

My presentation deals with the aftermath of my research on town planning in Nederlands-Indië during the first half of the XX. The origin of this presentation is the post-war discussion between the Indonesian architect/planner Soesilo and the Dutch archaeologist Van Romondt on the 1948-plan for Kebayoran Baru near Batavia. The differences in opinion between Van Romondt (who was of the opinion that the Kebayoran Baru plan was too 'Western' i.e. was too far removed i.e. barely bore any connection with indigenous plans) and Soesilo (who argued that for Indonesia in order to catch up with the rest of the world it needed to apply Western models) made me curious, particularly about Van Romondt who seemed to be of a much more conservative opinion than Soesilo.

My curiosity led me to some of Van Romondt's his former students. While talking to them the name 'Kentucky Contract Team' regularly popped up. This again led me to yet another question, namely whether it was maybe the presence of this 'team' that caused the different outlook of Indonesian town plans that were designed in the second half of the twentieth century.

It were the Kentucky Team and this change in outlook that stimulated my research into the 'Americanization' of Indonesian planning. A research that is not yet finished but of which I am happy to be able to share some aspect with you today.

Before getting into that, I will however give you on a quick overview of planning developments in the archipelago until 1945 - as I think it is relevant to have a reference of the developments that took place after 1950.

VOC-officials in the early XVII laid out Batavia the way towns were designed in Holland: a geometric plan intersected by canals [map Batavia 1650] and built up with Dutch-style houses.

After the VOC's bankruptcy at the end of the XVIII, the Dutch state gained full control over the lucrative trade in the archipelago in 1830. In 1870 this monopoly was abolished, enabling entrepreneurs once again to set up businesses and trade with the colony. A change with far-reaching effects: not only because the Dutch started conquering regions that before were more or less untouched (Sumatra, Aceh, Bali), but also because the arrival of large numbers of Europeans thoroughly changed the economic, social and cultural landscape of the colony.

Though not exclusively, the Dutch administration from the start first and foremost provided the needs of the Dutch/European population. Thus in the early XIX a new neighbourhood was developed south of Batavia. To address the none relenting demands for housing, another extension plan adjacent to this area was designed and realised in the 1910's.

Other projects the Dutch during the first half of the XX increasingly took up were improvements of insalubrious hygienic conditions in existing neighbourhoods – both European or indigenous – new housing projects for the indigenous population and new infrastructural works.

While working on these planning projects the architects involved seemed well aware of developments in the Netherlands, other European countries (particularly Germany) and the USA. One reason was that - notwithstanding only a very few exceptions - all architects were trained in the Netherlands. Another reason was that many of them had subscriptions to Dutch or other overseas journals. And last but not least, more than one architect when travelling to the Netherlands for his long leave (sabbatical), travelled via the USA.

Though with some delay, architects in the Dutch East Indies seemed to be aware of developments in the West. Thus, after it was generally acknowledged that economic changes

and population growth made proper town planning indispensable, arguments in favour of regional and even national planning gradually emerged in the 1930's.

A discussion that, although its advocates felt really strong about it, only seemed an issue in every day practice. That is to say: as town planning was not part of the curriculum for students who studied civil engineering at Bandung's Polytechnic, it only seems logic that teaching regional or national planning was never even considered. Although modelled after the Polytechnic in Delft, lectures in Bandung on architecture were absolutely secondary to civil engineering – before as well as after WWII.

The appointment of the colony's leading architect in town planning, Thomas Karsten, as professor for planning in 1941 did not change this for the better as it was only a couple of months later that Japan occupied the colony and 'normal' life was disrupted altogether.

After Japan surrendered (in August 1945) the situation in the archipelago was extremely unstable and tensed due to the Dutch refusal to acknowledge Indonesia's independence – proclaimed four days after Japan surrendered. A situation that did not stop the Dutch from continuing their work in the field of planning and architecture, though.

Because of the very different circumstances compared to the situation before WWII the projects developed immediately after the war necessarily were of a very different character than those before the war. Priority was now given to the reconstruction of towns that were largely damaged because of war casualties. No easy task as only 6 professional architects were available to get all the work done.

As Karsten passed away during his internment, his Indonesian assistant Soesilo and Jac.P. Thijsse, an architect who prior to WWII worked for the municipality of Bandoeng, took the lead. In order to coordinate the reconstruction works as good as possible Thijsse already in 1946 established a Central Planning Bureau (CPB). The bureau's first objective was to list the need for reconstruction works throughout the archipelago and assist local administrators drawing up and executing reconstruction plans.

The fact that the damages in some areas created an opportune situation for improvements on a regional scale, Thijsse – who in the 1930's had been one of the promoters of regional planning – seized the opportunity and designed a regional reconstruction plan for North Celebes (Sulawesi). Unfortunately up until today no other material than some brief descriptions on this plan have surfaced.

Another project that was on a local scale but of an entirely different character than any pre-war town plan was the plan for Kebayoran Baru (New Kebayoran), a satellite town south of Batavia.

Designed to address the seemingly never ending housing shortage in particular for the low-to middle income group, Kebayoran Baru's lay-out very much followed pre-war/Karsten's ideas. Living, working, recreation, and green were carefully balanced and arranged, according to the various zones in which the plan was divided.

It was this plan, designed by the Soesilo that led Van Romondt to discuss the nature (and future!) of Indonesian town planning.

The unbuilt area between the Kebayoran Baru and Batavia was to remain a green belt, only to be transected by a 4,5 kilometre long main road connecting the two centres.

I will show you some images of the architecture in Kebayoran Baru. Although all the

architecture was designed by Dutch architects Indonesians today label the style of the majority of these buildings 'Jenki'.

What inspired CPB - or more precisely, Thijsse - to build a satellite town so far has not been found in the archives. Given the fact that the plan for a satellite was presented after Thijsse attended a conference on planning in Great Britain in 1946, I presume - though I did not find any record of this - that during this conference Abercrombie's Greater London Plan was presented and/or discussed [Greater London Plan]. This plan very well might have 'inspired' Thijsse to transfer this idea to Indonesia in order to address the continual housing shortage in Batavia - and eventually other towns.

While Kebayoran Baru was under construction the Netherlands finally agreed to acknowledge Indonesian Independence as of 1st of January, 1950. In the aftermath of the transfer of sovereignty, all Dutch professionals in leading positions were replaced by Indonesians. This so-called 'Indonesianisasi' implied that Thijsse could no longer lead the Central Planning Bureau. As he did not want to leave Indonesia but had to make ends meet, he took up a teaching position at the former Polytechnic in Bandung. As did Soesilo who, after Thijsse's suggestion to appoint him as his successor at CPB was ignored, rather frustrated moved back to Bandung.

Although the 'Indonesianisasi' did not seem to cause too much friction - also after 1950 several young Dutch architects opted for a career in Indonesia - relations between former colonised and former colonizer remained tense. This was blatantly obvious when president Soekarno in 1954 told the Dutch to 'go to hell' with their 'assistance'. Two years later diplomatic relations between both countries became to a complete standstill when Soekarno refused further negotiations with the Dutch of New Guinea.

While on the one hand the diplomatic relations between Indonesia and the Netherlands deteriorated, the relation with other European countries AND the USA improved. Not long after Soekarno told the Dutch to 'go to hell' he signed a contract with the Kentucky Team within the framework of the US Assistance Programme. At the same time architects from Germany and Austria were appointed at the school of architecture of the newly established University of Indonesia - Bandung's former Polytechnic.

Dutch teachers the alumni from this school remember were Van Romondt (who taught architectural history), Thijsse (who, to his own frustration, lectured planning to each group of students for only two hours per week), Soesilo (for architecture and planning), Zeilemaker (for modeling), Mulder (for drawing and painting), and occasional guest lecturers (Maarten Westerduin).

Besides these Dutch teachers the German Schonherr (Mrs., for interior design), Lechner (Mrs, for?) Mesnig (for ? (unknown)), Nofsinger (of whom the name is uncertain and his subject not remembered) were appointed. From the Kentucky Team all alumni remember a teacher called Heinz (for planning), but no other name.

Given the fact that the school for architecture opened in 1953 and the number of students initially was very limited (2 students graduated in 1956, 5 in 1957 and another 5 the year after), it is not unlikely that only a small number of teachers sufficed to serve the students. In other words, it could well have been that the staff from Kentucky at the school of architecture was indeed limited to Heinz, only.

According to my interviewees the arrival of the Germans, Austrians and Americans did not cause impressive changes in the curriculum. The division in four courses (planning ('planologi'), representative architecture ('monumental'), utilitarian, and social housing) as set

up by Van Romondt in 1953, remained unchanged.

What did change (though not mentioned by the alumni), was the establishment of a school in Bandung that solely focussed on city and regional planning. [cover brochure] This school was a division of the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) – formerly known as the school for architecture of the university of Indonesia and prior to that the Bandung Polytechnic.

Two members of the staff of this new division at ITB were architects from Harvard, W.A. Doebele Jr. and J. Tyrwhitt, who acted on behalf of the UN. The curriculum [curriculum] only dealt with planning. This was new: up until then the planning component at the school for architecture had been rather limited.

After the Kentucky Team left Indonesia in 1962, it was not replaced by another American team: neither during the last years of Soekarno's reign (during which he increasingly 'sympathized' for China and the USSR) nor during Soeharto's presidency. Though ties with America temporarily weakened in the early 1960's, they were strengthened again when Soeharto took over power. This time however, the USA no longer sent Americans to Indonesia but instead, by providing scholarships, enabled Indonesian students to study in the USA.

According to my interviewees it was not until the first levy of these 'scholarship graduates' returned to Indonesia in the early 1970's, that new paradigms and approaches in architecture and planning occurred. Changes they did not notice in the 1960's when Indonesian architects were appointed who graduated from schools of architecture in Delft, Berlin, or London.

To end this presentation I will now show you a few images of the 1962 low-coast housing project that I describe in my paper.

The governor of Djakarta in 1957 decided the development of Djakarta had to be stimulated. In order to do this in a more or less orderly way an plan indicating the development areas for the next 15 years was designed.

As developments went (much) faster and the population increased more rapidly than anticipated, this plan needed be revised only five years later. As you can see here, five satellite towns were projected to accommodate the future inhabitants of Djakarta.

One of the appointed areas in the revised plan became the project three Indonesian post-graduate students in Denmark developed in cooperation with their Danish teachers and UN consultant Kenneth Watts. A project that was intended to be a model project for low-cost housing in South-East Asia.

Projected on a very extensively built area at five kilometres from the centre of Djakarta, the team developed a plan combining Western notions of planning (zoning, separated traffic flows, pedestrian areas, high-rise) with Indonesian/Asian notions of society.

The end result was a plan in which from the centre outward the scale of the plots, the buildings, streets and social communities gradually diminished.

Concluding remarks

I don't think 'modernization' was the drive behind the 'Americanization' of Indonesian planning. From my point of view the motive was much more pragmatic than idealistic: as Dutch involvement gradually diminished during the 1950's, Indonesia accepted assistance offered by the Americans.

The import of Western ideas was not new: this already started with the arrival of the VOC.

What was new was that American involvement was not limited to Americans working in Indonesia but was extended to Indonesians by offering them opportunities to study in the USA.

According to Indonesian architects today, involvement of the Americans in Indonesian planning did not replace European architecture and planning until the early 1970's.

Indonesians today who continue(d) their studies in Europe detect differences between the Indonesian (i.e. American?) and the European (i.e. Dutch) planning methods. The most significant of them being that projects in Indonesia are on a larger scale, pay less attention to detail and when conservation is concerned, the fabrics less 'sensitive' than the European approach. Whether these observations are accurate needs to be further investigated.

There are two topics I did not mention in this presentation (nor in my paper): the topics of contemporary Indonesian architecture and the question of how to relate to Indonesian culture.

To start with the latter: many Western oriented projects have proven that a 'cut and paste' application of Western models to Indonesia due to strong and seemingly ineradicable cultural behaviour will fail. A more sensitive/hybrid approach is therefore inevitable to be successful.

The first one is not a new topic. Even the Dutch discussed at length the desirable character of contemporary 'Indische' architecture. Today young architects discuss what contemporary Indonesian architecture (should) look like. That America does not provide the (only) answer, is something many of them are convinced of - although in their daily life most of them don't put their action where their mouths are.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my presentation, there are still many gaps in this research. (A so far 'not done' study is required of contemporary projects, professional magazines, newspapers, and books.) I hope that nonetheless that my presentation will contribute to the theme of this conference.