

**Architectural  
Conservation on an ex  
Colonized Country  
the Semarang, Indonesia case**  
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Presented on Environment & Urban Management Seminar, 2 -3 August 2006

# KOTA-LAMA, little Nederland, in painting



# Lawang Sewu in painting



# Common problems on Architectural conservation.

- The decline of an old historic urban area
  - Owners of old buildings are reluctant to maintain their old-historical building.
  - it will be very difficult to restore the declined area to be a bright and promising area again.
  - 'Kota-lama' at Jl. Raden Patah , Semarang, which is popular as 'The Little Netherland' is an example of the problem. Many NGOs in collaboration with the Government have made many efforts to restore that 'sleeping' area, but until now, the result has not been significant yet.

- The Old historic urban areas located in old Downtown are becoming more interesting areas
  - this condition raised many threats to the old historic urban areas as well.
  - The land-value is getting higher, so it is understandable that owners of old historic buildings will undoubtedly always try to develop the site of the old historic buildings to a more profitable site.
  - That stimulates some Owners to arrange 'tricks' to remove the Old buildings. One of the tricks that is very popular nowadays is what we called "*Pembusukan*" (Indonesia, spoiling, Intentionally decaying strategy),
  - means a clandestine effort to despoil protected old buildings until there are nothing left but ruins, so anyone can do anything on that ruins and nothing wrong with that.

# The ex Colonial building

- A Colonial building was the setting and the place where all the Colonialism was done including the abuse, the torture and all the arrogancy of a Colonialism.
- A Colonial building was conciously designed to show the superiority of the Colonials to the colonized people.
- At the time when an indigenous people had to come to a Colonial building, they had to be in a position of a loser, a servant, even an accused , so they had to come in a very careful, 'polite' and maybe in a frightened way.
- This 'Unwritten-law' had made a very deep trace or even scar into the feeling of indigenous people.
- The Colonial-building than became a nightmare for nearly all of the ordinary indigenous people until the Freedom-day came and a new hope arise.

- After Indonesia's Independence-day on August the 17th, 1945, all the Colonial buildings were then occupied by the Indonesian Republic Government and the military had been given the authorities to manage them.
- The military buildings as well as another military properties were managed in a military way.
- This military management reached the most strict holding of the Colonial buildings after The New Order regime - which was a Military regime - took-over the rule of the politics on 1965.
- The Colonial buildings then had become more and more alienated from ordinary people.
- And so, the Colonial buildings had again become a nightmare for nearly all of the ordinary people for about 32 years.

# the Problem

- Architectural Conservation in an ex Colonized Country like Indonesia, have had the First-rule, that it must guarantee that the coming use of the ex Colonial building will never awakened the trauma and the nightmare to the people - now - in the present time



# Altruism paradigm in Conservation

- In order to avoid recalling the bad memories of both Colonialism and Militarism, first we have to avoid Elitism from the treatment of the building,
- because Elitism, which alienated the building from ordinary people is the main cause that construct the image of a Traumatic-building.
- This means that we have to eliminate the psychological distance which have made a pseudo barrier that likely block the ordinary people to come and visit to the building.
- Refunctioning a Colonial-building to another Elite building will be too risky to be caught from an Elitism to another Elitism.

# Lawang Sewu, painted by Johans



# Lawang Sewu

- The discourse to revitalize *'Lawang-Sewu'* - a very huge and significant Colonial building - at Jl. Pemuda Semarang, and to refunction it to an International Hotel, is an example of what we have just discussed above.

# Lawang Sewu



# "Forgive but not forget",

- We have forgiven , but we won't forget the Colonials and the Colonialism, because it is a part of our History.
- The best thing to do with our Colonial building is if we can give a new function as a Museum of the Colonialism itself.
- The ever frightened Building, will then become a very 'Welcoming building', it is open to every one, even the 'Now-Marginalized', the Grass-root people - can come inside. People can enter every room in that Huge and very Nice - but tough - building, that generation by generation cannot even look & watch at.

# Altruism paradigm in Conservation

- Elitism in that Colonial building have to be neutralized with Altruism and Populism in architecture. Another new function that can be given to the old Colonial heritage building is therefore : a Lobby, Lounge, Waiting-room, a Restaurant , Tea-room, Coffee-shop, Supermarket, Shopping-center, Exhibition-room etc,
- all that means of an accessible Public room, the more Populist - in term of every class in the community can enter - is the better.
- The building itself have to be controlled by the City Government to avoid another effort to make that Colonial heritage buildings (which are usually laid at a very strategic site) again be Elite buildings which will always create psychological distance and barrier to the ordinary people.

# To Neutralize the Colonialism spirit

- we can drag the Symmetrical-axis that are almost always applied in a Colonial building.
- By dragging the Symmetrical-axis from that Colonial building we can than make a reorientation of that building.
- To drag the Symmetrical-axis we can re-layout the axis of the lanscape or fitting another new building that can reduce the main Symmetrical-axis to a neither second or third axis, but not the first or main axis anymore.

# The complex of Wisma Perdamaian





# The '*Wisma Perdamaian*'

- This Colonial building conservation has done this Axis-dragging.
- The former genuine mainbuilding - The ex Colonial Governor Office, at Jl. Pemuda (across the *Lawang-Sewu* building) - was placed as a second building in ballanced with the same-like new building - guarding-like - the new Main Javanese-style building which is the '*Wisma Perdamaian*', functioned as the Governor of Mid-Java office.

# The ex Colonial Governor's office



# The Wisma Perdamaian, the main new building



# The new ballancing building



# The '*Wisma Perdamaian*'

- This was an effort to treat a onced Colonial building to be reoriented and tame the onced Colonial building.
- However, the result, the Complex of buildings as the Governor of Mid-Java office is somehow still an Elite building which commonly have psychological distance and barrier to the ordinary people. And as we all know, that was the everafter problem.

# The *Walikota*'s office

- the City-government conserved the ex *Burgomaster*' office and still used it for the City-government's office.
- The City-government decided to build a high-rise building on the background - functioned as the main office - using the style and ornaments from the Old Colonial ex *Burgomaster*' office .
- The same ornaments, the same colours, the same detail of windows and doors and many of another 'the Same' which adopted from the Old Colonial ex *Burgomaster*' office.
- From that many of 'the Same' attributes of architectural elements , we undeliberately let the Spirit of the building – which is the Colonial-spirit – still live and still working in that building







# Conclusion

- The conservation of a Colonial building in an ex Colonized Country , if treated wrong , can bring back the feel of anguish and can give a traumatic feeling to the people in the present time.
- Every people in this Republic have the right to feel invited , welcomed , homy and familiar from an ex Colonial building.
- Don't let the fire and the spirit of the ever Colonialism left in the present Conserved building.
- Let us serve a treatment in conserving the ex Colonial building that can make everybody in this independent Republic feel spiritfull, happy, and stand on our own dignity.

# Marba, little Nederland, painted by Johans

