

Quartering the city in discourse and bricks: Articulating urban change in a South African enclave

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Abstract: Focusing on the urban enclave in Cape Town known as De Waterkant, this paper examines the product and process of ‘quartering’ urban space—shaping urban space as the locus for the symbolic framing of culture. This paper advances recent studies of De Waterkant by applying the concept of quartering to understand urban change in an African context. Complicating existing research on De Waterkant, the findings show that the area has witnessed four distinct quartered identities including: an ethnic quartering which was dismantled under *apartheid*; a Bohemian quartering that changed racial dynamics and improved housing stock; a ‘gay village’ quartering that engaged sexual identity performance as a strategy for place-making; and most recently a consumer lifestyle quartering that exhibited new notions of citizenship and consumption. This paper advances theorization of how quartering as a process is articulated through the application of discursive and material tropes to the urban fabric of the city.

Keywords: quartering, De Waterkant, Cape Town, enclaves, regeneration

To some, De Waterkant is an urban utopia, a quaint enclave with a village-style atmosphere, hemmed in by the swank of the Atlantic Seaboard on one side, the sex of the city with its global ambitions on the other... To others, it is a tourist trap – a cleaned-up, postcard-perfect version of its former slave-quarter self, where astronomical property prices keep locals from living there. (Cape Etc. 2008)

Urban quarters constitute an important catalyst in the regeneration and commodification of urban space. Cape Town’s De Waterkant is one such urban enclave that reflects the shifting identities of the city while also embodying new forms of regeneration, inclusion and exclusion that characterise cities in the era of globalisation. Understood in recent literature through a lens of sexuality and leisure, a more nuanced analysis of the urban quarter of De Waterkant offers multiple representations of the city in which it is situated. Its distinctive cultural landscape is differentiated from the ambient urbanness that surrounds it. As a quarter, De Waterkant serves as the locus for the symbolic framing of culture (Bell and Jayne 2004): a space that offers possibilities for multiple forms of citizenship and belonging, and a space that enables the regeneration of urban space (Hall 2013), and the commodification of the urban experience. Quartering provides a conceptual lens through which neighbourhood change can be understood. In an environment of limited scholarship on urban change at the neighbourhood scale (Visser 2014), a quartered view of De Waterkant lends finer resolution to understanding urban change in this context. At the same time, while cultural quarters play a central role in the development of cities (Bell and Jayne 2004; McCarthy 2005; Roodhouse 2010), the mechanisms behind their articulation and change are less well understood.

After a brief contextualisation of the concept of quartering, I use a discussion of De Waterkant’s shifting quartered identities to provide two principle contributions to the urban studies literature. Firstly, the results of this study apply the concept of quartering as presented in European and North America contexts within a South African setting. Although De Waterkant has been the focus of inquiry through the lens of sexuality and

leisure/tourism (Elder 2004; Sonnekus 2007; Rink 2008a, 2008b; Visser 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2013, 2014), this study situates previous investigations of De Waterkant in the conceptual framework of quartering while highlighting four distinct quartered identities, adding depth to the neighbourhood's social and spatial contexts. The discussion of a variety of quartered identities extends recent analysis of De Waterkant's transitions in the touristic cultural economy (Visser 2014) and those that problematise the transitions of places such as De Waterkant that were once understood as gay ghettos (Visser 2013). Second and perhaps more critically, this paper attempts to theorize how quartering happens through the application of discursive and material tropes to the urban fabric of the city. Adding to analyses of urban change in the age of neoliberal economic development, the conceptualization of quartering that I offer focuses on the tropes of borders, surveillance, spectacle, the body, community, and consumption that act as triggers to actuate the process of quartering.

Quartering as place making

When you enter the urban quarter you encounter a distinct cultural landscape: a world that is steps away from the ambient urbanities that surround it, but discursively and materially differentiated. The urban quarter is a space that is the locus for the symbolic framing of culture (Bell and Jayne 2004), a space that offers possibilities for identity production and consumption, and a space that enables commodification of the urban experience. The recent debates on quartering primarily reference European (Bell and Jayne 2004; Evans 2005; McCarthy 2005; Roodhouse 2010) and North American (Marcuse 1989) exemplars and thus offer little that speaks to quartering African cities and their unique spatial contexts. In spite of this, theorization of quartering as a discursive and differentially constructed process (Bell and Jayne 2004) sheds light on De Waterkant as a space for the symbolic framing of culture, and a deliberate site of place-making. The quarter's representational framings are enacted through the built environment, symbols, and the actors themselves by means of relational achievements (Knopp 2007; O'Neill and Whatmore 2000); the connections that are made among and between network actors that confer identity, agency and belonging. Networks of actors thus "construct space by using certain forms of calculation and representation" (Murdoch 1995 as quoted in O'Neill and Whatmore, 2000: 125).

Marcuse (1989: 705) described boundaries that divide inter-dependent urban quarters as fluid and flexible, yet contemporary transformations of urban space 'require distinct boundaries in order to be commodified' (Hall 2013: 334) as they use their distinctiveness in both magnetic and exclusive ways. Urban quarters can prove exclusionary as they buttress themselves from "...the real and perceived threats of another fiercely hostile, dystopian environment 'out there'" (MacLeod and Ward, 2002: 154). Quarters increasingly have an exclusionary tendency that bars entry and/or participation only to those who possess the symbolic and economic capital to take part in the culture of consumption that drives more recent iterations of the concept (Bell and Jayne 2004: 4).

De Waterkant: An urban village

Cape Town's De Waterkant is an urban quarter that is at the same time charming, historic, sophisticated and cosmopolitan while it is also controversial and exclusive—some would argue exclusionary. The area is a mixed-use residential, industrial and commercial area of 0.4 square kilometres situated¹ between Cape Town's central

¹ The De Waterkant Civic Association delimits the enclave by the area bounded on the east/west by Somerset Road and Strand Street, and on the north/south by Boundary Road and Hudson Street.

business district (CBD) and the residential suburb of Green Point (Fig. 1). The area is often referred to as ‘De Waterkant Village’, or simply ‘the Village’. The area’s identity has thus shifted with the coming and going of the apartheid city, but in the past two decades has witnessed a surge of economic and infrastructural development that in the late 1990s gave birth to the area’s reputation as Cape Town’s gay village (Elder 2004; Rink 2008a), which gave way to the dawn of a new era of consumer-driven development (Rink 2008b) drawing local and international visitors to this urban enclave. Contemporary depictions of De Waterkant as a gay utopia (Rink 2008a) are both instructive and limiting. While the embodiment of the enclave as a site of gay male leisure pursuits is substantiated by Visser’s (2003a) description of the area as “consolidated gay territory” (Visser 2003a: 128) and is clearly evident through touristic publications like the *Pink Map* (Rink 2008a, 2013), such reading of De Waterkant proves problematic since such places are understood to have North American roots as the identity-marked enclave known as the “gay ghetto” (Levine 1979). Gay villages nonetheless serve as a locus of gay identity performance (Désert 1997; Binnie 2004) and leisure/consumptive pursuits (Elder 2004; Visser 2002; 2003a; 2003b) that are rich with symbols and meanings of otherness in contrast to the ‘ambient heterosexual’ (Murray 1995). The notion of a gay village emerges from debates concerning gentrification, citizenship and sexuality, and provides the basis for only one type of urban quartering.

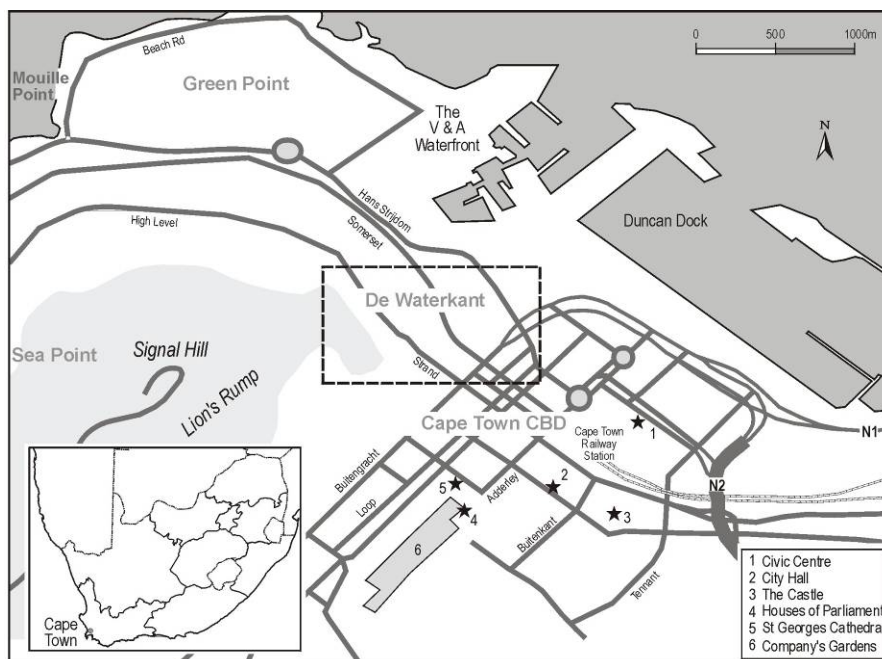


Figure 1 De Waterkant and Cape Town

De Waterkant’s quarterings extend beyond the gay village, to include its original ethnic quartering characterised Cape Town’s multicultural and racially tenuous past which was dismantled under *apartheid*; a Bohemian quartering that changed racial dynamics and improved housing stock; a ‘gay village’ quartering that allowed new, but limited, expressions of sexual citizenship; and most recently a consumer lifestyle quartering where shopping, dining and entertainment take place in secure, comfortable surroundings that capitalise on invented histories of the old Cape Quarter—a shopper’s paradise far removed from the fear of crime and violence that infect the city while promoting new notions of consumer citizenship. Whether a gay quarter, an ethnic quarter,

or a lifestyle quarter, the process of quartering is about the production and consumption of place. In that process there are a multitude of discourses that traverse the network of actors through a variety of nodes (Latour 1987, 1999, 2005). Conceptually, this paper builds on the notion that places are created through layers of meaning imparted from human and non-human actors onto space. The character and identity of places—with particular attention to quartered urban spaces (Bell and Jayne 2004)—is derived from meanings associated with and produced by collective and individual human and non-human actors. The meanings produced by those actors thus can tell us something about how worlds are created. In the case of De Waterkant, those worlds are encapsulated in four distinct quarterings that have shaped it over time.

Loader Street, Louder Street: ethnic quartering

Before De Waterkant was known as such, the area was defined by one colourful but notorious street: Loader Street, which one former resident recalled as “Louder Street” due to the masses of rambunctious children who played in the busy lane. The children of Loader Street came from families that came together to form a colourful ethnic diaspora². One thread of the diverse ethnic tapestry of De Waterkant was the Allie family, who operated a ‘café’³ on the corner of Strand and Vos Streets on the edge of De Waterkant. Mr. Abbas Allie’s story is both an immigrant’s tale as well as one caught-up in the dynamics of racial segregation during South Africa’s apartheid years. Abbas Allie’s father was an immigrant from India, arriving in South Africa in 1935. Soon after settling in Cape Town, the senior Mr. Allie set up a café at the corner of Vos and Strand Streets, only steps from the Loader Street mosque. Allie’s Corner Shop was one of thirteen such cafés that once catered to the residents and labourers in De Waterkant. The multi-cultural landscape that constituted the area around Loader Street was comprised of immigrants and South Africans from myriad backgrounds, as Mr Allie recalled:

We had Italians here, we had Portuguese... We had Africans here—I don’t mean Africans⁴...but there were Africans here, the Christian people here, Muslim people here, and Indian shop owners here. (Allie 2008, personal comments)

Hand-in-hand with the changes in De Waterkant’s ethnic profile were changes in its consumer profile. And the corner café was in the middle of those shifts. Even with thirteen shops vying for trade in the area, business was brisk, partly due to how people in De Waterkant shopped to fulfil their daily needs. The corner shop therefore served as a robust node on the network of De Waterkant where information and goods were exchanged.

However, the vibrant café business and the quarter itself was already undergoing a radical transformation as Mr. Allie returned in 1971 after a hiatus in India. The area that Mr. Allie knew before he left for India and that which greeted him when he returned was different than the vibrant, multi-cultural neighbourhood that it used to be. Regeneration from a ramshackle ethnic enclave involved a radical re-quartering through the implementation

² The area’s proximity to Cape Town’s port as well as the Muslim neighbourhood of the Bo-Kaap meant that Loader Street was comprised of a racially and ethnically diverse range of families of working class background drawn from a cross-section of African, European and Asian origins.

³ In South Africa a ‘café’ (pronounced ‘ka fe with an emphasis on the first syllable) is a name used to describe a general merchant that sells household essentials such as bread and milk, as well as prepared foods, newspapers, etc. For many residents, corner cafes acted like modern-day convenience stores and used to be the mainstay of many Cape Town neighbourhoods. Such shops are also known locally as ‘bappi shops’ from the fact that many were owned and/or operated by South Africans of Indian origin. Bappi is a term of Indian origin that refers to a male elder.

⁴ His use of the term “African” in the first instance refers to black South Africans. In correcting himself, he is implying that the African residents were from other parts of Africa, not South Africa. His reference implies that the ethnic diaspora was rich, but that it excluded some.

of the Group Areas Act (GAA)—a dystopian chapter in the area’s history. The GAA (Act No. 41 of 1950)⁵ had a devastating effect on the social, political and cultural landscape of South Africa, and the scars are apparent in De Waterkant. Forced removal of families and their business hit communities hard, and few if any people of colour were immune. The GAA shifted the property market, weighing the advantage on the side of white property buyers (or speculators) who could afford to offer less for properties that were in areas being designated as ‘white’. In effect, the GAA invisibly built an exclusionary border around De Waterkant that resulted in a rapid transition of the area in terms of race, ethnicity, and creed. It thus served a decisively mediating role in the network of De Waterkant, shaping the possibilities for change in De Waterkant and imposing a relational achievement that at once changed the nature of the people and the possibilities actors in the network itself. The GAA inserted the ‘obligatory passage point’ of race: for only those of the white (European) racial group were allowed to remain. As a result, De Waterkant became ripe for property development and renovation as families who had resided there for decades were sent to the Cape Flats, peripheral areas segregated by race.

Of course at that time the people with the money they grabbed the properties. Today the properties are worth millions. At that time they paid people five thousand [Rand] for their houses. About that time, '69 you could buy a property elsewhere for maybe 10 or 15 thousand [Rand] at that time. And the people sold—some of them were builders. They could build their own places out in Kensington, Grassy Park, all of those [Cape] Flats areas. You know that Flats area? And they moved out there. And that’s how the area has changed. (Allie 2008, personal comments)

The changes that forced many others out made way for a cohort of young, white professionals searching for their particular urban utopia. One of a few, Mr. Allie and his family resisted removal through the establishment of an unusual partnership that allowed him to remain in the area while also holding onto his business.

And I had also to do a transaction which is called, you know, form a company. I gave my white partner 51%, and I kept 49%. I took the chance with all my finance. Ten years after that we didn’t need the company. They dissolved the company and then transferred the property onto my name. (Allie 2008, personal comments)

As a result, in 1990 Mr. Allie and his wife were granted full ownership of their property on the corner of Strand and Vos Streets, and the legacy of his business and of his tenure in De Waterkant would be guaranteed into the future—at least until the next quartering was set into motion.

Young, artsy, hip: Bohemian quartering

In the wake of forced removals, property prices in De Waterkant plummeted, and the area became ripe for change. The formerly colourful ethnic quarter thus made way for a new breed of residents who were young, creative, and white. Forced removals made way for cheap properties that were in desperate need of renovation⁶. Homes with historical value—and crumbling façades—located along quaint cobbled streets close to the city centre was appealing to young urban professionals at the time. Among this group of young professionals was Neville and Susan⁷ who came to De Waterkant in 1975 during this time of transition. They were representative of the group of young, white urban professionals who re-populated the area as forced removals of coloured, Indian and black residents initiated the demise of De Waterkant’s ethnic quartering. Many pointed to them as

⁵ The Group Areas Act of 1950 determined where residents from the various racial groups (European, Indian, Coloured, and African) could legally reside. While the Act was set into law in 1950, its implementation took place over decades, and changed the racial profiles of South African urban areas in particular.

⁶ It should be noted that during the period that I characterise as De Waterkant’s ethnic quartering, most residents in the area were tenants rather than owners of the properties in which they lived.

⁷ Not their real names

important sounding boards for De Waterkant's residential charm, as one of the longest resident couples who arrived during the period of transition between quarterings. They came to De Waterkant explicitly seeking a close-knit community within an urban oasis that was home to a largely Bohemian and creative population, in the midst of an urban village. As Neville remembers,

...we loved the style of the cottages; we just liked the feeling of the area...a little bit Bohemian in those days. You know there was lots of married people up here, lots of tenants, lots of rented people, lots of artists, lots of drugs, lots of prostitution. But we fell in love [with the area] (Anonymous 2008, personal comments).

The architecture of De Waterkant was as much a drawing card for Neville and Susan as it is for others. From its original, humble dwellings in the early 19th century De Waterkant presents a unique built environment on a very small 'village' scale. The Georgian architecture that characterises much of the residential architecture of the area is rooted in the British Colonial period during which the area was developed, and the residents for whom the dwellings were built. As unique and charming as the architecture was—and for the most part still is—there was something different, almost intangible, that Neville and Susan felt in De Waterkant. As Neville recalled, "We didn't buy for convenience. We bought because we just loved the sense and the feeling here." Those feelings centred around its tight-knit village-like community of like-minded people. Neville and Susan quickly became part of the fabric of the area. Their home became a focal point for friends, and formed part of Loader Street's new reputation as a street filled with house parties (Anonymous 2007a, personal comments). Their home was "a serious party place on a Friday night, and a meeting place for [friends]" (Anonymous 2008). De Waterkant suited them, and they made lots of friends, but as they see it, wasn't for everyone.

It's a strange area. We've become so friendly with so many people. It's a tight village. Everybody knows everybody; [De Waterkant is] not really for families. Families don't really survive here; pets don't really survive here. (Anonymous 2008, personal comments)

The area continued to have an edgy appeal that was built from its mix of old and new, and a host of colourful characters. One of those characters was the flamboyant Edward Austen, who initiated an impassioned crusade to improve De Waterkant's housing stock. Renovation efforts notwithstanding, there were still vestiges of the former ethnic quartering gave the area a certain appeal. The gritty side of the ethnic quartering that still remained added edginess to the area that made it feel genuine. Panel beaters and an unsightly old garage with broken-up cars and an equally broken fence served as reminders of how the area lived on the edge—not quite city, not polished enough for a suburb. At the time the area was home to a host of light industrial business during the day and a range of often shady night-time business and activities that gave the area an edgy reputation that was inviting to a bohemian crowd. In 1984, De Waterkant was a place characterised as a "new-found Greenwich Village atmosphere" (Younghusband 1984: 55). It was a place where

Pot-smoking hippies frequent some fringe areas of the complex, a covey of shaven-headed monks in orange robes professing some Eastern religion, come and go. The community is made up in the main of divorcees, young married couples, gays, artists, architects (an astounding number of these) and businessmen who like to reach their offices each morning in one quick leap. (Younghusband 1984: 55)

The Bohemian quartering of De Waterkant was brought about through actions of the state. Nevertheless, it created opportunities for a new set of actors to populate the area, and to infuse it with identity, culture and symbols. The area's Bohemian identity was characterised by a new breed of young, white professionals who sought community in the gritty surroundings of a built environment in transition. The pioneers of the area's Bohemian quartering set the stage for further change. With their community of liberal professionals on the edge of the city, they paved the way for sexual liberation and yet another quartering to come.

“The first gay in the village”: queer quartering

The property buy-up that Mr. Allie recollected from the 1970s has been implicated in De Waterkant’s architectural preservation as much as it has in developing the area’s contemporary reputation as a place where there are few full-time residents and only guesthouses with temporary visitors (Allie 2008, personal comments). Some of those major shifts in owner-occupancy were driven by property investors and speculators who purchased multiple properties in the wake of forced removals. One of the most notable property speculators in the area was Mr. Edward Austen, a white Kenyan immigrant who had a colourful and notorious reputation in De Waterkant. Mr. Austen’s interest in architectural preservation has been credited with restoring and preserving the unique character of the area’s built environment since the 1970s. In so doing, he has contributed to the area’s quartering since the architectural charm and character of De Waterkant is often used to set it apart from the rest of Cape Town that surrounds it. According to some long-time residents, the push to renovate, restore, and improve property was driven passionately—even obsessively—by Mr. Austen (Anonymous 2008, personal comments).

I think he was the first to get a beautiful Georgian home if you like, a Georgian-Victorian home. He was one of the first, I think, that kept his home in beautiful condition, his trees were always beautifully pruned, and he was the one that pushed and pushed and pushed, and I think people followed his line of thought. I think he was a saviour here. (Anonymous 2008, personal comments)

Rosemary Barrett, in her cheery *South African Garden & Home* article of 1982 also noted the contributions of the late Mr. Austen when she said:

It was the late Mr. Edward Austen who saw the great potential in an area that has only recently become known as De Waterkant. At the base of Signal Hill, overlooking the city of Cape Town and its fairest peninsula, the area was for many years a sorry slum, its 170-year old houses crumbling with neglect. Ever a keen restorer of houses, in 1967 he decided that the waste was too great and bought a house in famous Loader Street.

..

Painstakingly he restored the double-storey house to its original Georgian charm, living in splendour in a slum area until his example was followed by others whom he encouraged with enthusiasm. (Barrett 1982: 60)

Mr. Austen was not only the first chairman of the De Waterkant Civic Association, but by some accounts drove much of the restoration and development that has led to the place that we know of as De Waterkant today. Some remember the more ‘colourful’ aspects of his character, however, for instance as the man who used to stand in a dressing gown on his stoep, with a gin & tonic in one hand, cursing at passers-by, and fondly recollected as the “first gay in the village” (Anonymous 2008, personal comments). A flamboyant character who attracted attention to himself and to the area that he loved, Mr. Austen’s flamboyance and outspoken support for renovation established him as a pivotal mediator in the network of De Waterkant. His actions—and more importantly the connections that he established—enabled him to discursively shape De Waterkant through the discourse of architectural renovation and improvement throughout the network. Seen by many as the original visionary of De Waterkant’s charm, a 1984 *Style* magazine article remembered him as Edward “The Baron” Austen, a man “...who flew a swastika flag from the roof of his Loader Street house because it had been a personal gift from Adolf Hitler” (Younghusband 1984: 57). Whether he was a character to be admired or abhorred, Mr. Edward Austen left his legacy visibly on De Waterkant.

If ‘Baron’ Austen were truly the ‘first gay in the Village’, there have been many more in his wake. The artistic, Bohemian character of De Waterkant that developed over the 1980s and 1990s led to a growing gay population of residents, businesses and visitors—the concentration of which altered the network of actors and

eventually contributed to symbolically framing De Waterkant as a gay quarter. With a gay following, it may have simply been a matter of time before the area was to become improved and developed. Yet it was not until 1994 that De Waterkant had an unambiguously and proudly gay Café Manhattan. The popular restaurant and bar soon became a clearly-coded gay space drawing locals and visitors alike. With the start of unambiguous and ‘out of the closet’ gay venues, De Waterkant’s quartered profile began to shift from a Bohemian urban place to a modern gay village. The increasing density of gay actors began to create a more robust and diverse network. Information began to pass across network links such as Café Manhattan. Gay symbols such as pride flags and pink triangles were openly displayed, and thus the network grew and became more robust.

While Edward Austen may have been responsible for securing De Waterkant’s architectural heritage, it was the proprietor of Café Manhattan and ‘mayor of the gay village’ who hoisted the first gay pride flag above the historic buildings. Russell Shapiro and his establishment on the corner of Waterkant and Dixon Streets became an important and active node in De Waterkant, allowing for an increasingly dense structure and far-reaching network of actors to enrol in the gay discourse and thus shape the cultural milieu of the quarter. The more gay-oriented venues came, the more the area took on the glow of a ‘gay village’ even though there was no such grand plan (Shapiro 2007, personal comments). The area was ripe for redevelopment, and attracted people who appreciated its edgy charm and promising potential. As Shapiro recalled,

The area was “camp”. It was quaint...it was bohemian. It was different to everywhere else. And of course when the *moffies*⁸ starting moving in, so it just became more and more wanted. It became such a scene now, how desirable it became. (Shapiro 2007, personal comments).

What followed was a decade of growth of gay-owned and oriented establishments catering to locals and international visitors alike. Growth of the gay village and its rise in popularity to the point of being considered the ‘gay capital of Africa’ (Rink 2013) has been documented by a range of scholars (Elder 2004; Visser 2002, 2003a, 2003b; Sonnekus 2007; Rink 2008a, 2008b, 2013). However, opportunities for further property development focusing on the coming FIFA World Cup 2010 shifted De Waterkant into a process of ‘de-gaying’ (Visser 2014) that is evidenced in its most recent quartered identity; that of a consumer lifestyle quarter.

Shopping, dining, relaxing: Lifestyle quartering

De Waterkant’s desirability to a wider audience and the economic and infrastructural developments in preparation for Cape Town’s hosting of the FIFA World Cup in 2010 signalled the dawn of yet another quartered identity. De Waterkant not only afforded the possibility of new shopping, dining and relaxing, but taken together they led to an entirely different lifestyle experience in the city. Eventually, queer discourses began to be interrupted by what some called a “straight invasion” (Bamford 2007). The area that some called “camp and quaint” (Shapiro 2007, personal comments) soon became a hot commodity. Along with the growth of the gay quarter and before it was cast aside in favour of lifestyle quartering, De Waterkant was shaped by a transition brought on by short-term guest accommodations⁹. The provision of tourist accommodation adds an important economic and cultural dimension to De Waterkant. One company that has forwarded that agenda more than any within De Waterkant is “Village & Life”. In the mid-1990s the Village & Life group of companies began by

⁸ *Moffie* is a colloquial term for a gay male. It is a word of Afrikaans origin that generally has pejorative connotations. (Cage 2003: 82)

⁹ The upper areas of De Waterkant—above Jarvis Street—remain largely in residential use to this day. Although residences are still the main use of housing stock in the upper area of De Waterkant, many of the homes have been converted into Bed & Breakfast or other forms of guest accommodation.

purchasing and renovating De Waterkant properties for use as tourist accommodation (Anonymous 2007c, personal comments). The business model of Village & Life, explored in-depth by Visser (2004), helped to promote tourist-oriented development through the company's property management scheme that makes use of second home ownership in the enclave. As a result of developments like Harbour View Cottages, visitors and holiday-makers in De Waterkant during the early 2000s could choose from an array of accommodation options: from up-market backpacker lodges to fully-furnished self-catering luxury cottages. When looking at the variety of accommodation choices offered within De Waterkant, it becomes clear that the many guesthouses, crashpads, luxury lodges and boutique hotels cite their position in De Waterkant relative to other places in Cape Town as their main appeal. Even more than the amenities offered, size of rooms, range of bath products, etc., inn-keepers celebrate the unique situation of De Waterkant: close to the CBD, but not within it; close to beaches, but away from the maddening crowds, featuring views of two of Cape Town's most salient geographic features, Table Mountain and the sea; and most importantly situated within an enclave that is safe, secure, pedestrian-friendly, and infused with "European charm"—all attributes that set it apart from the reality in many South African cities, including Cape Town itself. All of these qualities locate De Waterkant within other spatial contexts, and transport the visitor to other spatial and temporal dimensions. Their discourse acts to quarter De Waterkant as a guest village—a place where all residents are temporary.

The re-casting of De Waterkant's quartering as a guest village began when Village & Life purchased multiple properties in De Waterkant's Loader Street for the purpose of renovating and renting them to short-term visitors and holiday makers. Village & Life markets and operates De Waterkant as a 'hospitality village', offering three- to four-star holiday accommodation with 69 participants: owners who rent their properties which are managed by Village & Life. Village & Life charges a 25% fee for their cleaning and property management services (Anonymous 2007c) and thus serves the role of surrogate property steward for the actual owners who are likely to live overseas. The guest village concept complicates De Waterkant's residential profile since it makes it temporary. It creates an unstable community of residents that is constantly shifting week after week. Those changes in residents can act to de-stabilise the identity of De Waterkant in that the ever-changing profile of visitors continually brings new influences, new identities, and thus new meanings to the area. The possibility for change in the network, due to the ephemeral and disconnected nature of the temporary residents, is therefore diminished as guest accommodation holds static the residential component of De Waterkant's landscape. What remains, however is the static 'charm' of the built environment and the physical surroundings of De Waterkant.

As the agent notes, there is "no where else like [De Waterkant] [in South Africa]. It has a European flair, is secure, people can walk the streets at night, and there are special security guards in place" (Anonymous 2007c, personal comments). More than simply a pleasant area in which to work and play, however, the agent sees De Waterkant in terms of its success as a property investment. "De Waterkant is a good investment", the agent reminds me. "Short-term rental return is double that of long-term rental—and is always increasing in value" (Anonymous 2007c, personal comments). Of the many selling points of the area, the agent cites the fact that security is very good—an assurance that would appeal to many South Africans, regardless of socio-economic status, as South Africa has a reputation as one of the worst crime-ridden countries in the world. The certainty of her claims comes with the fact that the property owners in De Waterkant pay for and provide their own private security. They do so by way of the De Waterkant Civic Association. The Association keeps watch over more than just security. The Association is also vigilant of the area's history. The preservation of the area's

architectural heritage is a central aim of the Association. “Heritage is strict in keeping facades not going up. Changes must be agreed upon [by the De Waterkant Civic Association].” Not only do they try to maintain the existing character of the Edwardian and Cape Dutch façades, they have also fought developments that, in the eyes of the association, fall out of line with the character of the area. Many of the developments have nonetheless continued unabated, as noted by Visser (2014).

Consuming the quarter: commodification and the citizen-consumer

Those who reside or just stay in De Waterkant for short visits also speak of the convenience of consuming leisure activities or simply shopping as entertainment. Consumption in De Waterkant has undergone notable changes since the days when the only opportunities for shopping were at one of thirteen corner shops. Formerly industrial buildings, such as the warehouses on the corner of Jarvis and Dixon Streets were converted for retail and entertainment use in the late 1990s. Similarly, cottages along Dixon and Jarvis Streets in the late 1990s turned their use toward retailers and estate agents as light industry was forced out of the area due to large-scale property development. These changes have taken place along with the growth in retail business, including entertainment venues such as bars and clubs, restaurants, and gift shops that were built as homes in 1901 and later put to adaptive use as retail space; the diminishing of light industry, warehouses and machine shops such as panel-beaters and automotive fitment centres; the development of commercial office blocks; the emergence of multi-use commercial hubs known as ‘lifestyle centres’¹⁰.

Lifestyle centres are shopping centres or mixed-used commercial developments that combine the traditional retail functions of a shopping mall with the addition of ‘upmarket’ leisure amenities geared toward affluent consumers. The concept of the lifestyle centre came to De Waterkant in 2001 when the Cape Quarter Lifestyle Centre was opened. The development is unique in its architectural design owing to the fact that it is built around a central courtyard, or *piazza* (a suggestion of spatial otherness in its use of the Italian architectural term) with only two narrow public entrances. Access to the piazza is controlled by private security guards—who can be seen expelling interlopers at the behest of management and patrons alike. The *piazza* in the Cape Quarter, unlike their counterpart in vernacular city architecture, is not a public space, but private, commercialised one that enacts control and surveillance upon its occupants—a welcome and necessary element for tourists and locals alike amidst the crime-ridden streets according to a respondent who himself works in the security industry (Anonymous 2007b, personal comments).

The exodus of light industry has also been prompted by large-scale property developments such as the Cape Quarter Extension that has taken over and demolished the remaining industrial properties along Somerset Road. Whilst the areas in the upper section of De Waterkant have maintained their residential use and charm, the areas bordering Somerset Road, and the periphery near Hudson Street to the east and Boundary Road to the west have been witness to larger-scale changes and development. Foremost among these has been the development of the Cape Quarter, the rise of office blocks, and the development of large-scale residential properties. Both the original Cape Quarter and its much larger extension that opened in 2009 combine office, retail, and

¹⁰ The ‘lifestyle centre’ concept is attributed to Memphis, Tennessee (USA) property developers Poag & McEwen. According to company sources, their centres are designed to “[serve] a growing and affluent community as the primary center for quality shopping and dining” (Poag & McEwen 2015). They are places where, “Life meets style” and where “the customer is never overwhelmed but is, instead, able to escape the pressures of the day to relax, dine and shop in style” (Poag & McEwen 2015).

entertainment spaces under one roof. As the new focal point of De Waterkant, the Cape Quarter Lifestyle Centre, as discussed in depth by Visser (2014) is now “...populated by wealthy homemakers, heterosexual after-work drinks and dinner gatherings; indeed, young children are now to be seen with their mothers buying designer clothing—at outlets catering for the toddlers and teenagers of the wealthy” (2014: 476).

Thus, the future holds many more changes for De Waterkant, and the Cape Quarter extension will be foremost among them. Along with these changes of land-use also come changes in identity; and in this regard, De Waterkant has undergone many transformations. The demolition of buildings that once housed some of Cape Town’s icons of the gay village eventually make way for new ways of understanding and shaping De Waterkant. As the gay village begins to re-position itself, it makes way for the consumer lifestyle centre that allows new ways of imagining community, identity and citizenship. At the same time, the fact that the quarter requires so much intervention in the form of borders, surveillance and discursive othering, speaks to the tenuous and ephemeral nature of quartering. Quartering is part of place making, and both are fluid, ever-changing processes and products. They are also products that are comprised of tropes that act to shape them and the actors who inhabit their spaces.

Tropes: Articulation of quartering

Quartering De Waterkant engages discursive and material tropes in order to break away from the present and look toward new possibilities for the future by changing city spaces, and changing social relations within them. Those tropes frame De Waterkant and help to shape the identity of the quarter. In order to ‘produce’ the quarter, therefore, the discursive tropes in question must somehow mediate the network of actors and their discourses through some break from the present, an achievement of otherness, or simply new ways of imagining the future and challenging attitudes of what is possible or impossible. In this way, quartering does not function as an inclusive agent of urban change. Rather, quartering establishes new ways of engaging with and living in urban space. In my reading of De Waterkant’s discursive and material practices, I highlight six tropes that prove instrumental in mediating its various quarterings. They include the tropes of: borders, surveillance, spectacle, the body, community, and consumption. These tropes can be understood as mediators in the actor network, influencing the performance and consumption of space and thus the quartering of De Waterkant. The tropes are rhetorical themes within the discourses that act to shape the quartering of space with both utopian and dystopian effect.

The quarter is a spatial form, and as such it has borders that define what is ‘inside’ and what is ‘outside’. The tropes of borders and surveillance support each other in the process of framing and stabilising De Waterkant’s quartering: borders help to shape quartered space by reinforcing the identity and norms of that space while keeping otherness at bay, while surveillance keeps the borders in-check. Borders and surveillance thus work to maintain the form and identity of the quarter while preserving the identity of its occupants. Ballard (2005) places this notion into the context of the changing South African city of the 1980s and 1990s when he argues:

..much of the uncertainty experienced by white people in the 1980s and 1990s stemmed from a fear of the unregulated access by people previously excluded to ‘their’ cities. The very basis of white identity as ‘civilised’ and ‘modern’ – as created through spatial segregation – was, for some, under threat by the presence of others (Ballard 2005: 9).

The trope of borders constitutes an important device for ‘othering’ De Waterkant; both for determining physically what is and is not De Waterkant, and for symbolically framing the quarter itself. Along with the trope

of borders is surveillance, a trope that is also a tool for enforcing the exclusionary otherness of borders. Surveillance is used to exclude those whose individual identity does not ‘fit’ into the collective identity of the quarter. Surveillance, for example, keeps the homeless out of De Waterkant’s quasi-public *piazza* developments, and maintains order, cleanliness and ‘civility’ for a new generation of consumers to shop within De Waterkant’s lifestyle centres.

The trope of community builds on a sense of identity and security; a feeling of belonging. This trope is exhibited both in the narratives of De Waterkant residents as well as in the desire of club owners to define a cohesive ‘community’ around which De Waterkant’s gay village quartering was built (Rink 2008a). A sense of ‘community’ was both constructed and enforced by the first wave of gentrifying Bohemians who entered De Waterkant in the wake of forced removals and established the De Waterkant Civic Association in the 1980s. Similarly, the intentional—albeit unresolved—drive toward a utopian community of queers (Rink 2008a) that emerged during De Waterkant’s gay village era was a powerful trope that helped to build and reinforce the quarter.

In parallel, the trope of the spectacle involves symbolic performances such as gay pride parades (Bell and Binnie 2004) that act to imprint culture—and thus a quartered identity—onto place. Yet the spectacle also encompasses the large-scale shopping and entertainment developments known as ‘lifestyle centres’ which utilise the trope to bring a sense of history into an otherwise ahistorical space. As importantly, the trope of the body mediates much of the gay identity of De Waterkant in terms of the contemporary sexualised body; yet it also governs changes that occurred in De Waterkant during the era of forced removals when the racialised body was a determining factor as to who stayed and who was relocated from the area. And finally the trope of consumption is perhaps the most over-arching of all as it extends throughout all of De Waterkant’s quartered identities and has a mediating affect over the quarter as well as over other tropes.

The mediating effect of these tropes can be seen as either utopian or dystopian. Whether a liberating break from the present or a nightmarish descent from the ideal state, De Waterkant’s quartering is both stabilised and de-stabilised through such utopian and dystopian moments. The tropes and their utopian or dystopian consequences are rhetorical tools that translate messages across the actor network—between pivotal mediators and those who are consuming the message and therefore consuming and performing the identity of the quarter.

De Waterkant’s competing discourses have changed the profile of its quartering: from an ethnic quarter of low-income Cape Malay families, to a gentrified Bohemia that ultimately gave way to a gay village of queer quests, and most recently a secure lifestyle quarter that enables consumption in new ways. De Waterkant has not remained static, and it continues to be quartered in ways that reflect new identity and meaning. Although quartered character is constant, its identity shifts and changes amidst the dynamism of the actor network. It was an ethnic quarter of large families of mixed backgrounds with roots in the social history of Cape Town (a site of slavery, a home to the Scottish regiment, the marginalised such as freed slaves, prostitutes, sailors, etc.), then became an oasis for a young, urban (and predominantly white) group of residents without families, and then a locus of gay pursuits and identity. Following in the wake of improved infrastructure it became a ‘guest quarter’ where most residents are only short-term visitors. And more recently De Waterkant has become a consumer lifestyle quarter where shopping, dining and entertainment are the focal activities.

The result of quartering urban spaces such as De Waterkant are spaces that, while unique and marketable to a city’s image, can result in a fractured urban landscape “...characterized by a patchwork quilt of spaces that are

physically proximate but institutionally estranged” (MacLeod and Ward 2002: 164). In the pursuit of urban regeneration quartering may therefore be a double-edged sword. While such spaces may provide a necessary and dynamic platform for the production and consumption of new forms of urban citizenship, they may nevertheless prove to be exclusionary and interdictory, affecting the free flow of people and ideas, and changing the face of the city itself.

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