

# Changing views on colonial heritage

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**Within the context of a rational study and in order to arrive at a balanced appreciation of nineteenth- and twentieth-century heritage worldwide, architecture and town planning realized under colonial rule requires special attention. This paper describes the strengths as well as the need for a revised vision of this particular heritage and the issues and criteria that should be taken into account for evaluation of the objects. The Dutch East Indies are used as a stepping stone.**

## Considerations

Identification, listing, preservation and restoration of heritage of the modern era and the implementation of a policy require an open mind to the reasons why a nation does or does not appreciate its heritage and why it does or does not take responsibility for it. In the case of colonial heritage, the notion must also be revised that 'colonial' is something of minor importance and something to be embarrassed, ashamed or angry about. Not because these notions are invalid, but because they affect our evaluation and hinder a fair comparison with works conceived and realized outside the colonies.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike built heritage of earlier periods, until recently the appreciation and valuation of nineteenth- and twentieth-century architecture and town planning in former colonies was almost completely neglected and ignored. For cultural and historical reasons, the continuation of this attitude is no longer acceptable: the time has come to recover the imbalance and pay attention to (sometimes) unique works that for so long were neglected. The willingness to acknowledge, study and appreciate heritage from colonial times will differ from county to country but is indispensable for a successful project.

An inquiry into the relevance of colonial heritage as a designated group within the framework of World Heritage suggests common denominators that perhaps do not exist. Referring to architecture and town planning created under colonial rule as 'colonial heritage' first of all refers to a particular administrative system and a location outside the Western territory. It overlooks periodical, regional and administrative differences and passes over formal and technical characteristics. The denomination creates a situation where the significance of the heritage seems to be derived from political rather than from other, far more subject-oriented factors (formal, technical, circumstantial). Awareness and recognition of the various factors that over extensive periods of time, considerable distances and within various cultures influenced the architecture and town planning in various colonies underlines the necessity to formulate criteria to assess this particular kind of heritage in its own right and in comparison with non-colonial heritage.

Valuation of heritage requires as objective an approach as possible. Western guidelines and criteria regularly prove to

be inadequate to evaluate artefacts created and realized outside the Western Hemisphere. Whereas primary and secondary sources and the objects themselves provide ample proof of the assumption that built heritage from colonial times has a quality and value of its own, when measured by Western criteria this heritage is often considered inferior to developments outside the colony. The merits of these works simply never come to the fore because specific (local) circumstances and demands are not taken into account.<sup>2</sup> Thus, taking up the challenge of assessing the qualities of nineteenth- and twentieth-century heritage forces us to recognize the inadequacy of a predominantly Eurocentric approach and coinciding Western criteria with regard to achievements realized outside the Western Hemisphere. Determining the intrinsic meaning, importance and value of colonial heritage within the framework of the modern era therefore requires the formulation of a (new) set of (uniform) criteria that is applicable to heritage around the globe.

## Memory of the past

Conceived and realized at a time when European nations established empires around the globe by ruling colonies that were often far more extensive than the territory of the motherland, heritage from those days and regions bears witness to a former world order and its transitory character. It belongs to the realm of tangible evidence of a past that, assuming colonialism as we knew it will not re-occur, has faded away forever. It is this particular condition that gives rise to the need to determine whether it is 'because of' or 'in spite of' its colonial context that this heritage is of special interest and importance.

As the nomenclature suggests, colonial heritage is inextricable linked to specific political and economic circumstances. Circumstances peculiar to colonial society (political, economic, social, cultural) played an important role with regard to the possibilities and limitations that society offered. When evaluating position and meaning, quality and merits of colonial heritage within the realm of architecture and town planning of the modern era, these circumstances will have to be incorporated.

1. Heritage that originates from a colonial past is by definition a bilateral affair: both colony and motherland are the rightful heirs of this heritage and should commit themselves accordingly. Therefore, and in order to avoid the negative connotation of the adjective 'colonial', I would prefer to use the more positive and accurate 'mutual'. In Indonesia this term was successfully used during a seminar on 'Change and Heritage in Indonesian Cities' (Jakarta, 1988) and has been used ever since.
2. Despite various attempts, Western awareness and recognition of different values outside the Western Hemisphere only gradually seem to sink in. Although a small number of studies tries to prove the contrary, many art and architectural historians today still argue that contemporary art and architecture are merely provincial derivatives of Western developments. For a discussion on contemporary Indonesian art see Astri Wright, *Soul, Spirit and Mountain. Preoccupation of Contemporary Indonesian Painters*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993.

In her book on the politics of design in French colonial urbanism, Gwendolyn Wright describes how the French Government used the colonies as a kind of experimental garden to try out new architectural and planning concepts and ideas.<sup>3</sup> Wright's study leads to questions such as the commonality of this practice, the different aims by which different administrations ruled their colony, and differences in the practice of architecture and town planning between colonies and motherland. They also lead to questions concerning how to define colonial heritage, what distinguishes colonial heritage from other heritage, is the term colonial heritage accurate and/or justifiable, does colonial heritage around the world have common denominators that make it stand out as a group, and so on.

The outlook, importance and value of colonial heritage are closely intertwined with and determined by conditions in the colony (climatic, economic, social). The fact that these conditions differ from those in the motherland contributes to and distinguishes colonial heritage as something different from (Western) non-colonial architecture. In order to arrive at an objective assessment as possible, a study of the circumstances in the colony, including characteristics of indigenous architecture and town planning, has inevitably to be incorporated.

### State of the art

In a multicultural society such as a colony (cultural) cross-fertilization is inevitable. However, artefacts that are the result of this blend often no longer fit in with Western criteria. When applying them we none the less risk considering non-Western artefacts merely as regional derivatives and locally derived manifestations of a world (i.e. Western) culture. In doing so we then completely deny the intrinsic quality and importance of this heritage. In order to assess the merits of architecture and town planning in the colonies, a (new) non-Eurocentric analysis and valuation method must therefore be applied.

To arrive at a better evaluation and understanding of the position, meaning, quality and merits of architecture and town planning in the colonies, Western standards such as innovations in the use of new materials, technology, concepts of production, transport, communication and labour, or organization of space, can be applied as long as one keeps an open mind to context and circumstances. When, for example, the Western criterion 'innovations in the use of new materials and technology' is applied in a colonial context, the result will be ambiguous if it is not made clear what is actually being compared. Specifications concerning adaptations of local materials and technologies, innovations realized by Western architects in the colony or other colonies, or applied by local people, all need to be taken up in assessments and valuations.

A new approach should include questions and criteria about:

- **circumstances:** political, economic, social, cultural;
- **assignments and objectives:** nature (social, political), volume and scale of the assignments;
- **working space:** education, professionalization, opportunities, limitations;
- **point of departure:** availability of material, institutions, legislation;
- **local conditions:** climate, building and construction methods, styles and decorations;
- **external dimensions:** application of Western materials, building and construction methods, styles and decorations;
- **adjustments and adaptations:** mutual integration of vernacular/Western constructions, material, styles, decorations;
- **contemporary references and examples:** other colonies, Europe, United States;
- **characteristics of emerged (colonial) architecture and town planning:** distinguish and determine distinct and shared characteristics according to motherland, region and period.

Answers to these questions will eventually allow conclusions to be drawn about the degree to which architecture and town planning in the colonies were innovative; produced a distinguished style particular to a region and period, with its merits and demerits; generated a cross-cultural fertilization, etc. Based on a description of these characteristics, a statement can be made about the intrinsic significance and quality of this heritage.

### The Dutch East Indies: late-colonial society (1870–1942)

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, characterless buildings and the greater demands of clients regarding the appearance of their buildings forced architects to create an architecture that would not only suit the climate technically but would be aesthetically pleasing and an impetus to the booming business sector.<sup>4</sup> The demand for appropriate architecture coincides with administrative and socio-economic changes marked by the introduction of the Agrarian Act in 1870.<sup>5</sup>

3. G. Wright, *Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1999.

4. Throughout the nineteenth century, the problem that preoccupied architects in Europe was the need to create an appropriate contemporary architectural style that would reflect the spirit of the time: new machines, new professions, new building materials, new building types, etc. A real debate on the need for a proper architecture in the Dutch East Indies did not start until around 1880.

5. The Agrarian Act replaced the much more repressive Culture System that was put into effect in 1831.

Whether the move towards a more liberal administration originated in self-interest (economic profit) or altruism (a conscious effort to build up a colony that would eventually be self-sustaining), the overall result was a gradual shift from an initially completely centralized control by the national government to an increasingly decentralized administrative system. This was taken a step further during the early twentieth century with the introduction of the Ethical Policy. This new policy opened the way for more political and socio-economic changes, marked by the passing of the Decentralisation Act (1903), the Local Councils Ordinance (1904) and the Government Reform Act (1922). These developments also mark the start of and run parallel to a debate on the need for an appropriate *Indische* architecture and town planning.

The Japanese occupation (1942–45) abruptly ended these ongoing developments. Following Japan's surrender, the Netherlands ignored Indonesia's unilateral declaration of independence and reclaimed power over the archipelago. The unbending Dutch attitude plunged the country into guerrilla warfare with Indonesia that only ended because of heavy international pressure on the Netherlands and Indonesia's agreement to establish a federal administration over the archipelago.<sup>6</sup> Following the official transfer of sovereignty (1948), business continued more or less as usual until well into the 1950s. The final blow for the Dutch came in 1955 when they could not reach an agreement with Indonesia on the status of Papoea and as a result the Dutch became *persona non grata* in the Republic until the 1970s. Despite some political hiccups the relationship from then on has been more or less stable.

The implementation of the Agrarian Act and the Ethical Policy brought about considerable changes in many areas. One of the most noticeable physically – and the most relevant regarding architecture – was the increase in the number of citizens. An influx of Europeans who, unlike in the past, often had no intention of returning to the Netherlands, and of Indonesians from rural areas, led to overcrowded cities and a housing shortage. The architects' task was to address these issues. While working on extension and improvement plans and housing schemes, they faced a specific problem, that of the multiracial and segregated character of colonial society. Whereas the various ethnicities initially lived desegregated, the arrival of increasing numbers of Western immigrants after 1870 gradually created a segregated society. In the field of architecture and town planning, this implied the emergence of European, Indonesian, Chinese and Arab quarters each with their own specific economic, social and formal characteristics.

### Professionalization of the business

During the nineteenth century, engineers in the Netherlands united and initiated professional architectural organizations. The Royal Academy for Artillery and Military in Delft was established for educational purposes in 1815.

A department of civil engineering was added in 1842. Only six years later, in 1848, architects established the *Maatschappij tot Bevordering der Bouwkunst* [Society for the Enhancement of Architecture] in Amsterdam. Alongside these developments a range of specialized professional journals, such as *Bouwkundige Bijdragen* [Architectural Contributions] and *De Ingenieur* [The Engineer] came into being.

These initiatives by and large also covered the situation in the colony. During the nineteenth century the need for fully fledged institutes and journals was increasingly felt and complied with. In 1898 the *Vereeniging van Bouwkundigen in Nederlandsch-Indië* and its journal *Indisch Bouwkundig Tijdschrift* [Dutch East India Architectural Magazine] were established as well as other *Indische* journals. Institutes and journals served as an outlet and platform for architects and engineers to exchange ideas and publish developments. Although the journals in the Dutch East Indies were mainly dedicated to local colonial affairs, they did pay attention to developments overseas, whether in the Netherlands, Germany, the United States or India.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the *Nederlands-Indische Architecten Kring* (NIAK, Dutch-East Indian Architects Circle; 1923), the counterpart of the by then renamed *Maatschappij tot Bevordering der Bouwkunst/Bond van Nederlandse Architecten*, was established. In 1920 the engineer R. L. A. Schoemaker was the first professor to be inaugurated at the faculty of civil engineering at the recently opened Polytechnic in Bandung.

### Emergence and characteristics of *Indische* architecture and town planning

Climatologic and geographical conditions in the colony prompted constructive adaptations from the outset. During the eighteenth century, elevated buildings were increasingly erected with steep roofs with ridges that ran parallel to the street in order to create an overhang that would protect the building from sun and rain. Much later, during the first half of the twentieth century, flat roofs and so-called 'double-front' walls were applied as well.<sup>7</sup>

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, country estates a considerable distance from the initial settlement started to emerge for those who could afford to leave the densely built-up and rather unsanitary city centres. The houses occupied large parcels, were usually low-rise, frequently built on stilts, surrounded with galleries on the outside to

6. The question of whether the assumption of power by the Indonesian republicans generated a rupture in architecture and town planning practice is interesting and might be included in research activities.
7. A double-front wall is an extensively pierced façade intended to create natural ventilation and shade.

create natural ventilation, large overhangs, a more or less standard ground plan, and had the kitchen and sleeping quarters of the attendants separated from the main house at the back of the estate. The materials used for buildings usually consisted of wood for the construction, river stones, brick and plaster for the walls, and tiles or *atap* for the roofs. Gradually new residential areas developed around these estates, spaciouly laid out with wide unimproved streets, extensive green areas and spacious parcels with wide drives and lush gardens. Their only difference to the initial estates was the (largely) reduced size of the parcels and the consequently more condensed building capacity.

While the need for climatic adaptations was recognized, the engineers responsible for the design of buildings were unable to create a really suitable architecture because their architectural education was very shallow: academies usually instructed students on the application of classical European architectural styles without paying much attention to the function of the building.<sup>8</sup> After nearly two centuries this had resulted in an architecture that lacked style and character. Engineers, who were increasingly annoyed by the low architectural quality, criticized the building 'ethics' in the colony and, stimulated by a growing awareness and increasing demand for quality in architecture and town planning, generated a debate on the significance and need for a contemporary *Indische* architecture that would be physically suitable to the region and aesthetically pleasing to the eye.<sup>9</sup> The debate on the importance and possibilities of architecture focused on various aspects such as the use of materials, construction methods, style, decoration, and last – but certainly not least – the applicability of indigenous motifs.

The architectural debate was at its peak in the early 1920s when two distinctive 'schools' emerged. There were those who felt that the only objective was to create good architecture: architecture that would meet the needs of users and physical conditions and would be aesthetically pleasing. To these architects, the application of Western or Eastern constructions, materials and motifs was irrelevant as long as they were applied with a full understanding of their meaning or function. On the opposite side were those who felt that indigenous architecture was to lead the way towards an appropriate architecture. They were of the opinion that buildings throughout the archipelago offered beautiful examples of suitable architecture and could easily be used as sources of inspiration to create a contemporary architecture for the Dutch colony.

One of the hallmarks of the *Indische* architecture that emerged – apart from adaptations to meet the climatic requirements as described above – was an experimental, loose and eclectic application of a wide variety of construction methods and architectural styles varying from Art Deco to Expressionist, and from modern to vernacular. Within the restricted choice in building and finishing materials, architects managed to create a variety of buildings and spaces with unpretentious but refined detailing and

decoration. The overall result was an experimental, vibrant, daring and hybrid architecture that resembled world architecture but added a little twist. Presumably because the building and housing inspection department mainly focused on technical matters, and building regulations were not very strict, buildings seem more daring and elaborate.

In order to meet the demand for large numbers of various kinds of new building (schools, hospitals, post offices, prisons, etc.) that were needed after 1900, the government Department of Public Works often relied on and applied so-called *normaalontwerpen* [normative designs]. Though interesting from a production point of view, these designs often lack a specific kind of architectural quality. Representative, unique government buildings (offices for governors, city councils, departments) on the other hand were (naturally) given more attention and were usually of outstanding quality. The same may be said of the dwellings of middle-income civil servants. Though from an architectural point of view not very noteworthy, their production methods lend government housing an interesting aspect because these buildings were produced *en masse* and were part of larger planning schemes such as city extension plans or improvements of existing areas.

More outspoken and daring architecture is found among buildings commissioned by private entrepreneurs. With an eye for business and increasing awareness of how an appropriate location and building (i.e. architecture) could contribute to and reflect commercial success, private entrepreneurs frequently went to great lengths to realize their dreams in architecture. Houses built for the high echelons of administration and business sometimes displayed a similar sense of distinction, character and remarkable architectural features, with the eclectic application of various styles and decorations to their situations.

Many architects that arrived in the Dutch East Indies were students from the Polytechnic in Delft, but they were not town planners by training. As the practice of town planning in the colony was virtually non-existent around 1900, these newly arrived architects faced the complex and sizeable task of addressing technical and design aspects (uncontrolled town extensions, the need for urban improvement, housing shortage, insufficient infrastructure and sewerage) as well as aspects of legislation, regulation and organization. The town-planning method they developed was characterized by the establishment of various municipal services, systematic execution procedures and simultaneous implementation of legislative matters.

8. Two frequently applied styles were neoclassical and Empire: Jeanine R. M. Deckers, *Architectuur in Batavia tussen 1800 en 1900* [Architecture in Batavia between 1800 and 1900], M.A. paper, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, 1992; Dieuwke Wynia, *De Indische Overheidsarchitectuur tussen 1908 en 1928* [East-Indian Government Architecture between 1908 and 1928], M.A. paper, Universiteit van Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 1993.
9. This echoes simultaneous developments in Europe and the United States.

A typical element of the *Indische* town was the application of functional and ethnic zoning with buildings that were appropriate according to their location, function and status. As a result of the increasing process of Europeanization, this physical segregation, although already in existence, became more pronounced after the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> The majority of the extension plans were designed for European inhabitants at a considerable but bridgeable distance between the new and the existing built-up area. They covered vast areas, had a wide, open and green layout with detached or semi-detached houses, and limited employment opportunities for the Europeans. Chinese areas were usually in the old quarters of the city, dazzling with commercial activities, densely built up with people living above their shops or businesses. The Indonesian areas were usually built in between and around these areas, as the majority of the Indonesian labour force worked as employees of European companies or as housekeepers. The Indonesian areas (*kampungs*) mainly consisted of a jumble of low-rise, semi-permanent houses, with little or only communal sanitary facilities, unpaved roads and poor connections to the main infrastructural network.

Although a detailed description of the various town plans is outside the scope of this paper, the extensions for Semarang (New Candi, 1909) and Batavia (Menteng, New Gondangdia, 1918) should be mentioned because they were the first extension plans in the Dutch East Indies and, with regard to aesthetics as well as methodology, more or less set a standard for developments throughout the archipelago. On account of the remarkable growth and unity of design, the town plan for Bandung should also be mentioned. Bandung, an almost non-existent provincial village by the late nineteenth century, developed over less than twenty years into a full-grown city with almost European allure that provided accommodation for various governmental departments and leading educational institutes.<sup>11</sup> The short development period of the city resulted in a coherent development plan with specific functions, inhabitants and building for each of the eleven districts.

Thanks to the work of a relatively small group of architects, civil servants and legislators, within a period of twenty years a large number of municipal extension and improvement plans were designed and executed, and several local ordinances and a draft town-planning ordinance were drawn up and implemented.<sup>12</sup> The reason for this pace could be the fact that colonial society was very hierarchic, only a limited number of people were involved in the process and communication lines were short. Consequently, decision-making was swift.

### Indonesia today: chances and risks

Until some twenty years ago, a general inertia of both Indonesia and the Netherlands prevailed towards their mutual heritage of the late-colonial period an era that had witnessed great political, economic, social and architec-

tural changes. But in 1985 the indifferent attitude changed for the better when a historic landmark building in Jakarta was demolished due to increased traffic and the need to widen a main connection. De Harmonie (1810–14, architect J. C. Schultze) was a corporate building that had been built to persuade Europeans to move from the old city centre to the more southerly located new area of Weltevreden. The building, in Empire style, was generally considered to be one of the most vital of early-nineteenth-century buildings in Jakarta. The fact that it originated from colonial times seemed not at all relevant when architects and the general public expressed their disbelief, anger and frustration over the loss. Its importance as a landmark was (and is!) signified by the fact that this particular area in the city is referred to as 'Harmoni'.

Ever since the destruction of De Harmonie, various people and organizations have documented, studied, discussed, published and created awareness of Indonesia's colonial heritage. In Indonesia governmental and non-governmental organizations are active, such as the Indonesian Institute of Architects, the National Heritage Trust and local heritage societies.<sup>13</sup> Their core business is creating awareness among inhabitants and policy-makers concerning the value of built heritage and the irreversibility of its destruction. Occasionally restoration projects are initiated.<sup>14</sup> Similar organizations in the Netherlands are increasingly interested and involved in various small- and large-scale projects and in exchanging knowledge and expertise.

10. The initially segregated but economically and socially communal mixed way of life gradually gave way to a much-increased (physical) segregation, thus sharpening social, economic and ethnical differences. J. J. P. de Jong, *De waaier van het Fortuin. Van handelscompagnie tot koloniaal imperium. De Nederlanders in Azië en de Indonesische archipel 1595–1950* [The Fan of Fortune. From Trading Company to Colonial Empire. The Dutch in Asia and the Indonesian Archipelago 1595–1950], The Hague, Sdu Uitgevers, 1998, pp. 387, 391, 483.

11. The rapid development of Bandung was caused by the decision of Governor-General Earl J. P. van Limburg Stirum in 1916 to move the administrative departments from Batavia to Bandung. Owing to its appearance and outstanding facilities, Bandung around 1930 was already referred to as the 'Paris of Java'.

12. Not long after the town-planning issue came to the forefront, architect Thomas Karsten wrote an important article on town planning entitled 'Indiese stedenbouw'. Until 1942 Karsten published on issues relating to architecture and planning, ranging from social to legal and from technical to aesthetic. Thomas Karsten, 'Indiese stedenbouw', *Mededeeling 40 bijlage bij Locale Belangen 19/20* (1920), pp. 145–250.

13. Local heritage societies operate in Bandung, Jakarta, Medan, Padang, Semarang, Solo, Surabaya and Yogyakarta.

14. Projects that attracted a great deal of attention are the restoration of the Reinier de Klerk mansion at Jl. Gadjah Mada in Jakarta (1995) and the house of and by C. P. Wolff Schoemakers at Jl. Sawunggaling in Bandung (1999). The latter was awarded the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Award 2000. Currently the Sumatra Heritage Society in Medan is working on the restoration of the historic town hall (design Ch. M. Boon, 1908) while Semarang and Jakarta are working on revitalization schemes for their old (Dutch) city centres. The Jakarta Post in 1999 and 2000 published a series of fifty-four articles on heritage buildings (Arab, Chinese, Dutch, Indonesian, Portuguese) in Jakarta.

The Dutch National Department for Conservation advises on historical projects, the Bond van Nederlandse Architecten, the Netherlands Architecture Institute and the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies organize programmes that introduce foreigners to the Dutch practice of architecture, town planning, restoration and policy-making. Non-governmental organizations Stichting Oud Jakarta (Foundation Old Jakarta), Stichting National Cadeau (Foundation National Present), and the Association of Dutch Friends of the Sumatra Heritage Trust, to name but a few, usually focus on a particular project such as the restoration of the Reinier de Klerk mansion in Jakarta or the town hall in Medan. Several students from Indonesia and the Netherlands have conducted research or are working on papers and dissertations.

These initiatives, although sympathetic, should not obliterate the political, economic, scientific and pragmatic implications and problems of the task lying ahead when dealing with conservation of built heritage. An important obstacle to consider in the Indonesian context is the political and economic status quo. Although the political and economic instability that has dominated the country since 1997 has proved to be a 'blessing in disguise' – because of the temporary halt it has caused to the devastating effect of the booming economy through the rapid demolition of monuments in the older parts of cities – it is not hard to imagine this trend will once again continue when politics and economics are back on their feet again. For architecture and town planning this would mean a return to a situation where despite the Act on Monuments and additional regulations, historic buildings and whole city areas fall victim to real estate and infrastructure developments that primarily serve the middle- and upper-class income groups.

This situation automatically leads to another problem, that of Indonesia's general attitude towards heritage, which is at the same time indifferent and of a smothering nature. The indifference is clear from the fact that despite the existence of a national act on the conservation of monuments, the implementation and enforcement of this measure is almost constantly violated by real-estate developers, building- and landowners.<sup>15</sup> Because demolition of a building is considered easier and cheaper, hence more economic, this in general is preferred to renovation or restoration. Historical resentment is hardly ever an argument.

When, on the other hand, people do pay attention to a historic object this does not necessarily create a positive situation either. The general tendency to overemphasize the cultural and historical value of the object, combined with the limited range of design and functional changes that are allowed when handling a registered monument, limits the possibilities for adaptive reuse and radical conversions.<sup>16</sup> The result is that restored heritage buildings are often put on a metaphorical pedestal and turned into a gem only to be admired from an appropriate distance, thus losing connection and interaction with their physical and social surroundings.<sup>17</sup> The same goes for town planning: protective measures usually freeze the existing situa-

tion and do not allow any visual or functional alterations, thus creating lifeless and economically depressed areas.<sup>18</sup>

A last but no less essential problem is the lack of sufficient knowledge and effective policy in both the Netherlands and Indonesia on preservation, conservation and restoration of nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial heritage. For a considerable period, the Netherlands has practically ignored its overseas heritage on both a scientific and political level. Universities in general greatly overlooked this particular part of the Netherlands' architectural heritage. Politics, if any attention was paid at all, usually focused on earlier periods: sixteenth-century fortresses on the Moluccas, an eighteenth-century mansion in Jakarta, the palace of a local king, and a Buddhist temple in Central Java. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century architecture and town planning never seemed able to attract the same amount of enthusiasm; not to mention money. As a result their restoration has only been carried out haphazardly.

The situation is not much different in Indonesia. Despite increased interest in colonial cultural heritage, the national policy of priority to economic growth and development has created a situation where there is almost no need or desire for architects to specialize in the field of preservation, restoration and conservation. Simultaneously, it is obvious that training methods are inadequate and insufficiently up to date to address design issues in a contemporary, innovating and challenging way.

To end on an optimistic note, it is important to mention that there are plenty of architects and Indonesians genuinely interested in the cultural heritage of the country. For them, the coming about of an *Indische* architecture and town planning is, though not without faults, particular to the spirit of the time and region of the late-colonial period. It is also a source of inspiration in their quest for a suitable contemporary Indonesian architecture and a guiding principle in their daily confrontation with current design issues.

15. The first Act on Monuments was drawn up and passed by the Dutch Government in 1931 and revised in 1934. The Indonesian Government revised, updated and passed a new act in 1992: Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië 238 (1931); Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië 515 (1934); Undang-undang Republik Indonesia 5 (1992). Real-estate developers, building- and landowners repeatedly seem to consider themselves above this law.

16. Because of the restrictive laws on restoration, restoration projects usually propose turning monuments into cultural centres, exclusive restaurants, etc. The inflexibility of the regulations leads to inconsistent situations: while dozens of spacious and deserted buildings from the 1930s are scattered throughout pre-war neighbourhoods of Jakarta, some years ago a new building that imitates the atmosphere of the jazz era was built in an southern area of the city and fitted out for entertainment. Another fine example is the entire removal of a nineteenth-century villa from one area of Jakarta to the same southern area, just so that it could be exploited as a Italian restaurant.

17. This observation applies to many conservation projects executed in Indonesia. Pauline van Roosmalen, 'Lagi-lagi museum', *Kompas*, 14 January 2001.

18. As stipulated by law, Indonesian cities draw up new town plans every ten years. Studies on the revitalization of old city centres and/or buildings have been carried out for Bandung, Den Pasar, Jakarta, Medan, Padang, Semarang, Solo, Surabaya and Yogyakarta. To what extent these revitalization studies will be included in or influence future town planning remains to be seen.

## Recommendations

Appreciation and assessment of cultural artefacts are determined by qualification criteria. Notwithstanding the significance of Western research and valuation methods for Western architecture and town planning, their ambiguity, inadequacy and deficiency outside the Western hemisphere, i.e. in a colonial setting, hinders an objective and equal evaluation of the intrinsic quality and importance of the objects. Therefore an inevitable stipulation when studying and evaluating nineteenth- and twentieth-century heritage in former colonies is an adaptation of the Western, predominantly Eurocentric methodology, criteria and standards (innovations in the use of new materials, technology, concepts of production, transport, communication and labour, organization of space).

To understand and appreciate the specific character, meaning and relevance of built heritage in former colonies, the study and analysis of colonial society is inevitable because the architecture and town planning is intrinsically linked to the needs, demands and possibilities of that society. When political and economic circumstances play a decisive role in determining heritage from colonial times as a particular kind of heritage (something its nomenclature seems to suggest) it is essential to not only review and study formal and technical characteristics but to include these circumstances when assessing the value of this particular heritage.

With regard to the Dutch East Indies, the proposed combined study and analysis of nineteenth- and twentieth-century architecture and town planning is interesting, because it covers a period of political, economic, social and architectural transition that runs more or less parallel to and is closely linked with social and architectural developments in the motherland. It is the combination of these aspects, together with the climatic, geographic and specific colonial circumstances, that generated a moderate but flourishing architecture and town-planning practice during the late-colonial period. The specific colonial as well as the formal and technical characteristics make it worthwhile evaluating and studying this particular heritage – in Indonesia as well as in other former colonies around the world.