

Decommodifying People, Place, & Planet: Transformative Policies Towards Unconditional Inclusion and Belonging

- Concept Note -

Background

The issue of homelessness is more relevant now than ever, clearly illustrating how global challenges are interconnected as we see millions of people around the world displaced by conflict, climate, and economic conditions. Perhaps displaying poverty in its most visible form, global homelessness remains one of the most extreme and growing manifestations of inequality, social exclusion, and disregard for human rights. Less visible, however, are the women, children, and girls experiencing homelessness, and the different forms that homelessness can take depending on the context. Women and youth experiencing extreme poverty are often marginalized further through social and cultural prejudice, and through the lack of access to appropriate resources and social protections in the face of climate displacement or other crises. This contributes to the invisibility of these populations, continuing the cycle of inequality and poverty whereby intersecting vulnerabilities are confounded and deepened.

With the acceptance of a ‘growth at all costs’ mindset, the fulfillment of basic human needs has been made contingent on individuals’ contributions to a profoundly unfair economy. Similarly, the planet has been recast as an economic entity that is only valuable insofar as it generates profit, disregarding its inherent value as the source of all life. As such, true eradication of both homelessness and poverty necessitates breaking the cycle perpetuated by the insufficient and incomplete framework we currently approach these issues with. A more nuanced understanding of the experiences of individuals and families in these contexts is necessary to inform effective policymaking and community engagement. Homelessness and displacement should not be seen as a personal failure but rather as the structural failure and human rights violation that they are.

Social justice for all requires a paradigm shift which de-commodifies people, place, and planet, and which orients development to the full realization of human rights, regardless of one’s socioeconomic status or the extractive potential/climate vulnerability of the place they call home. It requires a new frame which exposes not just the individual injustices of homelessness, but also the broader systems which engender, foster, and profit from the unequal and unsustainable status quo in both the Global North and the Global South. When social justice is prioritized, human rights are upheld, sustainable and fair development is advanced, and widespread systemic inequalities like poverty and homelessness are addressed.

On the occasion of the 62nd Session of the Commission on Social Development, this side event seeks to explore:

- The consequences of upholding social policies which commodify people, place, and planet
- The connection between social exclusion, poverty, and climate injustice
- The transformative policies (e.g., in housing, poverty alleviation, climate displacement) needed to create unconditional inclusion and belonging and foster social justice

Modality

In-person panel held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, with the opportunity for in-person questions, answers, and discussion. Recording will be available following the session. Hosted by UNANIMA International and co-sponsored by UN DESA, Mercy International Association, ATD Fourth World, and Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd.

When: Wednesday, February 7, 1:15pm-2:30pm

Where: Conference Room A, UNHQ, New York

Registration Link: <http://tinyurl.com/registerui>, register by January 26th, 2024