

The Mutuality of Colonial Heritage in Multi-ethnic Paramaribo; Reality or Illusion?

by

Eugenio van Maanen*

Gregory Ashworth**

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* Academy of Tourism, NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands. E-mail: maanen.e@nhtv.nl

** Department of Planning, University of Groningen, The Netherlands. E-mail: g.j.ashworth@rug.nl

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Abstract

Over the last decade the term '*mutual heritage*' is increasingly used in policy documents in the Netherlands to describe and contextualize Dutch overseas heritage in their former colonies (Oostindie, 2008; Hefting, 2005; CIE¹; SICA²). By using this term it implicitly assumes that more than one party is equally involved in the ownership and interpretation of heritage resources that originated from a colonial past. This article seeks to explore the existence of mutuality within the interpretation of built colonial heritage in a multiethnic society. What is examined here is how colonial heritage, especially in this case of the built environment can be considered to be mutual both between colonised and colonizer and between different ethnic groups within Suriname. The focus in this article is on the interpretation of the World Heritage Site of Paramaribo in relation to identity, sense of place and nation-building. Suriname is an appropriate example of a multiethnic society that was ruled by the Dutch for more than 300 years and the immense cultural diversity is manifested in the composition of its population. By referring to the interpretation and use of built colonial heritage this article contributes to a discussion about the appropriateness of the idea of '*mutual heritage*'. Through its conclusions it aims to contribute to a further debate on the usefulness and issues raised by the concept of mutual heritage, especially when used in a multiethnic post-colonial society.

Key Words: Colonial Heritage, Mutuality, Identity, Nation Building, Multiethnic

1. Exclave or mutual heritage?

The harmonious co-existence in one place of a people and the heritage they claim as theirs is not as common as might be imagined or desired. The existence of enclave / exclave heritages, that is the heritage of one people on the territory of another, is a widespread consequence of the movement of peoples and cultures over the centuries of which the colonial experience is only one, albeit particularly sensitive, instance. The European colonial empires from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries not only created European heritages overseas but facilitated global movements of population, influencing directly and indirectly over half the world. The dissolution of these empires and the emergence of new nation-states raises the central issue of the role of the heritage of the colonial era in nation-building (Marschall, 2008).

One reaction is for the new country to discard the colonial heritage as at best an irrelevant distraction from the nation-building project and at worst a reminder of previous unhappy and fractious times. At the other end of a spectrum of possible actions is the deliberate use of aspects of the colonial legacy as a means of binding diverse cultural groups together by using the common shared colonial experience. This use of a 'third-party imported core' as an instrument of post-colonial nation-building provides otherwise diverse groups with some commonality of historic experience as well as functional benefits derived from a common familiarity with a language and with legal and governmental systems.

The idea of mutual heritage suggests that the same heritage is shared in some way by different cultural or ethnic groups, with shared being defined as either a common identification with, or experience of, the heritage. In this context it could be used in two not unrelated ways. First, there is the mutuality between the local ethnic groups who add the common heritage to their particular separate heritages. Secondly, there is the possible mutuality between the local population as a whole and the ex-colonising power. The significance of the latter lies to some extent in the post-independence official and unofficial contribution of the ex-coloniser in expertise and the financing of heritage as well as the possibility of an economic contribution from European tourists, visiting their heritage in former colonies. The key issue is whether the acceptance of mutuality in this second sense strengthens or undermines the attempt to shape a national identity (Smith, 1991; Light & Dumbraveanu-Andone, 1997). The heritage of the colonial experience can be viewed quite differently from the perspectives of the colonizer and the colonized, which sharpens any consideration of mutuality.

This article contributes to this discussion by presenting the case of Paramaribo, Suriname, which is a relevant example of a plural ethnic society that was created, and governed for more than 300 years, by Dutch colonial authority. This approach to heritage as an expression of social and

¹ CIE Centre for International Heritage Activities

² SICA Dutch Centre for International Cultural Activities

satisfy growing European demands. Thus began the export-oriented plantation economy, which spread along the rivers and centred on the export ports, such as Paramaribo in Suriname. These trade activities and the consequential contacts with Europe shaped present Surinamese society. This is not only expressed in terms of economics, but also in its politics, culture and society. A central element is the role of Suriname as a plantation economy and society developed by the Netherlands between the 17th and early 20th centuries. Most developments within Suriname have their origins in this typical plantation economy and especially its need for labour, which shaped the ethnically diverse contemporary population. Using the terminology of the official 2012 Suriname census, the Atlantic slave trade accounts for the Creole and Maroon (i.e. escaped slave) population, who are the descendants of slaves and number more than one-third (37.4%) of Suriname's total population. Other relatively large population groups are the Hindustani (27,4%, also known as "East Indians"; as their ancestors arrived from northern India in the latter part of the 19th century) and Javanese (13,7%)³ who came to Suriname as indentured labourers after the abolition of slavery.

A consequence of this labour import is that Paramaribo is an example of a multiethnic Caribbean city but with the largest cultural and ethnic diversity within the entire region (De Bruijne & Schalkwijk, 1997). As a colonial city, like others, it functioned as an intermediary between the colonial hinterland and the rest of the world. The development process of the Caribbean region was highly influenced by and dependent on its colonial background (as Lowenthal, 1978, has emphasised) Furthermore, the Caribbean region as a whole has a relatively high degree of urbanisation. Although most of the Caribbean cities are relatively small, the majority of the people live in or near the capital city. In Suriname almost 70% of the total population reside in the Paramaribo agglomeration (De Bruijne & Schalkwijk, 1997; Verrest, 2007). The historic inner city of Paramaribo is the result of an urban development that had already started when the Dutch took over from the English in 1667. Paramaribo functioned as the sole centre of administration, finance, commerce and residence for many plantation owners who preferred to live in the city. By the end of the 18th century the population of Paramaribo consisted predominantly of whites (among them a large group of Portuguese and High-German Jews), freed mixed-race and African slaves (mostly domestic servants) and soldiers (Buddingh', 1999). The earliest constructions, mostly wooden, were around Fort Zeelandia and the first city expansion from the beginning of the 18th century was west of the fort. By the end of the 18th century several suburbs had been developed. Most of the buildings and houses built during this period were wooden structures, which explains the extent of destruction caused by the fires of January 1821 (destroying 400 houses) and September 1832 (destroying 46 buildings).

The World Heritage Site

UNESCO's decision to inscribe the city centre of Paramaribo on the World Heritage List was based on the stated criteria of the fusion of European architecture and construction techniques with indigenous South American materials and crafts thus creating a new architectural idiom and it being a unique example of contact between a European culture and the indigenous cultures and environment of South America in the years of intensive colonization of this region in the 16th and 17th centuries.⁴

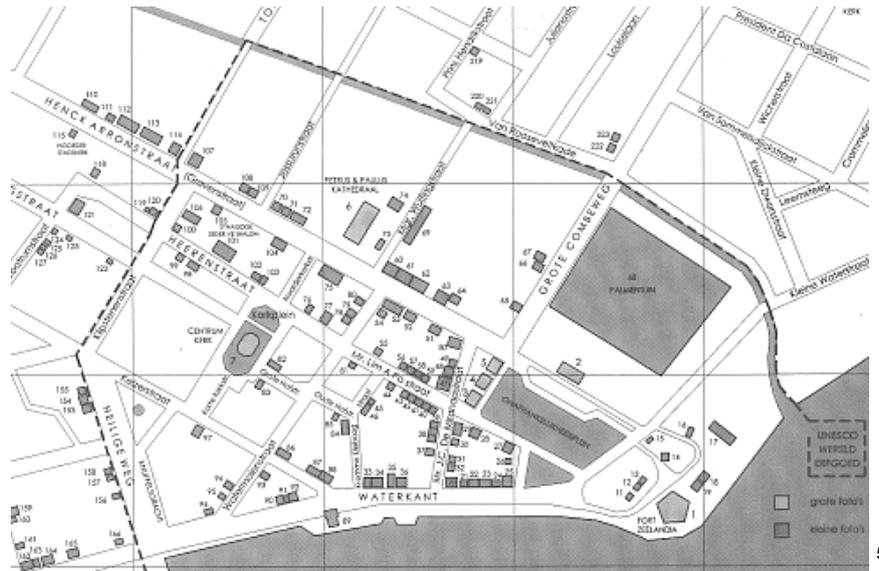
The built environmental heritage resource is a compact and planned town created between 1683 and 1800, although much was reconstructed after fires in 1821 and 1832. It is characterised by tree-lined wide streets and spacious lots occupied by 2/3 storey elegant wooden houses, with ample public open space (especially the 'Palm Gardens') interspersed with stone or brick major public buildings (government offices and churches). The whole white painted ensemble contributes a symmetry in design in which European building styles have been adapted to local materials and conditions, not least the tropical climate.

A number of factors were paramount in establishing the parameters of the core area. First of all, the concentration of listed buildings in the area. Secondly, the presence of a number of natural borders to the area, for instance, the *Waterkant* on the bank of the Suriname River and the small river, *Sommeldijckse Kreek*, and finally, the manageability of the area. Of all listed buildings still existing in Suriname (229), almost half (49.8%) are situated within the boundaries of the UNESCO World Heritage site. The oldest listed building, Fort Zeelandia, dates from 1667. Some of the most important listed buildings are centred around Fort Zeelandia and Independence Square and feature prominently in the nomination dossier.

Figure 2.; map showing the designated Conservation Zone of the World Heritage Site of the historic inner city of Paramaribo

³ Algemeen bureau van de Statistiek, 2014

⁴ whc.unesco.org/en/list/940



National governments ('states parties') nominate potential world heritage sites to UNESCO's World Heritage Committee. Such sites are therefore symbolic expression of a projected national identity and as Van der Aa (2005) has pointed out in the case of Mexico, changes in the types of nominations implies a change in these national perceptions. Some groups will be more successful in asserting their identity than others and therefore the heritage sites and objects selected will only contribute to an identity for those who did the selecting. Especially in colonised nations it is often difficult to deal with a legacy of inequality in which the voices of many in the heritage selection process and thus the creation of an identity have been marginalised. This critical integration between heritage and identity implies that such sites are national symbols, embodying a national heritage as an expression of a national identity as selected by those exercising national power (Lowenthal, 1985). Suriname as a creation of a mercantile colonization, is composed of diverse ethnic groups, including an indigenous minority group of Amerindians, in addition to several groups of descendants of immigrants from different parts of the world, with no clear contemporary majority. The inscription of the historic inner city of Paramaribo on the UNESCO World Heritage List in essence means that this city is a national symbol, contributing to the expression of a national identity, with which all ethnicities could mutually identify as well as a heritage linking colonised with coloniser..

3. Mutuality and Colonial Heritage

The idea of mutual heritage with the same heritage being shared by different groups, poses questions about what is meant by 'shared'. Is it a common and equally valued identification with, or experience of, the heritage? Conversely, are the experiences of the different groups themselves quite different, leading to differences in their attitudes to the heritage and roles in its management? In the latter situation it is in fact different heritages that are being experienced although emanating from the same resources in the same place.

In the Suriname context mutuality, as mentioned above, may be either the mutuality between the local ethnic groups or the possible mutuality between the local population as a whole and the ex-colonising power who physically created the resource in question. The significance of the latter lies to some extent in the post-independence official and unofficial contribution of the Netherlands in expertise and the financing of heritage as well as the possibility of an economic contribution from Dutch tourists, visiting their heritage in Suriname. The key issue is whether the acceptance of mutuality in this second sense strengthens or undermines the attempt to shape a national identity. The heritage of the colonial experience can be viewed quite differently from the perspectives of the colonizer and the colonized, which sharpens any consideration of mutuality.

The colonial legacy could be viewed as an obstacle or even contradiction to nation-building. A spectrum of attitudes towards such a legacy could range from indifference, leading to a collective amnesia and neglect, to irritation, alienation and hostility, resulting in reinterpretations and even removal and demolition at independence. In Paramaribo for instance, there was a replacement of

⁵ Detail Monumentenkaart Paramaribo: ME Productions

symbols and nomenclature representing the colonial regime including officially changing the name of 'Oranjeplein' (named after the Dutch Royal Family but often referred to as 'Gouvernementsplein') into *Onafhankelijkheidsplein* (Independence Square) and the statue of Queen Wilhelmina that stood on the square has been removed to Fort Zeelandia.

To understand the processes involved in the creation of places, one cannot overlook the forces, purposes and attitudes of official governmental agencies at different jurisdictional scales, with their own agendas and ordinary people living their everyday lives. Several studies (Carter & Donald, 1993; Graham et al., 2000; Van Hoven et al., 2005; Ashworth, 2005; Kuipers, 2005) emphasize the consequences of the inclusion and exclusion of particular groups in the creation of places and identities. These, often conflicting, forces of inclusion and exclusion manifest themselves in a broad range of dimensions. In most cases, it is about dominant groups that try to protect their interests from minorities or 'others': it is about insiders and outsiders; about people that have norms and values different from a mainstream in society. What is important in these discussions is the awareness that it is not only about how dominant and subordinate groups think about themselves in relation to others, but also about the way they think others see or think about them. The consequences of these forces may be expressed through physical displacement, like migration, or a self-marginalisation of those groups that feel themselves excluded and not at home. Furthermore, these minority groups, 'others' or 'outsiders', may react to this exclusion by isolating, separating and just withdrawing themselves from society without actually leaving the place, or in extreme situations, join others in an active resistance to assert their separate identity. With regard to these conflicts and disputes, which result in inclusion and exclusion, insiders and outsiders, another dilemma can be raised concerning the degree of correspondence between the senses of place as seen from an official and a popular perspective. Once an area or building has acquired heritage status, the nature and potential role of this area or building is changed and the sense of place is influenced accordingly. Heritage contributes in various ways to these processes, for example through narratives, imaginations and representations. It is about how the actors involved - groups as well as individuals - react and identify themselves with the processes that are initiated - consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly- in the selection, preservation and conservation of colonial heritage, which ultimately leads to social, cultural, political, economic and spatial changes. The degree of mutuality in the commodification of colonial history and its resources can be considered from the side of the producer, that is the official agencies that consciously "produce" colonial heritage, based on their interpretation and motivation Or from the side of the users, viewed as "consumers". The bottom-up approach to place identity is about how and to what extent a place reminds users of their past and how they associate with it. In other words, depending on the position in society of official agencies or users, commodification of colonial history and the degree of mutuality follow different trajectories. This is because a place expresses plural histories, at the same time, at the same location, while simultaneously representing different uses, purposes and motives for different actors, leading to differences in the status, valuation and appreciation of place. This versatility of heritage, inherent in its definition and its selection processes, leads often to the simultaneous occurrence of contestation and unity in its contribution to sense of place and identity.

In Paramaribo, the question is whether the transformation of this city's colonial past into a sort of mutual, colonial heritage is just a top-down approach imposed by official government agencies based on economic, cultural, ethnic or political considerations. Alternatively, or additionally, is this transformation appreciated by its users and do they consider this colonial history, with its preserved relics and its remembered past events, as part of their own history and do they value it the extent that it is important for them to preserve, experience and bequeath it to future generations.

Mutuality between Suriname and The Netherlands

It needs to be reiterated here that 'mutual' means not only mutuality between the ethnic groups in Suriname but also between the Dutch and Suriname. In essence there exists an ambiguity here that is interesting in itself. The term 'mutual' has been widely used within government in the Netherlands and applied to the relics of the Dutch trading empire overseas. In the late 1990s the two ministries of foreign affairs and culture developed a 'Netherlands Mutual Heritage Policy' to be implemented by a state funded agency called 'The Centre for International Heritage Activities' (CIE). Eight priority countries, in which the Dutch had been historically especially active, were targeted (Brazil, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Russia, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Suriname with Australia and the United States being recently added). The technique is to establish academic and governmental links through expert meetings ('heritage days') exploring the possible implementation of 'mutual' (*gemeenschappelijk*) heritage (Netherlands-Suriname heritage days were held in 2007 in the Netherlands and 2008 in

Paramaribo) (www.heritage-activities.org). 'Mutual heritage centres' have been established in Sri Lanka and India. An 'Atlas of Mutual Heritage' has been published as a data base of relevant national archives and agencies since 1996 (The objective of these activities from the Dutch side is the safeguarding, studying and promoting of the physical and archival legacy overseas in cooperation with local governments and agencies as, it can be surmised, a form of 'soft power' diplomacy, furthering Dutch links and unspecified national interests, whatever these may be, in the priority countries).

The interests of the 'overseas' targets in this mutual enterprise are less clear and may very well be mixed. Such motives no doubt include the advance of historical scholarship and of techniques for physical preservation of both buildings and archives. In countries poorer in money or expertise, including Suriname, there is a clear incentive to acquire these from the Netherlands, as witnessed by the subsidies from Dutch government agencies to a number of renovation projects in Suriname and the help given by Dutch experts with the Paramaribo World Heritage Site inscription (and the ongoing tentative inscription of the *Jodensavanne* settlement). The Surinamese may both welcome Dutch involvement, especially money and talent, while resenting any interference in their uses.

However the experiences, attitudes and interests of the colonized are inevitably different from those of the coloniser in two respects. First, this 'mutual' heritage may evoke different emotions in the two parties with the colonized experiencing dissonance from a heritage that may be a reminder of social and political discrimination and oppression, especially in places dominated by slavery (such as Suriname but also Ghana). Secondly, the post-colonial states are all engaged in a nation-building project, generally by creating their own 'authorised heritage discourse' (Smith, 2006). The heritage of the colonial power may support this nation-building project (as conceivably in 'rainbow nation' South Africa), may be largely irrelevant but non-threatening to it (as in Brazil, India or Sri Lanka) or, in the worst case scenario be a distraction and even contradiction of the 'Authorised heritage Discourse' to use Smith's (2006) term, (as arguably in Suriname and Indonesia)

Similarly the idea of 'mutualising' heritage is widely used by Dutch museums, largely of anthropology, that have acquired major collections from former Dutch possessions overseas. The aim is to involve museums and others from the countries of origin in the care, study and possibly display and interpretation of such artefacts. This 'shared cultural heritage project' begun in 2003, significantly uses the word 'shared' ('*gedeeld*') rather than 'mutual' as applied to physical artefacts. It could be that this is a defensive policy of such museums in the face of actual or potential demands for the complete 'repatriation' of such collections. An interesting assessment study on this subject is done by Scott (2014).

Finally the Dutch population, not least as tourists, is to some extent ambiguous about claiming this heritage as theirs, as colonialism, the plantation economy and not least the slavery and indentured labour it implied, do not coexist comfortably with current popular Dutch social and political ideals and attitudes. There is a substantial visitor flow from the Netherlands to Suriname, aided by the only direct flight to a European destination and by the investment of Dutch capital and entrepreneurial skills in many tourism related projects in Suriname. However these visitors are largely part of the Suriname diaspora and are visiting friends and relations and other Dutch tourists are as likely to be attracted to Suriname by the tropical rain forest experience as by 'their' colonial heritage. Even the enthusiasm and optimism of the Centre for International Heritage Activities is muted. 'So far in Suriname heritage tourism is regarded more as an interesting possibility than a valuable objective today' (www.heritage-activities.org).

Mutuality within the Suriname population

A study was undertaken (see van Maanen, 2011) into the attitudes of the inhabitants of Paramaribo towards the World Heritage Site. A sample of 3150 was obtained, stratified by ethnicity and neighbourhood (locally known as "*ressorts*".) This sample, consisting of five ethnic groups, was made up of a total of 3150 addresses. During the data collection period, a total of 2732 addresses were visited at least once. This produced a gross response of 1746 completed questionnaires and a valid response of 1626.

The answers sought to the question how different ethnic population groups identify with and interpret colonial heritage, are predominantly subjective. Interpretation of colonial heritage is about awareness, beliefs, opinions, values, motives and attitudes. Consequently, the questionnaire used was a combination of factual questions measuring some relevant factual variables, and the measurement of subjective variables through attitude scaling, multiple-question and in-depth interview techniques. For the purpose of clarifying the socio-psychological meaning of colonial heritage, several dimensions of attitudes towards this heritage were distinguished. The most important ones were the personal appreciation (i.e. recognition, identification, solidarity, interest) of the heritage; engagement

(i.e. use, visitation, ownership) with it; and management / administration (i.e. involvement, participation, debate) in decision-making about the heritage. These categories attempted to measure attitudes towards colonial heritage, including aesthetic appreciation, use and visitation of the historic inner city, and its contribution to a sense of place, personal identity and to feelings of well-being and attachment. They also measured the expression of such attitudes in active participation, through official or voluntary agencies, pressure groups or just having a voice. In addition personal (i.e. gender, age, ethnicity, birth-place and residence) and socio-economic (i.e. educational level, income, employment) characteristics were noted,

In addition to the questionnaires, in-depth interviews were conducted with experts (14 interviews) as well as with residents (21 interviews). These interviews focused on the phenomenon of heritage for (local) policy-makers, agencies in heritage planning and management, entrepreneurs, the tourism industry, residents, etc. The aim of these interviews was to contribute to a better understanding of the meaning and importance of heritage to all those involved in the processes of the preservation, conservation and exploitation of the heritage sites.

This study revealed differences in the way that colonial heritage is regarded as a factor that contributes to the formation of a communal identity among certain ethnic groups in Surinamese society. The role of the colonial heritage is regarded, to an important degree, as a window on the past. It shows a piece of history, especially to the Creole and Maroon population groups. For example, based on a sample of total 1474 respondents the percentage of people that are in support of colonial heritage preservation (n=609 in total) is the highest among the Creole with 26.8%. While Hindustani and people of Javanese descent score relatively low in this group with 19.4% and 15.4 % respectively. Furthermore, it shows that the Creole score the highest percentage (28.2%) agreeing to the statement that they feel very strongly connected with the historic city centre of Paramaribo. For the Javanese this is only 12.2%. The same differences are observed when it comes to the extent in which they feel at home in the historic inner city. 28.9% of the Creole feel themselves very much at home, For the Javanese this is 11.9%. Other outcomes that emphasise these differences between the ethnic groups are the extent to which the historic inner city is considered as invaluable or how it can contribute to the formation of a Surinamese identity. More than 31% of the Creole consider it as invaluable while for the Javanese and Hindustani this is 13.2% and 16.8% respectively. Roughly the same percentages are found when it comes to the extent in which the inner city contributes to the creation of a Surinamese identity.

In addition to the above results, it is notable that there are a number of characteristics where significant differences are observed between some ethnic groups. Characteristics such as level of education, income and social class display significant differences. The higher the level the greater the support, appreciation and identification with the built colonial heritage. This suggests that there are variables other than ethnicity that play a role in the socio-psychological attachment to the built colonial heritage in Paramaribo. It is mainly the Maroon group that sets itself apart from the other population groups where a number of distinctive variables are concerned. On all characteristics where a difference is manifested, this population group records lower scores. This leads to the conclusion that in attaching socio-psychological meaning to colonial heritage, these variables do not play a decisive role for the Maroon population. This means that the colonial heritage contributes to the formation of a communal identity for only a part of the Paramaribo population. This 'sense of place', which the Creoles and Maroons attribute to the built colonial heritage is a relative phenomenon. As a result, it is different from the extent to which the population of East Indian and Javanese descent residing in Paramaribo develop a sense of place for this same colonial heritage in the historic city centre. To them, the importance lies more in the aesthetic value of the historic city centre and not so much in the historical value.

This means that having an appreciation of colonial heritage does not automatically mean that an identity is derived from this heritage or that one identifies with it. This idea is frequently confirmed by various interviewed heritage experts. For example, the Suriname Urban Heritage Foundation clearly states that it is the Creole population group who can most identify with the heritage of the historic city centre of Paramaribo. Other groups, such as the Chinese, Hindustani, Javanese and Amerindians, will have less reason to do so. According to the Foundation, the cause is primarily that the historic city centre already existed prior to the arrival of all of these groups, except the Amerindians, who generally do not live in the city (De Bruijne & Schalkwijk, 2005)

It is especially the government authorities, who are formally responsible for, and involved in, policy formulation and implementation, that attach significance to colonial heritage in the sense of identity formation. As for policy, the study did not reveal any formal policy presently being pursued by the Surinamese government that was specifically aimed at the creation of a Surinamese identity through protecting, restoring and managing the built colonial heritage. However, it is remarkable that a

large number of the local heritage experts consulted claim that a Surinamese identity can indeed be distinguished. Although it is difficult for the parties involved to put into words precisely what characterises this identity. In essence a Surinamese identity is described as the creation of unity through recognizing, preserving and promoting the cultural diversity of Suriname. This is manifested by the implementation of the current cultural policy that aims at preserving and promoting the traditional culture, cultural forms and expressions of each ethnic population group in society (Van Maanen & Ashworth, 2013). It is interesting to place the views and ideas, as expressed above by various heritage experts in Surinamese society, in a theoretical context in terms of place identity and heritage. Both phenomena are closely interrelated concepts that involve identification. However, in relation to the Surinamese identity, the issue is not whether such an identity actually exists or not, but much more about the possible subsequent question that underlies it; if there is a Surinamese identity at all, whose identity is it and what role does the built colonial heritage play in the possible creation of this identity? In other words, which people identify themselves with this identity and with the heritage? In concrete terms, this may mean that identity as such is a social form of expression of the most influential people within a society. For example, within the government institutes in Suriname the Creoles are the most influential group as they are significantly more represented compared to the other ethnic groups.

Table 1; Percentage of various professions by ethnicity in Paramaribo in different years

Occupation	1930ii		1964			1992		
	Cr.iii	Hi.	Cr.	Hi.	Jav.	Cr.	Hi.	Jav.
Civil servants	58	3	--iv	--	--	58	28	11
Teachers	84	6	--	--	--	70	20	7
Nurses	--	--	79	9	..v	69	19	8
Police	86	3	--	--	--	47	36	7
Merchants / shopkeepers	12	7	15	34	..	26	43	13
Welders	--	--	87	..	7	61	10	29
Tailors	66	21	14	77	8	50	39	6
Drivers	--	--	45	42	10	35	47	17
Peddlers	24	57	21	61	16	36	45	14
Gardeners	--	--	18	31	50	3	78	11
Total i	81	8	59	26	7	51	31	14

- i. Share of total urban population
- ii. Only for income tax payers; no specific data for Javanese
- iii. Creoles include mixed and Maroons
- iv. -- = no data
- v. .. = less than 5 percent

Source: 1930: De Bruijne 1976; 1964: Derde algemene volkstelling; 1992 Schalkwijk & De Bruijne 1999

By comparison, in Guyana, ‘...African – Asian tensions persist despite state commitments to national fusion’ (Ashworth et al, 2007:122) but in this case it is the descendants of the Indian migrants who dominate numerically and politically.

Colonial heritage may play many different roles in the process of identity formation. The colonial import may be seen as a neutral binding element transcending local rivalries and not favouring any one local culture. There are many such cases of the deliberate application or more or less spontaneous evolution of such uses of a colonial past, such as Singapore and much of ex-French West and Central Africa (Ashworth et al., 2007). In Suriname, although the focus of this study is upon the heritage conveyed by the built environment, nevertheless it should be remembered that the Dutch colonial legacy includes non-place bound elements, such as a common language, political and administrative structures and education systems, as well as current family ties with those living in the Netherlands. These are almost certainly a more important binding element in nation-building than the more place-bound and object focussed legacy of architecture and urban design. The question is therefore does the heritage of the colonial experience, in either its tangible expression in the built environment or its intangible elements of language and shared history play this binding role transcending ethnic cultural differences?

The variety of ethnic groups in Paramaribo, each with its own origin, history, position in society, etc., results in the colonial built heritage in Paramaribo being strongly susceptible to multiple interpretations. Consequently, Paramaribo’s colonial heritage certainly contributes to identity formation, but the way and direction in which this occurs may differ greatly across the various groups

and/or individuals. To some people, colonial heritage represents foreign rule, viewed as political and cultural suppression, intimately involved with the economic and social institution of slavery. Others may interpret this heritage as recognition of their existence through time and consider the built colonial heritage as an inheritance from their ancestors who played a decisive role in the history of the development of Paramaribo. Although the buildings were commissioned by the Dutch political and economic authorities, they were constructed, and also to an extent lived in, by slaves. In addition, there are groups or individuals who interpret the heritage merely as a remainder of a period from the past with which they do not feel particularly connected. As mentioned earlier, the Creole and Maroon communities express the highest degree of identification with the built colonial heritage in the historic city centre. They are the direct descendants of the slaves that helped build Paramaribo or they are the descendants of the run-away slaves who resisted Dutch colonial rule for centuries. Furthermore, the relative high preference by the Maroon for identifications with 'colonial heritage' could possibly be explained by their willingness to be a recognized member of the urban society. Conversely the Javanese and Hindustani arrived after the abolition of slavery and have few historic or contemporary links with the historic city centre and its structures, although in recent years the number of Hindustani residing in the city are rising more and more.

The core in the answer to the question of whether the colonial heritage is mutual heritage, which binds the various population groups together, is the extent to which colonial heritage contributes to national identity. Ultimately, this means that the historic city centre of Paramaribo is a visible and potent reminder of a long period of colonial government, often viewed as oppression, which occupies at best an ambivalent position in the creation of place identity. The identification with the place may be formed of many meanings and powered by many emotions, including identification against the place and its heritage as much as identification with it.

One may conclude that the connection and creation of a mutual national identity between different ethnic groups in a multicultural society is an illusion rather than a reality. For Suriname this means that, despite the fact that various heritage experts argue that the preservation of the built colonial heritage contributes to the formation of a Surinamese identity and subsequently to the growth of mutual acceptance and understanding between these different ethnic population groups, there will always be differences between these groups in terms of the interpretation of the heritage as well as a national identity. The creation and/or stimulation of a sense of national identity, unity and pride is merely an expression of those in that society who have the power and the position that allows them to influence the decision-making processes which underlie this process of identity formation. This holds true especially in a multicultural society shaped by immigration like Suriname, where there is an enormous diversity in the backgrounds of each ethnic population group. For example, the diversity in the reasons and motivations, which led these groups to settle in Suriname - either voluntarily or otherwise - are a considerable influence on the way in which the colonial heritage is interpreted.

4. The Wider Implications

Which general insights has this research produced about the interpretation of built colonial heritage in a multi-ethnic society? What could be the significance of these results to heritage policy in other comparable regions with a colonial past in a multi-ethnic context? An interesting study relevant to these questions is that of Lagae (2004) about the former Belgian Congo. In this study ideas like shared colonial heritage and the relationship between colonial architecture and national identity are discussed. Like Suriname, the former Belgian Congo was a multi-ethnic society, consisting of people from many different tribal groups, who were regarded by the colonising power as having little to contribute to monumental architecture. Even Belgium, perhaps the most reluctant colonial power, with the Congo being willed to the state by the king in 1908, felt the need to design the capital Leopoldville (now Kinshasa) to represent the idea of the Belgium nation as a colonial power through its suitable impressive structures (Lagae, 2004; p. 174). While in the other major urban centre of Elisabethville (Lubumbashi), Katanga, the economic centre of the colony, there was no such attempt to impose an overarching Belgian imperial design. The architecture from the colonial period still strongly marks the physical appearance of the cities and the legacy of this colonial era is, in this sense, still present. Furthermore, as is the case in Suriname, this heritage is now redefined by ICOMOS as 'shared built heritage', implying that this heritage is both from the coloniser as from those who had been colonised. However, although it is labelled as a shared or mutual built heritage it is argued by Çelik (1999) that "symbolic sites for the coloniser culture continued to maintain their significance in the post-colonial era as their capacity to change and acquire new meanings allowed them to act also as places of memory for the colonised".

A clear example of this phenomenon is the Presidential Palace in Paramaribo facing Independence Square in the heart of Paramaribo. During the Dutch colonial period it was the residency of the governor. At the back of this residency there was a large park and garden. After independence in 1975 it became the Presidential Palace, the garden was confirmed as a public park (the 'Palmentuin'). The whole independence ceremony took place in this residence and on the square in front of it. So, this site is not only important for the identity of the former colonising power but also for the new formed nation. However, the extent to which it contributes to the creation or identity of a new nation, differs between the groups in society according to their associations and attachments to the site, as discussed above. Therefore it is of importance to recognise and acknowledge the existence of multiple interpretations and even conflicting memories that coexist about the built heritage that dates back to the colonial era. The definition of 'shared built heritage' as used by ICOMOS and other governmental institutes is therefore only applicable where its aim is to record the past. The interpretation the built colonial heritage however is often far from shared and often even a source of conflicting memories that are embedded in it.

The conservation and commercialisation of built colonial heritage becomes more complicated 'by the circumstances of colonisation whereby buildings acquire symbolic meanings for both residents and visitors. They may be interpreted as representations of the authority of control of the former colonial power, as well as its values, and the source of some contention regarding preservation and use' (Henderson, 2001; p. 7).

What many different studies make clear is that each case is different in its ethnic composition. 'Most Caribbean societies are locally unique composites of various European, African and Amerindian ingredients, often in long standing mulatto or mestizo mixes, in some case later augmented by Asian immigrants' (Ashworth et al., 2007: p. 122) Heritage from the colonial period may offer possibilities for mutuality both between former colonised and former colonizer and in nation building in post-colonial societies but both outcomes are fraught with problems as well as potential. Returning to the case of Paramaribo, it can be concluded that the built colonial heritage is a visible point of contact between contemporary Suriname and The Netherlands and is thus to an extent shared. It also makes a functional contribution to place identity, and as such, identity formation within Suriname. However, the identification with and interpretation of the heritage amongst the parties in both situations varies to such an extent, that the mutuality is partial and frequently imbalanced. In Suriname it cannot be concluded with certainty that the colonial heritage of Paramaribo serves as an equally and mutually interpreted binding factor that contributes to an integration process and nation building, resulting in the creation of a Surinamese identity, transcending the various ethnic groups. The fact that this role is nevertheless quietly but insistently awarded by several local heritage experts to Paramaribo's colonial built heritage, can therefore probably be labelled as "the wish is father to the thought".

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