

Shared heritage, joint future

The South African-Dutch cooperation in the field of inner city regeneration

Jean-Paul Corten

Current efforts to re-centre Tshwane—the main subject of this publication—are not an exclusively South African phenomenon. They form part of a movement to revitalize the historical cores of our ever-expanding cities; a trend that can be encountered on literally all continents today. Historical features seem to provide a strategic asset in the urge to attract the post-modern resident, the creative entrepreneur, and the leisure-seeking visitor to our cities. The South African–Dutch cooperation in the field of inner city regeneration serves both countries in their aim to face the issue. This cooperation is based upon a joint policy framework, which in turn is based upon a mutual history. This mutual history is not free of injustice and inequality and is currently a subject of contestation. The challenge of the bilateral South African–Dutch cooperation is not to eliminate such contestation in practice, but rather to investigate possibilities to adapt historical features to current social needs.

Introduction

In the year 2013 the city of Tshwane launched its long-term development plan, entitled *Tshwane Vision 2055: Remaking South Africa's Capital City*. The *Vision* is the result of extensive debate and public participation that started much earlier and has been prepared to guide the expected growth and development of the city for the next 40 years. It sets out a plan of action to provide high-quality living for the city's current and future residents. The document presents an ambitious vision: fostering a liveable, resilient and inclusive city.¹ Tshwane's current

policy can thus be considered as an invitation to the heritage sector to get involved, since—as will be argued—the historical urban landscape has much to contribute to the *Vision's* goals. These same ambitions that Tshwane formulated in 2013 are present in the United Nations' new Sustainable Development Goals. Contrary to the Millennium Goals set earlier, which ended in 2015, the new Sustainable Development Goals have a spatial dimension and focus on today's urban urgencies,² thus calling for the international heritage community to get involved.

Left: Constitution Hill seen from the Old Fort as site with a shared and contested past, once a site of oppression now in service of a democratic South Africa. (Marieke Kuipers)

1 <http://www.tshwane2055.gov.za/home/tshwane-2055-info/tshwane-vision-2055>
2 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabledevelopmentgoals>

Yet, recent events show that the remaining heritage of the mutual age-old South African–Dutch past can be evaluated from different angles, and that its significance for today’s society and the city’s future can, eventually, be heavily contested. A number of historic statues all over South Africa has of late borne the brunt of frustration with injustice and inequality. The Paul Kruger statue, located on Church Square, the most central public space of the country’s capital, is one of them. The same frustration has been vented against the statues of Cecil Rhodes, Jan van Riebeeck and others. They are all confronted with calls for them to ‘step down their pedestals’ on account of the historic injustice associated with their persons.³ These protests are indicative of the position that history holds in the political debate in South Africa today. They also demonstrate the need of current generations to re-position themselves in relation to their past. As such the protests are necessary and help to define a future perspective for the nation. The Dutch policy on shared heritage is not aimed at positioning itself in this debate. It is up to the South African people themselves to determine the place their historic statues hold in society.

What we should note at the same time is that the built structures surrounding Paul Kruger’s statue on Church Square have to date remained excluded from this debate. Yet buildings like the Palace of Justice or the old Government Buildings are artefacts relating to this same contested history too. Are buildings less burdened by their past? Or do they simply bear a greater ability to adapt to shifting needs and changing regimes than statues do? South Africa has brilliant examples of adaptive re-use of historical structures with a contested past. Robben

Island is an appealing one. For a long time this was the place to incarcerate opponents of successive repressive regimes; today it is presented as ‘a symbol of the triumph of the human spirit over adversity’.⁴ Even more inspiring are the transformations that have been executed at Constitutional Hill in Johannesburg. Here the former prison, extensively utilised by the ruthless Apartheid regime, has been turned into the symbol of a growing democracy, housing the country’s highest court. Adapting built heritage to current needs and linking heritage conservation to the social agenda is a subject where South Africa and the Netherlands have common interests as well as experiences to share.⁵ For that reason cooperation between the countries is prioritized on activities with a clear social and economic impact.⁶

The current cooperation in heritage conservation between South Africa and the Netherlands was established by a Memorandum of Understanding on Shared Cultural Heritage, signed between the two nations in the year 2004. The memorandum should be considered a further elaboration of the Netherlands–South African Cultural Accord of 1996, restoring historic cultural bonds between the two countries after the Apartheid regime ended.⁷ It so happened that the first Cultural Accord of 1951 had been frozen by the Dutch Government in 1977 in response to the brutal suppression of the Soweto-uprising of 1976. Shortly afterwards, in 1981, the Accord was unilaterally cancelled by the Dutch Government.⁸ The goal of the current policy is not only to conserve a shared heritage but also to enhance relations between the two countries and to promote joint ventures between the two nations.⁹

3 Ndlazi, 2015: 10.

4 <http://www.robben-island.org.za/>

5 Kuipers, 2015.

6 Accommodate Cultural Diversity.

7 Cultural Agreement.

8 Clarke, 2015.

9 Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



"There goes the neighbourhood". A 2002 parody by cartoonist Jonathan Zapiro of the 1851 Charles Bell painting depicting the landing of Jan van Riebeeck at the Cape in 1652. (Jonathan Zapiro)



*The Dolphin Fountain, Castle of Good Hope.
The Castle is one of the most well-known of shared
South African Dutch heritage sites. (Johan Swart)*

Shared heritage

Neither history nor heritage is restrained by country borders. Thus there is reason for heritage conservation to cross borders. This was the underlying argument for the two countries to sign the 2004 memorandum. Their joint history originated in 1652 when the Dutch East India Company established a refreshment station at the southern point of Africa to supply its numerous vessels sailing between Amsterdam and the East Indies. It did not take long before the surrounding Cape hinterland was colonized, heralding an extended period of foreign rule. The transfer of governance of the Cape from the Dutch to the British in 1806 did not end the relations between the two parts of the world. Family ties remained and migration of new Dutch settlers continued. The establishment of the Boer Republics midway into the 19th century in the northeast of the sub-continent brought a substantial influx of Dutch-born migrants to the southern part of Africa. This is the reason why still today the Netherlands have such a large number of family ties with South Africa, probably more than with any other country in the world. This was also a source of the conflict between loyalty and aversion, manifested in the Netherlands during the years of Apartheid and the subsequent support for the Anti-Apartheid Resistance Movements from within The Netherlands. The heritage that has resulted from the mutual history illuminates the commonalities shared by the two nations and narrates the emergent conflicts and cultural cross-pollination. It demonstrates to us that present cultures as manifest today are not a coincidence, but are related through time. This is important to note in a globalizing world.

Our current cooperation in the field of heritage conservation has a history too, and was preceded by earlier exchanges of knowledge and expertise between the two countries. Early exchanges took place mainly through civic initiatives and were incidental by nature. The earliest found evidence of such exchange is through the reports of historian and archivist J.C. Overvoorde, which date from 1911. In the early 20th century he travelled to South Africa to explore the shared heritage and to attract attention to its preservation.¹⁰ In the late 20th century it was the late Prof. C.L. Temminck Groll from the

Delft University of Technology who documented this shared heritage. His findings were published in his magnum opus *The Dutch Overseas*.¹¹ More lasting contacts were provided by non-governmental organizations like the Simon van der Stel Foundation, founded in 1959, which fostered cooperation between professionals of the two countries. In the 1990s a global trend saw various international specialists join forces to advance a new interest in histories and heritage that crossed the borders of the nations, particularly those with formerly colonial connections. This mutual past (as stated by the Scientific Committee for Shared Built Heritage of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)) needed a critical re-appraisal based in joint acceptance of the responsibility for the associated urban and built heritage.¹²

The main subject of the earlier cooperation in heritage conservation between the Netherlands and South Africa was Cape Dutch architecture, a vernacular developed mainly by Dutch-born migrants who settled in the Cape from the 17th century onwards. It has specific features that are derived from Dutch examples, but were adapted to local circumstances and craftsmanship. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries a Cape Dutch Revival Style appeared in South Africa that was not only applied in the Cape Province but also extensively employed in construction in the northern provinces. It is only recently that attention has been brought to the so-called Eclectic ZA Wilhelmiens period in the Boer Republics at the end of the 19th century. This architecture was strongly related to the Dutch architecture of the time and distinguished itself from the contemporary Victorian Style. Strangely enough the historiography for a long time labelled this Eclectic Wilhelmiens as being Victorian.¹³ The reappraisal of the Eclectic ZA Wilhelmiens period has opened up new avenues for cooperation.

¹⁰ Attema, 1997: 332.

¹¹ Temminck Groll, 2002.

¹² ICOMOS's Scientific Committee on Shared Colonial Architecture and Town Planning, started in 1998, changed its name into Shared Built Heritage in 2003 as part of a broadening of its objectives.

¹³ Bakker, Clarke & Fisher, 2014.

A joint future

Early cooperation in the field of shared heritage focused on investigating, documenting and reserving the residue of the mutual past. The social dimensions of heritage conservation were hardly touched on. The first joint South African–Dutch project dealing with heritage conservation as a social endeavour was the Genadendal Project. Genadendal, located in one of the many idyllic valleys of the Western Cape, was established in 1738 as the first Moravian mission in South Africa. Its founding and development were largely directed from the Moravian headquarters in Zeist, the Netherlands. (It is noteworthy that the offices of the Netherlands Department for Conservation were located in this complex during the last quarter of the 20th century). In the course of time, however, the Genadendal settlement had become rather run down and was in danger of losing its vitality. The Genadendal conservation project, jointly executed by the Western Cape Cultural Commission, the Netherlands Department for Conservation and Delft University of Technology, aimed at improving living conditions by making use of the existing building stock. The improvements, implemented between 2001 and 2008, were applied in accordance with the principles of Integrated Conservation, as expressed in the Declaration of Amsterdam of 1975.¹⁴

The Genadendal project may be considered as one of the first results of public involvement in the bilateral cooperation. As noted before, early cooperation mainly took place in the civic domain. Although heritage conservation was already included as an aspect of bilateral cooperation in the aforementioned Cultural Accord of 1951, no substantial activities seem to have resulted from this policy at the time.¹⁵ At the start of the 21st century both governments made new efforts towards cooperation. The Dutch government at the time actively

approached a number of partner countries on the subject of shared heritage, resulting in two multilateral conferences. The first was held in 2000 in the Netherlands, the second was held in 2002 in Indonesia. The statement made by the South African representatives to the so-called Bandung Conference of 2002 is notable as it touches upon the social dimension of heritage conservation: "... cultural heritage is powerful and forms the basis for economic development, independence and interdependence rather than dependency. South Africa prides herself on having identified her past as a heritage resource to remember and use it to improve the lives of the present generation."¹⁶ The successive talks and negotiations eventually resulted in bilateral memoranda of understanding with seven countries, one of them South Africa.

The current policy on shared heritage, as executed since 2009, builds on the achievements of the past fruitful cooperation between the two countries; therefore the topical subject for cooperation in South Africa is the Eclectic ZA Wilhelmiens architecture, and the topical focus is Integrated Conservation. This focus fits the theme of regeneration of historical inner cities, identified as topical in the collaboration between the Netherlands and the ten partner countries. The reason for this is that much of the built heritage in the partner countries with historic Dutch association is located in historical cores. And, more importantly, most of these historical cores are under increasing pressure from either over- or underdevelopment. Urban heritage is an urgent topic, bearing great social significance. It is here that the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (the successor of the aforementioned Netherlands Department for Conservation) attempts to apply its experience in inner city regeneration by means of training or local advice.¹⁷

¹⁴ Du Preez *et al.*, 2010.

¹⁵ Clarke, 2015.

¹⁶ Madiba, 2002: 54.

¹⁷ Rijksdienstvoor het Cultureel Erfgoed.



Genadendal, street scene, 2012. (Jean-Paul Corten)



Integrated Conservation

Urban planning and heritage conservation are by tradition two separate disciplines, each working within its own paradigm to reach its own objectives. The aim of urban planning is directed towards improving living conditions and adapting urban fabric to infrastructural needs. Heritage conservation, on the other hand, has the ambition to pass historical features on to future generations in order to sustain a collective memory in the built environment. Although the aims differ, the disciplines do not exclude each other. What is more, experience has shown that both disciplines attain better results when they join forces. Historical features can add to quality of life and thereby serve the goals of the planning discipline. Planning in turn can provide favourable conditions for conserving historical features. Through urban planning a future perspective can be gained on the heritage at stake, which may help to provide it with a base for existence. Integrated Conservation is where these two disciplines meet.¹⁸

The concept of integrated conservation was first formulated in the Declaration of Amsterdam in 1975.¹⁹ It was the outcome of the Council of Europe's Congress as part of the European Architectural Heritage Year of 1975. It defines heritage conservation in a holistic way: not as an autonomous activity, but as integral part of a planning process. Since then the concept has evolved and found further expression in several subsequent documents, notably the Washington Charter of 1987,²⁰ and most recently UNESCO's 2011 *Recommendation*

on the Historic Urban Landscape.²¹ According to UNESCO, the historical urban landscape should be perceived as "... a mind-set, an understanding of the city, or part of the city, as an outcome of natural, cultural and socio-economic processes that construct it spatially, temporally, and experientially. ... [I]ts usefulness resides in the notion that it incorporates a capacity for change."²² The historical urban landscape is thus not a static object, but a dynamic subject, constantly adapting to changing circumstances. Change is considered to be an inclusive and essential element of historical identity. Excluding change would after all be a rather a-historical premise, as history happens to be determined by change.

Consequently, conserving the historical urban landscape becomes a matter of managing change. Here heritage conservation enters the urban management paradigm, fostering social and economic development, and making history the subject of political consideration and decision-making. Thus, to be effective, the discipline of heritage conservation should adapt to the discourse of urban management. Validating historical features as a stand-alone strategy is insufficient. In order to provide historical features with a basis for existence we should rather develop achievable future perspectives. The challenge is therefore to define the development potentials that the historical urban landscape has to offer, and to indicate opportunities and risks for the future of the built heritage.

Left: Church Square 2015. The resilient nature of the Square persists despite its 150-year history of change. (Nicholas Clarke)

18 Corten *et al.*, 2014: 39.

19 Council of Europe; Kuipers, 2015.

20 ICOMOS, 1987.

21 UNESCO, 2011.

22 Van Oers, 2010: 14



Re-centring Tshwane

We should however keep in mind that declarations and conventions are toothless documents, and academic debates and theories are powerless notions if not accepted and applied by the operatives in the field. The cooperation between South Africa and the Netherlands in the field of heritage conservation is therefore directed towards the professionals dealing with heritage conservation in daily practise. As noted before, these can be urban managers as well as conservationists. Based on requests received from South Africa, bilateral cooperation since 2009 has to a large extent been focussed on the City of Tshwane's policies on regenerating its inner city.

The *Re-centring Tshwane Laboratory* of September 2014, the results of which are described in this publication, served the same goal. It was preceded by several activities. The Tshwane Heritage Field Academy of 2009 provided insight in the developmental opportunities and risks of the city's historical features.²³ The potentials were elaborated in possible actions during the Course on Urban Heritage Strategies of 2011.²⁴ This was followed by a visit to the Netherlands in 2013 of representatives of the National Department of Public Works dealing with the redevelopment of several of its properties in the city's historical core. In 2014 the book *Eclectic ZA Wilhelmiens: a shared Dutch built heritage in South Africa* was published, explicating the history of many of Pretoria's historical structures.²⁵

Left: The former TPA Building on Church Square covers nearly the entire block directly southwest of Church Square and holds great potential as assets to re-centre Tshwane. (Nicholas Clarke)

Right: The Café Riche Building, Church Square, a late Eclectic ZA Wilhelmiens building designed by Frans Soff. (Nicholas Clarke)

²³ Corten & Van Dun, 2010.

²⁴ Corten *et al.*, 2014.

²⁵ Bakker, Clarke & Fisher, 2014.

The joint cooperation between the two countries has so far been rewarding in the exchange of knowledge and experience. Yet much remains to be done. Within the joint policy framework, further cooperation could be directed to the redevelopment of the city block located on the south-western corner of Church Square, the central part of the country's capital city. This block, which contains a number of buildings of mutual interest, has recently been transferred to the National Department of Public Works. On a larger scale, the bilateral cooperation has potential to contribute to a global understanding of the value of the integrated conservation approach and can foster cross-cutting debate between the conservation and planning sectors.





PRIMEDIA
OUTDOOR
ADVERTISE HERE CALL
086 010 2989

51 3575
72 4358
ELECTRICAL
04 588 5663

Car Stage Motors CC
129 Pretorius Street
Tel: 011 211 3217

UNIVERSITY
COOK & BROS
TEL: 011 211 3217

FREE REGISTRATION
FOR 2014

Commercial & Residential
Property Management

MidCity
Holistic Property Solutions

OBERT MIDCITY

NO PARKING
FOR THE
SCHOOL
BUS

References

- The Netherlands. 2004. *Accommodate Cultural Diversity: The challenge of common cultural heritage. Implementation Framework on the Common Cultural Heritage of South Africa and the Netherlands*. Unpublished agreement signed in Pretoria, South Africa, on 31 March 2004.
- The Netherlands. 1996. *Agreement between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of South Africa on cooperation in the fields of Education and Science, Arts and Culture, Health, Welfare and Sport*. Unpublished accord signed in Pretoria, South Africa, on 30 September 1996.
- Attema, Y. & Keesom, J. 1997. Tropische verrassingen met Hollandse ingrediënten. In: Don P. ed. *In dienst van het erfgoed: Jaarboek Monumentenzorg 1997*. Zwolle: Waanders, 332–354.
- Bakker, K.A., Clarke, N.J. & Fisher, R.C. eds. 2014. *Eclectic ZA Wilhelmieni: 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. & Van Dun, P. 2010. *History in progress: Future perspectives of Pretoria's historical core*. Amersfoort: Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands. Available at: <http://repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/13943> [Accessed 20 July 2015].
- Corten, J.P., Geurts, E., Meurs, P. & Vermeulen, R. eds. 2014. *Heritage as an asset for inner-city development: An urban manager's guide book*. Rotterdam: nai010.
- Council of Europe. 1975. The Declaration of Amsterdam. *Congress on the European Architectural Heritage*. Amsterdam. Available at: <http://www.icomos.org/en/support-us/179-articles-en-francais/ressources/charters-and-standards/169-the-declaration-of-amsterdam> [Accessed 20 July 2015].
- Du Preez, H., Van Oers, R., Roos, J. & Verhoef, L.G.W. eds. 2009. *The Challenge of Genadendal*. Delft: IOS.
- Gimbrère, S. & Kennis, J. eds. 2002. *Mutual Cultural Heritage Conference Bandung, 27 February–2 March 2002*. The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Zoetermeer, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.
- Hanekom, B., Nadel, M. & Stoltz, J. 2014. Pretoria: Siyaya ePitoli! In: Corten, J. P., Geurts, E., Meurs, P. & Vermeulen, R. eds. *Heritage as an asset for inner-city development: An urban manager's guide book*. Rotterdam: nai010, 102–115.
- International Council on Monuments and Sites. 1987. *Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas*. Available at: http://www.international.icomos.org/charters/towns_e.pdf [Accessed 20 July 2015].
- Kuipers, M.C. 2015. Pionieren in Pretoria: Inspirerende ideeën voor herbestemming van Gedeeld Cultureel Erfgoed. *Vitruvius*, 32, 6–13.
- 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.
- Madiba, P. & Leemhuis, M. 2002. Implementation of the Mutual Cultural Heritage Policy in South Africa. In: Gimbrère, S. & Kennis, J. eds. *Mutual Cultural Heritage Conference Bandung, 27 February–2 March 2002*. The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Zoetermeer, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 53–55.
- The Netherlands. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Education, Culture and Science of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. 2012. *Shared Cultural Heritage Policy Framework 2013-2016*. The Hague: s.n.
- Ndlazi, S. 2015. Tighter security after Church Square defacing. *The Star*, April 7, 10.
- Van Oers, R. 2010. Managing cities and the Historic Urban Landscape initiative: An introduction. In: Van Oers, R. & Haraguchi, S. eds. *Managing Historic City Centres World Heritage Papers 27*. Paris: UNESCO, 7–17.
- The Netherlands. Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed. 2013. *Verbonden Verleden: Beleidsnota Gedeeld Erfgoed*. Amersfoort: s.n.
- Temminck Groll, C.L. 2002. *The Dutch Overseas: Architectural Survey. Mutual Heritage of Four Centuries in Three Continents*. Zwolle: Waanders.
- UNESCO. 2011. *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL)*, art. 22. Available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/638> [Accessed 20 July 2015].

Websites

- <http://www.robben-island.org.za/> [Accessed 1 July 2015].
- www.icomos.org/en/network/international-scientific-committees/list-of-international-scientific-committees/goals-of-isc [Accessed 7 June 2015].
- <http://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/638> [Accessed 1 July 2015].
- <http://www.tshwane2055.gov.za/home/tshwane-2055-info/tshwane-vision-2055> [Accessed 1 July 2015].
- <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabledevelopmentgoals> [Accessed 1 July 2015].

