Cultural citizenship has been used to conceptualize the empowerment of marginalized groups in society in cultural terms. I doubt whether this is a productive trajectory and will illustrate that. Alternatively I aim to apply the notion of cultural citizenship to the late colonial period in Indonesia in order to identify the large but anonymous indigenous lower middle class and its crucial role in sustaining the colonial state. Ignored by historian of nationalism this groups appropriated modernity as a lifestyle and was to play an important role in shaping the postcolonial condition of the new nation state.

Henk Schulte Nordholt is Head of Research at the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asia and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) in Leiden and professor of Indonesian History at Leiden University. His main fields of research include Southeast Asian history, contemporary politics in Indonesia, political violence, and the anthropology of colonialism. He has a special interest in Balinese studies.