

## **Balancing Cultural Heritage Analyses & Ethnographic Research Methods Towards A Sustainable Future**

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## I INTRODUCTION

Our world is a changing habitat. Throughout history, we have learned and experienced the constant developing of new characters in culture, visual aspects, conventions, and social habits. This change is inevitable, it has always happened, and always will. Our environment will continue to change in the future, it will lose and gain features that fit with our current state of living. It is, therefore, our responsibility to protect the built heritage, conserving traditions and cultural values for future generations. The ability to adapt to these new environments and conditions has since the early times been one of our greatest assets. Parallel to the changes in society we have understood the importance of climate change and the necessity of adapting our planet towards a more regenerative system in which we start to interpret with what we already have by producing long-lasting design, maintaining and reusing our built environment. Furthermore, we should be able to adapt our buildings towards a healthy circulatory system that can fit our requirements today. And it is only through architectural research that you can investigate and explore a valid argument for what of our built environment should be conserved and how to adapt it to our current social character. The contribution to knowledge is the relevance of research-methodological awareness in relation to university and the architectural profession

Research in architecture can be hard to define<sup>1</sup>. The start of every project in Heritage & Architecture has been about researching site analysis, discovering precedent projects and using the most important tool, The Heritage Value Matrix. This process is part of research methods called Cultural Heritage Analysis. The matrix is intended to guide students in detecting the essential qualities of the heritage buildings in their present state and to understand them better in relation to the historical evolution. Through the Lecture Series Research Methods, I understood and encountered the importance of finding a balance between different research methods to present a valid design project. In particular, the ethnographical research methods have given me a lot of knowledge about the significance of understanding the site, and how this methodology is tying the analysis to design. Most importantly, how ethnographic research method can define a new program for the adaptation of the built environment that needs to be changed to fit with our current social needs.

In the Shared Studio Lab, the focus lies on the translation of the design in the city of Bandung, Indonesia. The city of Bandung was once established by the Dutch as an important transport hub, governmental & military base and travel destination for the Dutch colonial society. After Indonesia became officially independent in 1949, the city saw a pressure on public spaces, networks, health and comfort as a result of the rapid growth in population. The Shared Heritage Lab approach is to find a sustainable solution for these challenges by evolving the important heritage structures and areas of Bandung, in order to realize inclusive, thriving and healthy environments for working, living and leisure<sup>2</sup>. In this paper, I will reflect on The Cultural Heritage Analysis and how to balance this research method with ethnographical technique to define my design. Inspired by the general theme of the studio, the topic of my thesis and the research question forms the following: *"How can we conserve the heritage of the previous colonial military storage, so it can be adapted to revitalize the balance of border conditions regarding Bandung's informal and formal segregation through music & sports communities"*?

## II RESEARCH-METHODOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

The Shared Heritage Lab Studio encourages students to use the research methods described in *Designing from Heritage, Strategies for Conservation and Conversion* by Marieke Kuipers & Wessel de Jonge. This book is a guideline for students to observe, analyze and the plot to make decisions regarding conservation based on cultural consciousness. The book guides us through three steps. We first go through a primer of observation. We use literature, documentaries, maps, archives, drawings, case studies, inventories, measurements, descriptions and photographs for analyzing the site before and during the field trip. This work allows us to observe the buildings on site in its present state in a

coherent manner<sup>3</sup>. The next step of this research method is to interpret the findings in the primer of observation to create a cultural value statement through the cultural value matrix. As mentioned before, the matrix guides us through the qualities of the heritage building. By creating and working with the matrix we can argue for the transformation framework that is needed for the last step, the transformation of our built heritage. Now that the primer observation and the value matrix are completed, we are now able to distinguish the level of implications for the building.

It is also essential to choose an appropriate research methodology to analyze the transformation program of the built heritage. Ethnography has been chosen as the main research methodology. It is only through the study of the praxis of architecture that one can see the human action and develop an eye for the actual users of the building, and not the imagined ones<sup>4</sup>. The health detector Claude Bernard launched the concepts of *milieu intérieur* and *milieu extérieur* in the 19th century. *Milieu extérieur* refers to nature, city and architecture, whereas *milieu intérieur* refers to the human social nature<sup>5</sup>. The study of the interdependencies of these two concepts is referred to as ethnography. The changes to the external environment should be a product of the internal need. Therefore, during the site visit in Bandung, I decided to interview the locals and developers. The goal was to observe the social life in order to learn and analyze the behavior of the city's indigenous population.

I chose to use these two research methods because they are underlined by the idea that they will integrate and balance the outcome of the design proposal. From the Heritage & Architecture studio's research methods, the notion is to argue the importance of what should be heritage listed, and how the building can possibly be reused. Ethnography, on the other hand, is a qualitative research method used to emphasize the observations internal and external social practices to recognize what the adaptation of the site can become.

### **III RESEARCH-METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION**

There have been many discussions considering the precise meaning of built heritage. From the Oxford dictionary we can define architectural heritage as the art of designs and structures that have value. These structures withstand the test of time and are passed down to the next generation. The concept of structural preservation has been around for millennia, but the concept of architectural heritage only dates back to the enlightenment<sup>6</sup>. During the industrial revolution there was an ongoing debate between whether to restore or preserve the built heritage. Two schools of thoughts developed within the field of building conservation, the ethics, and aesthetics school<sup>7</sup>. Two of the main advocates for the ethics school, John Ruskin and William Morris, considered architectural heritage work as preservation and conservation, they recognized monuments as historical documents in built form. Cases of this type can be found in Athens (1931) and Venice (1964). Contrarily, an influential advocate for the aesthetic school of thought, Eugene Viollet-le-Duc believed that architectural heritage work should restore the heritage buildings back to its supposed former glory which has been lost over time, such as Sainte-Chapelle (1840-67) and the cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris (1845-64)<sup>8</sup>.

In order to simplify the nuances between the two different approaches, the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl came up with one of the early matrixes in his essay "Modern Cult of Monuments (1903)"<sup>9</sup>, where he introduced the idea that a monument's value is determined by today's perception. Riegl's matrix is highly influential in today's work, besides the fact that though the practice of conservation has now shifted towards rebirth and adaptive reuse of our heritage, something Riegl did not address. Since then there have been various heritage value typologies that have been used by scholars and organizations such as Lipe (1984), Burra Charter (1998) Frey (1997) and English Heritage (1997)<sup>10</sup>. The approach we use today is a combination of these approaches that also offer the opportunity to add the classification of relevant heritage values at various scales<sup>11</sup>.

Furthermore, there has also been a shift in the way we use ethnography as a research method. Ethnography began as a search for biological, social and traditional human societies and cultures. For example, the use of anthropology has been around for centuries. Ethnographic fieldwork was not necessarily a part of it<sup>12</sup>. The idea of researching social anthropology became popular after the second world war. In the book *Designing for People* (1955), Henry Dreyfuss started to research human behaviors in order to create designs which were tailored specifically to men and women. The approach has since changed several times, from the more psychological point of view in the 60s to a more social science approach in the '90s<sup>13</sup>.

During my own field trip, it was suitable to use a combination of two different ethnographic research methods from more recent times. The first ethnographic research method is based on Atelier Bow-Wow's book "*Made in Tokyo*" and the subsequent exhibition entitled "*Architectural Ethnography*". The research method is based on four different categories: *drawings of architecture*, *drawings for architecture*, *drawings among architecture* and *drawings around architecture*. The four categories examine the qualities of a site as well as the way people use the site's space and buildings<sup>14</sup>. The second guideline I studied and used during my fieldtrip was "Beyond Design Ethnography: How Designers Practice Ethnographic Research, specifically the chapter of Field, Research and Design by Nicolas Nova<sup>15</sup>. I used the primer observation together with the valuation matrix in order to develop a plan to conserve the heritage values of the former military storage site. Throughout the design process, I made extensive use of the aforementioned literature in order to study the local values and behaviors and to strike a balance between cultural heritage analysis and ethnographic research methods.

#### IV POSITIONING

The methodology, as explained by Jorje Mejia Hernandez, establishes the usage of tools and methods to increase and improve our knowledge. The research methods then become our epistemology of ontology<sup>16</sup>. During this period, we have collected our observations and conclusions from the site into a cultural value book that will work as a guide for further research and design. I adopted the valuation matrix as it will help me to determine how to protect the built heritage through cultural, social, ecological and economical methods. At the same time, the book is a solid work of observation that strengthens the epistemology of the history of Dutch colonial architecture in Bandung, Indonesia. Furthermore, the chair of Heritage & Architecture's main goals are to define, develop and test integrated assessment frameworks to see how they can impact the sustainability of cities. In the end, the book leads to the start of a framework for options of change and alteration of the built heritage. And it is here that I feel the necessity of balancing different methodologies to figure out how we can best gear cities towards a more sustainable future. It is through the inspiration and techniques of Atelier Bow-Wow and Nicolas Nova that I could introduce the local way of living and architecture that works simultaneously with their identity. The goal of this research is to uncover the complex socio-cultural institutions that are taken for granted by the people of Bandung. Once I familiarize myself with their identity, the architecture will reflect the patterns of behavior and human nature in its habitat. This work will create something new that will enhance the quality of life of the local people.

Even though these methods are useful to contribute original solutions, there are still significant obstacles that will limit the value of my work. Firstly, to familiarize and study a new environment, a considerable duration of time is required. In our case, the study trip lasted for only two weeks. Therefore, the information will still be vague and questionable. Furthermore, the rushed nature of the trip may cause the researcher to scramble for answers and rush to conclusions in order to satisfy the research question.

One of the main goals of the Heritage & Architecture studio is to address the challenges of sustainability. Sustainability can be thought of as reducing energy waste, and therefore we should not rush to demolish and rebuild. It is of the utmost importance to protect the built heritage and conserve

traditions and cultural values for future generations, but also present a new program to serve societal needs. Wessel de Jonge argues that it is time for young architects to seize the opportunity to kiss our sleeping beauties awake<sup>17</sup>. While I agree with this statement, let us not forget that as architects, we have a responsibility to ensure that the new program is in the best interest of the local population.

Therefore, the goal of architectural heritage should not only be to preserve, but also to adapt the site to reflect the local needs of the population. In order to adequately serve the needs of the population, it is necessary to conduct a proper cultural value matrix and sufficient ethnographic research. Only then is it possible for the architect to develop a sustainable solution which takes into account the needs of the local people. Striking a balance between the preservation of cultural values for future generations and tailoring the program to the specific needs of the society is the key to sustainable environments in the future.

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