Community as Utopia: Reflections on De Waterkant

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Abstract

This paper will reflect on research currently in progress in Cape Town's De Waterkant neighbourhood—an area also known as Cape Town's 'gay village'. This paper engages the literature of utopia as a framework of analysis for interrogating the performance of community—while at the same time problematising the terms "community" and "utopia" upon which much geographical description of the area is based. This research argues that both 'comforting' and 'unsettling' relational achievements amongst the human and non-human actors in De Waterkant function as building blocks of real or imagined community and further recognises multiple tensions that affect the formation of community and the pursuit of utopia in the South African urban context.

The Utopian way of life provides not only the happiest basis for a civilized community, but also one which, in all human probability, will last for ever [sic]. They've eliminated the root causes of ambition, political conflict, and everything like that. There's therefore no danger of internal dissention, the one thing that has destroyed so many impregnable towns. And as long as there's unity and sound administration at home, no matter how envious neighbouring kings may feel, they'll never be able to shake, let alone shatter, the power of Utopia.

Raphael Nonsenso in More's *Utopia* (More 1965 [1516], p. 131)
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Introduction: Approaching Utopia

What, or perhaps better said, where is utopia? If we are to take the term at face value, it is no-place (from the Greek *ou-topos*)—nonexistent and defying location—neither in space nor place. It would seem, therefore, not to be the province of geographers but rather something to be contended by scholars of sixteenth century literature. Kraftl (2007) provides the most common definition of utopia, referring to More's satire (1965 [1516]) as "...simultaneously the 'good' place and 'no' place—in a sense, somewhere perfect whilst being unachievable" (Kraftl 2007, p. 121). Whether it is obtainable or not, located merely in the personal or collective geographical imagination, or indeed on the physical landscape itself, this paper will argue that utopia is closely linked with community through the relationships that are negotiated and performed by human and non-human actors alike.

This paper reflects upon ongoing research in Cape Town's De Waterkant neighbourhood. De Waterkant, part of the suburb of Green Point, is situated on the periphery of Cape Town's CBD and is bounded by Somerset Road on the north, by Hudson Street on the east, by Strand Street on the south, and by Boundary Road on the west. The area is also known to many as Cape Town's 'gay village' (see Fig. 1). The paper engages the literature of utopia as a framework of analysis for interrogating the performance of community—while at the same time problematising the terms "community" and "utopia" upon which much geographical description of the area is based. It should be noted that Joseph (2002, p. xxxii) contends that community is also a product of performance in the capitalist sense of production.
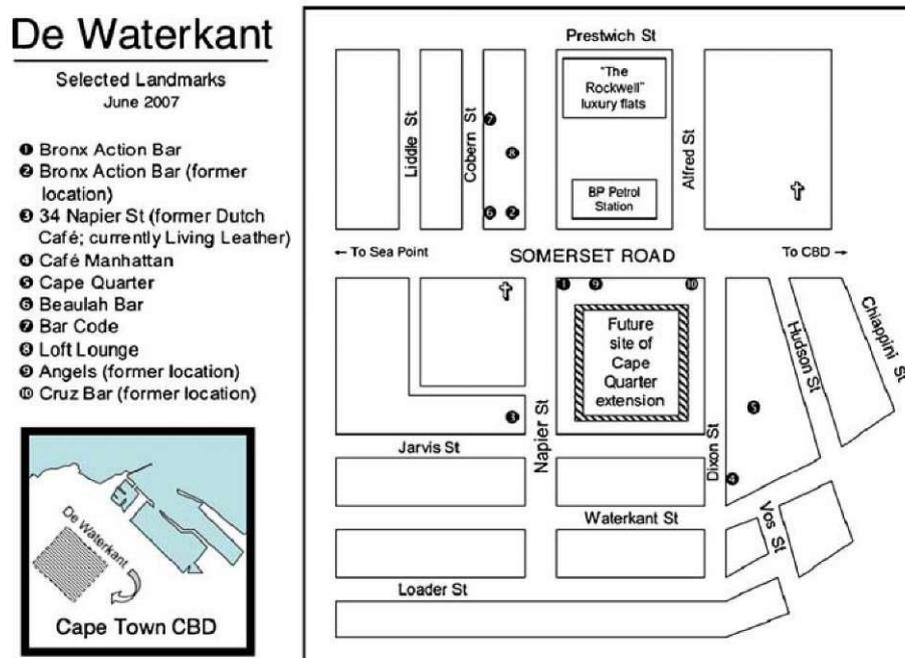

Fig. 1 Map of De Waterkant ⓡ **Springer**

This research will argue that the performance of community is further constituted of various other 'performances' such as the performances of identity and sexuality among others.

It is the contention of this investigation that both 'comforting' and 'unsettling' relational achievements amongst the human and non-human actors in De Waterkant function as building blocks of real or imagined community that is a constituent of utopia. The narrative recognises the many limited potential that such sites have on identity formation in the multi-racial South African landscape (Visser 2003a, b) and is intended to examine how multiple tensions affect the everyday formation/re-formation of community and the pursuit of utopia in the South African urban context.

Like the constant production of place in the everyday life, the search for belonging and the realisation of community are on-going endeavours. Attempts to attain a utopian state of being have taken shape over centuries and have situated themselves in real and imagined space—such that they can be examined through the lens of geographical enquiry. While considering De Waterkant through a utopian lens, distinction must be drawn between sites that are actively built as "utopian", such as those experiments in nineteenth century USA[1] (Rink 1998) and those that "may" have resulted from broader concerns like racism, religious intolerance, and homophobia. In this regard, places may be considered idealised (Harlem, District Six, Greenwich Village, Chelsea, De Waterkant); however, their *raison d'etre* are not necessarily utopian.

Utopian experiments have often centred around religious or political ideology (Baeten 2002) and, in more recent times, have taken on new forms including gated communities, security parks and other forms of monitored public space in the South African context (Hook and Vrdoljak 2002; Spocter 2007). In its many forms and expressions, the "utopian dream" can be characterised by "...notions of abundance, healthiness, rurality, nostalgia, community and social order(ing)..." (Kraftl 2007, p.123). The search for utopia is desire for order, control and ultimately a longing for heaven on earth.

Among the many manifestations of utopia, urban gay enclaves are one that have surfaced throughout North America, Europe and Asia while constituting a relatively new phenomenon in the South African context (Visser 2003a). So-called gay ghettos— areas where gay men and lesbian women live, work, and play—are one unique form of urban enclave, and one that is projected onto space in identifiably utopian ways in the pursuit of community, abundance and social ordering (Kraftl 2007, p. 123). Although these enclaves may be considered "ghettos" in that they are contained and concentrated, they may also contribute, according to Sandercock (as

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[1] Some examples include the Janssonist community of Bishop Hill, USA; the Oneida 'Perfectionist' community of Oneida, USA; and the Shaker community who had settlements throughout the USA.

quoted in MacLeod and Ward 2002, p.165) to "...the postmodern utopia: a cosmopolis where there is genuine connection with, and respect and space for, the cultural 'other'". Such spaces provide opportunities for the expression of alternative cultures and/or identities and may fulfil the search for the utopian 'other'—whether that be nostalgic, transcendent, transgressive or otherwise.

Gay enclaves form part of the urban landscape and serve not only as a playground or palimpsest for creation of a gay cityscape, but they may also be seen as a modern form of utopianism—place making[2] that is situated at the confluence of space and ideology where performance of a gay identity may (presumably) be freely practised. Gentrified gay enclaves as experienced in other parts of the world have not been an element on the South African landscape (Elder 2004) but have relevance to the modern city in that they are marketed and represented "...as idyllic landscapes to ensure a variety of lifestyle fantasies" (MacLeod and Ward 2002, p.154), while "... providing city stakeholders with much of the pleasurable freedom one might ordinarily associate with urban civic life" (p. 154). Whether or not De Waterkant constitutes a 'gay enclave' in the true sense, the extent to which the area is marketed and situated as a site of freedom-seeking performance of transgressive identities and sexualities not freely practised in hetero-sexualised spaces beyond the gay enclave cannot be denied. Such sites, however, can also prove exclusionary as they buttress themselves from "...the real and perceived threats of another fiercely hostile, dystopian environment 'out there'" (p.154). In the South African context, however, equality of access to and agency in such 'utopian' gay space cannot be assumed (see Elder 1995, 2004; Gevisser and Cameron 1993; Visser 2002, 2003a, b) where a history of spatial control and a policy of racial separateness shaped the city. The case of a gay enclave on the South African landscape is more complex and is infused with other tensions that may not be present in other such urban settings.

Locating and Naming Utopia

To interrogate community in De Waterkant, this paper argues that, as an introductory step, the origins and meaning(s) of the term 'village' must first be unpacked. Is the referral of De Waterkant as "the village" a product of global gay culture, or does it celebrate a rural existence and the return to a simpler (better?) way of life? Given the definitively urban context of the De Waterkant, use of the term 'village' may seem in conflict with the urban nature of so much of globalised queer culture; yet, it may also intersect with recent literature that focuses on idealised rural queer life (Bell and Valentine 1995). What are the tensions that exist in this seemingly uncomplicated name? And what does the term hide imply and evoke? There are at least two possible meanings that I will highlight: (1) an idyllic rural one that may conjure images of a simple life outside of the context of urban decay and crime, and (2) a

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[2] Place making in this sense refers to the process that produces an end result of a physical landscape consisting of multitudes of social and cultural artefacts and the creation of 'community' in both a physical sense and in a spatially unbounded group of individuals with aligned interests.

globalised/urbanised one that may be linked to global gay culture, namely, New York's Greenwich Village.

From the South African perspective and within the burgeoning urbanity of the African continent, the term village may hearken back to rural life. A village, one can argue, both relies upon and builds a sense of community in the pursuit of survival. The notion of a village "...brings with it a sense of community and a feeling of security" (MacLeod and Ward 2002, p.159) that while, at the same time, fulfilling the utopian dream by evoking a sense of a rural, abundant and comfortable existence (Kraftl 2007, p.123). That, in-turn, can produce feelings of security in the sense that the risks and rewards are (presumably) shared by all. A village in this rural sense may evoke a comforting haven where like-minded and committed individuals work towards a common goal while safe-guarding its inhabitants from the hostile environment beyond the horizon.

On the other hand, the village in a globalised gay cultural context can have alternate roots and meanings. New York's Greenwich Village—certainly urban and questionably idyllic—provides a possible link. As the birthplace of the modern gay rights movement by virtue of the Stonewall Riots and of the related concept of 'gay pride', New York's Greenwich Village carries great symbolism as a gay utopia, where the struggle for freedom of sexual identity expression was made visible on the American—and later the world—stage. Re-casting that powerful image onto the landscape of De Waterkant could therefore lend credence to the enclave while also strongly coding it as gay space.

Relational Achievements

As discussed above, the creation of utopia—and in doing so, the vision of community—calls for the need to attract like-minded individuals in the pursuit of common goals. Therefore, central to the argument of this research is to examine the relationships that develop on the landscape of De Waterkant amongst its many actors. In his call for new approaches towards realising the potential in queer geographies, Knopp (2004) advocates "...a focus on the intersections of movement with identity quests..." (2007, p.50). Knopp's approach, and that which is employed in this study, "...features a radical notion of agency, which can very fruitfully be conceptualized, by way of actor-network theory, as "relational achievements" involving human and non-human discursive material" (p.50). This research examines De Waterkant in this way, through situational analysis (Clarke 2005) that entails, among other methods, listening to the dialogues between actors. The term "actors" refers to the human and non-human entities including individuals, collectives, media, texts, ideas and discourses that interact on the landscape of everyday life. It is the basic unit of inquiry in the Actor Network Theory (ANT) as derived by Latour (1999) among others.

Data from this research are being examined by way of coding the physical spaces of De Waterkant, by analysing the 'situation of inquiry' (Clarke 2005) in which the actors 'act'. Some examples of such codes include places for cruising, consuming, sex, drinking, drugs and places intended for gay, lesbian and/or straight people (see Knopp 2004, pp. 152-53). In addition to coding the physical spaces of De Waterkant, this research also examines the actors and their material through interviews, participant observation and printed/electronic texts such as websites, newsletters, windscreen brochures and advertising posters. This research intends to interrogate how human and non-human entities relate to other entities—and their identity, ideas, symbols, meanings, etc. —within the context of De Waterkant. It is contended that these relational achievements are the building blocks of the utopianlike real or imagined community, and produce—as in Hitchings' garden[3]"...an ephemeral and precarious outcome, whose achievement—both symbolically and materially—is constructed and negotiated through the interaction of different actors" (2003, p. 102).

The relational achievements that are interrogated in this research can further be coded to help to explain the nature of their relationship by analysing themes and narratives emergent from data: through deductive and inductive coding of research data, as well as an analysis of narratives of human subjects to determine how the respondents represent their version of reality—and in so their perception of De Waterkant. The subsequent discussion below will reflect on some of these relationships, how they relate to the notion of community and how they either construct or destabilise the pursuit of utopia. It is this tension, between the 'comforting' and the 'unsettling', that Kraft (2007, p.121) sees as the central to utopian analysis.

Questioning Community and Unsettling Utopia in De Waterkant

De Waterkant utopianism is "unsettling" insofar as it destabilises (or perhaps de-centers) the gendered and sexualised order of heteronormativity on Cape Town's urban landscape. The comfort of doing so, it could be argued, is to counteract the exclusionary tendencies of hetero-normalised space and to therefore construct a 'safe' space where one can exercise agency and perform identity. De Waterkant's development into the 'village' followed a similar path, as driven partly, although not exclusively nor by design, through the desire of gay consumers to seek an escape from heterosexual space (Visser 2003a, p.129). The 'community' that develops around such pursuits—whether real or imagined—is utopian in its quest for comfort in community, as well as unsettling the gendered and hetero-sexualised order of things in the world 'outside' of the village—what Alison Murray calls the 'ambient

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[3] Hitchings (2003) draws upon research with gardeners and their private garden spaces in Britain to demonstrate that, through the process of tending to gardens, humans can enrol non-human elements (plants) to perform certain relationships within a network. This research argues that the same kind of human/non-human interactions are implicit in realising relational achievements in De Waterkant.

heterosexual' (1995, p. 67), in other words the sea of heteronormativity in the public spaces that surround all of those other spaces that are implicitly or explicitly 'homosexual'.

In her critique of the ' unquestionable good' that is community, Miranda Joseph (2002) argues "against the idealization of community as a utopian state of human relatedness" (Joseph 2002, p. ix). The assumption in pursuing community (and utopia) is that of a singular vision and common goal. While the goals of creating safe and accessible gay space in De Waterkant is a noble one, Visser (2003a, b) has demonstrated how exclusionary forces act in gatekeeping access to De Waterkant's utopian pleasures. It is those exclusionary forces, as well as a sense of *otherness* in the village's representation that separates De Waterkant from its physical setting and ultimately calls the idea of community into question.

Otherness and Exclusion: Questioning Community

While literary utopias (More 1965 [1516]) and those of nineteenth century USA (Rink 1998) are fixed in time and space, many of the utopian discourses that drive the vision of community in De Waterkant draw false connections to the Western gay ghetto—which is not a feature of Cape Town's landscape (Elder 2004, p. 586)— while advocating an 'otherness' that is often not situated on the South African landscape but rather drawing references to European or North American discourses. Such 'otherness' in De Waterkant denies the context of the city where it is located[4], such as naming conventions that symbolically situate restaurants, bars, and clubs elsewhere, while still contributing to the dialogue of relational achievements. Examples of this can be found in the naming conventions that convey a variety of themes: (1) a 'New York state of mind' (Bronx, a bar/dance club; Cafe Manhattan, a restaurant/bar; "55", a former bar whose name references New York's *Studio 54;* and the Loft Lounge, a bar/lounge); (2) a transcendent otherness (Angels, a former dance club on Somerset Road; Heaven, a dance club; and Beaulah, a lounge/bar[5]); or (3) transgressive desire (Slither, a former dance club on Somerset Road; Cruz, a bar/ dance club; and Bar Code, a men-only 'leather, uniform and jeans' bar).

The nostalgia these various versions of otherness as expressed in the naming conventions of De Waterkant can be explained as a longing for "the homeland as an almost paranoid and painful desire [which] can be powerfully anxiety inducing and unsettling" (Kraftl 2007, p. 136). This research further contends that the refrain of otherness in De Waterkant is also an expression of the desire for mobility—creating new places, new connections, testing, exploring, and ultimately liberation (Knopp 2004, p. 123). Mobility in this sense focuses on consuming at the leading edge of society, establishing personal and symbolic connections to other countries and

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[4] For further discussion on seemingly disconnected symbolisms, see Hook and Vrodljak (2002, p. 201).
[5] A term that, in the gay slang language *Gayle,* means "beautiful".

cultures, and going beyond the narrowly defined borders of De Waterkant. Such "mobility practices" are, according to Knopp, "common for many people in contemporary individualistic societies and cultures, especially those with the means to be physically mobile, such as those with class, race, and/or gender privilege" (2004, p. 123). Such privileges may be masked in the name of community building or in creating familiar (homogenised?) gay space in De Waterkant. The notion of community that is established through the utopian discourses in De Waterkant act, as Elder notes, to homogenise gay space...in efforts to create interchangeable neighborhoods that produce experiences of place similar to Sydney, Amsterdam, or London. What this space creates is a myth of "community," while also masking the life of gay and lesbian people and the material inequalities of globalization (2004, p. 580).

Therefore, the appearance or intension of community building through such homogenising practices might actually build false notions of togetherness (and perhaps Utopia?) while further adding tensions of privilege and exclusion to the landscape.

Exclusion

Re-reading Raphael Nonsenso's quote from More (1965 [1516], p. 131) at the beginning of this paper, it can be concluded that some degree of exclusion is more than simply a hallmark of real and imagined utopias; it could be a necessary step toward securing utopia's future. By "eliminating the root causes of ambition, political conflict...[thereby removing] ...danger of internal dissention" (p.131), utopia maintains the strict controls that ensure "unity and sound administration" (p.131). This tension is utopia's survival tactic.

The exclusionary tension of race—particularly in terms of how white, black or coloured groups identify with or have access to the village—remains evident on the landscape of the village (Visser 2003a, b) and can be traced to South Africa's recent apartheid past (Elder 1995). These tensions can be seen in the coding of certain gay spaces along racial lines, where venues in De Waterkant are/were coded as privileging those of different races. The tensions may also be linked to messages portrayed through advertisements of De Waterkant clubs that frame the image of the ideal patron.

Nationality also plays a role in this tension, where questions of the role of the 'global gay' (Oswin 2006) tend to favour white men as stakeholders as a result of the socio-economic power of non-South African wealthy white gay men who constitute the global gay cohort and can exercise economic power because of the strength of foreign currencies such as the British pound, the euro, and the US dollar. Out of these debates has emerged the "concern that queerness can perpetuate colonization and marginalization" (Oswin 2006, p. 787). Regardless, for the gay tourist who lands in

Cape Town for the first time, windscreen brochures, advertising messages and gay publications such as the *Pink Map*—a specialised map for gay and lesbian leisure seekers—can be potentially useful. The cover of the 2007 edition of the *Pink Map,* contains an image of a "pink passport" from "The Republic of Cape Town" that promises to guide its reader through gay Cape Town—differentiating gay space and excluding straight space, presumably to ensure a pleasant stay by filtering out the gay landscape from all the rest (Pink Map 2007). Similarly, advertising messages communicate certain exclusions. If the images evident in many of De Waterkant's texts spoke for themselves, however, the typical utopian figure would emerge as a white, 20-something man with a highly toned physique (Figs. 2 and 3).

In addition to exclusionary messages across racial lines, some of the social spaces of De Waterkant may also be coded along lines of sexual identity. During a recent evening at newly opened (June 2007) Beaulah Bar, several male patrons asked if it was actually a lesbian bar owing to the number of women-whom they assumed to be lesbians—crowded into the small space. Whether or not it has been designed as a lesbian space, the coding is taking an exclusionary turn early in its young life as a social space in the village. Similar codings have also developed and been entrenched over time: such as Bronx, as a "gay male" space and Cubana as a "straight" venue.

Architecture of Exclusion and Otherness

Another achievement in De Waterkant may come as a result of elements of control and surveillance. One of these elements is the emergence of the 'lifestyle centre' as ®
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Fig. 2 Bronx Action Bar advertising poster

9
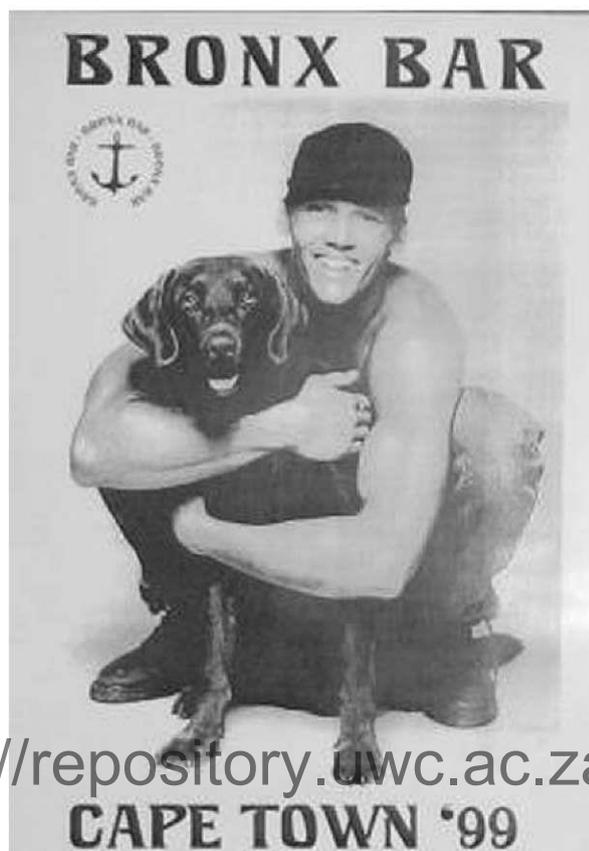
both a consumer destination but also an example of the architecture of control that can contribute to the utopian unsettling (Kraftl 2007, p. 126). The example cited in this research is called *The Cape Quarter*, a multi-use property built in 2001 by property developer Propfin, located between Dixon/Hudson Streets and Waterkant Street/Somerset Road (Fig. 4). The Cape Quarter describes itself as "[A] lifestyle-shopping destination [that] reflects the cosmopolitan profile of its tenants and shoppers alike" (Pink Map 2007). It contains retail and office space, as well as restaurants and bars. "Andiamo", one of many restaurants within the Cape Quarter, describes itself as an "[a]uthentic, trendy, Italian-restaurant-deli-bar with a wonderful selection of imported and local goods to eat here or take home. Situated in the vibey Cape Quarter" (Pink Map 2005). 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 a 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, personal comments 2007b).

Fig. 3 Bronx Action Bar advertising poster
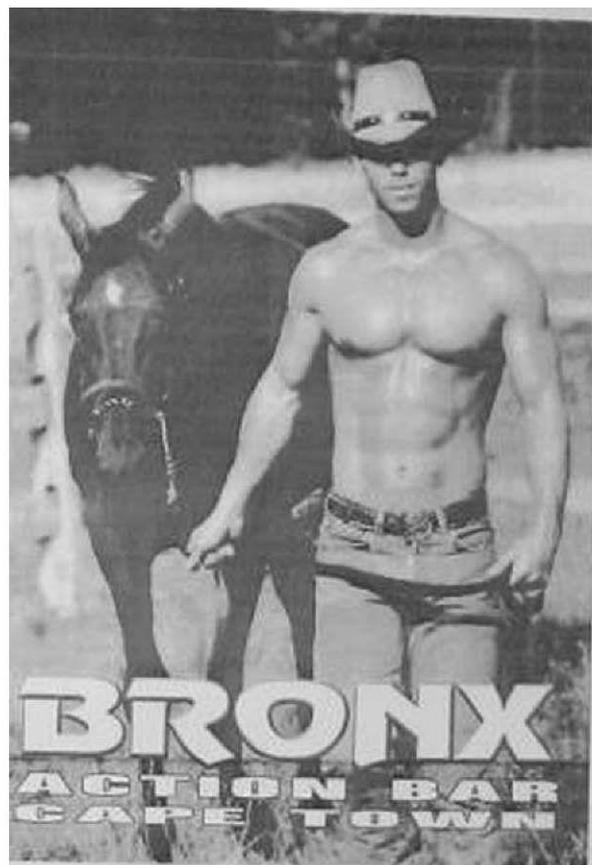
Consuming Desire

The Pink Map promises visitors to Cape Town a landscape replete with gay-friendly accommodation, cafes and restaurants, travel and leisure, events, services, health and grooming, shopping, pubs, and clubs and entertainment at their fingertips (Pink Map 2003). In addition to such consumer goods on offer, the *Pink Map* also points the way to bodily pleasures and to the fulfilment of desire (Pink Map 2003). In this way, the *Pink Map* clearly differentiates queer space from the surrounding cityscape and establishes borders within which same-sex desires can be pursued.

While the Pink Map may firmly locate gay spaces on the physical landscape, De Waterkant is not immune to the shifting locus of the consumption of desire that is prevalent in recent years: from commercial spaces in the public sphere to the private space of the home via the Internet. Such changes eliminate the need to seek same-sex desire in homo-normalised spaces in the public sphere and allowing social ®
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Fig. 4 Cape Quarter–Dixon Street entrance (June 2007)

connections to be made in cyberspace. Likewise, the nature of those desires may also be changing: from food and entertainment to a focus on hearth and home (see Figs. 5 and 6). This takes Kraftl's (2007) "utopia of the homely" literally—where the pursuit of the perfect place has its locus in domestic spaces rather than in the public spaces of bars and clubs.

Fig. 5 Dutch Café, 34 Napier Street corner of Jarvis Street (April 2007)

Fig. 6 Living Leather and Poggen Pohl kitchen design studio, 34 Napier Street corner of Jarvis Street (June 2007)

The critique of Miranda Joseph of community as an "unquestionable good" provides valuable insights towards interrogating the idea of community as utopia through the assertion that "...communal subjectivity is constituted not by identity but rather through practices of production and consumption" (2002, p. viii). Using Joseph's approach, the performance of utopia De Waterkant can more likely be associated with the practices of consumption of leisure activities that take place there than any singular quest for identity. Consumption in the case of De Waterkant, as Elder (2004) asserts, is a stand in for gayness (Elder 2004, p. 588). Therefore, the relational achievements in the realm of consumption deserve further exploration.

Conclusions and Forthcoming Tensions

Rather than build a community in the traditional sense—which is grounded in space and place, this research contends that the many forces acting together in the village are building alternative visions of togetherness that are rather tied to pursuit of

12

consumption and of experiences that act to disconnect them from the larger city in which they are located. Approaching De Waterkant through a utopian lens allows the pursuit of the comforting (through the consumption of leisure) and the unsettling (through a break with the hetero-normalised world outside) to be seen as elements of community. Utopia, like space itself, however, is not without tensions. Likewise, it is fluid and ever-changing. As the bodies that inhabit the space change, so too do the meanings associated with them. As such, it should be seen as an evolving story with additional forthcoming tensions. ® **Springer**

One of those forthcoming tensions was heralded in recent news reports as the "invasion" of the straights (Bamford 2007). Bamford notes that...concerns have been raised that the area is fast being taken over by upmarket business developments and heterosexuals. Straight businesses are springing up, straight people come to party in the pink village—and they are even snapping up property and moving in, with children in tow, much to the horror of many gay Capetonians (2007, p. 7).

That invasion has situated a tension over community, the sense of ownership and identification with the "village" along the lines of the gay/straight binary. The impact of this on both utopia and community cannot be overlooked. Rather than merely seeing those marauding 'straights' as the final chapter of the utopian gay village, it could signal, as Kraftl has suggested, a movement that has 'grown up' and moved from adolescence to adulthood through a "...break from exclusionary comfort (adolescence to adulthood) through a little pain..." (2007, p. 127). This break from exclusion is echoed by one of the respondents of Bamford when he notes the loss of De Waterkant's "simple, informal comfort" (2007, p. 7). It is inclusion and comfort that one respondent may be referring to when she noted that the ' bubble' that used to be De Waterkant now "...feels good for everyone: safe, as things *used to be*". (Anonymous, personal comments 2007a). Could it be, then, that the "straightening"

Fig. 7 Notice from Glasfit, Somerset Road

13

of the village signals a journey to queer adulthood—to an acceptance of difference

Fig. 8 Demolition site, corner of Napier and Jarvis Streets (June 2007)

within the multitude of racial, ethnic, gender and sexual identities on Cape Town's urban landscape and the end of a need to socialise in differentiated gay spaces? Or, does is simply signal the start of yet another queer *groot trek* to an as-yet "undiscovered, ripe-for-development area of the city" (Bamford 2007)?

The gay migration to another area of town or at least the other side of Somerset Road may also be related to a further unsettling: the property boom and the changing land use of the area. These tensions are evident in the extensive demolition and property development projects in the area (Figs. 7 and 8) to make way for a billion-

Fig. 9 The new vision, corner of Napier and Jarvis Streets (October 2007) ® **Springer**

rand commercial development (Powell 2007)—the extension of the Cape Quarter that bills itself as "The place to be...shopping...relaxing...working...eating...meeting...

playing...in Cape Town" (see Fig. 9). As new visions of De Waterkant take shape, so too does the continued contestation of gay space in De Waterkant as reflected in the debate as to the "right" side of Somerset Road in which to socialise (Loft Lounger 2007), suggesting that the 'real' gay experience of De Waterkant has shifted. This shift is evident in the growth of gay-oriented venues on or below Somerset Road, including lower Napier and Cobern Streets. As such transformations continue to take shape, it may be that to remain a citizen of utopia, a change of place is required.

This paper has attempted to reveal some of the salient discourses arising from defining community and utopia: the struggle over belonging and power, and the struggle between comfort and unsettling. The case of De Waterkant is one example of place-making and community development where these issues reveal themselves in the relational achievements between actors on the network of this particular landscape that has specific relevance to the understanding of community and the urban geography of contemporary South Africa. Utopia defies location in that it constantly shifts with the changing relationships between the actors that perform it. In this regard, a utopian analysis of urban life in South African cities may be useful towards understanding the city today.

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