

The diverse heritage meanings of colonial infrastructure in postcolonial cities
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A case study in Bandung, Indonesia

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Abstract

The lived experience of residents in postcolonial cities provides a better understanding of these distinctive cultural landscapes as colonial heritage is often contested. Heritage conservation policies are implemented and change the sense of place but the meanings assigned by officials differ from those of residents. Using qualitative methods, this case study shows that residual colonial infrastructure has layered heritage meanings. Heritage meanings are related to national identity and personal memories connected to colonial infrastructure. The link between the colonial infrastructure and the colonial period has faded; new functions have altered the meanings of these places. Residual colonial heritage important to the new identity is linked to symbols and heroes of independence. What was once part of the colonizing other is now part of the unifying identity of their new nation.

Keywords: Cultural heritage; Indonesia; post colonialism; spirit of place; contested heritage

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Introduction

Residual colonial heritage in postcolonial cities is frequently contested and the meanings that these places bear can vary greatly. How governments and heritage organizations shape places can occur with very different intentions than how these places are actually experienced by the people who live in those places.

Much has been written about heritage in postcolonial places but the focus is usually on the concept of heritage itself or the relation between heritage and identity (Ashworth, 2009; Harvey, 2001; Jones & Shaw, 2006; Munasinghe, 2005; Nuryanti, 2000; Taylor, 2004; Teo & Huang, 1995; Yeoh, 2001). This study focusses on the perspectives of residents of a postcolonial city. Henderson (2001) suggested further research into resident attitudes towards colonial heritage, their experiences of it and its management is necessary to provide a better understanding of these distinctive cultural landscapes.

Postcolonial approaches aim to critique and surpass the cultural and broader ideological legacies of imperialism (Sidaway, 2000). From postcolonial nations there is debate about the Western modes of knowledge on heritage management processes (Waterton, 2005). Yeoh (2001) argues that the once-colonized should claim 'the freedom of imagination' in a contested field of power to imagine their cities differently. Sentiments of anti-colonial resistance and postcolonial misery are assigned by Europe and America on behalf of the colonized countries. In the Dutch media the current focus seems to be on the excesses during the late colonial times in Indonesia creating an image of exploitation and oppression suggesting there is no other way than to see this period with guilt and distress. This research examines if this image is consistent with the feelings and meanings of residents of a postcolonial city.

Postcolonial context

Residual colonial infrastructure is the built environment that is still remaining from the colonial period. The built environment is closely related to the lived experiences of people and the meanings of these places in their everyday lives. In the case of Bandung - and Indonesia in general - the forming of a new identity is an important part of the postcolonial period. In newly independent nations, many historic places are reminders of the colonial period (Jones & Shaw, 2006). Changing the function of a colonial building and removing most of the ties with the past can alter the association people have towards that building. As very few Indonesians have direct experience of the colonial period, the new function of colonial buildings is overlapping and seeping into national consciousness and memory (Jones & Shaw, 2006). Creating layered meanings so that a place has different significances to different groups of people.

On the island of Java, Indonesia (see Figure 1.), traces from the Dutch colonial period are still visible in the landscape. During the Dutch colonial period, the foundations for the present networks of public works including irrigation facilities and agricultural land, roads, railroads,

harbors and drinking water supplies throughout Indonesia were laid (Ravesteijn & Horn-van Nispen, 2007). Colonial influences are not limited to infrastructure but also seen in daily life, most notably in the presence of the numerous Dutch words in Indonesian language.



Figure 1: Java, Indonesia. (Source: <http://www.ezilon.com/maps/images/asia/Indonesia-physical-map.gif>)

Spirit of place and sense of place

Sense of place is an important concept when explaining the way people feel in relation to a certain place. When asking residents of Bandung how they value places with colonial infrastructure, one is asking for the sense of place and the spirit of place. Sense of place is the character or identity that belongs to certain places or locales and the shaping of our own identity in relation to that place (Malpas, 2008). Rose (1995) suggests an intimate, personal and emotional relationship between self and place. Vanclay (2008) describes sense of place as the meaning, experience and connection of an individual with place. Spirit of place is about the qualities that make a place special. For the case of Bandung this can be a sentimental and nostalgic experience, but sense of place is more than that: *"it is the contemporary everyday connection individuals have with their local spaces that gives their live meaning in the present"* (Vanclay 2008, p. 9). Place awareness and place familiarity are important factors when asking for sense of place and spirit of place in this research. Place familiarity with the colonial infrastructure is about the knowledge people have and shows the interest and importance of that place. The forming of a new identity and sense of place is not based on false nostalgia but a multicultural and dynamic view on place. This means that place meanings are not static but can change through time and can differ per group or community.

Social spaces contain objects that are more than just things, they also represent relations. These objects have certain properties that can transform through social change giving them a different place in the body of social and spatial relations without changing their appearance (Lefebvre 1991:77 in Hall, 2006). Residual colonial infrastructure is made up of objects that have transformed without major changes to their physical form. The relations that colonial

infrastructure represents changed over time. The meanings of colonial infrastructure are closely linked to the creation of heritage.

Heritage

Heritage is a cultural process and more than an artifact or record, it is a representation or a reinterpretation of the past (Lowenthal 1998 in Munasinghe, 2005). Lowenthal (1998) sees heritage in a way that it clarifies pasts as to infuse them in present purposes. Heritage is never passive, often contested; people engage with it and re-work it. It is part of the way that identities are created and disputed, whether as individuals, groups or nation states (Harvey, 2010). Heritage is a concept that entirely relates to present circumstances in which the present does not inherit but consciously selects what it wants from an imagined past to preserve for an imagined future. Heritage is completely produced in the present and therefore represents our contemporary understanding and perception of the past (Hardy, 1998; Turnbridge & Ashworth, 1996, Harvey, 2010). The present is informed by the past and the past is reconstructed by the present, making heritage a process wherein it does not matter if history is falsified in that manner (Boholm, 1997; Taylor, 2005). Selection from the past creates new landscapes that will inevitably echo the dominant political, social, ethnic or religious discourses (Graham et al., 2000). According to Lowenthal (1998), heritage in the form of national icons are an expression of national identity and are determined by those who select them.

The question is who decides and selects heritages and for what purpose. Who controls the process and benefits from the transforming of history into heritage? What becomes exalted as heritage is often not decided by the community (Yeoh, 2001). Several authors have argued that heritage conservation can be considered to be an elitist practice that has overlooked local residents and created landscapes devoid of lived experiences (Waterton, 2005; Teo & Huang, 1995; Nora, 1989; Ashworth 2006). Teo & Huang (1995) question if conservation serves or excludes people. What local residents perceive to be their heritage should also be taken into account. 'The people in the street' and their lived experiences and views on heritage are often ignored by planners. In Jakarta it was the rich and the powerful that shaped the landscapes that are handed over into a broader shared memory (Jones & Shaw, 2006). And while Teo & Huang (1995) debates the legitimacy of the minority elite to plan a landscape, previous studies have shown that there are questions concerning the involvement of the public in the highly stratified society of Indonesia (Hitchcock 2000). It is expected of the government to make the right decisions and only to inform the people after these were taken. (Waterton & Smith, 2010; Hitchcock 2000).

Identity

Places that have cultural heritage significance play a special role in the production of identity, power and authority throughout society and can express a powerful message of cultural belonging (Malpas, 2008; Waterton, 2005; Harvey, 2010). *"Heritage can be used to address nationalistic, patriotic, political and religious values and, based on topophilia, enhance the character of the townscape to support identity and orientation"* (Munasinghe, 2005 p 254).

Topophilia, or love of place, is the deeply felt connection between people and place. Urban landscapes are formed by expressions of identity and in turn contribute in the formation of identity. This makes cultural landscapes inseparable from their politic and economic context (Hall, 2006).

Urban landscapes are expressions of identity in which buildings, street layouts and monumental structures are interpreted and reinterpreted as changing relation of power. In the formation of these identities, the past is represented in different ways, emphasizing some parts and ignoring others (Hall, 2006). Toponymic rewriting happened in Madras and Singapore. Lewandowski (1984, in Yeoh 2001) examines how in Madras, streets were renamed after Indian folk heroes and statues erected to reinforce Tamil identity. This rewriting has happened in Bandung too, where, for example De Groote Postweg was renamed Jalan Asia Africa. And a case study conducted in Singapore (Henderson, 2001) found that renaming, neglecting, removing or using colonial buildings are common ways for postcolonial societies to deal with inherited infrastructure. This is seen in Bandung and Jakarta where some Dutch colonial buildings are used for tourism, while others receive little official acknowledgement. Though some of these objects may still be in use, others are in a state of neglect (Ashworth, 2009). This raises the question if there is a place for heritage from the Dutch colonial period. The Dutch government and residential district has been rearranged for Indonesian national administration and media events in a way that the colonial origins have been almost completely erased (Ashworth et al., 2007).

The concept of heritage meanings as used in this research is based on the present meanings of the colonial infrastructure. It concerns the places selected by residents reflecting the contemporary understanding of the past and the importance and meanings related to these places in their daily lives.

Methodology

This study is based on three month fieldwork conducted in early 2012 in Bandung, Indonesia. This qualitative study provided the opportunity to get to the lived experiences of residual colonial infrastructure for the residents of Bandung. The site for this case study is the city of Bandung, a vast urban area housing 2.4 million people, surrounded by volcanic mountains. This place was but a small village before it was selected by the Dutch colonizers to serve governmental and military functions around 1810. As one of the towns on the Great Postal Road (*De Groote Postweg*), connecting West to East Java, it was developed since the 19th century as the potential future capital of the Dutch Indies (Ashworth, 2009). Bandung became known as 'the Paris of Java' in the early 20th century and distinguished itself from other places with many expressions of Tropical Art Deco architecture. The city has three different spatial areas and functional types of colonial infrastructure. Located in the north of the city are the governmental and its commercial affiliates. The central part of Bandung is the retailing and commercial axle focused around Braga Street and Asia Africa Street. In addition there are the former residential and domestic structures that used to house the Dutch officials and employees.

Organized resistance to colonial rule started in the 1920s including a pro-independence party established by Sukarno. Attacking colonialism in speeches, Sukarno was sent to Sukamiskin Prison in Bandung in 1930. Shortly before the end of the Second World War, Sukarno declared the independence of Indonesia on August the 17th 1945. This was however, the beginning of a four year guerilla war and military invasion during which the Netherlands tried to seize back the power in its colony. This period is known in the Netherlands as the Police Actions while in Indonesia people refer to it as Military Aggression. When independence finally officially occurred, Sukarno became Indonesia's first President. In the decade after independence, the colonial infrastructure was either reused, renamed or neglected as the governments focus was nation building (Ashworth, 2009).

As a form of triangulation, three different types of interviews are used to confirm the validity of each of the sources. This resulted in doing 8 in-depth interviews, two group interviews and two go-along interviews in the former colonial area. After no new findings were added by the last interviews and previous results were repeated or confirmed it was decided that a point of saturation was reached and no more interviews were held.

This study uses a handpicked sample although finding the respondents happened through snowball referral. The respondents are not randomly chosen as there is no proof that the values, beliefs and attitudes that are the core of qualitative research are equally distributed. Some informants are more likely to provide insight and understanding for the researcher than others (Marshall, 1996). Therefore a profile of the targeted respondent was made. This profile consists of criteria that aim to get a cross-section of the residents in Bandung. The respondents are selected on important variables as the characteristics of age, gender, occupation, social background and period of residence (Marshall, 1996). Access to the respondents was gained through the help of researchers and students at the ITB University in Bandung and through the researchers' own social network. This meant that respondents were also found at places otherwise unknown or inaccessible due to safety reasons. One of these places was 'Kampung Apandi', an impoverished and small village place close to Braga Street. In this case, special attention was given to age assuming there can be a difference between people who have witnessed and experienced the colonial period and those who have not. The intention for this research is finding respondents from different groups evenly spread between 20 and 80 years of age. As Colonial infrastructure is not evenly spread throughout Bandung, respondents are selected from different areas that are close to and further away from residual colonial infrastructure. By doing so, the boundaries or limits of heritage meanings are explored.

To get to the lived experience of places, semi-structured in-depth interviews were chosen. Interviews gave the respondent the opportunity to answer in their own ways and explore relevant meanings and opinions (Dunn, 2010). Using different types of questions including descriptive questions, storytelling questions and questions about opinions the in-depth interviews provided insight in the meanings and importance of colonial infrastructure in their lives. During the 8 in-depth interviews respondents were asked what colonial places mean to them and if they are familiar to those places. Respondents were asked to share the memories they have of places related to the colonial period as memory is an important factor in the

forming of personal, social and cultural identity (Kenny, 1999). Other questions dealt with their contemporary perception of the colonial period and the need and importance of conservation of colonial infrastructure.

The interviews were conducted using the help of local interpreters. These interpreters were both students at the ITB University and were proficient in Bahasa Indonesia and the local Sundanese language. The unequal status between men and women made it necessary to use two interpreters to counter problems in the prevailing social hierarchy in East Java. Interviewing women was mostly done with the help of a female interpreter while interviewing men proved to be easier when making use of a male translator.

In addition to the in-depth interviews group interviews were conducted allowing for more dynamics as group members can influence and complement each other. The questions were similar to the question used in the in-depth interviews. Different opinions can lead to discussion regarding different meanings of the same places. The interviewer tried to give all of the respondents an equal share in the conversation. The group interviews took place in an informal manner to establish a form of trust and openness for the respondents to speak comfortably. The first interview was done with three elderly women who all spoke English, Dutch and Indonesian and took place in the house of one of the respondents. During the interview they switched between the three languages making it sometimes difficult to follow. One of the ladies was far more dominant, answering questions asked to the other group members. The other group interview took place in an old school build during the colonial period. In this setting two teachers and the headmaster shared their thoughts on colonial infrastructure.

During the preliminary analysis of the interviews it seemed that some respondents gave social desired answers. To find out how the presence of the Dutch white male researcher was of influence on the answers, it was decided that two of the in-depth interviews would be done without the presence of the researcher. Two reasons for this were that almost none of the respondents seemed to have negative feelings towards the Dutch colonial period and respondents referred to the interviewer as 'you' meaning the Dutch colonizers. Both of the interpreters did one of the interviews in similar settings to the others.

What also stood out during early exploration of the results was that two places were mentioned in almost all of the interviews. These are the streets Jalan Braga and Jalan Asia Africa. These places were therefore selected to have a go-along interview, combining the in-depth interview with a walk through the actual place. In standard interviews the respondent was asked to recall places without any tangible stimuli. This can result in the loss of minor details, whereas being in the actual place can make it easier to communicate the sense of place to others (Tuan, 1975). The combination of walks and interviews can produce different kinds of knowledge as the respondent has direct contact to the place and its associated objects (Trell and Van Hoven, 2010). These walks provided additional information as several objects and buildings were pointed out that were not mentioned in other interviews. But answers concerning place meanings did not deviate from the other interviews.

The interviews were translated into English by the interpreters. When verifying the transcripts, it was found that not all transcripts were translated as precisely from Indonesian to English. The 3 interviews done without an interpreter were more extensive and go into more detail. Despite going through the questions in detail and conducting trial interviews, the language barrier between researcher and respondent was not always sufficiently tackled by the interpreter. Translation of cultural meanings coming from verbal expressions from one language to another is a challenging task and the total transference of meaning can only be partial (Catford 1965, in Müller 2007). As the interview questions are translated from English to Indonesian and the interviews themselves from Indonesian to English, the translation should be considered a subjectivity and not just a mere transfer of meaning (Müller, 2007). The coding is done with the help of deductive and inductive strategies (Hennink et al., 2011). Deductive codes focus mainly on the question if residents challenge and reject colonial places or if their attitudes are more inclusive towards them. Inductive codes focus more on the meanings concerning spirit of place, symbolic meanings and aesthetic values. Other codes are made up of several terms mentioned many times such as the Banceuy Prison and President Sukarno. Cross case comparison is used taking the analysis of a single code across the interviews in the data set to identify the variety of perspectives and experiences of residual colonial heritage and the creation of a new Indonesian identity. Next to that there is also looked at the common and odd answers and confirming and disconfirming examples, giving understanding of the diverse heritage meanings of residents.

Results

The analysis focused on the meanings and lived experiences of residual colonial infrastructure. It was found that several places with colonial infrastructure were mentioned almost every time while other places were mentioned much less frequently or not at all. This shows that the place familiarity with colonial places differs per respondent and also varies by location. The places that are often named are Gedung Merdeka, Gedung Sate, Braga Street, Asia Africa Street and the Banceuy Prison. These places can all be seen as landmarks; important government buildings, historical sites or remarkable places in terms of architecture. Many respondents said these places have personal importance as well, giving them layered heritage meanings. Colonial places that are mentioned less frequently are Dago Street, Goa Belanda (Dutch cave) and schools; places that have specific personal meanings. Other structures mentioned such as roads, railways and irrigation systems are places that appeared to have no heritage meaning to the respondents. It was found that motives for conservation include for most colonial structures their architectural and aesthetic qualities. The places that were mentioned often revealed to have particular importance concerning colonial resistance and the formation of the new Indonesian identity.

Postcolonial context - the creation of a new identity

The post-colonial city is an important site where claims to an identity different from the colonial are made, linked and contested (Yeoh, 2001). Bandung is a place without pre-colonial infrastructure, making it difficult to revert to pure Indonesian heritage. The new Indonesian identity in Bandung is focused on several colonial buildings that became symbols of resistance

during the fight for freedom. Other places gained their importance through new use shortly after independence.

What emerged from the interviews is that Gedung Merdeka is an important heritage site that many respondents identify as being an important place in Indonesian history. Built by the Dutch as a private club and theatre for the wealthy inhabitants of Bandung; it was renamed after independence from the Concordia Society Building to Gedung Merdeka (freedom building). Its importance is due to the hosting of the first Asian-African Conference in 1955. This being the first conference for the non-aligned nations, it is an answer to Western political dominance making Gedung Merdeka a symbol of unification and independence. This is also referred to by respondents. The 60 year old Sarwan explained it was a precious moment when he as a young boy scout was allowed into Gedung Merdeka and saw President Sukarno there. Gedung Merdeka is a place that is not often visited by local residents but the place awareness is significant:

"I only went there once in my life, and well it does not mean anything in my daily life, but when I was there I felt so excited and proud to be Indonesian. They told us about the history and importance of the building, the conference, really important for the city and for the country." (Debby, 23)

The Sukarno effect

President Sukarno played a special role in the creation of the new Indonesian identity. When it comes to heritage it could be said there is a so-called 'Sukarno effect': Almost every place related to Sukarno is of great importance to Indonesia. Sukarno has been nicknamed 'the father of the country' and buildings related to him are directly related to the formation of postcolonial Indonesia. Most noticeable is Banceuy Prison, which is mentioned by most respondents as a significant symbol of resistance. Located in the middle of the old town, this prison was the place where Sukarno was imprisoned in 1930 for his role as the leader of the Indonesian National Party. Not much is left of the actual building, only the prison cell where Sukarno was locked up remains as a monument. Sukarno's significance is mentioned in almost every interview when asked about the meanings of the most important colonial buildings:

"In the war for independence, Sukarno was in those places, first hiding with his generals and later he was locked up in the prison next to Alun Alun. He is Indonesia's most important person, our first President; he made the Pancasila, the 5 principles of Indonesia as a country. And he proclaimed the independence of Indonesia on 17th of August 1945." (Muhamad, 22)

Being in these places is described as more than just being in an old colonial building. It can be topophilia, the deeply felt connection between people and place, which is invoked by the connection with Sukarno making it a distinct part of Indonesian identity. The prominence of Sukarno is not limited to himself. Ibu Tuti (60), who runs a small restaurant, mentioned a museum dedicated to Inggit, one of Surkano's wives. It should be conserved as *"ibu Inggit is like*

a hero, she was Bung Karno's wife." Sukarno and the related colonial infrastructure have heritage meanings on both a personal and a national level.

Remembering the colonial

Most of the colonial buildings are still in use and some are related to Indonesia's independence and to Sukarno. Other places are everyday places that are built in the colonial period but lost their direct connection to it. This is seen when respondents are asked about the contemporary ties these places have with the past. Aesthetic and architectural qualities are characteristics that are mentioned the most when asked what is typically for the colonial Dutch infrastructure. Present day Bandung is dominated by buildings that are formed by function and practicality resulting in massive concrete multi-storied structures. The difference with new buildings is that most of these colonial houses have more decorations incorporated in the architectural style which is appreciated. The buildings are perceived as strong and well built, better than modern buildings. Continuing on the ties of these places with the colonial period, it seems that heritage as a selective instrument to create a new identity was successfully used. To form a sense of national identity, certain things should be officially recalled while there has to be agreement on what should be forgotten. This 'official nationalism' requires a version of history that is made up of cultural traditions (Kusno, 1998).

Jones & Shaw (2006) argue that stories of nationalization often overwrite other memories and histories because policies concerning urban development and renewal focus on Indonesian nationalism and less on the more exotic or colonial history. This is also found in this study but interestingly enough, it also appears that not all relations to the colonial period continue to be negative. There can be rejection of the official nationalism raised by personal memories:

"Indonesian government try to make the Dutch look bad. But we still benefit from it. Older people still refer to the colonial period as 'jam normal', the normal times, so now we live in times that are not normal. So for some people those times gave a good impression of the Dutch. But for people with nationalism inside, it's bad; they don't like us to speak like this. That we appreciate the Dutch and what the Dutch did for us. They call it 'Belanda is Penjaja' (meaning the Dutch dominate and oppress). For nationalistic people and politics. And we now see how they govern their own people, which is worse than the Dutch times with the corruption and everything." (Pribasari, 65)

Two of the older respondents that experienced the colonial period admitted that there are some bad memories. Their recollections did not go into detail about that period but there is a sense of forgiveness. Time heals hostilities and memories of conflict fade, changing the meaning of reminders of a despised colonial past (Ashworth, 2009). One respondent said that it does not mean that one should forget about the pain, but it is not necessary to embed this for the next generations. This is a view shared by older and younger respondents:

“We don’t look for the badness from the Netherlands. Yeah, the Netherlands colonized Indonesia and many Indonesians were downtrodden but without the Netherlands we would have been different. Although a lot of Indonesians died of kerja paksa system (forced labor) ... but who is using that infrastructure now? Yeah, Indonesia uses the infrastructure” (Suhartono, 75).

“Even though the Netherlands colonized Indonesia, we cannot deny the positive role they had when they colonized us. Netherlands played a vital role in the construction of infrastructure in Indonesia. They built it long ago, but we’re still using Dutch infrastructure.”(Muhamad, 22)

The need for preservation in relation to the confirmation of identity is another heritage meaning that was common among respondents. Almost every respondent said it was important to keep the colonial buildings for the future. Apart from the architectural qualities ascribed to these buildings respondents found them to contain a strong message for future generations. A common uniting factor in Indonesia’s plural society that links to Indonesia’s motto ‘Unity in diversity’:

“The buildings need to be preserved as physical proof that we have been colonized by the Dutch. We look at to the history to create a sense of nationalism and unity in the young generation. We were colonized by the Dutch, but that doesn’t mean that the buildings should be destroyed, because after all, the buildings can be converted to new functions.” (Ibu Dina, 50)

What this also shows is what Yeoh (2001) calls a contradiction in postcolonial identity as there is a mix of identification and at the same time rejection of the colonizer’s culture. Postcolonial efforts to construct a new identity do not completely dismiss colonial influences making it difficult to filter out what is pure, non-colonized self and what is the colonial past, as other. As very few Indonesians have direct experience of the colonial period, the new function of colonial buildings is overlapping and seeping into national consciousness and memory (Jones & Shaw, 2006).

Spirit of place and colonial infrastructure

In 2009 an official list containing 100 designated heritage sites was presented by the government in association with the Bandung Heritage Society. This report about the conservation of heritage states that adaptation or change to buildings is allowed as long as the change is not too drastic. This means that the function and interior of the building can change while the exterior has to be preserved (Perda: 19, 2009). Many of the 100 buildings on Bandung’s heritage conservation list are located in Braga Street. The heritage meanings of the buildings in this street differ from the importance attributed to them by the government and heritage society. The heritage meanings of this street are concerned with personal heritage and memories and the regulations are not helping in creating a common heritage. It is found that conservation guidelines lead to façadism; the outside is being retained while the interior can be

completely transformed. As happened in Singapore, original shops disappeared from the street and were replaced by hotels, bars, restaurants and pubs for tourism markets (Jones & Shaw, 2006). Awan (30), who is working as a parking assistant every day in Braga Street, said:

“The center of Bandung significantly changed; first they built a new shopping mall and a large hotel, which was a turning point. After it was completed, many shops here reopened or changed into restaurants. And there are a lot of new shops and things like KFC. I think it’s good, before this place was quiet and now many people come here.”

The change as experienced by some respondents in Braga Street is seen in other studies too. This change into a wider landscape is often experienced as a loss of ‘Kampung spirit’, the strong collective ties people had together and the loss of distinctiveness for the area they used to know (Jones and Shaw, 2006). The former characteristic of Braga Street, luxury shops for shoes and clothing and restaurants are replaced by shops that are already found throughout Bandung. The pavement in Braga Street was changed too: the original asphalt was recently replaced by black stones to give the area a more authentic feeling. A remarkable choice by the government as the road had been asphalted since the early 1920’s. This did not only change the appearance of the area:

“Braga has too many vehicles, noisy; it used to be comfortable to go there, now not any more. Asphalt is replaced by stones. And the traffic already destroyed the new road surface.” (Ayse, 55)

The changing of the colonial places in Bandung is for most people not a great concern. Two meanings can be distinguished about the change in Braga Street. A few respondents have connections that are mostly superficial while others have precious memories:

“For me personally it is not important. But perhaps for other people that area is important. The main reason is, I don’t work there, I’m just passing through the street and I never go inside those shops and buildings.” (Dudung, 30)

A place in Braga Street that is special to several people is the old bakery that opened in the early 20th century. It still serves cookies and bread made according to Dutch recipe in a similar way as they did 80 years ago. It has a nostalgic and personal meaning, a unique spirit of place that goes beyond the building and that stimulates all the senses:

“In Braga Permai, they had a cake with ‘tumila’ smell. There is no smell like that in other places, it is just in there. I often went there when my husband was still alive, twice a month maybe. The most delicious food in Braga Permai is the handmade ice cream and krentenbrood.” (Ayse, 55)

Spirits in place

During talks with several acquaintances, there was often mentioning of ghosts that are haunting old buildings or spirits that can influence the weather. There were stories that every colonial building had its own Dutch ghost. Sarwan (63), janitor and maintenance worker, was talking about a cold aura that gave him a creepy feeling whenever he was at work in the old colonial buildings of the ITB University:

“It smells and feels different, that is the character of colonial buildings. Yes, it feels different, not because I have a sixth sense or magic. My family always asks me, are you not scared in there?”

Bubandt (2009, 2012) described multiple stories in Indonesia confirming that spirits and ghosts are part of everyday life and are normally accepted entities in Indonesian culture. One respondent describes an encounter with a spirit in Goa Belinda (the Dutch cave). This cave served as a water tunnel before it was used as a bunker by the Dutch military in the Second World War. He explains it is an important religious site he visits every month:

“I always go there with my friends, around four men. My friends and I are having a ritual there. Only gathering inside the cave in the night. We came to that cave because of our soul is being called to go there. And when we have ritual there, one of us suddenly got possessed by a ghost spirit! And all of a sudden and unconsciously our friend starts speaking to us, in Dutch! A Dutch ghost took control of him. We can't and do not speak Dutch in our daily life. It was so strange.” (Dudung, 30)

Discussion

These findings suggest that heritage meanings are related to national identity and the personal memories connected to residual colonial infrastructure. The most common heritage meaning of colonial infrastructure is related to the independence of Indonesia. A direct connection between the colonial infrastructure and the colonial period is not seen; new functions have altered the meanings of these places. A major role is reserved for a national hero: Sukarno and places related to him are important in their contribution to the current Indonesian identity. Only specific remaining colonial places have heritage meanings that are generally recognized. These places are now related to Indonesia's independence. This means that not all meanings are shared between resident and heritage conservation organizations. This is consistent with finding of Jones & Shaw (2006) that in Jakarta Dutch legacy is more and more recognized as collective memory. Colonial heritage shapes the identity of the nation for an important part as well as the sense of what it means to be Indonesian. The postcolonial experience of colonial infrastructure tells a different story than what is usually told in western media.

One result is the current attitude towards the colonial infrastructure, most notably the emphasis on the positive sides of the colonial period: the construction of roads, railways, irrigation systems and bridges. The explicit mentioning that the bad things should be forgotten

as it is so long ago by several respondents could indicate that social desired responses were given. In Javanese society there is an unwillingness to ask questions or challenge superiors, and there is an emphasis on harmony and avoidance of conflict (Timothy, 1999; Waterton & Smith, 2010; Hampton, 2005; Hitchcock 2000). Another explanation could be that this forgetting about the colonial period is, as explained by Widom & Shepard (1996, in Kenny 1999), a conscious wish to forget the past, a lack of confidence to report to the interviewer or a feeling of embarrassment.

Bandung is a specific case with no pre-colonial infrastructure present, making it impossible to base the new identity on older Indonesian heritage. The abundance of colonial infrastructure and the capital role Bandung had during the colonial period can make the findings different from postcolonial cities that have less colonial influence. A comparable case study in multiple postcolonial cities in Asia and South America or Africa could generate a broader understanding of resident meanings on residual colonial infrastructure. Indonesia itself has several provinces that want autonomy and it would be interesting to find out if Sukarno is as important in for example Aceh or Papua as he is in Java.

Conclusion

The freedom to let the residents write their own postcolonial story resulted in a diversity of personal meanings. Ranging from daily life activities and memories of a time gone by to a spiritual connection, personal meanings give colonial infrastructure a distinct sense of place. The colonial aspect of the places is present in varying nuances: The distinction in architecture separates them from modern buildings, but it is the stories that make them matter or not. Of the many places listed as heritage, only a few have a heritage meaning that is shared by a broader group of residents. In addition there is certain gratitude attached to functional colonial infrastructure as roads and railways that are still in use today.

There are layered meanings where one place can function as a reminder of the oppression during colonial rule while it can also have a connection to the new Indonesian identity. Both the colonial and the postcolonial function are important to residents. For the creation and confirmation of national identity this means that landmarks are important while places without historical significance are not. The places that are important lost their colonial association and function and are imbued with new meaning to tell a different story. Residual colonial heritage important to the new identity is linked to symbols and heroes of independence. This provides colonial infrastructure with a binding heritage meaning supporting the unity of the new nation.

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