the steady deterioration of the town. Although Virginia is not an urban setting in the sense referred to by Jacobs (1961) (as the town centre, for instance has no permanent residents), this poignant image reminds of the rich descriptions by the dystopian urbanists of the grime, darkness and disease of the city (Merrifield, 2000).

Even more powerfully emotive is Tshepo’s story of the demolition of New Shaft, portraying the community of Meloding’s shared sense of having lost part of their history – a loss that not only signifies the end of Meloding, but of the whole of Virginia (“Virginia is done”). This kind of “showing”, i.e., through sharing a concrete example or event, and in particular a personal experience, is much more powerful than mere “telling” – an established principle of narrative fiction.

The demolition of New Shaft reminds of Berman’s account of the destruction of his childhood neighbourhood of the Bronx to make way for Robert Moses’s Cross-Bronx Expressway. Yet here, the story seems somehow inverted – the demolition of the tower does not have as its aim to make room for “progress”. Instead, it symbolises a regression, an end to progress.

Both in Kabelo’s image of the town as a dying child and in Tshepo’s story of the demolition of New Shaft, we are given clues as to the meaning the town as well as the demolished mining tower has for the residents of Virginia. The image of Virginia as a dying child conveys a very close intimate relationship with the town while the mining tower was a symbol of life and hope that turned into one of despair and hopelessness for the Meloding community. As indicated by Paquet (2017: 196) emotions such as these infuse places with meaning, as do power relations and identities. She challenges the bias against planning research that is emotion based, arguing that such a bias “has debilitating consequences for real transformation (social, political, economic)”.

The modernist impulse to compete and compare is apparent from claims by respondents that other towns or regions are better off than Virginia, even though they never benefited from gold mining activity. It seems the basis for comparison is somewhat skewed, as Virginia originated as a result of the gold mines and was never merely an agricultural town like most Free State towns. The comments by the respondents seem to suggest that the gold mining boom has not benefited Virginia in the long run and that it might in fact have harmed the town – a perhaps a classic example of the “resource curse” (see Ross, 1999). It could be argued that the never-ending drive towards modernisation becomes a source of self-inflicted despair, evoking Berman’s image of a scorpion stinging itself.

Virginia seems to be a case in point for Berman’s critical view that some modernisation projects, while they come at great cost (in this case the social cost of migrant labour, the high incidence of mine accidents and the environmental impact of mining activities) do not yield long term results. There is even the fear that, in the insatiable drive towards modernisation, that which was good about previous modernities is destroyed.

Tshepo’s description of the advantage Ventersburg has over Virginia refers to two core features of modernity, namely mobility and consumerism. Within a modernist spatial paradigm a town situated on a national road and boasting a mall and, moreover, a *new* mall, such as Ventersburg, will always have better prospects than a town without these attributes, such as Virginia.

Jack’s reference to the hope inherent in “developmental things” in KwaZulu-Natal reflects the modernist bias towards development or progress. It tallies with Bloch’s view of hope as linked to the future, although the nature of the future developments referred to is not clear.

5.5.2.1 The garden city no more

All the respondents, except for Kabelo, expressed their dissatisfaction with how Virginia looks today. Lucas says the following:

“Virginia was called the garden city of South Africa, I don’t have to tell you, I’m sure you know about it. Today it is one of the dirtiest, the filthiest towns in South Africa.”

Lucas illustrates the link between the appearance of the town and its economic prospects, by telling the story of a friend of his who tried to sell his underwear factory in Virginia to a clothing company from Durban. The investors were of the opinion that employees would be unwilling to relocate from Durban to Virginia, partly as a result of the town looking so unkempt. Eventually, the business could not be sold and the 80 or so workers, mostly women, employed by the business lost their jobs. The building is now an empty shell stripped by looters of all that could be sold.

Sias also dismisses ideas around developing a future economy for Virginia around virtual businesses, i.e., for people live and work in Virginia, but with their client base elsewhere, because “the people working in those virtual businesses also want to eat in good restaurants and send their children to good schools”.

The link between the town’s appearance and business is confirmed by Ben, who shares how keeping the town looking good was part of a municipal strategy to attract investors in the time when Virginia still had its own mayor.

Although, as a lawyer, it does not directly affect his business, Ben is also unhappy with what the town looks like:

“It is bad now, the town looks bad, in the main street there is a shebeen that’s cooking 24 hours a day [. . .] But I mean the town was much better maintained. You could . . . there were little parks everywhere. It was . . . in the evening if you had gone to get something to eat in Welkom, you could come back and come to Virginia Gardens that is just across from here. Well, now it is the Virginia desert, but at one stage it was Virginia Gardens.”

The issue of municipal services is closely related to that of the appearance of the town because of the role the municipality has in maintaining street reserves and in sanitation.

Angus explains the effect the downscaling of mining activities had on the town:

“... and when the mines began to downsize, people moved away, fewer people came into the town, the municipal facilities began to deteriorate. The pretty town became dirty, there was no maintenance and the mines started selling their houses at a low price and stopped the maintenance of, of the private houses.”

Tshepo calls the road running from Virginia to Meloding “a disaster” and states that, if the municipality cannot even do road maintenance, it most certainly cannot be expected to attend to the bigger issues facing the town.

According to Lucas, the neglect also extends to the Sand River. According to him the problem of raw sewerage flowing into the river has been a longstanding one and was not even addressed by the municipality following a visit by the Green Scorpions arranged by a number of concerned residents under Lucas’s leadership.

Residents of Virginia mourn the loss of the town’s erstwhile beauty, order and cleanliness. The emphasis placed on the outward appearance of the town both for those living in Virginia and as a source of attraction for visitors and investors from outside, is to be expected in the modern era (Berman, 1988) – this is, after all, the era of outward show.

Just as the well maintained and beautifully landscaped parks, road reserves and traffic circles symbolised Virginia’s respectability and the pioneering spirit of its founders (as was the case in Sasolburg and Secunda when these towns were later developed (Sparks, 2012; Paquet, 2017), the loss of these features symbolises the town’s drop in status.

It is important to note that the black respondents generally do not refer to urban landscaping when they describe changes in their town from the mining boom to the present day. After all, there was no landscaping in Meloding, even at the height of mining activity in Virginia. This points to the ways in which physical space can be demarcated to signify class, status and, as is most often the case in South Africa, race (see also Paquet, 2017 and Sparks, 20012).

The general neglect of the town is, however, an issue to all the respondents regardless of race. The lack of maintenance and cleaning by the municipality, and a seeming disorderliness, which is exemplified by the shebeen trading in the main street, represent the town's diminished respectability and does not sit well with its residents.

When Angus tells the story of Virginia's deterioration, he does so from a distance: "and when the mines began to downsize, people moved away . . . The pretty town became dirty . . . now it is again only the basics that are left" etc. Absent are any personal pronouns (e.g. "our" (town), "we" etc). From Angus's perspective, the active roles in his story are left to the mine and the municipality.

Again, at the root of the Virginia's wellbeing or lack thereof lies a capitalist consumerism – according to Ben, the town's appearance had utility in that it served to attract investors. Furthermore, the shifting sands of supply and demand led to low-priced mine houses flooding the market and leaving those owning property in Virginia with assets of lower value than they expected. In a modernist paradigm, therefore, even fixed property has unfixed properties.

Ultimately fixed amidst the fluidity and vaporousness of our time, however, is the location of Virginia. Coupled with people who are mobile ("people moved away, fewer people came into the town" – Angus), this is the town's ultimate dilemma, and that of other small towns competing for dwindling resources in the Free State and elsewhere in South Africa (CDE, 2005).

While Virginia could perhaps be considered a "former" mining town due to the drastic decrease of mining activity in the area, Secunda can still be viewed to a large extent as a "company town" as the Sasol plant remains in operation. Even in Secunda,

however, maintenance of the town's green areas proves problematic (Paquet, 2017). Paquet (2017) suggests that perhaps developing urban landscapes to Western ideals of beauty is not feasible in South Africa due to the practicalities and cost of maintaining them.

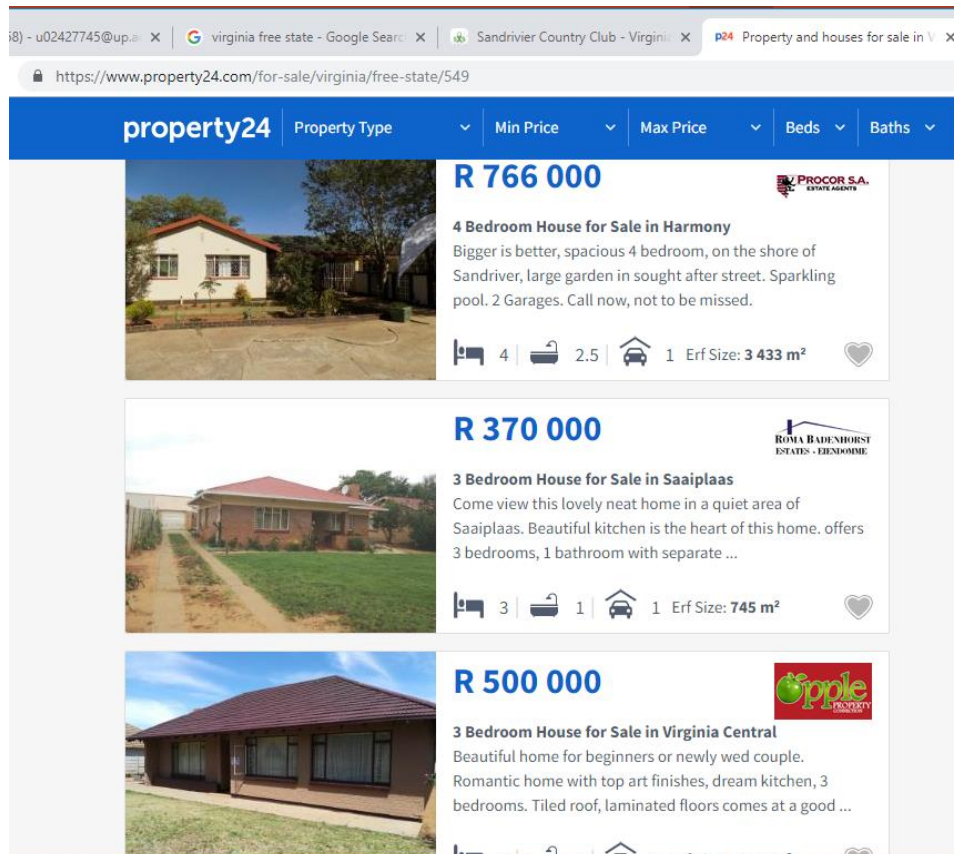


Figure 53: House prices in Virginia at the time of writing this thesis
Source: Property 24, undated

5.5.2.2 A struggling business sector

The contribution made by the Free State gold fields region to the provincial economy more than halved at the beginning of the 1990s, dropping from 57% in 1990 to 25,4% in 1996. Things worsened further between 1996 and 2010, with the economic output of the Free State gold fields declining by an average of almost 2% per year (Marais, 2013).

Angus tells how commercial activity in Virginia has contracted:

“Many businesses closed down – now it is again only the ‘basics’ that are left – there are no hotels²⁹ left, only the basic services of a small town like a Checkers and . . . that is just about the heart of the town.”

Sally also sees businesses in Virginia as struggling:

“The businesses in town are suffering terribly. I see it in my clients [. . .] There is no money, the people don’t have money.”

Ben remembers there being many more auto dealerships in the town than there were at the time of this study.

“In the old days there were motor dealerships, very many, now there are two.”

He adds, however:

“It affects certain businesses more than others. There is always work for lawyers. Even the lawyer in Boshof³⁰ keeps going. The worse things are for the people, the better things are for the lawyers.”



Figure 54: Advertisements for motor dealerships in Virginia that appeared in the supplement in *The Friend* published in 1964 on occasion of Virginia’s 10th birthday
Source: *The Friend*, 29 August 1964

²⁹ Lucas confirms that at one stage Virginia had four hotels.

³⁰ A Free State town with a population of about 8 500.

Lucas explains the role the first mass action by black mine workers which started at the beginning of the 1990s played in the economic downturn in Virginia. He remembers large numbers of mine workers (15 000) walking past his house to Harmony 3 Stadium for meetings that preceded, among other things, the consumer boycotts³¹ that took place in the town in 1990. Coming on top of the drop in the gold price in the late 1980s, the protracted boycotts, one in February for three and half weeks and a second one³² in August/September that year, saw businesses, among them some who were renting their premises from Lucas, going under and crippled the town's economy.

As a member of the executive committee of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce at the time, Lucas represented the shopkeepers in negotiations with the mine workers and the mining houses. Among other things, these negotiations resulted in the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) being acknowledged as the representative of the miners. According to Lucas, as soon as NUM was formally acknowledged, organized labour demanded higher wages, thereby setting the ball rolling that would lead to large scale retrenchments³³ as mines closed or downsized. Lucas tells how, initially, the retrenchments at first resulted in increased retail activity:

“They announced the retrenchments, and in two weeks’ time, there was a surge of business, people started buying and so on, because they all got packages, retrenchment packages and then they started buying things, because there were a lot of Mozambicans then, a lot of people coming from Transkei and, and, Lesotho.”

As is to be expected, however, the rampant spending did not last:

“And then, suddenly, reality hit and it went down. By 1993, where I had in my one [business] in Saaiplaas I had about 17,

³¹ Black consumers boycotted all white businesses in Virginia claiming that the white business owners discriminated against them.

³² Lucas states that, although consumer boycotts were also initiated in other places, as far as he knows, Virginia is the only town that had to boycotts.

³³ Lucas says there were 46 000 retrenchments in the Free State gold fields, of which 26 000 were in Virginia alone.

20 workers, I can't remember, we ended up, at my counter I ended up getting R4,20 for a day. One customer for the day. And not just once or twice, just about two three times a month on a Monday or a Tuesday it was R4,20. I'll never forget that. [. . .] And then a lot of places started closing down, a lot of insolvencies, a lot of bad debts [. . .] I had Pep Stores at my place and they had several outlets in Virginia. They closed down and consolidated. And you lose thousands of rands like that. And of course . . . unemployment.”

According to Lucas there is very little skilled labour left in Virginia. Spare parts, for instance for the machines in his business, are not available in Virginia and have to be ordered from elsewhere.

Kabelo confirms the direct link between the downscaling of mining activities in the form of repeated retrenchments, or *pongolas* as they were known in the township, and the closing of businesses in the town:

“and with that all the factories closed down, everything, because now remember, mining was the only thing that supplied employment

. . .

Edgars, Truworths, most retail shops have closed and moved to Welkom.”

Tshepo says the same thing:

“So, the mine closed; life changed. Automatically when the mine shut down, Virginia town, your shops, they closed down too. Why? Because they were never doing the profit like they used to. Like I said, Virginia economy was buzzing, you know, but it went down the drain – it went down the drain like fast.”

Jack uses the local minibus taxi industry as an example of the impact of the mine closures on business in Virginia:

“On those days, taxi industry were blossoming, but nowadays it is really, it is a disaster. Like even the lines that we have of the routes that we have, maybe they could go to Winburg or neighbouring towns, they’re no more having that and then automatically you know those people who bought the vehicles then they have to maybe repay their debts. But nowadays you’ll find that it is difficult for them to survive, you see. Others they have to resort to selling maybe their taxis so as at least they know that if I sell the taxi, I’ll have a certain portion of money that I’ll take my child or their children to university or colleges or whatever in terms of surviving. So that’s why you will find that life nowadays, really, it is hard.”

Lucas’s story of the strikes and consumer boycotts in Virginia on the eve of the mine closures represents the point at which the South African equivalent of the “little man” (or the superfluous man, or the underground man) of the St. Petersburg writers discussed by Berman becomes a “mass of little men”, a veritable Soviet that will nevermore be silenced. The “one man demonstration in the street” (the black man walking into the white side of the post office) has become a mass movement – a “primal scene” of the struggle against Apartheid. It was the unstoppable manifestation of what Posel (2011) describes as the inherent hubris of Apartheid, namely the overwhelming majority of black South Africans.

And, just like the “little men” of St. Petersburg were shaped by their urban setting, so have the masses that rose against an oppressive regime in South Africa from the late 1970s been brutally shaped by cities and towns of which the very streets proclaimed their inequality. As was the case in St. Petersburg, these same streets became infused with new meaning as they became the arena for revolt.

For the mine workers, the effect of the protests was higher wages and recognition for their labour union, the National Union of Mine Workers (NUM). At the same time, however, it sowed the seeds for the demise of Virginia and possibly that of the entire

South African goldmining industry. While the Virginia retailers were initially the worst affected by the consumer boycotts, it eventually had an impact on all residents of the town and, ultimately, the whole of South Africa. Ironically, it was the poorest of labourers who up to that point could at least have counted on mine employment, who ultimately paid the price. Thus, much like Dostoevsky's underground man, the mine workers tragically became the victims of their own triumph.

Here again the consumerism that characterises modernity, but also the specific warped brand of "a modernism of underdevelopment" (Berman, 1988) or the "peculiar modernism of Apartheid" (Parnell & Mabin, 1995) or the "Apartheid modern" (Sparks, 2004) that emerged in the South African context, is prominent. When the workers boycotted shops in Virginia, they aimed at the symbol of capitalist Apartheid, of the consumerism that added another layer on top of the racial discrimination against them, namely discrimination on the basis of the poverty they were structurally condemned to suffer under Apartheid.

For the respondents, the retail opportunities and activity in Virginia are a barometer of the wellbeing of the town. The presence of the larger chain stores, e.g., Pep, Edgars, Truworths, in particular seem to indicate economic soundness. This is coupled with the presence or absence of a mall as referred to in paragraph 5.5.2 above. Large chain stores opening and closing, malls being built and going to seed are typical South African narratives and a typical feature of the built environment in our cities and towns.

From the remarks of the respondents, of which those by Kabelo and Tshepo are quoted above, it is clear that the residents of Virginia recognize that mining was the main, if not only, driver of the town's economy. From the account by Humphriss and Thomas (1968) the growth of secondary industries that had their roots in serving the mining sector was mainly responsible for Benoni surviving and flourishing beyond the life of the mines in the area. In Virginia, however, only one such business, Wesco Plastics, could be identified. From the information at my disposal, I could not determine why there had not been a greater uptake with respect to secondary businesses in Virginia.

Jack's remark about parents wishing to send their children to universities or colleges as a way out of poverty and out of Virginia was echoed in casual interactions with several of the respondents. This leads me to believe that the dictum of the erstwhile National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP) that places should only be invested in in areas of growth, while in all other areas investment should be in people, is already a practical reality in Virginia as far as people can afford it. Education is linked both to the future and to the new and is therefore clearly related to the notion of hope as it is described by Bloch (1995).

5.5.2.3 *Unemployment and poverty*

From a high of 180 000 in 1988, the number of people employed in the mining sector in the Free State gold fields dropped to 35 748 in 2010 (Marais, 2013). While specific figures for Virginia are not available, given the near total economic dependency of the town on the gold mines, the loss of mine employment can be expected to be devastating.

According to Marais (2013) in the twenty years from 1980 to 2010, the biggest variance in employment in the Free State gold fields was in the mining sector, where employment fell from 67.8% of the total to 42.2%. While employment in the services sector grew by 15.3% and most other sectors showed small increases, the total number of employed persons dropped from 227 508 to 84 728 – a drop of more than sixty percent.

According to the 2017-2022 Matjhabeng Local Municipality IDP, the 2016 Community Survey estimates for unemployment indicated an unemployment rate of 36.6% for Virginia, slightly better than the municipal average of 37%.

Liz remembers how residents of Virginia experienced the retrenchment of personnel by the mines:

“Probably 24 years ago the retrenching started. And what you noticed was the panic in the town when you hear people are losing

jobs, even if it's not them. It's that 'It won't happen to me' scenario. Then, when the mine started selling houses, suddenly people who had private houses couldn't sell theirs, because the mine sold theirs for considerably lower. [. . .] Retrenchments started off very slowly, but then accelerated. The first thing that we started seeing was when you asked the mine for, like can we use the marquee tent for the church fête, the mine gave it to the church. We should have put two and two together. [. . .] You could see things like the country club was no longer being maintained, the swimming pool closed down. It didn't happen overnight, it was like, one globe dies, and eventually everything is in darkness."



Figure 55: The Harmony Club swimming pool in 2011.
Source: Fitzgerald, 2011

Tshepo shares how it affected him, his family and the entire community of Meloding when New Shaft closed:

"You know, the most saddest part of Virginia was when the New Shaft was closed, because when New Shaft closed, obviously, the people are losing their jobs, and most of the people who were working New Shaft – it was community of Meloding – brothers, fathers, mothers, you know. My mother and my granny, they experienced that – there was this thing called pongola and that pongola affected many lives. [. . .] Some kids became criminals

because of pongola because their parents could not afford anymore. Because, remember, when pongola was happening, you would be called and told that your job is no more, and we are going to give you all your money, only to find all that money, they would give only R250 000. You have a family of five, they are still young, they attend school – yes, its public school, but still, there is life around that public school, there is life around Meloding, everyday life, there is a life that we need to live, you understand. There are some events, you know. The functions that we used to have, they were no more. The enjoyment we used to have, it was no more, because most of the parents could not afford.”

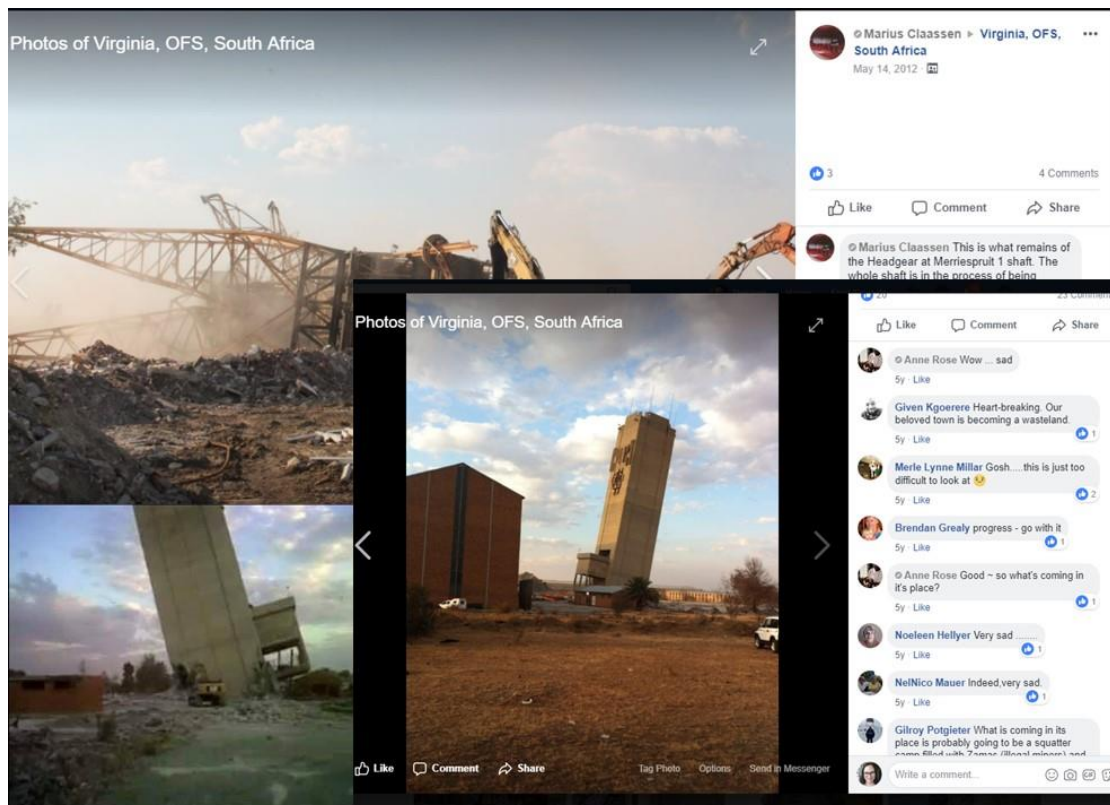


Figure 56: Residents of Virginia share their sadness about the demolition of mine shafts on social media

Source: Facebook groups Meloding Virginia Info and Virginia, OFS, South Africa

According to Kabelo, there were 13 mine shafts in Virginia that at one time together employed more than 100 000 people, between five and ten thousand people each. Today all the shafts are closed.

Kabelo's grandfather was retrenched during the first wave of retrenchments, in 1989. Life changed for the worse, because the grandfather's dream was to send Kabelo to the best schools and universities. He expected a large payout when he was retrenched, but was only given R10 000.

"It changed at a time when I was going to high school. My mom was unemployed at the time and the old man was also unemployed. So it really took a toll. Those were difficult times from my childhood, grade 8 to grade 12. The only choice was to go and work."

He explains how the mine closures affected the social fabric of Virginia:

"Some of the employees left for Rustenburg, while others returned to their relative homes, leaving many households without fathers. Because now remember what these guys did is when they came here they would have second families because they left their wives at home, they would have nyatsis what you call nyatsis, concubines I don't know what you call them and they would also have kids with them, so when they leave, it means now you have a problem."

He refers to the high rate of HIV and Aids in town and the prevalence of child-headed households.

Sally also personally experienced the effect of the mine closures. Although her stepfather with whom she lived in Virginia was never retrenched, she explains that mine personnel were very dependent on bonuses. When the mines started feeling the pinch, these bonuses dried up. As a result, her parents could not send her to university. Instead, she studied through the correspondence university, Unisa.

"So he, [her stepfather] is on the mine, my grandmother and grandfather are mine people. [. . .] When I had to go and study it was already going worse with the mines than before. That is why I studied through Unisa. [. . .] Following that it went even worse and some of the mines then closed. So economically speaking the town

. . . I am too young to realise what impact it had 100%, because, because I didn't know the good years³⁴ – as I said, then I really began to think for myself, things were already going bad in town and families moved away, the schools were struggling. Because the families move to where there is work and if there are no children a town . . . you know, there is nothing left of it. [. . .] It went well, went well, went well, up to my Grade 11 year, then the mines started retrenching. Then things started to get very, very bad.”

Jack and Isaiah, who are both school teachers in Meloding, have first hand experience of the dire social conditions in the township. They confirm that at their school, which is a fee-free school which offers a regular feeding scheme sponsored by the Department of Basic Education, about half of the learners come from homes where the parents are not working.

☞ Satisfying work, from which everyone benefits equally, is a distinguishing factor of several of the utopias discussed in paragraph 2.3 in Chapter 2. The high rate of unemployment in Virginia makes it a decidedly un-utopian environment. One is tempted to call it dystopian, but the stories of poverty and unemployment in Virginia do not convey the same sense as those of Merrifield's (2000) dystopian urbanists. Here there is no congestion, no noise, no unruliness or busy chaos, but rather a quiet hopelessness, a feeling of “going nowhere”. Yes, when the mines closed, some people left for other mines or for their rural homes, as Kabelo points out, but others remain stuck.

In the above stories, I discern a theme around children – children for whom there were thwarted aspirations (their own and those of their parents) around education, children who have been left raising siblings, and children who go to school hungry. Finally, there is Sally's chilling image of a town with no children. Children are not only a *de facto* symbol of hope, as they are emerging, becoming people, inherently linked to the new, the front viz Bloch (1995), but they are also very directly and practically linked to the future of a place such as Virginia as the next generation of teachers, lawyers,

³⁴ Sally moved to Virginia with her mother from Krugersdorp when she was in Grade 2.

doctors and nurses, shopkeepers and clerks. At the time of this study, however, new families were not settling in Virginia and parents living in the town were trying by any means to send their children to study and find work elsewhere.

Here we see that the effect of the mine closures was first and foremost an effect on people. We are shown the cruel unsustainability of payouts received by the retrenched workers, broken dreams (for instance of education opportunities that no longer existed once the mines started retrenching), and a community, in particular in Meloding, reeling from the shock of so many of its members losing their livelihood.

The story Liz tells of how the people of Virginia began to feel the effects of the downscaling of goldmining in the area shows that processes happened both slowly and suddenly – a contradiction typical of the modern paradigm. While there were many signs that the mines were withdrawing, retrenchments were experienced as a shock (“the panic in the town”) and houses could “suddenly” not be sold. She uses the powerful image of one lightbulb after another going out (slow) until one day (suddenly) “everything [was] in darkness”. Sally describes the period after the mines failed to pay out the customary bonuses to employees: “It went well, went well, went well, up to my Grade 11 year, then the mines started retrenching”. There is a sense of inertia as people get used to things over a long period, of a reluctance to accept that things have really changed.

5.5.2.4 Flight and stuckness

Angus and Bettie, Larry, Tshepo and Sally all refer to the phenomenon of people leaving Virginia as soon as they get the opportunity. On the other hand, reference was made to people not being able to sell their property at a market rate (Angus and Bettie, and Liz) or not being able to afford an education that might unlock opportunities elsewhere. The flight from the town is apparent from the quiet streets, empty shops, even in the heart of the town’s CBD, and from the shrinking number of learners in schools.

Sally, who had two small children at the time of the interview, says her biggest concern regarding the future of Virginia is schools. In her view, once people lose confidence in the schools in a town, families move away and the town no longer has a future. For her, being able to send her children to Afrikaans medium schools, as this is her children's mother tongue, is extremely important. She says that there are two Afrikaans medium primary schools in town that each have only around 400 learners left, yet they refuse to amalgamate. Sally fears that, in the long run, both schools will lose their Afrikaans status. Liz refers to the same phenomenon, albeit without the focus on Afrikaans:

“I believe the schools could have been more pro-active. As they saw their numbers dwindling, they could have created a you know, they could have amalgamated with each other, they could have applied a selfless vision to their situation – as with the golf clubs, as with the tennis clubs – but they hung on to the last fragments of hope.”



Figure 57: Harmony Club tennis court
Source: Wroblewska, 2009

☞ The inertia, the slowness with which residents of Virginia respond when it comes to adapting to their changed environment (as referred to in 5.5.2.3) is also apparent here. The “fragments of hope” they cling to (as Liz explains) would not qualify as hope at all in Bloch’s (1995) book. Rather, it seems to be a hankering after a past that is long gone, never to return. This kind of pseudo hope also does not have the action orientation Bloch (1995) advocates. There is no sign of the action on the streets Berman’s (1988) protagonists engage in, but rather an attitude of waiting to be saved.

This could be the result of a certain degree of learnt dependency as a result of the strong paternalistic role played by the mine in the past. This is not conducive to Virginians taking an active role in creating a new future for their town. Laduma (2007) describes the difficulty of former mine workers transitioning from a life where everything was provided (accommodation, food, transport, recreational opportunities, medical care) to one where electricity, water, municipal rates and rent have to be paid for, often from a salary that does not compare to what they earned on the mine. This is confirmed by Kabelo, Tshepo and Jack, among others, when they share the trauma of the mine closure. It is therefore clear that the paternalistic generosity of the mine was at once a blessing and a curse.

If the reason for the inertia of Virginia’s residents is indeed learnt dependency, it is probably not only the result of town’s mining past, but also as a result of the greater context of Apartheid. Posel (2011) shows how, under the Apartheid regime, there was a high level of interference in individual citizens’ lives, coupled with a high level of surveillance and of prescription even up to the level of the most intimate aspects of people’s lives. Constant expectations from the state, the church and society at large constrained the extent to which people were allowed to be creative, to take risks and to assume responsibility for their own lives.

5.5.2.5 Crime and social decay

Sally, Piet and Ansie and Angus and Bettie all referred to the problem of *zama-zamas* (or illegal artisanal miners) in the town. Apart from illegal mining,

the *zamas* are also known for stripping steel and anything else of value from the old mining infrastructure.

The lawyer, Ben, tells the following story:

“And we have a real problem with break-ins in Virginia and it is just not stopping. OK, we cannot really keep them out, our golf course suffers under the zama-zamas, for instance they’ve stolen R350 000 worth of pipes from us last year. I mean, how must a private golf club keep its head above the water with such losses? And, I mean it is such that the private security is scared of going near there. Those guys are dangerous, they are armed, you know. [. . .] It’s not local, it’s not people from Virginia, it’s a bunch of immigrants, you know. They, you will sit on a Friday evening at the golf club watching the sun set over the first fairway and tomorrow morning when you tee off, a hole of two hundred meters has been dug through that fairway where they knocked the pipes out of the concrete . . .”

Tshepo has a different view of the *zama-zamas*:

Recently, the zama-zamas made protest – they want to be legalised, because they say – and trust me, one could understand them – because they are saying we’re not hurting anyone. And any job, it goes without saying you work at your own risk. It’s our own risk. So, if I go down there without your permission, but I’m not hurting you, at the end of the day if someone gets hurt, it’s me. And if, if someone benefit from that risk, it’s me, it’s my family. And if I don’t do that, my family is not going to survive.”

As a lawyer who is often in court, Ben reports that especially youth between 16 and 25 are being apprehended for crime in Virginia. He ascribes this to the high unemployment rate. In the past, he says, any young man, even a learner in grade 8, could walk into the mine office, ask for a job and be given one, sometimes as a filing clerk until he was old enough to be sent underground.

Probably because of the fact that he grew up in Meloding³⁵, the poorest part of Virginia, on the one hand, and because as a municipal official he has a broad understanding of the social problems of the municipality, Kabelo provides more insight into the social problems facing Virginia today.

“Some of the mine workers who could not return home, stayed behind, but in order to survive they had to turn to criminal activities, meaning they have to go to these shafts that are closed to seek better lives and stuff and some of them resorted to crime. The theft of cable, copper cable, street light poles, road sign poles, any steel that they could get their hands on they started selling them to scrap metals. [. . .] I know this for a fact because there were a lot of raids that were done by the municipality in partnership with SAPS [the South African Police Service] we received a lot of cable from those scrap metals and our street poles, road signs were also received in the process [. . .] And the issue of gangsterism has seen a lot of deaths amongst youth, fighting for territories, because what they do to survive is they will engage in housebreakings, all those petty crimes. [. . .] I know of four groups, popular groups, that will fight for territories. To say they are targeting a certain suburb, say for instance Eureka Park. Eureka Park is where your middle class people stay, your teachers and police officers. That’s why they targeted those areas for, you know, like housebreakings, but now they will fight amongst themselves to say this is my territory. And for you to have a territory, you have to win a battle.”

The link between unemployment and the increase in poverty driven crime is explained by Tshepo:

I’m telling you, majority of Meloding/Virginia youth it changed to worse. Majority of them, it even made headlines about the crime, because there were no shops anymore. In fact, still now, until today, there is no job in Meloding, there is no any kind of development, you know. And . . . someone is born with that

³⁵ Kabelo is adamant that there is only one Virginia. He is not in favour of distinguishing between Virginia and Meloding as if they are in effect two different towns.

experience. Children who have 15 years, 12 years, they grew up frustrated. Because, I'm telling you the truth, this thing, it also happened in our schools, because, for me to decide to do psychology in society I saw a gap in our township schools because of the failing rate. And, when I do my research I find out that this, this failing rate is caused by . . . it is a chain, it is not just a thing, but it's a chain and it starts right in the household of these kids. Because, you would ask a kid, why aren't you bathed? Why your clothes are so dirty? And they will tell you, my mom and my pap, my father, were fighting last night, my father was frustrated because there is no money because my father is not working. My father used to work at the mine . . ."

Isaiah and Kabelo both make reference to the problem of child headed households. Kabelo has the following to say:

"80% of these gangsters are born from your mine workers who have left. And this is informed, because that's one research that we also did in the process. And they are from child headed households where you have a brother who is looking after the younger ones. And they don't have IDs to qualify for grants. So as a result they engage in this criminalities to look after their siblings."

For Kabelo, the story of crime in Virginia is personal. He, his mother and his grandfather were brutally attacked on their way to catch the train to his graduation ceremony very early on the morning of 12 May 2001. For his grandfather, who was 81 at the time, the attack proved fatal. According to Kabelo the 12 attackers, were youths he knew from Meloding, all of whom came from broken homes that he ascribes to the mining downturn.

☞ Dystopian representations of South Africa in the 21st century are often built around the twin topics of crime and corruption (Jacques Pauw's bestselling exposé *The President's Keepers* (2017) is probably the best known recent example). While it is by no means only white South African's who complain about crime and corruption, these

narratives can easily be, and often are, imbued with a racist tinge, i.e., blacks as perpetrators and whites as victims of crime, and corruption as the preserve of the black government. Such perceptions are lingering effects of South Africa's Apartheid past and are reinforced by persistent socio-economic divides.

In Virginia, both black and white respondents raised the issue of crime without prompting. Both groups acknowledge the role that the loss of mine employment has played in the high incidence of crime, especially among the youth in Virginia.

Just as children are perceived both as victims and as perpetrators of crime in Secunda's green strips (Paquet, 2017), the youth of Virginia are seen as victims of the poverty and lack of opportunities in the town and as perpetrators of crime.

Stories told by the respondents about the "zama-zamas" mostly paint them as armed and dangerous opportunists who are to a certain extent also intruders because they are not viewed as local people, but immigrants from Lesotho and Mozambique. A minority view seems to be the story told by Tshepo about the zama-zamas as poor people making use of a resource that others have abandoned to feed their families, often at great risk to their personal safety. He repeatedly makes the point that "They are not hurting anyone". The prototype of Dostoevsky's "Underground Man" that Berman (1988) refers to can be applied to the "zama-zamas" in Virginia. Much like Dostoevsky's character, these literally "Underground Men" are afraid of being seen, met, recognized. At the same time, however, they are clamouring for recognition, for their existence and activities to be formalised and thereby sanctioned. They concurrently subvert the established order and demand to become part of it.

Berman's discussion of Baudelaire's *The Eyes of the Poor* show us how modern life opens up spaces and brings people together, forces us to confront, to react to, "the other".

Although they are no longer the mostly white places they used to be, golf courses still represent privilege and exclusivity in the South African spatial narrative. Ben's story of the "zama-zamas" digging the pipes out of the golf course can therefore be seen as

a primal scene of the kind of Dostoevsky's underground man bumping into the officer on the street. The anger of the "underground men" is apparent when, after discovering that the golf club has replaced the metal pipes with plastic ones, they dig them open and smash them to render them unusable.

5.5.2.6 *A good life for some*

According to Liz, there are still a good number of business people in the town who are positive about Virginia. Sally, Ben and Piet and Ansie, who are all business owners, are optimistic about the possibilities of doing business in Virginia. Ben, especially, feels that he is doing much better than his peers practising law in the larger urban centres.

"I would not have come here from Bloemfontein if I didn't think there were good prospects. And I can say with a degree of certainty that I think as a young man of my calibre I think I am definitely doing better than the guys in the cities. By far. Any one of my friends that I know of [. . .] For us who have ambition, there will always be work. I have never sat here doing nothing [. . .] Many of the guys complain while living on the fat of the land. You know, if you ask them how business is doing he says, bad, bad, but then he buys himself a new X5."

Sally owns a virtual business that she bought in the middle of 2015. Although she is physically located in Virginia, her client base is elsewhere. In terms of the distinction made by Toerien and Marais (2012) between enterprises that bring money into towns (driver enterprises) and those that circulate money within towns (service enterprises), Sally's business is a driver enterprise. She advocates for businesses that bring revenue into the town.

"My client value actually sits in Pretoria/Johannesburg; I actually have very few clients in the Free State, so, in the gold fields, actually, I actually have few clients, I have some, but it isn't . . . my biggest source of income actually comes from the city."

Sally contends that a business like hers that does not need feet can thrive in Virginia. Piet and Ansie also indicated that most of their business comes from outside of Virginia.

Sias, who also owns his own business, moved from Senekal to Virginia because Virginia offered better prospects for his business.

Most of the white respondents (Piet and Ansie, Sally, Liz, Angus and Bettie, and Ben) highlight a number of smaller things as positive aspects of life in Virginia at the time of the study. These aspects are typically introduced starting with the phrase “at least . . .”.

“At least there are still some mines operating in the area.”

Sally refers to the fact that some people who stay in Virginia still work on the Beatrix mine in Welkom, or at Joel Mine, which is situated between Virginia and Theunissen.

“Virginia, I think, will, I don’t know what will become of this town if the mines had to close.”

“At least we have a very nice Checkers.”

Angus jokingly stated that these days the heart of the town is the Checkers. Sally goes as far as to say that the Checkers in Virginia is one of the “most awesome” of its kind in the country. Liz is a little less enthusiastic, but essentially agrees:

“So yes, we haven’t got the end of month shopping, but our Checkers is fine . . .”

“At least life is fairly affordable here.”

The fact that life, and in particular property, in Virginia is more affordable than in the larger towns or cities, was mentioned by several of the white respondents. Ben spells it out:

“The cost of living in the small towns is much cheaper than in the cities. So you can really live well with a little here. Now, the guys who make a couple of rands can buy a mansion in town for R1,3m. In Bloem³⁶ you can’t even buy a townhouse for R1,3m and then it isn’t even a very nice townhouse.”

This view is shared by Piet and Ansie and Angus and Bettie. In the latter case, though, there was an undertone of “being stuck” in Virginia because of the low property prices. Liz states it more explicitly:

“Certainly if you have a home that’s paid for, you’re not easily going to relocate with what we’ve got. It’s like the rand and the dollar.”

“At least it is not only in Virginia that things are so bad.”

In spite of the statements made by Tshepo and Liz referred to in paragraph 5.5.2 that Virginia is in a worse state than other Free State towns, Liz, Wayne and Sally also make the point that Virginia is not alone in the economic decline and poor municipal governance it suffers, but that the same problems are experienced in most Free State towns, and even all over the country.

It was generally the white respondents who had a “silver lining” approach to Virginia, expressed as the “at least . . .” statements referred to above. The low property prices, often cited as one of the worst effects of the mine closures, are mentioned here as a positive factor. Again, the “positives” about life in Virginia is stated in consumerist terms – affordable property (also pointed out as a plus by residents of Secunda in Paquet’s (2017) study) and a good supermarket.

The modernist tendency to compete and compare is again seen when the respondents make the point that other towns face the same problems as Virginia. Depending on the point that one wishes to get across, it is advantageous either to describe Virginia as different from other towns or the same as other towns. In the years following the town’s establishment, a narrative of difference was strongly pursued to promote the

³⁶ The provincial capital, Bloemfontein.

town as “superior” in certain respects. This was – and continues to be – also the case in Secunda, see Paquet (2017).

5.5.3 Stories of blame

There are different views as to who is to blame for the poor state of the town today.

5.5.3.1 The mine – they owe us

Kabelo says that many of the people in Virginia feel anger towards the Harmony Gold mining company.

“Yes, we knew that, at one stage, they would close down, the gold would no longer be there. But we feel that, for the 50 years that they have mined here, they have done very little for this once beautiful and rich, diverse town, which had all the opportunities.”

He adds that community projects promised by the mine had not been completed and points out that there are no sports grounds in Meloding. Mining magnates fund soccer teams elsewhere in the country, but Virginia is not benefiting from that.



Figure 58: Harmony Soccer Stadium
Source: Tubb, 2009

Ben acknowledges that facilities deteriorated when the mines withdrew their support, for instance from the Benson & Hedges sports grounds that used to be a venue for provincial championships, but has since been transferred to Hentie Celliers, a well-known high school in town. He also feels strongly that government should place stricter conditions on mining houses when granting them licences. The mines should make up for the inevitable harm caused by mining activities. In spite of this, however, Ben is not sure whether the fact that Virginia is now less safe than in the past is “a mine thing or just a South Africa thing”. Liz makes more or less the same remark when she wonders whether the fact that Virginia Gardens with its Christmas lights and the fountain in front of FNB are no more is due to the “mining or just to a change of demographics”.

Ben, Liz, Lucas and Wayne all make the point that Virginia is not unique in the problems it faces and that other towns also face problems of crime, urban decay and struggling municipalities. This is not only true of the negative aspects of the town, but also of the positive ones. Liz says: “There are lots of famous people from Virginia. Like I guess there are lots of famous people from every town.”

Angus, Wayne and Sally stated explicitly that they do not blame the mine for the current depressed state of the town.

Given the high level of dependency on the mine in the past, one might have expected the respondents to place more of the blame for the town's current problems on the mine. It has to be kept in mind, however, that gold mining activities in Virginia started to decline sharply more than 25 years ago. It is possible that with the passing of so much time people's views would have changed.

Judging from the study of Secunda by Paquet (2017) it would seem that Ben and Liz are correct not to ascribe the current neglect of the Virginia to the mine. She (ibid) observes neglect of the municipal infrastructure and green spaces as well as concerns about crime in Secunda while the town's main industry, Sasol, is still operational.

In a response received from one of the mining groups that was active in Virginia (the mine asked to remain anonymous) the mine claims that its operations "*ensured that towns such as Virginia, Theunissen and Odendaalsrus existed for longer*" (my emphasis).

5.5.3.2 Government – there was no Plan B

In addition to the mine, Kabelo also blames government for Virginia's deterioration:

"Equally we are also angry towards our government to say with all the strategic opportunities that Virginia has besides mining – we are the most central town in the country with transport, tourism and business opportunities at our disposal. We have the N1 passing in Virginia, we have the railway passing in Virginia. You cannot fly to Bloemfontein, you have to fly over us from Cape Town, simply, and those were opportunities that could have been, you know, used,

when they realised that mining would cease. So, authorities did not have vision [. . .] there was no plan.”

Kabelo is not alone in blaming government, in particular the local government (Matjhabeng Local Municipality) for a lack of vision when it came to planning for the closure of mines in Virginia.

Jack lumps the mine and the municipality together as to blame for a lack of planning:

“The mining houses and the municipality are to blame. They did not have a plan.”

Ben is of the opinion that Virginia could have become like the town of Parys, which is a popular Free State tourist destination thanks to its location on the Vaal River, but that the municipality was not willing to make the necessary investment:

“. . . these are plans that the municipality should have done 15 years ago already, such as township establishment on the banks of the river, or to convert the golf course into a golf estate, but the municipality did not want to install sewerage systems. So it is mostly the municipality’s fault that it looks so dilapidated. [. . .] The municipality is so deep in debt, I doubt whether they would be able to dig themselves out of it.”

He also blames the municipality for the current state of the Sand River, which is contaminated by raw sewage from Meloding, a problem which, according to Ben, the municipality is not addressing. Lucas also tells how this problem has remained unresolved for a long period of time, even after he and a number of other concerned residents facilitated a visit by the Green Scorpions to investigate the matter.

Liz is also of the opinion that there was no planning for when the mines would close, as every one knew they eventually would:

“Along with it came the apparent lack of vision or foresight of the municipality about what are we going to do when the mines close. You know, there were the years of prosperity, but what is Plan B. [. . .] You know there were many opportunities [. . .] but there was absolutely no planning. [. . .] nobody sat and thought, while things were going well, let’s see what we can do to sustain ourselves. [. . .] there was no plan, the municipality never turned around and said we’ve got a cheese factory, or a BMW factory coming, there was nothing.”

Like Ben, she also also thinks that tourism could have been an alternative:

“I mean, just the river alone had the potential to be a huge attraction, but there is absolutely nothing”.

While most of the respondents are very negative about the Matjhabeng Municipality, Liz places the blame on the shoulders of the old Virginia Town Council:

“It was almost as if they rode the train to the last station and then everybody just got off. [. . .] The old regime knew they were going to lose the position of running the town, so they did not hand over a five-year plan, they just withdrew.”

Whether a Plan B existed for Virginia or not, is discussed in more detail in paragraph 5.7.2 below.

It is not only failure to develop a Plan B for the town that residents blame the municipality for. Overall, the respondents are of the opinion that the Matjhabeng Local Municipality does not care much for Virginia. Sally is scathing in her criticism:

“. . . we have problems with the municipality like any other town. Our municipality is one of the worst in the country, I mean that time when they wanted to cut everyone’s electricity, we were one of the three that refused to meet their commitments at all, you know. The

water and the electricity, you understand³⁷. But we try, you know [. . .] The local authority, unfortunately, has zero respect for the town, so nobody . . . they themselves are not interested. Our local authority contributes to the biggest fraud in the country. They steal from, from us, so I don't think they can improve the situation at all."

Kabelo shares being laughed at during a strategic planning session of the Municipality in 2015 when sharing his ideas for boosting the economy of the area referred to in 5.7.2 below.

While the respondents were unanimous in their criticism of the Matjhabeng Municipality, Angus, Ben, Tshepo and Larry also specifically referred to the change in municipal structure dictated by the Municipal Demarcation Act (MDA), which resulted in smaller town councils being amalgamated into larger local councils, with several local municipalities making up the jurisdiction of a district municipality.

So, where Virginia was governed by its own town council before 5 December 2000 (as was the case with Allanridge, Hennenman, Odendaalsrus, Ventersburg, and Welkom), the town is now part of the larger Matjhabeng Municipality, which in turn forms part of the Lejweleputswa District Municipality. According to Ben, the Virginia municipality had a R30m investment before the amalgamation which was swallowed up by the larger municipal structure.

The sentiment that the municipal demarcation introduced in 2000 had negative implications for Virginia is expressed by Isaiah as follows:

"Here in the Free State, Matjhabeng is the biggest municipality, with six towns. And looking at that, with all these things centralised in Welkom, then it becomes difficult for them, you know, to can reach all the towns so that all of them could be developed."

³⁷ Lucas also makes reference to the municipality's accumulated debt and its failure to pay for water and electricity.

As the seat of the Matjhabeng Municipality is Welkom, the respondents felt Virginia's interests were being neglected. Isaiah and Jack believe that soured relations between the mining houses and the Matjhabeng Municipality, rather than a depletion of the gold resources in the area, are the main reason for the mining companies being unwilling to make further investments in Virginia. This seems at the local level to reflect the relationship between government and global market forces that Kamete (2012) views as the main factor determining the wellbeing of the mining industry and therefore of mining towns. Jack expresses this view as follows:

"Maybe the new dispensation again, it hit us very bad. I wonder, because if logic could tell us, it doesn't sound well to say out of 11 to 10 mines we don't have a single one. So meaning that there is a problem, maybe in terms of the investors, or people who were talking with the investors. We don't know why then they opted to close those mines, because of now one could just ask a deep question: Why? [. . .] So meaning that I could say maybe whatever the investors' talks with municipality, maybe they didn't agree or whatever. I cannot say that now it is a question of saying the mine is not having gold."

Larry suspects that there is another dimension to the lack of municipal care for Virginia, namely that the town is being punished for being the only DA constituency in the district. He states the following:

"The main reason why Virginia is like this, it should have long been developed. [. . .] Due to Virginia . . . Virginia has never been ruled by the ANC, ja, since the release of Mr Nelson Mandela and all that up until now, it has always been DA, you understand. So it is like, it is something which is very personal, understand, it is very personal for it to be at this particular stage. So, whereby, they like to persuade the people 'If you vote for the ANC, we will try to develop your place'."

Michael also blames a lack of leadership for the current state of the town:

“I don’t think this place should have been where it is. It is just a question of having enough leadership in terms of how do we position ourselves in the new dispensation.”

Communication between the municipality and residents of Virginia seem to be sadly lacking. The web page of the Matjhabeng Municipality, namely www.matjhabeng.fs.gov.za is not well maintained. For instance, at the time of writing this thesis the last edition of the municipal newsletter appearing on the site was that of November 2011 and the latest news release 2015.

☞ One could argue that the municipality, along with the mine and the community is one of the lead characters in the story of any mining town. To a large extent, the power relationships between these three key players and the way in which they interact with each other determine the fate and state of the town. It is clear from the stories of the respondents that the relationship between the Matjhabeng Local Municipality and the residents of Virginia is not healthy.

Stories of struggling provincial and municipal governments have become a feature of post-Apartheid South Africa. The latest (2016-17) audit report on the local government audit outcomes released by the Auditor General (AGSA, 2018) shows that the state of municipal financial management has further deteriorated. Specific reference is made in the report to both the Lejweleputswa District Municipality, for failing to submit documents on time, and the Matjhabeng Local Municipality, for wasteful expenditure. The Matjhabeng Local Municipality is one of the top ten municipalities not honouring their obligations in respect of payment for electricity, owing in excess of R1,8bn (Omarjee, 2018) Three of the top ten defaulting municipalities are in the Free State. Allegations of corruption have plagued the Free State Provincial Government and the Matjhabeng Local Municipality for several years – the details of which will not be discussed here. The negative stories about the municipality told by the people of Virginia are therefore substantiated by other sources.

In the storyworlds created by the respondents, there is distance between the people of Virginia and the Matjhabeng Local Municipality in an emotional as well as a physical sense. Emotionally, the respondents mistrust the municipality, and suspect the municipality a lack of care for Virginia either as a result of indifference, as punishment for the town's political position or as the result of a lack of capacity. Following the new municipal dispensation introduced in 2000, the municipality is now also physically removed from the town. This distance may contribute towards the sense of helplessness expressed by the respondents. Without the sense of an "own" municipality to take the lead or at least support them, they no longer feel that they have authorship of the future story of Virginia.

The respondents expected of the municipality, more so than of the mine, to develop a Plan B for the town, but believe that such a plan was not developed. However, going back to the detailed account of the history of Virginia given by Viljoen (1994), there is evidence that, from Virginia's earliest years, there was an awareness of the need to secure the future of the town, and indeed of the entire Free State gold fields, beyond the life of the gold mines. Shortly after the establishment of the town, advocate Jan Haak, the then Minister of Mining and Planning, called for a comprehensive plan to ensure that the Free State gold fields were converted into a metropolitan area for South Africa within the next quarter of a century to create a home for its thousands of residents once the mines disappear (Viljoen, 1994).

In 1963 and 1964 the town management took decisive action to attract industries to Virginia. This included lowering municipal taxes on industrial stands and offering big consumers lower rates for water and electricity. The possibility of making industrial stands available to investors at a nominal fee was investigated and the sum of R5000 was made available by the town management for targeted publicity (Viljoen, 1994).

In 1967 the town council launched an investigation into the future of the town. This followed an earlier planning study of the Free State gold fields conducted by the University of Pretoria (UP) in 1965. The UP study found that very few of the existing factories in the area directly supplied products to the gold mines, but were rather serving the needs of the settlements in the area. In spite of these findings and various

efforts by the town council, by the end of the 1970s there had not been significant progress with establishing labour intensive industries separate from the mining industry in the town. The smaller industries in the town were mainly linked to the mining activities. This was in contrast with the larger neighbouring town of Welkom (Viljoen, 1994).

In 1970 officials of the Virginia municipality drafted a memorandum to the Regional Development Association (Streekontwikkelingsvereniging) of the North-Western Free State deploring the fact that the development policy for the Free State gold fields was mainly central government driven and argued that industries could be attracted to Virginia by granting rail and road concessions, decentralising industries and amending the Physical Planning and Resources Act (Wet op Fisiese Beplanning en Hulpbronne) of 1967 to allow for the establishment of more industries making use of black labour in the gold fields. (Viljoen, 1994). As quoted by Viljoen (1994: 153), the authors stated that “it would be a national disaster” if Virginia’s potential was not fully utilised.

It is therefore clear that the perceptions by the respondents that securing the future sustainability of the town beyond the life of the mines was not a priority for the municipality, is inaccurate, at least in as far as the former Virginia town council is concerned. However, that these perceptions exist are perhaps an indication of a lack of information, or of communication between the local authority and the community of Virginia.

5.5.3.3 The people of Virginia – they should take responsibility

A few of the respondents shared the view that the residents of Virginia themselves should carry some of the blame for the decay of the town. Sally felt strongly about this:

“I would say it is the [. . .], look, the fact that the mines are closing is the fault of labour relations, 100%, so it is the people’s own fault that things are not going well for the town. You cannot say it is because the mines are closing that money is now going out of the

town and that is why it is not going well with the town. It is the people's own fault, because the people are causing the mines not to do well. The mines are not productive, the mines do not make money, and therefore . . . so it is our own fault. Instead of getting work and saying, OK, we are not going to strike this year, let us just take the 3% increase and carry on, they go on strike for three months and then we sit in the mines with a loss and the big guns, wherever they are, decide now it is enough. So it is exactly, it is only our own fault that it is not going well with the town."

Liz and Sally share the sentiment that the schools in Virginia should have set aside their narrow self-interests and should rather have amalgamated than to try and survive on their own while numbers were dwindling.

Liz also argues that the people of Virginia should take personal responsibility:

"I do believe all the residents of Virginia have got to take ownership of the town, starting with their own yard. And that's not a mine or ex-mine factor. That is, you've bought a home, maintain it. That will improve the visual aspects of the residential areas. [. . .] and then also, if we move into a position where people are held accountable to do their jobs. If it's your job to mow the lawn, mow the lawn. If it's your job to sweep the street, then sweep the street. So if there's a mindset change, but this isn't a Virginia thing, this is a nationwide thing. Just be accountable."

☞ At first glance, the above inputs may be taken to mean that the respondents, as residents of Virginia, are taking responsibility for the current state of the town. A closer look at the perspective of these comments, however, shows that the focus is not on "us", but on "them". When Sally talks of "the people" she is referring to "others", namely the mine workers. Liz, similarly does not include herself in the group of Virginia residents she talks about. Ownership of the town should start not with "our own yards", but with "their own yard" – the "them" being less respectable residents of the town who do not maintain their own properties. The people who should be "held

accountable to do their jobs” constitute another group of “others”, probably municipal workers.

What we see here is therefore not residents taking responsibility for their town, but pointing fingers in the same way as fingers are pointed to the mine and the municipality.

5.6 MUNICIPAL AND PROVINCIAL PLANS AS “STORIES ABOUT THE FUTURE”

There are a number of provincial and municipal plans that are relevant to Virginia, the most prominent of which are the Free State Growth and Development Strategy, the Free State Province Provincial Spatial Development Framework (PSDF) of 2014, the latest (2017-2022) Integrated Development Plan (IDP) of the Lejweleputswa District Municipality (LDM) and the 2017-2022 IDP of the Matjhabeng Local Municipality (MLM).

5.6.1 The Free State Growth and Development Strategy Free State Vision 2030 – the future we want

This document succeeds two fairly unsuccessful attempts at steering the growth and development of the Free State at a provincial level, namely the Free State Development Plan and an earlier (2005-2014) version of the Free State Growth and Development Strategy. In the Premier’s foreword to the Strategy, he calls it “an ambitious and elaborate framework to profoundly redefine the long-term provincial inclusive growth and development landscape”. Developed through a consultative process and characterised by an integrated planning approach, the Strategy is informed by a provincial development analysis and underpinned by the Free State Vision 2030, namely: “By 2030, the Free State shall have a resilient, thriving and competitive economy that is inclusive, with immense prospects for human development anchored on the principles of unity, dignity, diversity, equality and prosperity for all” (Free State Province, 2013: 21-22).

From the vision are derived five pillars relating to economic growth and job creation, skills development, innovation and education, an improved quality of life, rural development, building social cohesion and ensuring good governance. For each of these pillars a number of strategic drivers are identified and for each of the drivers (15 in all) specific programmes, strategies, indicators and targets are identified, with the priority to “create decent work” (ibid: 26) the overarching and cross-cutting objective. For each driver a so-called “spatial perspective” is also provided. This takes the form of maps showing, for instance, the employment in the manufacturing sector, the prevalence of farming, the potential for mining activities, the Gross Value Added (GVA) contribution from transport, etc., for the different municipalities in the province.

There is no spatial plan included in the strategy, but alignment is required with the Free State Province Provincial Spatial Development Framework (2014) that is discussed below.

There is no specific mention of Virginia in the strategy document, but Matjhabeng does feature in a number of places. Matjhabeng is indicated as one of the municipalities where unemployment is concentrated and there are a couple of references to the loss of its share in the provincial economy owing to the downscaling of mining activities. In spite of this, though, Matjhabeng is still indicated as one of the municipalities with mining potential, not only in gold, but also in low-grade coal and salt. In addition, based on the current GVA and employment in transport in the municipality, it is identified as one of five municipalities in the province with potential in the transport sector. It is one of three with above average tourism potential. As one of the three Free State municipalities with the largest economic output, Matjhabeng also has the highest recorded crime – specific mention is made of crime problems related to gold mining in Matjhabeng. Matjhabeng has an internal sanitation backlog and along with Mangaung and Maluti-a-Phofung it has the highest number of traditional and informal housing units.

For this study, one of the strategic drivers identified for economic growth and job creation, namely to “[m]inimise the impact of the declining mining sector and ensure that existing mining potential is harnessed” (Driver 2), is of particular interest. The table below shows the long term programmes and strategies identified under this driver.

Table 5: Long term programmes and strategies to minimize the impact of the declining mining sector and ensure that existing mining potential is harnessed as well as the relevant targets and indicators highlighted in the Free State Growth and Development Strategy

Source: Free State Province, 2013

STRATEGIC DRIVER 2: Minimise the impact of the declining mining sector and ensure that existing mining potential is harnessed	
LONG TERM PROGRAMMES	STRATEGIES
Support the life of existing mines and create new mining opportunities	Invest in key infrastructure programmes that are secondary to mining
	Open up opportunities for new mining initiatives
	Market opportunities through new mining business profiles
	Curb crime which impacts negatively on the mining industry
	Promote small-scale mining in sandstone, clay, salt, diamonds and other commodities
Develop a post-mining economy for mining areas	Develop and support partnerships with social partners
	Re-use mining infrastructure in line with spatial development plans
	Implement mine tourism initiatives
Ensure rehabilitation of mining areas	Coordinate mining rehabilitation concerns (road construction) (waste recycling)
	Institutionalise an agreed upon funding model for mining rehabilitation
	Empower local entrepreneurs to benefit from mining aggregates
	Re-mining of existing slime dams and dumps

Indicators and targets in the mining sector

Indicator	Current status	Five year target	Ten year target	Fifteen year target	Twenty year target
GVA Growth per five year cycle	-1.85% per annum over 15 years	-1%	0%	0%	0%
Employment in Mining	33 863	28 000	25 000	25 000	25 000

☞ The document starts with an indication that a narrative approach will be followed, namely a title that is not merely a technical label, but which, thanks to the subtitle “the future we want” suggests an engagement or a specific relationship between the narrator and the reader/audience.

The foreword by the Premier of the Free State, describes the Strategy in an evocative manner thanks to the use of the adjectives “ambitious” and “elaborate”, and the adverb “profoundly”. The provincial vision for 2030, is what Ameel (2017) describes as a “micro-narrative”. It tells the story of what the Free State is becoming, foregrounding prospects for human development and a competitive economy and placing emphasis on the underpinning principles of “unity, dignity, diversity, equality and prosperity for all”.

This overarching “story” is broken down into levels of increasing detail – the vision into pillars, pillars into strategic drivers, strategic drivers into programmes, strategies, indicators and targets. This ensures an internal cohesion to the narrative structure of the document, which is further strengthened by the cross-cutting objective of job creation. Illustrating the narrative are the maps provided for each of the strategic drivers.

The Strategy could be seen as an epic, broad in scope and taking a long view into the future, rather than a short story or vignette that focuses on a single spot in the province, such as the town of Virginia. Nonetheless, it is telling that the town of Virginia, once the “garden city of South Africa” is not mentioned even once. Also telling is the fact that, when it comes to Matjhabeng, the story is still predominantly one of mining, albeit not necessarily gold mining. I acknowledge, as highlighted by Throgmorton (2003) that there is no one correct reading of a plan as a story about the future. Yet, as one of many readers of the Strategy, I find the “potential” seen in Matjhabeng for growth in mining, tourism and transport unconvincing. This scepticism stems from differences between what is presented in the “storyworld” of the strategy and that which I observed in the real world.

As can be seen from the table of long term programmes and strategies for the Strategic Driver related to the impact of mining, the strategy lacks specificity and

does not contain any innovative development proposals. The Growth and Development Strategy as a whole has no direct implications for Virginia and, although the quality of the strategy seems to be much better than that of previous provincial plans, there is nothing to suggest that it would “profoundly redefine” growth and development in the province as suggested by the Premier in his foreword.

5.6.2 The Free State Province Provincial Spatial Development Framework (FSPSDF) (2014)

Prepared by the Provincial Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), the FSPSDF is the first provincial SDF prepared in terms of the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act 16 of 2013 (SPLUMA) and as recommended in the National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030. The Framework has statutory status, which means compliance with it is mandatory. Compiled following an integrated approach, the Framework supplements the Free State Growth and Development Strategy and will guide spatial planning and land-use management in the province until 2030.

The Framework is a sophisticated document consisting of three sections that are interrelated and a comprehensive suite of users’ toolkits. The sections contain the administrative background to the Framework and its use, an in-depth situational (spatial) analysis of the Free State and finally the spatial vision, directives and strategy for the province.

The over-arching goal of the PSDF is stated differently in different sections of the document. At the beginning, it is stated as “to enable sustainability through sustainable development” (COGTA, Free State Province, 2014: 25) with sustainability defined as being “supportive of environmental integrity, human well-being and economic efficiency” (ibid: 143). However, in the conclusion, it is stated that “The over-arching goal of the PSDF is to help institute a developmental state as is contemplated by the South African

Constitution and the NDP” (ibid: 339) and that institutional development is a key to achieving this goal.

The PSDF “serves as a spatial and principle framework³⁸ (i.e. ‘common ground’) within which the imperatives of institutional integration, integrated development planning and co-operative governance can be achieved” (ibid: 32).

A system of Spatial Planning Categories (SPCs) is prescribed as a standardised format for classifying the land surface of the whole province. Six categories and 41 sub-categories are identified.

Virginia is classified as a “Medium Town” along with, Allanridge, Hennenman, Bethlehem and Kroonstad, among others (ibid: 38). Later on in the document, however, “Smaller towns and rural settlements that fall under the jurisdiction of Category B Municipalities (i.e. towns and rural settlements forming part of a Local Municipality)” are classified as “rural settlements” (Spatial Planning Category D.c.) (ibid: 144).

Virginia is mentioned in the Framework as part of the gold fields region and tourism route. It is furthermore indicated as a town with medium economic and urban growth potential, as a medium investment priority and a tourism node. Virginia is for the most part considered separately, although the configuration of towns around Welkom could have suggested a cluster approach. Within the Matjhabeng municipality, the development focus is clearly on Welkom.

The maps provided in the PSDF are very informative. Virginia lies on the edge of the Sand/Vet Irrigation Scheme area, which would suggest that there is potential for the town to support maize farming. There is no mention in the

³⁸ On page 339, in the conclusion to the document, this is amended slightly to a “spatial and strategic policy framework”.

document of Virginia as a significant railway node, although it is the closest town to the Durban-Johannesburg railway line.

At first glance, the FSPSDF document is of a high quality, neatly laid out and with sophisticated graphics. A critical view, however, reveals a number of concerns. First among these is the fact that the document is very long – it would take a considerable time for municipal officials who have to give execution to its prescripts to assimilate all of it. While the intention with the toolkits may have been to facilitate application of the Framework on the ground, the document itself states that “Section D comprises a host of procedural directives, or ‘toolkits’” (my emphasis) (ibid: 217). Not only are the toolkits many, but, rather than concise and practical, they are also extremely theoretical in nature. It seems to be an example of the “lengthy documents that drive their readers to deep frustration and anguish” that Van Huyssteen and Oranje (2008: 519) warn against.

Because of the statutory status of the Framework, it is of concern that a specific theoretical perspective on planning, namely the figure ground, linkage and place theory proposed by Trancik is advocated. If reference has to be made to planning theory in a document of this nature, one would also prefer it to be more recent than Trancik’s, which was published in 1986. This unnecessarily prescriptive tone is found throughout the document, e.g., on page 256-257 where it is stated that preference should be given to letter shaped buildings. This relates to another problematic aspect of the document, namely that it seems to far overstep the boundaries of a provincial spatial development framework. It is difficult to distinguish between the role of the PSDF and that of the PGDS – the spatial framework is so comprehensive, so vast in scope, that it almost seems to render the PGDS redundant.

The document contains long tracts of academic information that could well have been left out. This is another rather schizophrenic aspect of the Framework: While it seems to spell out aspects that professional municipal officials should be familiar with, it is so academic in places that it is not accessible. This creates the impression that the reader is both over- and underestimated, or, rather, that the document was not developed with a clear target audience in mind.

The Framework contains numerous language errors, for instance in the checklist for macro-investment that appears in the toolkit section, which calls for the “[n]umber of highly skilled, specialised white-colour [not white-collar] employees” to be indicated (ibid: 320).

5.6.3 The Lejweleputswa District Municipality IDP 2017-2022

The latest Integrated Development Plan for the Lejweleputswa District Municipality, is that for 2017-2022.

The impact that the restructuring of the mining sector has had on the towns of the Matjhabeng Local Municipality, namely Welkom, Ventersburg, Hennenman, Virginia, Allanridge, and Odendaalsrus, is clearly acknowledged in the document:

The mining sector has been in a process of restructuring for some years and is still retrenching staff, which is particularly affecting the mining towns of Welkom, Virginia, Odendaalsrus and Allanridge. The sudden surge in petrol prices nationwide would indeed exacerbate the already negative economic growth in the area in terms of employment opportunities. It is also estimated that most of the retrenched labour, mainly unskilled, remains in the region and adds to the social problems associated with declining economic conditions. As local municipalities plan, it is incumbent upon all of us to ensure that we take into account estimated figures of retrenched staff to project future service delivery demands. This will be reinforced by the development of an indigent policy and implementation of the same. (Lejweleputswa IDP 2017-2022: 7)

It should be noted, however, that this paragraph appeared word for word, even the reference to the “sudden surge in petrol prices”, on page 7 of every Lejweleputswa IDP document since 2011.

Similarly, section F of the IDP, the Spatial Economy and Development Rationale, has sections of which the footer states “Lejweleputswa District Spatial Development Framework 2014/15”.

The IDP refers to the Lejwe-le-putswa Development Agency (LDA), which was established in 2005 in terms of section 84 of the Municipal Finance Management Act (Act 56 of 2003) with the objective of promoting economic development in the District through public private partnerships (PPPs). The LDA reports to the District Municipal Manager and has to provide monthly reports to the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) from which it receives funding. The LDA is managed by a CEO and three other permanent staff members and employs a finance manager on a month to month basis. It is, however, not clear from the IDP what the LDA has achieved to date and no targets are indicated for the 2017-2022 term³⁹.

The vision of the LDM as contained in the IDP document is to be “[a] leader in sustainable development and service delivery to all” (LDM IDP 2017-2022: 13).

In alignment with the Free State Provincial Spatial Development Framework and the National Development Plan, the IDP advocates for investment to be directed to areas of high potential for sustainable economic growth and high human need. Lower priority should be given to investment in areas of low human need and low potential for economic growth. Furthermore “settlements with high levels of human need are to be prioritised for state funding as it relates to the delivery of human resource development and minimum basic services” (LDM IDP 2017-2022: 71).

IDP follows the planning approach of the FSPSDF, namely of identifying spatial planning categories (SPCs), e.g., agricultural areas, urban areas, industrial areas, surface infrastructure, that are further divided into sub-

³⁹ A similar structure exists at the provincial level, namely the Free State Development Corporation (FDC). For more information, visit www.fdc.co.za.

categories. A composite Lejweleputswa SDF map was constructed by layering the spatial plans for each of the SPCs and indicating proposed centres, nodes, hubs, corridors and regions. Where these proposals are described in the document, strategies are pertinently linked to the Free State Growth and Development Strategy and the Free State Provincial Spatial Development Framework. These linkages were not visible in earlier IDPs.

Virginia is still mentioned under “mining nodes” in the IDP. Moreover, “Welkom and Virginia (predominantly events, entertainment and mining tourism) are identified as important Tourism Nodes within the Lejweleputswa District” (LDM IDP 2017-2022: 80).

On p. 82 of the IDP document, Virginia is listed as one of two “hubs”, the other being Dealesville and Boshof. The latter is listed as a solar energy hub, while Virginia is listed as a jewellery hub. The IDP describes a “hub” as follows:

These are localities with concentrated development (facilities, services and economic opportunities) of such importance and with a sphere of influence of provincial extent. Specialization of services or products can take place. The larger the influence sphere of a node, the more intense the development associated with the node and the greater the density and area that the node will occupy (LDM IDP 2017-2022: 82).

Virginia is also mentioned because it lies on the north-south railway line that runs through Brandfort, Theunissen, Virginia and Hennenman. According to the IDP, this, together with the R30 that links Bloemfontein with Klerksdorp in the North West Province, through Welkom and Bothaville, constitutes a major transport axis that “carries large volumes of heavy vehicular traffic as a result of service delivery to the mines and associated economic activities in the area” (LDM IDP 2017-2022: 83).

Under the sector department for “Police, Roads, Transport” (ibid: 164) is listed a project to rehabilitate the A133 road from Meloding to Virginia (Phase

2) for R15 000 000 with an expected completion date of September 2018.

The LDM IPD for 2017-2022 is an improvement on those of previous years, mostly because it does contain new information and is not merely a “cut and paste” of the previous year’s plan. As indicated above, there are still some instances of this and the poor language of the message of the Executive Mayor, in particular, conveys the sense, whether justified or not, of a municipal structure that is not equal to the task. The LDM is not alone in putting forward a vision that is unrealistic, namely that of being a leader in sustainable development while it is grappling with the challenge of delivering basic services, but deemed necessary for the branding or public relations of the municipality. As indicated earlier, this tendency towards outward show is a feature of the modern paradigm.

This IDP is not a good example of “a plan as a story”. The reader does not immediately get a sense of the district or, more importantly, of what the spatial plan for the district is. While acknowledging that this is not an easy task when one has to present a spatial plan for such a sprawling and diverse municipal area, I believe that merely improving the IDP document itself could assist in this regard. By this I mean better structuring and writing of the plan as a story that can be understood and supported by the people of the district and anyone else who reads it. A narrative approach could have made it much easier for the reader to navigate the document and to gain an understanding of the overall “message” of the Plan.

The spatial planning approach followed in the IDP is technicist, almost mechanistic and process oriented. Spatial planning categories are defined, and the plans for each layered to develop a composite plan. Care is taken to link strategies with provincial plans. While there is appreciation for the work done in this regard, e.g., the composite plan, which is very informative as to the *status quo* of the district, this kind of planning seems to focus more on slotting things into categories and giving them labels than on new, creative ideas. It is very much structuralist and acknowledges nothing of the fluidity, the experimentation and the identification of multiple possible futures that Hillier (2008, 2011), and Balducci *et al* (2011) advocate as part of a post-structuralist planning paradigm.

A further criticism of this planning methodology is that it is not future-oriented, not hopeful in its approach. The style is to describe what is there rather than to “venture beyond” (Bloch, 1995). Where actions are proposed, they are vague and unspecific.

As an Integrated Development Plan, the document can also be criticised for failure to indicate clear links between the spatial plans for centres, nodes, corridors, etc., and the budget. There seems to be fragmentation between the spatial plan (not linked to the budget) and the service delivery plan (drawn up in terms of the budget).

The spatial plan itself is not convincing in some respects, for instance identifying Virginia as an “important tourism node” or as situated on a major transport axis thanks to the railway line that runs through it. The IDP also continues to give Virginia prominence as a mining node, even though this is clearly no longer the case.

There is a lack of focus on addressing the spatial legacy of Apartheid in the plan – in fact the imperative of spatial restructuring of centres in the district is not referred to anywhere in the document.

5.6.4 The 2017-2022 Matjhabeng Local Municipality IDP

The latest IDP for the Matjhabeng Local Municipality (MLM) is that for 2017-2022. The IDP seems in the main to comply with all legislative requirements. For instance, the IDP process seems to have complied with the requirements for community participation, as the document contains a summary of projects for each ward that have been proposed by the ward councillor and the community respectively. The document furthermore contains tables in which programmes under each of the municipality’s KPAs are unpacked in terms of objectives and strategies, for each of which targets, budget and source of funding have been indicated.

The situational analysis contained in Chapter 2 of the document contains a large body of data on service levels and demographic information which is very valuable as it is broken down to the level of Virginia. The section of this

chapter that deals with “Economy [sic] structure and performance” is largely copied from the District Municipality’s IDP.

The situational analysis shows that inequality as measured by way of the GINI coefficient has increased in the Matjhabeng municipality as it has in the Free State province and indeed in the country as a whole. Given this trend and the requirement set by the National Development Plan that every municipality should have an explicit strategy for spatial restructuring as well as instruments for the implementation thereof, one would have expected spatial restructuring to enjoy more prominence in the document. There is, however, reference to the integration of each of the towns in the municipality and the adjacent township. In the case of Virginia and Meloding, it is mentioned that there is some scope for integration via a link over the farm Schoonheid, which was already stated in the 2015/16 IDP.

The vision of the MLM is: “By [sic] being a benchmark developmental municipality in service delivery excellence” (MLM IDP 2017-2022: 49). This is a significant change from the vision statement that appeared in the 2015/16 IDP, namely “By 2030, Matjhabeng envisions to emerge as a leading agricultural, commercial and industrial based Metropolitan City in the Free State [...] A New City and business hub that integrates strategic towns close to the transport nodes that feed in and out of the Free State” (MLM IDP 2015/16: 64-65).

In the presentation of developmental strategies in Chapter 4, the highest mayoral strategic priority is roads maintenance, and the lowest is economic development. The vision referred to above, as well as the mission statement, which starts with “By [sic] being a united, non racial, non sexist, transparent, responsible municipality” is very much inward focused, i.e., it is a vision and mission for the Municipality as an institution, not for the municipal area.

This chapter also includes a detailed IDP process plan as well as a table indicating requests received from the community in each of the 36 wards of the Municipality juxtaposed by the Ward Councillor’s priorities for each ward.

Chapter 6 of the MLM IDP contains the Municipality's Capital Infrastructure Investment Plan for 2017-2022. Here, too, the focus is mainly on service delivery. It is not quite clear what is meant by the third stated objective of the Capital Infrastructure Investment Framework (CIIF), namely to "Direct future public and private investment, by aligning capital budget requirements of departments as defined in the IDP sector plans". It is furthermore stated that the Municipality intends to contribute towards improving the local economy by ensuring that 70% of the capital is spent with local businesses.

The IDP indicates several projects related to the installation and maintenance of municipal service infrastructure for Virginia and Meloding. The one larger project indicated for Meloding is the construction of a sports complex of R20m funded from the Municipal Infrastructure Grant. This project also appeared in the 2015/16 MLM IDP.

The development of precinct spatial development frameworks for Merriespruit and Virginia Central that will be funded by Harmony Gold to the amount of R1m each that was indicated as projects in the 2015/16 IDP are again listed as projects in the 2017-2022 Plan.

The IDP document does not contain a Spatial Development Framework (SDF) for Matjhabeng, instead, Chapter 8, the "High Level Spatial Development Framework", contains the Spatial Development Framework *Plan* (my emphasis), i.e., a plan for developing the SDF, which will be done in phases.

The section on the "general direction, principles and norms adopted" in developing the spatial development framework, it is stated that "during the Integrated Development Planning process the principles and Plan of the Free State Goldfields Structure Plan Phase One was [sic] adopted" (MLM IDP 2017-2022: 231). The only reference that could be found elsewhere to this Structure Plan was in an undated report prepared by Stuart Paul Denoon-Stevens on the Matjhabeng Local Municipality for the South African Cities Network (2017).

In the section that sets out the “legislative environment for spatial development”, reference is still made to the Land Use Management Bill rather than to the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act 16 of 2013 (SPLUMA). In the implementation tables in Chapter 6 of the IDP, however, it is stated that an SDF for Matjhabeng was approved in 2013, but needs to be reviewed in terms of SPLUMA.

Two maps are provided that contain the “general principles and norms in relation to the spatial development of Matjhabeng” (MLM IDP 2017-2022: 231) as discussed in the IDP document.

These “general principles” seem to include an aspiration to amalgamate the different centres in the Matjhabeng municipal area into a metropole of sorts. It is stated that “The core areas of the Goldfields including Welkom/Thabong, Odendaalsrus/ Kutlwanong, and Virginia/Meloding should be encouraged to develop as a compact integrated sub-region” (ibid: 235) and that “Development in [of?] towns must be channelled to develop towards each other as indicated by the Goldfields Guide Plan” (ibid: 235). No reference to a Goldfields Guide Plan could be found anywhere outside of the IDP document.

The commitment to such compaction is not very convincing, however, as the arrows on the map showing the development of existing settlements indicate an acceptance of Meloding expanding away from Welkom. From the map one can deduce that the four farms identified for acquisition by the municipality for expansion of Meloding referred to in the project implementation tables earlier in the document are also probably located on the side of Meloding that is furthest from Virginia.

It is proposed in the document that the area between Welkom and Virginia should be use for “heavy industries that are classified as noxious industries in terms of noise, smoke or other pollution activities” as mining activities preclude residential development in the area (ibid: 239).

There is a puzzling section on page 239 that starts with the sentence: “Approximately 446 ha additional [industrial] land will be needed by the year 2010” and proceeds to identify areas where the need for this additional industrial land can be met (ibid: 239). The section is not only mystifying because it refers to a date in the past, but also there had been no industrial growth in the Matjhabeng area since the early 2000s.

As was the case in the 2015/16 IDP, there is mention of a “future rail corridor concept” between Welkom and Virginia that was proposed by the South African Rail Commuter Corporation Limited. The wording is exactly the same as that used in the 2015/16 Plan (ibid: 240).

Large development projects proposed in previous MLM IDPs such as the development of a Free State Innova Technopark, an economic development intervention by the Free State Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DETEA) between Virginia, Ventersburg and Hennenman (foreseen in the 2015/15 and 2015/16 IDPs) as well as the intention to “[p]lan and establish a mega city between Welkom and Kroonstad by 2030” (MLM IDP 2015/16: 120), which was to be accompanied by the development of a regional airport in the area, are not referred to at all in the latest IDP.

Reference is also made to zoning schemes and the regulations and policies related thereto that form the “primary tools for land-use and development management” in addition to “the spatial development frameworks and structure plans”. According to the document, a “new uniform Land Use Management Plan for Matjhabeng” that will replace the existing guidelines for land use management for “the different units” in Matjhabeng will be approved “shortly” (MLM IDP 2017-2022: 241). It is assumed that these “units” are the different towns that were incorporated under the Matjhabeng Local Municipality in 2000.

The IDP closes with a chapter on Social and Labour Plans. Apart from a number of learnerships and bursaries that benefit recipients from Virginia,

projects implemented by mining houses listed for Virginia include subsidies for the sports academy and jewellery school by Harmony Gold to the amount of R8m and R4m, respectively. There are also two projects listed as “cooperative support by Tetra 4 for the projects “Virginia Farm Agri-tourism” and “Prison Plant Product [Project?]” to the amount of R3m and R500 000, respectively.

Tetra 4 is a subsidiary of Renergen and holder of South Africa’s gas production rights in an area covering 187 000 ha that includes Virginia, Theunissen and Welkom. In May 2016 it was reported that an agreement had been signed between Renergen, Afrox and the Linde Group from Germany around the extraction and beneficiation of natural gas in the Free State. It is expected that this agreement will lead to an investment of 13 million Euros that will include the construction of a facility for the large-scale separation of helium (Craemer, 2016). However, in the report prepared by Stuart Paul Denoon-Stevens on the Matjhabeng Local Municipality for the South African Cities Network (2017), he indicates that the impact of the mining of natural gas in the area will be minimal in respect of job creation, creating only 172 direct and indirect employment opportunities.

As is the case with the Lejweleputswa District Municipality IDP for 2017-2022, the Matjhabeng Local Municipality IDP for the same period is long, incoherent and in places contradictory, full of language errors and references to outdated documents, inaccuracies and parts that have not been updated in years. It is not presented as a story that can grip the imagination and unlock the energy of role players in the municipal area or as a sense-making tool (see Bladucci, 2011) that can assist in creating an understanding of the area and issues relevant to it. The Municipality has had “bad” IDPs for several years running and it is very discouraging that the quality of the Plan is not improving. A major concern is that the IDP is perhaps indicative of a municipality that does not have the necessary capacity or competence and that does not work together as a team.

The emphasis of the plan is clearly on service delivery rather than on strategic planning or development. The planning approach, in as far as there is one, seems to be

very much a structure planning or comprehensive planning approach. This is confirmed by the South African Cities Network study (2017).

While spatial integration is advocated in the text of the IDP, it is clear from the map indicating actual development in the municipality that the development of new residential areas for Meloding enlarged the settlement footprint of Meloding away from Virginia. This is deplorable in the light of the fact that there is ample open land in the rest of Virginia where infill development could have been considered. The South African Cities Network (undated) states an over-supply of residential units as one of the biggest spatial challenges Matjhabeng has had to contend with over the past 15 years. This tallies with the information available about the drop in residential property prices as a result of the mine flooding the market with cheap housing and with the decreasing population figures for the Municipality. The question is why projects are not undertaken to convert surplus housing stock into low-cost housing units, as this seems to be the greatest need in the market.

The radical change in the vision of the Municipality from 2015/16 to the current IDP bears closer scrutiny. The new vision is still aspirational (“a benchmark”), but at least it does not put forward the unconvincing prospect of a new metropolitan city that will be a leader in agriculture, commerce and industry. The pragmatism that is reflected in the new vision is welcomed.

There is nothing utopian about the IDP – no picture of the “ideal” Matjhabeng as far as its physical form and connectivity and the quality of life of its residents are concerned. The plan is devoid of hope for the future and instead creates the impression of a municipality that is hardly managing to keep up basic service delivery and maintenance.

5.7 STORIES ABOUT THE FUTURE OF VIRGINIA

5.7.1 Hope and hopelessness

As indicated in Chapter 4, the respondents were all chosen on the basis of their love for and/or involvement with the town of Virginia. Some of them have

been directly involved in attempting to find a means to revitalise the town's economy following the downscaling of mining activities. When asked whether there was hope for Virginia, however, the answers were divergent.

At the negative end of the spectrum, was the following description given by Kabelo:

“And now, what is even dangerous, even more worrying, when I go home, when I meet elder people, when I meet my generation, when I meet younger ones, the level of, you know the loss of hope, that is the most dangerous thing. You know, because if a person loses hope, that person dies. And when you don't have hope, you are a time bomb. So that because now they tell me that they have listened to many hope, to stories of hope, but there is none left, they are not willing to listen to anything, there is no hope.”

Tshepo is equally despondent about the prospect of hope for the future of the town:

“There is no hope for Virginia – it is going down the drain day by day. There is no work – the most important thing, you know. Youth of Virginia recently, I'm talking about recently, it's been two weeks or three weeks . . . in three weeks' time, I think we had six of youth who died in a car accident under the alcohol influence. That's how Virginia went bad. That's why I'm saying Virginia is going down the drain day by day, because the youth of Virginia gave up.

. . .

There is nothing we can do. We don't have power, we don't have resources, so there is nothing we can do. That is why I'm saying to you, Virginia . . . there's no hope.”

Larry expresses much the same sentiment:

“I think we have missed this question about what is the people of Virginia mostly suffering about, because people tend to say it is youth unemployment, lack of education, and crime [. . .] but I think those things are just results of the problem, something led for us to

go there, you understand? Yes. So I would say, people have lost hope. Yes, people have lost hope that Virginia will ever come back to life ever again.”

Ben lies at the opposite end of the spectrum. He definitely has hope for the future and says it is something he often talks about with his father. In fact, he believes that the town has proven the prophets of doom wrong.

“The town may look bad, but business has never been better. If one takes into account that in 1995, I think, there were . . . half of the houses in Virginia stood empty . . . you know [. . .] It was also the case, I think in 1983 when my father just started here, there was a headline on the front page of the Volksblad that said, you know, Virginia is going to become a ghost town. And notwithstanding that, we have kept going.”

Liz is hopeful about the property market showing signs of recovering, which would halt the dumping of cheap houses on the market.

Throgmorton (2003) and MacIntyre (1984) highlight the importance of emotion in stories and, in Throgmorton’s case, particularly in planning stories. The hopelessness expressed by Kabelo, Tshepo and Larry regarding the future of Virginia is almost overwhelming. Although not as emphatic, most of the white respondents were also negative about the town’s future. In this regard, Ben is the exception. When considering his optimism about the future of Virginia, one should keep in mind his remark that “the worse it goes with the town, the better it goes with the lawyers”. He also has a personal story, probably told to him by his father, of a time when predictions that Virginia was going to become a ghost town were proved wrong. As shown by Eva Hoffman (2005) in *After Such Knowledge*, her book on the aftermath of the holocaust and by Jonathan Jansen in his book on dealing with race and South Africa’s Apartheid past, *Knowledge in the Blood* (2011) such personal narratives can be very powerful.

The cast of characters in these stories are also important. Tshepo and Larry specifically mention the youth. As there is a strong association between youth and

hopefulness, it is all the more poignant that the youth of Virginia is painted as having lost hope. On the other hand, Kabelo's repetitive enumeration, "when I meet elder people, when I meet my generation, when I meet younger ones", shows how pervasive the loss of hope is.

A very significant similarity emerges from the statements made by Kabelo, Tshepo and Larry, namely the importance they give to the notion of hope, to an expectation of the future (see Bloch, 1995). It is almost as if they regard the response of hopelessness as more dangerous and damaging than the actual socio-economic problems people in Virginia grapple with. This is again a reason to support Paquet (2017) in challenging the bias against emotion based research in planning as such emotions give meaning to places and must be taken into account if transformation is to be effected.

5.7.2 Plans for the future: Small adjustments and grand strategies

As indicated in 5.5.3.3 above, some respondents felt that the residents of Virginia themselves were responsible for the poor condition the town was in at the time of conducting this research. It follows, then, that the townspeople also have a role to play in improving the appearance of the town. Alta says that:

"If every person just cleans and fixes up their own little place and makes sure that it's working . . ."

Liz shares her view:

"I do believe that all the residents of Virginia have got to take ownership of the town, starting with their own yard. And that's not a mine or ex mine factor, that is: You've bought a home, maintain it."

Kabelo's approach is that Virginia will benefit from any development in the Matjhabeng area. He proposes a diversified strategy catering to the strengths of each of the towns in Matjhabeng. His plans range from exploring the tourism potential of the sites of archaeological and cultural finds in the vicinity of the town, e.g., by establishing a Sotho village project, to exploiting the

potential of Matjhabeng's central location in the country and the proximity to the railway line between Durban and Johannesburg.

For example, he was part of preliminary discussions with vehicle manufacturers in Durban to establish a vehicle testing facility around the Phakisa race track outside Welkom. This would save the cost of having to take the vehicles to Kyalami for testing as is currently happening.

There have also been discussions with Transnet around making better use of rail transport and thereby lessening the number of trucks on the roads. In this regard, he sees Hennenman as the nodal point where freight will be transferred between truck and rail transport.

Michael also refers to the as yet unrealised plans to develop a cargo hub in Virginia and says there were also plans to develop an Ernie Els⁴⁰ golf course in the town. According to Michael, both plans were put on ice because of bitter disagreement between role players from Virginia and from Welkom about which of the two towns they should have been located at.

Tshepo, Lucas, Kabelo, Isaiah and Michael all make reference to Virginia's central location as a key to the town's potential for development. Tshepo links this to the argument that the mines should not have closed:

Virginia is in the heart of Free State – that is a fact – if that was considered, the mine would never close down – people from Zim, from Maputo was here, they would experience the hype, the vibe, the mood of Virginia. People travelling Johannesburg to Cape Town, passed Virginia. But that seems not to matter, it's just a fact – Virginia is in the heart of the Free State, so what.”

Michael, Kabelo, Larry and Ben see potential for Virginia as a tourist destination. Ben's vision in this regard is the following:

⁴⁰ The internationally acclaimed golfer, Ernie Els, was born in Virginia.

“Things like these golf estate developments, and if one could just utilize the river more to create a kind of Bothaville vibe here. And it can be fantastic, really, it can. I mean, make it a tourist town, because the days of the mine are over. Then make it a tourist town. You know, for me it would, I think it would be fantastic. But for it to be a tourist town, you have to make it pretty. Let the little guest houses jump up a little. I mean it is so difficult to find a place to sleep in Virginia, it’s ridiculous. I think [the owner] of Tikwe has the right idea, with what he is busy with in the tourism industry. You know, he is busy laying out stands along the river bank. I think that is the direction our town will move in going forward.”



Figure 59: Virginia's waterfall

Of all the respondents, only Liz referred to the possible repurposing of mining infrastructure, by stating that a hostel would have made an excellent old age home. According to her, it was the municipality's responsibility to do this.

Lucas argues that the only advantage that Virginia has is that “There are vast available opportunities, not opportunities, but empty ground and empty premises that can be occupied for a very good price as compared to

Gauteng.” He tells of past attempts at projects that would have improved the economy of the gold fields region, one of which was an effort by the Gold Fields Chamber of Commerce, on which he served as an executive member, to bring the international cargo airport to Welkom, and to divert the N1 highway from Kroonstad through the gold fields and then to Theunissen, Brandfort and Bloemfontein. The opportunity to develop a cargo airport arose because OR Tambo International Airport was looking for a way to create more capacity for passenger aircraft.

The Chamber of Commerce, together with the Free State Gold Fields Development Centre in Welkom, tried to make use of this opportunity to the benefit of the gold fields region. A change of premiership⁴¹ played a role in these efforts losing momentum. Although the plans for the diversion of the N1 had in principle been approved, they were delayed for several years, ostensibly because of a lack of budget. It therefore came as a very nasty surprise to Lucas and his colleagues at the Chamber when they read in the media that R160m had been allocated for upgrading the highway between Kroonstad and Ventersburg. The reason provided for this was a lack of communication between different government departments.

For Sally, the key to ensuring the town’s future prosperity is to protect the quality of the schools so that people will not be tempted to send their children to Welkom for schooling. Historically, Virginia had excellent schools (Hentie Celliers is regarded as one of these) that have yielded influential people. She fears that, if people leave the town, for example to attend school in Welkom, the chances that they will return are slim.

✍ The plans residents of Virginia have or had for their town resonate with Merrifield’s (2000: 480) assessment of dystopian aspects of Jane Jacobs and Lewis Mumford’s planning philosophy, namely “home remedies and big plans”. They are

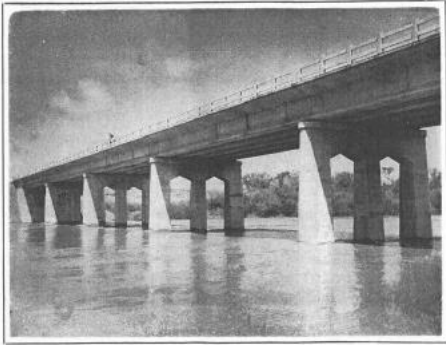
⁴¹ Mosiuoa Lekota was the Premier of the Free State from 1994 to 1996, after which he became the first chairperson of the Council of Provinces and subsequently, in 1999, the Minister of Defence. In 2008, following the resignation of President Thabo Mbeki, he resigned from office and created a new political party, the Congress of the People (COPE) which he was still leading at the time of writing this thesis.

at once humble and individual, calling on the ordinary man and woman living in Virginia to “be the hero” and boldly ambitious beyond any realistic expectation – both permutations of modern development as described by Berman (1988).

When the stories told by respondents about future plans for Virginia are read as part of the larger story of Virginia’s history since its inception, an interesting similarity in plot emerges. Very many of the “big plans” for Virginia were enthusiastically developed up to a certain point, but then fell by the wayside. I list only a few examples here.

- In 1959, the town council started planning for a Trade and Technical High School with residence facilities on 99 acres donated by the Virginia Land and Estate Company to the Gold Fields Technical Institute. In 1967/8 the project was placed on the list of major works of the Department of Education, Arts and Science. In spite of this, however, it was never built.
- The town council also petitioned government in 1960 for the establishment of a Gold Fields university in Virginia. However, the Department of Education, Art and Science responded that no new universities for whites were being planned in the near future.
- In 1967 planning started for the development of a factory, built to American standards, to produce light, multipurpose aircraft with the help of German technicians. The Virginia town council was of the opinion that the town met all the requirements for realising the project and petitioned the various government departments involved in the project to locate the factory in Virginia to counter the effect of decreasing gold mining activity. It is not known why the project was not implemented. (Viljoen, 1994).

VIRGINIA
TOWN OF THE FUTURE
SECURES YOUR FUTURE



(Photo: MARTIN GIBBS)
 VOORTREKKER BRIDGE OVER SAND RIVER IN VIRGINIA

VIRGINIA—

OFFERS HEALTHY RESIDENTIAL AND PLEASURE AMENITIES. BEAUTIFUL SCENERY ON BANKS OF SAND RIVER. FUTURE GOLDFIELDS PLEASURE RESORT.

★ ONLY O.F.S. GOLDFIELDS TOWN ON MAIN RAILWAY LINE FROM JOHANNESBURG TO CAPE TOWN.

★ INDUSTRIAL SITES WITH ALL MODERN AMENITIES AVAILABLE AT REASONABLE PRICES — AND MODERATE RATES TO SUIT ALL INVESTORS.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Before investing, contact:—
 THE TOWN CLERK,
 P.O. BOX 156,
 VIRGINIA. PHONE 3-2111.

Figure 60: A 1964 newspaper advertisement aimed at attracting investment to Virginia
 Source: *The Friend*, 29 August 1964

From the above, it is clear that the efforts by stakeholders in Virginia to attract industrial investments and development to the town are very similar to those in Benoni. While in Virginia, none of these initiatives came to fruition, in Benoni (after some initial setbacks – see section 3.7.2 in Chapter 3) industrial investment did eventually take off at an even greater rate than anticipated (Humphriss & Thomas, 1968).

There is not enough information to understand clearly why these plans, and those in the stories told by the respondents, were not implemented. It would seem, however, that power relations played a significant role. In the earlier examples the Virginia town council took the initiative and strongly advocated for a project, but could not secure support, or sustained support, from national government.

Tshepo's "so what" ("Virginia is in the heart of the Free State, so what") echoes one of the findings of the study conducted by the Centre for Development Enterprise (CDE) on growth and development in the Free State, namely "being 'halfway to everywhere' is no help at all if most influential people are leaving, fewer are passing through and fewer still are coming to stay" (CDE, 2005: 3).

From my own observations made during the site visits referred to in section 5.1.2 above, there is little potential for Virginia to develop a tourism industry that will significantly contribute to the town's economy. Sparks (2003: 245) is equally sceptical about plans to promote Welkom as a tourist attraction, citing as his reasons the fact that the city "has no beach, no river and no mountains, just the flat Free State plains". In contrast with Welkom, Virginia does have the Sand River running through the town; there is even, as was pointed out to me by Larry, a waterfall in Virginia. However, neither the river, nor the waterfall boast sufficient natural beauty or attractive facilities that it would entice holiday makers from other provinces, or even from elsewhere in the Free State province, to visit Virginia.

At the time of conducting this study, almost two decades into the new millennium, the constant pressure to (re)develop urban spaces that was apparent to Berman (1988) is still pervasive. He (Berman, 1988: 78) remarks that "Even in the most highly developed parts of the world, all individuals, groups and communities, are under constant pressure to reconstruct themselves; if they stop to rest, to be what they are, they will be swept away". The image of being swept away is problematic when it comes to the town of Virginia. For those affected by the Merriespruit disaster in 1994, when a tailings dam failed, killing 17 people and injuring many more, and several houses in the Virginia's Merriespruit suburb washed into the river by a mudslide⁴², it brings to mind memories of sudden, violent destruction. The plight of Virginia in the absence of the "rapid, heroic development" (Berman, 1988:75) that characterises modernity is rather that of being left behind, of fading away. This is quite literally the case as vegetation takes over the town's former industrial area and the sites of the mostly demolished mining infrastructure, and as the name of the town disappears from municipal documentation, from the media, and from the national consciousness.

However, in the Faustian world view elucidated by Berman (1988: 69), "For the developer, to stop moving, to rest in the shadows, to let the old people⁴³ enfold him, is

⁴² This was not the first Merriespruit disaster. In 1956, Merriespruit shaft 1 was flooded, killing 7 miners and leading to the shaft being permanently closed (Viljoen, 1994).

⁴³ This is a reference to the old couple, Philemon and Baucis, whose humble house stood in the way of Faust's development and who was killed by Mephistopheles and his thugs. It could, however, also be

death.” “Developer” in this sense, as Berman explains, could well be replaced with “public planner” (Berman, 1988: 74). It is certainly true that, for a (modernist) planner, as for the respondents interviewed for this study, it is not easy to sit idly by while a once thriving town is dying.



Figure 61: Some of the images of Virginia that appear on the tourism site *tripmondo.com*
Source: Tripmondo, undated

5.7.3 Hope for a new mining boom

In the interviews with the respondents hopes to achieve a revitalisation of Virginia were often pinned on a revitalisation of mining in the town.

The only hope Angus sees for Virginia is a new mining boom.

“If the gold price will ever really go up, then there is a possibility that they will mine those reefs owned by Weswits. But it would have to increase drastically to make it profitable. Because they have to sink shafts and that costs a lot of money.”

Sally believes that there is hope for renewed mining or extraction related activity to boost Virginia’s economy, but that labour issues would have to be addressed in order to make such ventures profitable. On a personal level,

read as a reference to the large proportion of elderly residents that remain in Virginia now that the mines have closed down.

however, living on a farm between Virginia and Theunissen, she has reservations about plans by Sibanye Gold to open new mines in the area⁴⁴ as well as the possibility of extracting the natural gas resources on their land.

“The mine was good to us while I grew up, because I mean my whole family works on the mine, my brother still works on the mine now, my father still works on the mine . . . but now, now it is kind of a bad thing for us, you know. But for the town the new shaft must be sunk if it is possible, because it would of course be a hell of an injection for the town.”

Jack, Isaiah and Tshepo are all of the opinion that the Virginia mines should be reopened. Based on the fact that the zama-zamas make a living from artisanal mining in the area, they argue that it is not a shortage of gold, but political factors that prevent continued operation of gold mines in the area. They do not espouse the view expressed by Keyes (1992) that the profitability of a mine can drop to below acceptable levels even though the resources have not been depleted. Tshepo explains as follows:

“One thing for sure, New Shaft is closed now, neh? But there is still gold down there, you understand, there is gold, there is still gold. [. . .] I believe that government and the private sector, they had something to do with the closing down of New Shaft.”

Tshepo also makes an impassioned plea for the legalisation of the *zama-zamas*, based on the fact that the zama-zama's need the income to feed their families, that they are not hurting anyone and that they are the ones carrying the risk.

The notion of a new mining boom is not supported by Larry at all:

“So we are trying to fix Virginia, but not by introducing this concept of Virginia being a mining town again, but then to change the economy all in all so that is why we are mostly focused on tourism.”

⁴⁴ Sally is part of a community group with which Sibanye gold held meetings about possible new mining activities in the area, although things have been quiet for a year before our interview.

He sees a different solution for the town:

“When you like try to ask some people what is it that we could do here to solve the problems that have been facing Virginia many people tend to say if maybe we build malls. As if like malls can boost the economy, you understand. What we need here is something to boost not just the economy, but then the people, understand, which is to develop a social enterprise. Yes. We want to develop a social enterprise by participating in areas of agriculture, and especially tourism and financial literacy, and health. Our health standard is very poor.”

☞ Hope for a new mining boom for Virginia can be considered as a kind of utopian yearning that dresses up the past as the future (see the reference to Graham (1891) in paragraph 2.4.2 in Chapter 2), which is rejected by Bloch as a block to the creation of the future as the “Not-Yet-Conscious” (Bloch, 1995: 11). It would seem, furthermore, that the wish for a new mining boom for Virginia emerges from a simplified narrative about the past that removes the problematic aspects of Virginia during the boom and focuses on a single factor such as the availability of employment (see the criticism by Bailey and Bryson (2006) against such simple narratives of Bournville, for example).

Larry’s proposal to establish large-scale social enterprises in Virginia, on the other hand, presents something of a new model for economic development for the town. As such he embodies the revolutionary youth described by Bloch (1995: 119) as “an enormous receptacle full of future”.

5.7.4 People, networks, leadership

For Kabelo, good leadership is an essential requirement for realising his hope for Virginia:

“Sometimes I have my dreams. Personally I believe Virginia can turn around. It’s possible, but it’s a question of you need the right

people to see the opportunities that I've just mentioned. There are a lot of opportunities. Return back to its glory days. It is highly possible, but I have little hope, I have little confidence in the current leadership . . . The calibre of people that we have in those strategic positions . . .”

For Sally, hope also resides in people, but in her case it is the people living in Virginia:

“What makes the town awesome is that, although we are suffering under the terrible, you know, the mines’ retrenchments and people are having a hard time, the town is still standing . . .we are still standing and we are trying and it still looks almost better than some of the Free State’s smaller towns . . . There is hope, because you still have enough people who care for the town, good people, people who really work hard to make a difference. So I believe there is hope for the town, but hell, people have to pull together.”

Liz sees a change in the municipal structure as part of the solution:

“Get the municipality to become a Virginia municipality where they are accountable. Apparently, the rates and taxes in this area are far higher than the average, so it would be financially more viable.”

Social media has made it easy for networks to be established around the town. There are two facebook groups for Virginia, both of which are fairly active. The one is *Meloding & Virginia Info* (with the slogan: Together we can build our community), which seems to have mostly (not exclusively) residents of Meloding as members and the other is *Virginia, my dorp, my trots*, which seems to consist mostly of white residents or former residents of Virginia. Both groups are dominated by advertisements of goods and services offered by their members. In between is discussion about community issues that relate mostly to municipal services and projects. On *Virginia, my dorp, my trots*, members sometimes post materials (photographs, maps, newspaper clippings, etc.) that lead to nostalgic exchanges about “the good old days”.

Kabelo has started a network of about 80 former residents of Virginia. The aim is for them to contribute to the community. Called *Letsunyane* “people of Virginia”, this group includes professionals, sports personalities and other successful individuals who still have strong ties to the town.

☞ The internet and social media are the new platforms where stories are told and virtual communities have emerged to be just as powerful as physical communities. Mirembe (2017) indicates that the era of connectivity has resulted in physical spaces to be mirrored by virtual spaces constituted of infinite connections that are dynamic and ever-changing. This is in step with the fluid and vaporous nature of the modern world. Tensions arise, however, from the juxtaposition of the dynamic and changing cloud city with the physical city that is fixed in space.

In Virginia, it was found that lingering divisions along racial lines that exist in the physical space are reflected in the virtual realm, as there are two Facebook pages for the town, one of which the membership is almost exclusively white and another with an almost exclusively black membership.

Nonetheless, many examples exist where social media have been used to mobilise people around worthy causes and I believe there is potential for these virtual networks to become a force of good for the town.

5.7.5 God will heal our town

Several of the respondents identified themselves as Christian. Larry and Rika believe strongly that there has to be a spiritual dimension to a solution for the town. Larry says the following:

“Reason why the whole thing is like this, God has punished the place. If we turn from our wicked ways, he will renew and restore our land. We have not yet repented, therefore we are still in this position. There is new hope. 16 June prayer for new hope for Virginia: God to heal our land so that we can cultivate again.”

Rika states it this way:

“I do have hope for Virginia, I just think people should perhaps lift their eyes to the mountains⁴⁵, because they are very prone to . . . you know negativity breeds like a virus . . .”

✍ Scholars such as Posel (2011) and Davies (1981) have emphasized the role played by the Afrikaans Christian churches in promoting Apartheid. The findings of this study also shows that religion can be repressive and divisive and the source of social pressure (see paragraph 5.5.1.7 above). At the same time, however, formal religion, i.e., churches and religious organizations, has played a significant and well-documented role in the struggle against Apartheid and against social injustice and human rights violations the world over.

It is therefore not unreasonable to note the churches in Virginia as a possible strong role player in improving conditions, both social and physical, in the town. Although, as reported by Angus, the numbers of several of the churches have dwindled, the *Meloding & Virginia Info* Facebook page shows that there are also many that are very active. Churches have the ability to mobilise large numbers of people and substantial resources.

5.8 A LAST WORD ON THE RESPONDENTS

The respondents all have different reasons for staying in Virginia. All of them have a long association with Virginia. As Liz says, “This is my town. This is where my pharmacist is and this is where I belong. This is where I’m home.” This resonates with the statement by Tshepo: “It is poor . . . but it is home”.

In addition, Ben and Sally believe that the prospects for their businesses in Virginia are good and Liz says she will stay until her husband, who is a lawyer, retires.

For Angus and Bettie, and Piet and Ansie, affordability is a reason for staying.

⁴⁵ A reference to Psalms 121 verse 1: I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

Lucas has considered leaving Virginia many times, but he believes that he is too old to leave now.

Kabelo lives in Welkom, where he works, but still considers Virginia his town.

Larry, who is still living with his parents in Virginia, is passionate about making a difference to the town and has aspirations for his career as an entrepreneur in the tourism sector.

Sipho will leave as soon as the opportunity presents itself, a view shared by Tshepo.

Wayne and Molly left Virginia in 1987 after Wayne, who was working for the mine at the time, had been told that, going forward, there would be no promotion opportunities for white employees at the mine.

Beth left Virginia at the age of six when her mother returned to Boksburg after her father was left mentally and physically incapacitated by a mine accident.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The study had a dual objective, namely 1) to add to the body of knowledge of planning stories and thereafter 2) to consider the question of whether there is scope for the development of a narratology of planning. Such a narratology of planning would bring to bear on planning not only the form of narrative, but also the science thereof and would be mutually enriching to both the fields of planning and of narratology.

I will consider whether the first objective has been met before I proceed to the second.

6.2 THE FIRST STUDY OBJECTIVE: ADDING TO THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE OF PLANNING STORIES

6.2.1 The reading of the Virginia stories

In order to meet this objective, stories about the past, present and future of Virginia were collected and interpreted from a narrative perspective. Using a varifocal lens of interrelated or even integrated elements, the inputs from the respondents, and also the provincial and municipal plans for the town (as “stories about the future” (as per Throgmorton, 2003) were analysed as narratives from a structural, constructivist and discursive perspective.

The elements included in the varifocal lens proved to be a set of interconnected narratives from the different layers of narratives in relation to which the Virginia story can be understood (see MacIntyre, 1984).

At the outset of the study, I considered four types of planning narratives, a further development of the taxonomy of planning narratives proposed by Ameen (2017). These are: The use of narratives as a way of telling and understanding practice stories (stories of places or planning processes); the

narrative or elements thereof as a structure to make plans accessible and understandable/readable, the use of narratives to enable “world-making” through planning and, lastly, the reading of spaces (cities and towns) as narratives.



Figure 62: A graphic representation of different layers of analysis applied to the Virginia stories

6.2.2 The contribution of the study through the first study objective

I will briefly consider the contribution of this study in respect of each of the categories of narrative applications to planning.

6.2.2.1 *Narratives as a way of telling and understanding practice stories (stories of places or planning processes)*

Through a narrative reading of the Virginia stories as indicated in figure 61 above, insight was gained about the residents’ experience of their town in the past and at the time of conducting this study, as well as about their hopes and dreams for the future of Virginia. The different life stories of the respondents

shed light on different aspects of the town's history and current reality. While each respondent had an individual story to share, common themes did emerge.

In a study that looks back on South Africa's severely divided past, it is to be expected that the narratives shared by black respondents would differ in material respects from those shared by white respondents. What was surprising, however, was the extent to which the stories correlated, namely that white and black residents of the town generally looked back on the mining boom with nostalgia and that many of them in their future aspirations for the town yearned for a return to the past.

In spite of the general negativity regarding the current state of the town, and strong feelings of hopelessness expressed by some respondents, there are still a few people who are positive about the opportunity to make a living in the town.

Feelings of distrust and negativity towards the municipality are pervasive. This is linked to the fact that the new municipal demarcation meant that Virginia no longer has its own municipality. This is only one amongst many losses experienced by the people of Virginia since the downscaling of mining activity in the town started in the early 1990s.

6.2.2.2 The narrative or elements thereof as a structure to make plans accessible and understandable/readable

The provincial and municipal plans pertaining to Virginia were read as narratives from the premise that a narrative structure, or the inclusion of narrative elements, would make plans easy to understand and identify with.

The Free State Provincial Growth and Development strategy – Vision 2030, the future we want was found to have some narrative structure – a “micronarrative” (see Ameel, 2017) vision, unpacked in the rest of the document. In some cases, however, the “story” was not convincing, as there

was insufficient congruence between the real world and the story-world of the plan, e.g., highlighting Matjhabeng as a tourism node. There is no specific mention of the town of Virginia in the plan.

The Free State Provincial Spatial Development Plan was found to be a long and cumbersome document, without a coherent story line. It was difficult to understand who the plan was written for (the target reader) as it spelled out information in some places and assumed a high level of technical knowledge in others. Also problematic was understanding where this plan fits into the interconnected sets of narratives of provincial and municipal plans, because of the fact that, although it is a provincial plan (and therefore expected to provide high-level direction), it is prescriptive to a very high level of detail, e.g., the shape of buildings, in some places.

The Lejweleputswa District Municipality Integrated Development Plan 2017-2022 focuses strongly on the current *status quo*. This is presented in a technical, almost mechanistic manner, which cannot be read as a narrative. The focus is on classification and there is very little indication of a future-orientation or of a plot or story-line. In this plan, also, there is a lack of congruence between the story-world of the plan and the real world, which results in scepticism and detracts from the credibility of the plan, e.g., the description of Virginia as a tourism node. The plan does not address the need to address the Apartheid structure of the towns in the District.

The Matjhabeng Local Municipality Integrated Development Plan 2017-2022 lacks internal coherence and its credibility is undermined by outdated and inaccurate information. The document is generally of poor quality and lacks narrative structuring. The drastic change in the vision for the municipality from the previous versions of the IDP places the emphasis strongly on service delivery. This is indicative of a new pragmatism, which is welcomed, but focuses the document strongly on immediate, short term needs. There is no future-orientation or spatial development vision in the document.

6.2.2.3 The use of narratives to enable “world-making” through planning

Sommer's (2009) premise that everyone who can receive/interpret a story can also tell/create a story, means that any role player can participate in creating a future story or plan for their town. In the case of Virginia, several future stories for the town exist. The question considered in Chapter 5 was what is required for the story-world to become the physical spatial world of the town. Considered as failed mechanisms for world-making, the Virginia stories highlighted the role of power. This lends itself to further exploration, for instance in a close comparative reading with the story of Benoni (see paragraph 3.7.2, and Humpriss and Thomas, 1968), as it would seem that in Benoni, similar strategies to those mooted in Virginia were successfully implemented.

6.2.2.4 The reading of spaces (cities and towns) as narratives

The physical space of Virginia featured strongly in the stories told by the respondents. The most obvious space story is perhaps that of the town's Apartheid history as the distance and physical differences (higher density, smaller stand sizes) between Meloding and the former white town of Virginia remain. Rather than being rewritten, this story was recently reinforced by the Merriespruit 3 development.

The town's public open spaces, such as parks, traffic circles and road reserves tell a story of not only a loss of beauty, but also of status and respectability. They also illustrate the story of neglect and a lack of care by the local authority. The Joane Pim Park is the backdrop for Molly's reminiscences about the mine Christmas parties. In Ben's story about the “zama-zamas” stealing pipes from the golf course, the golf course becomes the scene for symbolic protest by the “zama-zamas” when they find a pvc pipe instead of the copper pipe they expected and smash it. It also tells the story of residents of Virginia stepping in, e.g., to manage the golf course, to fill the space left by the mine's departure.

In none of the stories does the built form play so touching a role as in the story told by Tshepo about the demolition of New Shaft. As he tells the story, the tragedy of Virginia unfolds before our eyes and we stand, as did the people of Meloding, dumbstruck and powerless to avert it. The demolition of New Shaft tells the story of the annihilation of the old way of life in the town. While the destruction of a landmark is central to Tshepo's story, in many of the other stories the changes in and even disappearance of part of the physical fabric of the town, e.g., swimming pools, squash courts, recreation clubs, are more indirectly referred to.

The physical space of the town played a significant part in the story-worlds of the narratives shared by the respondents. It could be viewed as another layer of storytelling, often as concrete symbols of the human stories superimposed on it.

I can therefore conclude that the first study objective, namely to gain an in-depth understanding of the experience of the people of Virginia of their town during the mining boom and thereafter, as well as of their expectations of the future of their town through a narrative study, was achieved.

6.3 THE SECOND STUDY OBJECTIVE: CONSIDERING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NARRATOLOGY OF PLANNING

The second objective was to consider the possibility of a narratology of planning that is understood as the application of the science of narrative to planning in a way that is mutually enriching to both the fields of planning and of narratology.

The literature (see Chapter 2) shows that the application of the narrative form to planning in as far as practice stories are concerned, is well established. However, if we wish to establish whether there is scope for the development of a narratology of planning, we have to consider two questions. The first is the extent to which the *science* of narrative, rather than the mere narrative

form (Heinen, 2009, and Heinen & Sommer, 2009) can be employed in planning studies. The second question is whether doing so will have benefit for (will advance) both of the fields involved, as per Herman's (2009) definition of a cross-disciplinary socio-narratology. I will now discuss these questions from the perspective of the Virginia study.

6.3.1 Employment of the science of narrative in planning studies

6.3.1.1 Narratives as a way of telling and understanding practice stories (stories of places or planning processes)

The Virginia stories were considered from different narratological perspectives. The first was structuralist. In this respect, aspects such as the description of settings, characters and plot were considered. From a constructivist perspective, it was important to determine what aspects respondents emphasized, added to or left out of their stories. From a discursive or socio-linguistic perspective, the repetitive use of certain words or phrases (or words or phrases that conveyed a specific mood or emotion) were identified. The narratological approach enabled me to “discern the background noises and silences” on the margins of the stories, as Oranje (1996: 265) did in his study of Sasolburg.

6.3.1.2 The narrative or elements thereof as a structure to make plans accessible and understandable/readable

Plans as stories probably lend themselves best to the development of a “narratology of planning”. To start off with, a plan is a text, and therefore closer to what has traditionally been the object of narratological study. However, apart from judging whether a plan “tells a story”⁴⁶, the question remains how much of the “science of narrative” can be applied to a municipal or provincial plan.

⁴⁶ Even a “micro-story” as defined by Ameen (2017).

In the reading of the plans pertaining to Virginia, a constructivist approach was employed, for instance to determine to what extent the town of Virginia features in the plans, the prominence given to mining and the kinds of strengths that were highlighted for the town or the Matjhabeng Local Municipality and the focus (or lack thereof) on spatial reconstruction of the towns. Discursive aspects such as the relationship between the text and its reader were considered. This included whether the plan seemed to have been written with a certain reader in mind, but also the dissonance I experienced as a reader when there was incongruence between aspects of the plan's "story-world" and my real world experience of Virginia. Lastly, the planning documents were assessed in terms of structural elements such as whether there was a clear story-line or plot – this was considered in conjunction with the overall style, coherence and structure of the document. The latter was done specifically with a view to determining the "future-orientation" of the plans.

6.3.1.3 The use of narratives to enable "world-making" through planning

Indications are that, behind each of the "big plans" for Virginia that did not come to fruition, there is an elaborate story. While these stories were not collected in any detail for the purposes of this study, there is enough information to discern a common structure. The stories can mostly be summarised as a group of people in the town (for instance the municipality or a group of concerned citizens) deciding to pursue a project that, in their view would greatly improve the prospects of the town. They do research and solicit support for the plan and finally put it to a higher authority for consideration. It is often at this point, sometimes after being given false hope of success, that their hopes are dashed. This seems to indicate that power, as claimed before by the likes of Flyvbjerg, Forester and Hillier, plays a significant role in determining whether plans are implemented or not.

In this regard, a closer comparative reading of the stories of Virginia and, for example, Benoni, where development efforts did prove successful, could be helpful.

It also seems to indicate that there is scope for narrative models, such as Greimas's actantial model (see paragraph 2.2.1 above) to be used not only to understand why plans come to fruition or not, but also to ensure that they do, for instance by being aware at the outset of a project where the power lies and who/what can be classified as helper or opponent. The feasibility of employing models for literary "world-making" the other way around, i.e., from story-worlds to physical worlds, would have to be further investigated.

6.3.1.4 *The reading of spaces (cities and towns) as narratives*

The important role that the built environment has played in the Virginia stories was clearly illustrated, whether this was to confirm the difficulty of redressing the town's Apartheid past (the "unbridgeable" spatial divide between Meloding and Virginia), to underscore the differences between the privileged and the underprivileged (the golf course) or to bring home the loss suffered by the community as the era of mining prosperity came to an end (New Shaft in Meloding). These elements serve as powerful symbols and metaphors in the Virginia stories.

Having completed the study, I am inclined to amend my initial description of this aspect of narrative application to planning. It is a stretch to consider that elements of the built environment should be considered narratives, e.g., with a beginning, middle and end, in the true sense of the word. Although physical spaces in a town do "tell a story", such a story can only really be told through the interlocation of a "story-telling animal", i.e., a human being (as per MacIntyre, 1984: 216). These elements, rather, should be viewed as elements of a story, and more specifically as imagery, much like the illustrations, or perhaps as figures of speech, in a literary narrative.

6.3.2 The reciprocal benefit of the application of the science of narrative to planning

Planning

It was established that the science of narrative, rather than the mere narrative form has been brought to bear on the Virginia stories. How do we articulate the benefit (if any) this has had for the study and, by implication, the benefit such an approach will have for the study of planning in the general sense?

Having completed the study of Virginia, I can describe the benefit of a narratological approach for planning as follows: Narratology offers a treasure trove of tools with which to “take a closer look” and therefore achieve a deeper understanding of planning narratives. This is irrespective of the aspect of planning, e.g., practice stories or plans as narratives, these narratives relate to.

A most exciting aspect of a narratology of planning would be to consider the application of narrative models related to the making of story-worlds to the process of physical “world-making”. Such an application could not only have potential for planning research (analysing planning processes after the fact), but also for practice, i.e. to “make visible” the roles played by those involved, the dynamic interaction between them and the forces that influence them or the process.

Certainly, Soja’s warning that space can easily be ignored in the narrative mode (that Throgmorton, 2003, responds to), is warranted. As Throgmorton (ibid: 134) implores: “We must spatialize the storytelling imagination”. When considering a (socio)narratology of planning, the challenge is exactly to balance the interests of both fields of scholarship, to take the best and most advanced of the respective bodies of knowledge and conduct truly interdisciplinary research that will enrich both domains.

As I collected the life-stories of the respondents, I experienced first hand the emotional effect of stories that “show” rather than “tell”. The difference between the two is the same as between saying “[t]he end of the mining boom has been a painful loss to all of us” and sharing the first-hand experience of the demolition of New Shaft, as Tshepo does (see paragraph 5.5.2). Although there is a direct and implied reference to emotion (“painful” and “loss”) in the first statement, it does not have the same evocative power as Tshepo’s first-hand account. This could have an impact on how interviews are structured when conducting ethnographic research for collecting stories of places or planning processes. Rather than to ask respondents for their views (e.g. Do you have hope for Virginia?) one could ask them to share experiences (e.g. Can you tell me about an experience that made you feel hopeful about Virginia?).

When one calls, as I do, for plans as “stories of the future” (Throgmorton, 2003: 127) to be instruments of physical world-making, it holds the danger that we may moderate our expectations to that which we deem to be practically achievable. For planners and communities to truly achieve “the new” (as per Bloch, 1995; Berman, 1988, Docherty, 1993 and Throgmorton 2003), we however have to move beyond so-called possible futures (Hillier, 2008, 2011). It has perhaps become time to ask: “What are the impossible futures for Virginia?”

Narratology

Having established that the application of the science of narrative to planning studies substantively enriches the field of planning, can we prove that it promises reciprocal enrichment of the field of narratology?

A number of possibilities for the enrichment of the field of narratology through narratological planning studies are identified below. It is not the argument that these are unique to planning, nor that they are “new” in the sense that similar research has not yet been considered within the field of narratology. I do suggest, however, that going forward, these are aspects of narratological

research that can be further developed, thus advancing the field of narratology while advancing the field of planning.

Writing planning practice stories, and also collecting future stories from communities when developing plans, for instance in the community consultation phase of compiling municipal Integrated Development Plans, requires, as stated by Throgmorton (2003) that different and sometimes conflicting stories have to be moderated. A narratological analysis of the different stories enables the planner to identify common ground between a diverse group of role players.

In traditional narratology the focus is on a single text, which is sometimes analysed in relation to other texts. However, a comparative analysis of texts with the same purpose, for instance in the stories collected by Søderberg (2003) in her study of the telecommunications company referred to in paragraph 2.2.1, is a relatively unexplored aspect of narratological research. While the moderation of multiple narratives is not unique to planning, this is nonetheless an area of narratological planning research that I believe enriches the field of narratology and lends itself to further exploration.

Another aspect that could enrich the field of narratology emerged from the Virginia study, namely the understanding of the built environment as imagery, in the sense of illustrations, but also as metaphors and symbols, in planning stories. This is in a sense an inversion of the traditional focus of “spatial narratology” on textual representations of space – i.e., the space in the story – to a focus on the story in the spatial form.

A similar “inversion” that offers the potential of further narratological development, is the development of narratological models for physical world-making (mapping words onto the physical world – see also Herman, 2009 and Van Huyssteen & Oranje, 2008) i.e., world-making viewed the “other way around”, not as the real world precipitating in stories, but as stories (plans as “stories about the future”) precipitating in the physical form of towns and cities.

From the above assessment, I can conclude that there is indeed room for the development of a narratology of planning that focuses on the application of the science of narrative in the planning field and that advances both fields of study. In spite of the vast body of work that exists in relation to planning (and) narratives, such a narratology is as yet to be clearly described and circumscribed. Also, the reciprocal nature of such a field of study needs to be further developed. In this regard, for instance, the question can be asked whether planning terminology and models can be applied to the benefit of “traditional” narratological studies. Currently, such application is fairly monodirectional (i.e., narratological terms and models applied to planning), lending weight to the argument that narratology is the “master discipline” (as argued by Fludernik, 2005).

The further development of a narratology of planning will depend on the collaboration of experts in both fields who have a cross-disciplinary interest, or on the work of the few scholars who have an academic background in both planning and narratology. Creating a community of practice for this purpose could perhaps be useful.

Having shown the usefulness of the application of the science of narrative to planning and the benefit this holds for both the fields of planning and of narrative (although the benefit for planning is at this stage more clearly indicated), I can answer the second study question, namely that there is scope for the development of a narratology of planning.

6.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The study commenced with a statement of the imperative of overcoming what Parnell and Crankshaw (2015) refer to as the critical South African development impasse of urban segregation. While there are expectations of planners/planning to play a role in this endeavour, there is at the same time an acknowledgement that this challenge will not be met using traditional (modernist) planning approaches. Given the fragmentation, multiplicity and

fluidity of the (postmodern) social context, a new/renewed focus on narrative planning approaches is advocated.

The Virginia stories not only lay the very important groundwork for a creative engagement with possible futures of the town (viz. the activities of mapping and diagramming in Hillier's (2011) theory of multiplanar planning), but also enrich the fount of contextualised practice stories (see Watson, 2008) that planners can include in their mental repertoire of such narratives, and on which they can draw to make the expert judgments required in their day-to-day work. Given the concerns raised about the quality of plans and the reservations expressed about municipal planning capacity and capability in the Virginia study, this is an important contribution.

Given the growing importance of narratives in planning practice and research, the pursuit of a narratology of planning should receive focused attention, particularly in the training of planning professionals and municipal officials involved in aspects of development planning.

Ample opportunities for further research emerged from this study. This includes 1) more detailed comparative studies between, for instance, Virginia and Benoni to determine the differentiating factors in the success/failure of development interventions in the two towns; 2) an application of Greimas's actantial model to failed development initiatives in Virginia; 3) further refinement of the taxonomy of narratives for/in/of planning as proposed by Ameal (2017) and in this study; 4) ethnographic research on other mining towns or former mining towns, and 5) a variety of opportunities for further development of the notion of a narratology of planning, for instance by way of a more rigorous instrument for the assessment of narrative qualities of plans.

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