

My presentation focuses on architectural and town planning developments of Bandung: a town that is not only the direct result of Dutch intervention but also an epitome of modernist architecture in the Dutch East Indies in the 1920's and 1930's.

During the larger part of the nineteenth century Bandung was a rather backward settlement. Located on western Java at 165 kilometres southeast from the colony's capital Batavia (now Jakarta) its importance was for a long time exclusively related to the fact that it was the residence of the indigenous authority, the *bupati*, and of the regional representative of the government in Batavia, the resident.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century Bandung's status gradually changed though when its cool and hilly environment was increasingly exploited for the cultivation of tea and the government relocated large garrisons from Batavia to Bandung. The arrival of European military and entrepreneurs gradually changed the outlook of the town. The construction of roads, a railway connection with Batavia, shops, a Social Club, hotels, and houses generated a rather European atmosphere.

Dutch East Indies society did of course not exist of Europeans only. Far from it: Europeans were by far the smallest ethnic group in the archipelago. The majority of inhabitants was obviously of Indonesian descent while Chinese formed the second largest group. The smallest group were the Arabs and Indians from British India.

In Bandung the ratio differed slightly: here the Europeans outnumbered the Chinese. Despite the presence of various population groups the Dutch government until end of the nineteenth century paid attention to the needs of the non-European inhabitants of the archipelago. Although this policy changed around the turn of the century and subsequently several sanitation- and housing projects were initiated, projects for Europeans did prevail.

In 1911 an entirely new district was designed and executed, north of the railway. One year later the military headquarters moved from Batavia to this particular district.

Bandung's development accelerated drastically though when the governor-general, the supreme ruler over the archipelago, in 1916 decided to relocate the major departments from Batavia to Bandung. A decision prompted by the consideration that the relatively cool climate offered a far healthier place to live and work than the marshy grounds and high temperatures in Batavia.

From then on Bandung changed rapidly and radically. The extension plan designed in 1917 to accommodate the departments and the yet to be established Polytechnic almost doubled the size of the existing built up area.

Long and wide avenues created vistas and connected various neighbourhoods. Large buildings were situated on significant locations to enhance the monumentality of the plan. As, by the way, did the surrounding mountains towards which several avenues and buildings were purposely oriented. It was the 1917 plan that laid the foundation for Bandung's development and set off a building boom.

Prior to the actual building though the municipal department for public works and the development company first had to buy off the various individual rights to lands. Subsequently they prepared sites for building and coordinated the distribution of land. The latter was done according to eleven so-called 'plans': districts that each were dominated by a particular function and thus had a specific character: military, administrative, or educational for example.

After the preparatory works were finished, many new buildings were constructed. One of the most impressive but certainly the largest, was the building for the department of public works.

Another outstanding building (or rather 'buildings') constructed during the early 1920's were the two auditoriums flanking the entrance to the campus of the Polytechnic. Designed by Dutch architect Henri Maclaine Pont these buildings used aesthetic as well as constructive elements of indigenous Indonesian architecture.

What changed the outlook of Bandung most fundamental though were the houses and commercial buildings that were built. Up-to-date shops in the centre and villa's with spacious gardens in the outlying neighbourhoods soon established Bandung's reputation as both a 'garden city' and 'Paris of Java'.

Despite the abolishment, in the mid twenties, of the plan to move all departments to Bandung and the recession early 1930's, continued to develop. One of the architects who left an indelible mark in terms of quantity and style was Aalbers. His designs were characterised by horizontal, undulating lines work. I will show you some of his work in chronological order: De Eerste Nederlansch-Indische Spaarkas (Savings Bank) (DENIS) (1935), three villas (1937), Villa Tricolour (1938), the conversion of hotel Savoy Homann (1939), and the conversion of Social Club Concordia (1940).

As productive as Aalbers but far more eclectic was the oeuvre of C.P. Wolff Schoemaker. His first design was the office for Oliefabriek Insulinde (1917). Subsequently he designed various building types for which he applied a great variety of styles: the Annual Fair Building (1920), an observatory (1925), a Protestant church (1925), the conversion of Hotel Preanger (1929), Villa Isola (1932), mosque (1933), and, last but not least, a Prison (1933).

Far less remarkable from a quantitative point of view but stylistically characteristic were the buildings designed by the architectural firm Brinkman and Voorhoeve. Among their most remarkable work was villa Mei Ling (1936), and an office for Singer (1930).

During the 1920's and 1930's administrators and architects were very concerned to create and maintain Bandung's 'garden city'-character. A character created by shady roads, and many spacious and lush public gardens and parks. To preserve this outlook the municipality sometimes used rather radical (corrective) measures. This for example happened in the mid thirties when the municipality ordered the removal of existing divisions between parcels and the application of an imperative planting scheme in order to create a more uniform and spacious – more 'modern' – street scene.

The abolishment of the plan to relocate the departments did not in any way diminish the municipality's hope that one day Bandung would be the archipelago's administrative capital. Despite two profoundly revised plans though the government in Batavia did not budge: the intentions formulated in the 1910's were never realised.

The 1940's were characterised by political turmoil: the Japanese invasion in 1942, the hostilities between the Netherlands and Indonesia between 1946 and 1948, and the official transfer of sovereignty to Indonesia by the end of 1949. Hence, except for reconstruction works, no architectural projects were undertaken.

During the 1950's and 1960's very little physical change happened.

When, however, from the mid seventies onwards Indonesian economy started to prosper, things gradually altered. The demand for shopping malls, office blocks, hotels, apartments,

and more and wider roads profoundly changed the architectural and spatial outlook of Bandung.

As the new buildings were principally constructed outside the original commercial centre, the latter increasingly lost its function.

As a result old commercial property stood empty and dilapidated, while former houses were transformed into commercial buildings, former housing areas gradually commercialized, and former farmland transformed into housing areas.

The consequences are immense. Not only from an architectural but also from an environmental point of view. Air pollution, lack of natural water resources, and flooding are direct results of developments that are principally instigated by personal financial profit. Developments that will continue though as long as administrators (on all levels) and businessmen with the support of the military and the police continue to have (large) commercial interests in these developments and are above the law.

The latter is the real problem. Not lack of legislation. Legislation exists.

The problem is lack of implementation and weak jurisdiction. Money on the other hand is strong. Very strong. Thus, although the Act on Monuments prohibits demolition of buildings over 50 years old without prior consent and even contains a penalty clause, many buildings are demolished while the offender gets off.

Even less protected than buildings are the town plan and its characteristic features. Time and again zoning plans and building restrictions prove to be ineffective tools to prevent or stop illegitimate developments. The erection of giant billboards and high rise buildings that violate building regulations radically changed Bandung's appearance over the last 15 years.

Though many inhabitants regret the loss of historical buildings and townscapes, only a few actively fight for their survival. Bandung Society for Heritage Conservation has been a player since 1987. Using various media this association lobbies for the conservation of Bandung's unique built heritage.

With varying degrees of success. Many buildings were lost: Elita Cinema (1980), Olcott Park Hotel (1989), Singer Building (1993), and Siliwangi Mess (2002). Others were saved: among them Bookshop Van Dorp (1989), Villa 'De Locomotief' (2000), Oliefabrieken Insulinde (1995/1999/2004).

One of BHS's great victories was the 'Honourable Mention'-certificate granted by UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Committee on Heritage Awards for Culture Heritage Conservation for one of its most active members for the restoration of a house designed by and lived in by one of Bandung's leading architects of the 1920's and 1930's.

Over the years BHS's policy to achieve their goals changed significantly though. Initially the arguments put forward to save or preserve a building were architectural, aesthetic, historical, social, and emotional. Today mainly legal arguments are used to oppose new and intruding developments. The problem however is that, because of the huge financial and political interests of new developments, investors and other interested parties will use all conceivable means to secure their execution. Bearing in mind that Indonesia ranks high in the world's list of corrupt countries worldwide, I think I need to get into details.

Only last month BHS and many citizens opposed a plan to build a 14 story 25.000 m² mega-complex that violates all local, provincial and national laws and regulations. A project located

opposite one of Bandung's best known and much loved landmark buildings, the former department for 'Public Works' – now the office of the governor of West Java and the commissioner of the project. project violates all conceivable local, provincial and national laws and regulations environment.

Thus, more than anything else, the crusade to preserve Bandung's architectural heritage has become a political crusade. What is really needed though, is a mentality change. Only if politicians and businessmen start thinking 'community and future' instead of 'family and private pockets' does Bandung's built heritage stand a chance to survive. If not, the likelihood is that within a 100 years after Bandung was nicknamed 'Paris of Java', even the slightest built reference to it's former architectural heyday will be gone forever.