

Introduction

Marieke Kuipers

Settlements, while man-made, are like cultural organisms. Once laid out, even if only as a modest village, they can evolve into cities, even metropolises, in a dynamic process. Yet urban cores retain the DNA of their fabric and structure. The process of adaptation, renewal and sometimes decay is partly influenced by natural forces, but is mostly the result of cultural and economic factors. The recognition of heritage values in the historical structures and buildings in these cores is one of those cultural factors, albeit of relatively recent origin and not always evident nor consistent. The drafting of policies and composing of architectural designs for future developments are others. Policies and designs are often made through intense interaction and are accompanied by heated debates about ambitions, priorities and urban identity. Basically, all such debates deal with the appreciation of the built environment of the city as it is inherited from the past in the present, and in view of actual questions concerning change and continuity for or in the future. The process of valuing the past is neither static nor unequivocal, partly depending on the position and knowledge of the stakeholders involved and also influenced by the *zeitgeist*.

In the case of South Africa, the interpretation of heritage sites leads inevitably to a critical evaluation of the age-old, often-troubled past and its remaining structures as reminders of this past. According to the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999), all structures older than 60 years are

automatically protected; they may not be damaged, altered, removed, subdivided or their planning status changed without the approval of the relevant heritage resources authority or local authority. In practice, however, the heritage values are only barely perceptible to the broader public. Only if serious pre-defined changes are planned are Heritage Impact Assessments required by the Act in order to prevent unwanted destruction. Such assessments are indeed useful in giving insight into the 'don'ts' when urban renewal or architectural interventions to adapt heritage sites to new needs are envisaged. But often the impact assessments have shortcomings in their aptness for indicating the 'tolerance for change' before the process of (re) design starts to steer the process in a positive direction.

Rather than emphasizing the shortcomings and risks, it is more effective to advance a strategy that aims at a holistic approach in both urban development and the adaptive reuse of architectural heritage, as an integrated endeavour aimed at sustaining the cultural continuity of the place and its historic features. Such function-orientated strategies for revitalising historic inner cities are not only promoted by the 1975 *Declaration of Amsterdam* of the Council of Europe but also the new 2011 UNESCO *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*.¹ They are also part of the Dutch policy framework for the exchange of knowledge on the Shared Heritage, particularly the built heritage, in a select group of priority countries, including South Africa.²

Left: A view of the historic core of Tshwane from the Union Buildings—an iconic vista. (Marieke Kuipers)

¹ Clarke, 2015; Kuipers, 2015.

² The preceding Mutual Heritage programme (2008–2013) included, apart from South Africa, Brazil, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Russia, Sri Lanka and Surinam; the current Shared Heritage programme (2013–2017) is extended to include Australia, Japan and the United States of America, whereas Ghana is no longer included; see Corten, 2014 and Van Golen, 2010.

initial justification for this policy framework was based mainly on the historical relations associated with the colonial activities of the former West India Company and East India Company. Yet South Africa does not only share a well-known mutual past with the former Dutch Republic as represented by the Cape Dutch buildings of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. There is also the lesser known shared heritage of Eclectic ZA Wilhelmiens architecture that resulted from the contributions of Dutch-born architects and engineers to the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* (ZAR) (1854–1902) and the subsequent Union of South Africa (1910–1961). The term ‘ZA Wilhelmiens’ has been coined by a group of architect-researchers affiliated with the University of Pretoria, to express the Dutch link of the period that roughly coincides with the life of the Dutch queen Wilhelmina (1880–1962).³

In response to various initiatives, the Shared Heritage programme of South Africa and the Netherlands shifted its focus in 2009 on the built heritage from the Dutch period at the Cape towards the Eclectic ZA Wilhelmiens legacy in the administrative capital of South Africa, Pretoria. Since then, students in architecture have been involved in the functional analyses and design-oriented investigations of the inner city and its shared heritage based on the ‘cultural landscapes’ paradigm.⁴ Their involvement can be beneficial for both the local planning authorities (which are informed by the students’ imaginative powers for reuse) and the students themselves, who are enabled to engage with real-life assignments and obtain problem-specific training. They have to acquire the necessary skills for a sensitive approach to the challenging assignments of revitalisation and adaptive reuse. This type of heritage-informed design can only be taught in the setting of a master studio through case studies—an academic laboratory where students can experiment with ideas for real situations and assignments, as challenges for architectural or urban interventions under the supervision of experienced teachers in these matters. As representatives of the new generation, it is expected that the

students will have a fresh take on the past of South Africa and the present innate qualities of the capital, as well as at the potentials for integrating its multi-faceted heritage in future urban developments.

The urban core of today’s Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, Church Square and the surrounding centre, is without any doubt a place of great historic significance. Its origin dates back to the 1850s, when the Boers founded Pretoria as a *kerkplaats* on the plains in the Apies River Valley. It was the capital of the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* (ZAR) until the latter’s demise through its surrender to the occupying British forces in 1902. Afterwards, the town remained the administrative capital of the successive regimes in South Africa, and over time it prospered and grew into a large metropolis. While Church Square might still form the geographic centre of the capital, it has become less central in socio-economic terms. From a socio-cultural and functional perspective, new investigations of the potential for reuse and redevelopment of abandoned heritage sites are urgently needed so as to again turn the heart of the city into a lively place for Tshwane’s citizens and, possibly, tourists. In other words, the current challenge is to ‘re-centre the City’, however contradictory this may sound.

The theme was further elaborated during the responsive Re-Centring Tshwane Laboratory, organised in August 2014 as a master class presented to Honours-level students at the Department of Architecture of the University of Pretoria, with the involvement of Dutch experts (partly affiliated with the Delft University of Technology). The Lab was a multi-purpose endeavour for the exchange of knowledge and the investigation of favourable options for the revitalisation of three selected heritage sites in the heart of Tshwane. These are within walking distance of each other and directly or indirectly associated with (former) public uses. The first is the public space of Church Square, where the golden era of the ZAR is embodied in the Old Raadsaal and the Palace of Justice, both designed by the

³ See Bakker, Clarke & Fisher, 2014.

⁴ Corten, 2010 & 2014.

Dutch-born architect Sytze Wierda. The two other sites, located in the adjacent and partly desolate north-western quadrant of the city, are the Old Government Printing Works (also by Wierda) and Old Synagogue (by Beardwood and Ibler). Both are moth-balled and awaiting respectful reuse and re-incorporation into the public realm. The Lab enabled fruitful experimentation in research-by-design approaches for architectural conservation, which allowed for testing the 'cultural carrying capacity' of the three heritage sites through the students' designs for architectural interventions related to the suggested reuses.⁵

The outcomes of the Re-Centring Tshwane Lab were presented to the principal stakeholders and others on 1 September 2014, during a public session with debates in the Bosman Street Grootkerk. We are extremely grateful that Prof. Karel Bakker (1956–2014), who had supported this project from the very beginning, was able to attend and to participate in the public discussions. He had also whole-heartedly supported our intentions to publish a research report of this Lab, the result of which comes out one year later. This publication does not only compile the identified potentials for future development of the three case studies, but also includes specially added essays by experts from both South Africa and the Netherlands to embed the students' design exercises in a broader conceptual framework.

The Department of Architecture at the University of Pretoria has a well-established practise of engagement with the City of Tshwane and her heritage. *Roger Fisher* presents the emergence of the traditions of the department, tracing these back to the to *Department Publieke Werken* of the ZAR and its successors. In exploring this history he also presents the persistence of the links of the Department with the Netherlands, a continued association of which this publication forms part.

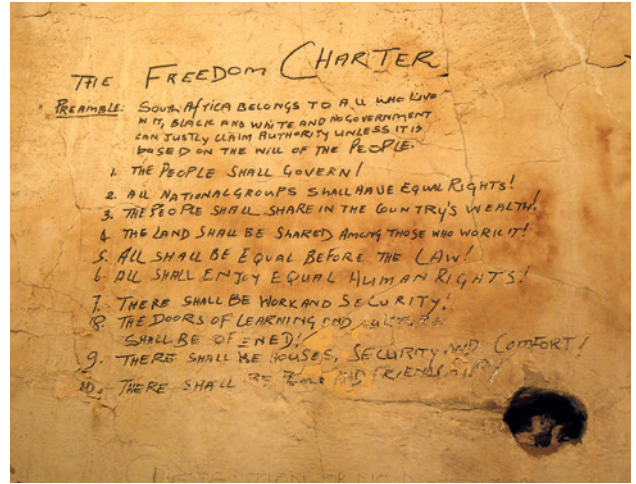
In this publication, *Jean-Paul Corten* introduces the issues of 'shared heritage' as a trans-national concept, and 'integrated conservation' as a holistic approach to urban heritage strategies. Even if the significances of the inherited buildings and monuments may be seen from different perspectives, the aim of the South-African–Dutch Shared Heritage programme is to create favourable conditions for a joint future.

The future perspectives on built heritage as an asset for urban development are addressed by *Ishmael Mbokhodo*. He locates these in the broader context of the current ambitions of the City of Tshwane to regenerate the inner city as its face and heartbeat. Adaptive reuse of public heritage buildings is, therefore, a critical contribution to the vitality of the city. Just as important is the recreation of a greater role for pedestrians in the public spaces of the urban core, for, he notes, they are probably the most critical contributors to a successful retail and leisure centre.

Nicholas Clarke and *Frans Lourens* describe current planning issues and the institutional perspectives to the challenges facing the Capital. They describe the reasons for the current dysfunctional urban morphology of the city, and present the imbalances and the various policies, plans and mechanisms that have been developed to counter these and further develop the city as fully-fledged national capital.

After these general political frameworks, the academic setting of the Lab and its educational context is described. *Nicholas Clarke* and *Johan Swart* explain how the assignment for the Honours students of the Heritage and Cultural Landscapes studio is defined, and why the research-by-design approach is part of the teachings in architectural conservation. In the Lab most students were confronted for the first time with the dual assignment of finding an adaptive reuse for a heritage site, and drafting

⁵ See Kuipers and Quist, 2013.



Student engagement in the Lab included individual work, group discussions and site visits, such as to the holding cells under the Palace of Justice. (Marieke Kuipers)

the related architectural intervention in a coherent design that is respectful of the attributed heritage values according to their own analyses. The Lab has proven a challenging test environment for all to explore this difficult assignment.

The characteristics and challenges of the three heritage sites that were investigated as case studies for research-by-design are discussed by *Nicholas Clarke* and *Adrian de Villiers*. They summarize the origins and evolution of the three places chosen to test the strategic intervention potentials, and situate each site in the broader context of Pretoria's history and Tshwane's future challenges in relation to their multiple heritage values.

Provocatively, *Edna Peres* and *Job Roos* argue that Tshwane is already a resilient city, and that the municipality's ambitions towards a Resilient Capital also requires reflection on the concept of resilience as such. They notice that resilience thinking in the urban environment can be approached from either a systemic or a normative perspective, which partly overlap, and that heritage can play a great role in building the resilience of the city.

This report concludes with the 'Lessons Learnt' from the students' research-by-design experiments in the Lab, as distilled by *Nicholas Clarke*, *Marieke Kuipers* and *Johan Swart*. The students came up with attractive, and sometimes surprising, suggestions for reusing the heritage sites, inspired by history and actuality. In general, the Lab proved that the UNESCO *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape* is a useful tool for drafting heritage-based strategies for urban redevelopment. For every case study a summary is given of the appraisal of the heritage site, with recommendations for 'do's and don'ts' in relation to redevelopment potentials. The greatest challenge lies in addressing change while maintaining and augmenting the dignity of place. Within the transformative *Tshwane Vision 2055*, the heritage resources of the historic city core can be inclusive of all the citizens of the multi-cultural capital of South Africa.

To our great regret, Karel Bakker could not see the final result of the Lab's report. To honour his good spirit and lasting inspiration, we dedicate this publication to his memory, and commemorate his life and his heritage endeavours on the African continent, particularly that of sub-Saharan Africa.

References

- Bakker, K.A., Clarke, N.J. & Fisher, R.C. eds. 2014. *Eclectic ZA Wilhelmiens: A shared Dutch built heritage in South Africa*. Pretoria: Visual Books.
- Clarke, N.J. 2015. Futures for a collective past: The South African after-life of the European Architectural Heritage Year of 1975. In: Falser M. & Lipp W. eds. *A Future for our Past: The 40th anniversary of European Architectural Heritage Year (1975–2015)*. Berlin: Bäßler, 376–386.
- Corten, J.P. 2014. *Shared Heritage Joint Future: SCH-projects overview 2009–2013*. Amersfoort: Netherlands Cultural Heritage Agency.
- Corten, J.P. & Van Dun, P. 2010. *History in progress: Future perspectives of Pretoria's historical core*. Amersfoort: Cultural Heritage Agency, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, The Netherlands. Available at: <http://repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/13943> [Accessed 19 August 2015].
- Kuipers, M.C. 2015. Dutch Conversions in Conservation: The European Architectural Heritage Year and its Aftermath in the Netherlands. In: Falser M. & Lipp W. eds. *A Future for our Past: The 40th anniversary of European Architectural Heritage Year (1975–2015)*. Berlin: Bäßler, 190–200.
- Kuipers, M.C. & Quist, W.J. eds. 2013. *Culturele draagkracht: Op zoek naar de tolerantie voor verandering bij gebouwd erfgoed*. Delft: Delftdigitalpress.
- Van Golen, C.J. 2010. *Footsteps and Fingerprints: The Legacy of a Shared History*. Zwolle/The Hague: Waanders Publishers.

