



Professor Eyal Weizman delivers the 18th Neelan Tiruchelvam Memorial Lecture

Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust

Empowering communities; building trust

Vision

The establishment of a just, equitable and peaceful society

Mission

To collectively promote peace, reconciliation and human rights, sharing responsibility, resources and risks through strategic partnerships with civil society, public sector, business community, diaspora, academia and donors

Contact us: 16/6A, Ward Place (Mohideen Terrace), Colombo 07, Sri Lanka | T: +94 11 2690991 | F: +94 11 2690993 | E:

Prof. Weizman has emerged as a key voice in the field of forensic architecture and published a number of books including *Hollow Lands: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (2007) and *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability* (2017).

The memorial lecture titled “Forensic Architecture: Space and Violence in Palestine and Beyond”, organized by Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust on the occasion of the 18th death anniversary of Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam was held on Sunday 30 July 2017 at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH) in Colombo. The lecture was delivered by Professor Eyal Weizman, Professor of Spatial and Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London.

The focus of Prof. Weizman’s oration was on the use of the groundbreaking work of forensic architecture in places of conflict, such as Palestine, Pakistan and elsewhere, to critically evaluate the politics and aesthetics of contemporary forms of spatial investigation.

The lecture commenced by Prof. Weizman explaining the importance of human rights work and how it should be able to make connections with local politics, situations and regional and universal aspirations and vice versa and understand the complexity around such situations and reach out to them.

Going beyond giving an understanding on what revolves around communities in struggle this further enables us to identify some of the root causes of such struggles.

He also spoke about how human rights work should generate a sense of global conversation undertaken by civil society and also develop the politics of those who are governed by it, and also contribute to forming political solidarity and a sense of common struggle across and beyond



According to Prof. Weizman the idea of forensic architecture emerged after the Israeli attack on the Gaza strip in January 2009 when this concept came to light. More than 25% of the buildings were damaged and civilian communities were affected during the conflict. The aftermath of this particular attack was evaluated by the extent of damage on the buildings. The Palestinian government had in place a project called ‘catalogue of destruction’, where each building was closely studied and it was concluded that each building bears a story. The basic idea of this concept is to create a human rights methodology and to be able to tell the history of conflict by examining destruction on the buildings. With the aim of making this concept more understandable he linked it to medical pathology where pathologists study human remains. He explained that forensic architecture can simply be seen or understood as the pathology of the buildings.

Even though the idea emerged only in 2009, Prof. Weizman believes that it goes back to the Jewish settlements in Palestine in 2000. It was related to implicating architects and planners into human rights violations and even war crimes. This was explained with regard to how settlements are not only government planned, but how, the elements considered during the process of planning tend to be a form of control, referring to suburban, strategic and even military aspects. And thus it could be observed that architectural thinking exists in colonial planning.

He further spoke about how architecture helps us tell stories in different ways than the more traditional human rights methodology by tuning both to the human voice and to the material trace and bringing them together.

In addition Prof. Weizman emphasized on the benefits with regard to the use of technology in architecture, linking this with a more recent attack on Gaza in 2014 and compared how the difference in time periods has proven to be more beneficial. For instance he described how tracking locations using satellite images was much easier and more accurate, and also how difficulties of forensic architects like the most common one, that is restricted access can be battled considering the useful pieces of data made available in social media. He linked material ruin, media and the memory of witnesses and explained through this how architecture as an arena allowed the categorization of this information through architectural models run on specific software. It has helped arrive at models with memories of witnesses and sometimes even supported victims recollect their memories. He also appreciated sound software as it guides by being able to describe the situation in spite of the incapability to actually see what happens.

Concluding, Prof. Weizman spoke about how researching even just one event very carefully helps gain an insight on the perpetuation of violence on a much larger scale. He also stressed on the thinking of each of those in the audience to look at human rights from a wide angle, in relation to the planet, its conditions and how they tend to be interlinked.

NTT will be compiling an electronic version of the lecture to capture both oral and visual presentation and it will be made available on its website www.neelan.org

Upcoming events..

ANNE FRANK EXHIBITION 2017

In September NTT, along with the Anne Frank House (AFH) will be organizing the third travelling exhibition **“Anne Frank - a history for today”**. Having covered the locations of Colombo, Jaffna, Galle and Batticaloa last year, this year the exhibitions will be taken across the estate areas of Dickoya, Deniyaya and Hatton.

PHASE 3– WFP 3

The Sithie Tiruchelvam Women’s Fellowship Programme (WFP) seeks to create opportunities for women leaders to participate in trainings and exposure visits outside their working environment/community and to share with and learn from others, particularly women activists, in other contexts. Throughout the fellowship period, the participants are encouraged to record their experiences and the impact of the fellowship on their engagement with their organizations and communities.

The third round of the WFP, began in 2016 and has successfully completed its 1st and 2nd rounds and is now working towards the final phase scheduled to be carried out in November.

STAFF CHANGES

Ms. Harshini Ranasinghe was appointed as the new Programme and Grants Manager in June. She is an Attorney-at-Law with a Masters in Human Rights Law from Monash University, Australia. Having worked in the development sector for 12 years, she has a strong background in the area with special focus on human rights and gender. She has managed a portfolio of grants for an international donor in her previous employment and has engaged with civil society with various capacities throughout her career.

The project “Building Bridges” which is an arts education initiative conducted by Mind Adventures (MA) was funded by the Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust, together with Cargills Ceylon, Ms. Dilrukshi Fonseka, Ms. Ruwanthi Sivapragasam and Mr. Madura Prematilleke. Two 3 day workshops (Kakkaiyankulam and Nattankandal) and a six day workshop were conducted as arts education initiatives directed by Nushelle de Silva.

Mind Adventures (MA) is an organisation committed to creating and staging original work that explores socio-political concepts in a compelling and engaging manner. Mind Adventures also focuses on outreach projects that emphasize teaching skills, employing drama therapy techniques and creating performances with underprivileged youth.

The 6 day workshop was conducted in the hamlets of Kakkaiyankulam (KK) and Nattankandal (NK) - small towns in the vicinity of Vavuniya. The identified target group was 15-18 year olds from both locations. The workshop catered to a total of 43 students (KK 19, NK 24).

Project Drama Camp’s main strategy is to initiate sustainable peace by helping individuals understand and analyse their own thoughts and fears and to appreciate the value of pausing and taking stock, of reflecting before taking action ; especially in situations of heightened emotion. It is the belief of MA that drama provides a safe, enjoyable space to explore emotions and play out a range of solutions to social issues.

It was proposed by the camp to introduce basic cognitive thinking strategies with a focus on reflection, through a series of drama games and activities. Following were the objectives :

- Increase awareness of critical thinking skills
- To activate greater levels of self-awareness
- To introduce non-verbal theatre techniques
- To support participants in creating performances on the themes explored

- To encourage participants to write and record personal observations

A three step process was planned to achieve the above mentioned objectives, with the first step including activities like ice-breaker games, non-verbal theatre techniques and reflection through a range of physical activities. The second step got the participants to share writing pieces completed in step 1 and compare and develop an idea for their performance. The third step brought together the youth groups and the facilitators to finalise their performances, discuss and share with the local community.

This was a great opportunity for both youth groups to identify, value and also learn about some vital concepts in life like identity, conflict and connections.

Students engaging in group work



'The City Game-one day workshop'

NTT supported a one day workshop proposed by the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA). The primary role envisaged by CPA in the field of public policy is a proactive and interventional one, aimed at the dissemination and advocacy of policy alternatives for non-violent conflict resolution and democratic governance. Accordingly, the work of the CPA involves a major research component through which the policy alternatives advocated are identified and developed.

The CPA together with researchers from Fields of View (FoV) proposed to conduct a one day workshop that involves a morning session playing a city game with 10-15 participants followed by a workshop with around 5 practitioners working in the area of urban development. FoV is a non-profit organization based in Bangalore, India that designs workshops where different disciplines come together and have meaningful dialogue that helps relate it further to real-life contexts and understand cities better.

The City Game, held on the 13th of July 2017 was designed to explore urban form and elicit a group/individual's preferences about their city. Participants were allowed to play in turns and react to each other's actions, and doing so helped create a dynamic that is absent in traditional participation/feedback processes.

The workshop conducted by the FoV facilitators discussed Sri Lanka's urban development context and how and whether the city game can be applied to work currently being done and also how it could be used as a tool in the future when working with communities and government authorities.

The game and discussion not only gave everyone present an opportunity to partake and learn new techniques with regard to participatory planning; conducting consultations with various actors on the particular topic, but also highlighted how a lack of discussion and planning can lead to messy development choices and preferences about cities and city living.



Media coverage:

<https://sanjanah.wordpress.com/2017/07/16/reimagining-a-city/>

<https://vimeo.com/148530034>

Applying for a grant

The Neelan Tiruchelvam is currently accepting project proposals to be supported under its November 2017 funding cycle **"Empowering Communities to Benefit from Participation in Sustainable Development"**. The proposal however mainly targets the topics of Gender and Human Rights.

Since its founding, the Trust has striven to extend and continue Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvams legacy by contributing towards facilitating upholding human rights, transparency and accountability, and promoting pluralism, diversity and ethnic harmony. With this aim, NTT supports community based organizations (CBOs) island wide by providing them with grants that strengthen their capacity.

Our Call for Proposals specifically seeks to enhance the ability of people to work for and contribute towards long-term social change in Sri Lanka. It also aims to bring about structural change to enable marginalized communities and vulnerable groups, such as those affected by discrimination or violence (women, children and youth, migrant workers, plantation workers, and the differently-abled), to exercise their rights.

Potential applicants are invited to submit proposals that are in line with the above mentioned thematic programme areas. For more details on our call for proposals and/or applying for a grant please visit our website. www.neelan.org

The Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust
"empowering communities building trust"