

Towards a Virtual Slave Island/Kompannavidiya Heritage, history and spatial contestation in Colombo (Sri Lanka)

5 June 15u-18u , Room 002 Lipsius Building
Faculty of Humanities Leiden University



Sri Lanka has a complex layered history of Portuguese, Dutch and British colonialism. Historians, anthropologists, writers and heritage specialists are concerned how to narrate this past and question how it speaks to the present. During this event a team of Sri Lankan and Dutch researchers will present the websites developed as part of two public history projects **“Towards a virtual Slave Island/Kompannavidiya”** and **“Everyday Lankan History”**.

Speakers:

- Varuna De Silva, Architect and lecturer University of Moratuwa
- Iromi Perera, Director Colombo Urban Lab
- Dries Lyna, Lecturer in History Radboud University Nijmegen
- Luc Bulten, Lecturer Radboud University Nijmegen & postdoc Leiden University
- Bente de Leede, PhD student Leiden University & project developer Nachtzon Media
- Alicia Schrikker, Senior Lecturer Colonial and Global History, Leiden University

All welcome, please register here: <https://forms.gle/ZEEkQk2Vq5a9AFj8>



Kompannavidiya (Slave Island) used to be one of those places that made Colombo's layered history tangible, through its built heritage and its multi-ethnic communities. The place carries a Dutch slavery past, as its Dutch name *Het Slaveneiland* discloses, while its Sinhala name *Kompannavidiya* (Companystreet) refers to its history of colonial militarization and industrialization. Over the past ten years the area is vastly changing: nearly all the old quarters have been demolished and replaced by high rises, while the people who lived there for generations were relocated. In the project "Towards a Virtual Slave island" we used virtual tools to make the changes and the layers of history in this one location visible and combined oral history with archival research to present deep history of this contested space.

Everyday Lankan History presents the results of the Colonialism Inside Out project to a broader audience, using story-telling techniques. It focuses on individuals living in and around 18th-century Colombo, whose lives were shaken by colonial encounters, sometimes in unexpected ways. The stories have been reconstructed through meticulous archival research and help us imagine life under 18th-century Dutch colonialism from a local perspective.



The two projects were founded on collaboration between Leiden University, Radboud University, Colombo Urban Lab and The Sri Lanka National Archives, and received funding from NWO and Dutch Culture. This event is organized in collaboration with the Netherlands-Sri Lanka Foundation.