GLOBAL CONVERGENCES

Strategies Against Evictions & Displacement

NOVEMBER 21-22, 2014
Forced displacement is one of the most crucial issues of our time. Affecting millions of people around the world every year, displacement violates fundamental human rights and in the process strips people of their hard-earned assets, stability and dignity. It also tears apart the social fabric of entire communities. How are these communities coping with and resisting evictions and displacement? How can we support their struggles? And are there alternatives that respect human rights while challenging the destructive impacts of evictions and displacement?

The two-day workshop “Global Convergences: Strategies Against Evictions and Displacement,” co-sponsored by MIT’s Displacement Research and Action Network (DRAN) and the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung—New York Office (RLS–NYC), brings together housing and land rights activists, and leading scholars and experts from around the world to discuss strategies against displacement. This gathering will examine the ground-level strategies adopted by affected communities against displacement, evaluate experiences from across the globe—particularly in Brazil, India, South Africa and the U.S.—and assess the growth and use of global and national standards, tools, and other measures.

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**Program Schedule**

**Friday, November 21**

9:30am-1:00pm  *Site visit and meeting with anti-eviction groups*

1:00pm-2:00pm  *Lunch*

2:00pm-2:10pm  *Welcoming remarks*
   Albert Scharenberg (Co-Director, RLS-NYC)

2:10pm-2:30pm  *Description of the workshop*
   Balakrishnan Rajagopal (Professor, MIT, and Founding Director, DRAN/MIT)

2:30pm-4:00pm  **Plenary 1: What strategies work to stop or change evictions and displacement?**
   Chair: Miloon Kothari (DRAN/MIT; Former UN Special Rapporteur, Adequate Housing)
   Rodolfo Stavenhagen, on international mechanisms; (Former UN Special Rapporteur, Rights of Indigenous Peoples)
   Joana Barros, on organizational structure of civil society; (National Advisor, FASE, Federation of Organizations for Social and Educational Assistance, Brazil)
   Michael Kane, on mobilization and working with city governments; (Executive Director, National Alliance of HUD Tenants, USA)
   David Ntseng, on mobilization and domestic legal mechanisms; (Project Manager, Church Land Settlement Programme, South Africa)

4:00pm-4:15pm  *Coffee break*

4:15pm-5:45pm  **Plenary 2: How do evicted and displaced communities cope and respond?**
   Chair: Balakrishnan Rajagopal (Professor, MIT, and Founding Director, DRAN/MIT)
   Amita Bhide, on resettlement; (Chairperson, Center of Urban Planning, Policy and Governance, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India)
   Joseph Schechla, on documentation, reparation and justice; (Coordinator, Housing and Land Rights Network of the Habitat International Coalition, Egypt)
Rachel LaForest, on coping through organizing; (Executive Director, Right to the City Alliance, USA)

Miloon Kothari, on community responses to poverty, non-material impacts, and eviction impact assessment tools; (DRAN/MIT; Former UN Special Rapporteur, Adequate Housing)

7:30pm-9:00pm **Group dinner**

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22**

8:45am-9:00am **Welcome and coffee**

9:00am-10:30am **Strategies against evictions and displacement: Documentation, impact-assessment, mapping and media**

Chair: Phil Thompson (Professor, MIT, DRAN Faculty)

Prafulla Samantara (President, Lok Shakti Abhiyan/Odhisa, India)

Frédéric Mousseau (Policy Director, Oakland Institute, USA)

Ryan Schlief (Executive Director, International Accountability Project)

DRAN Delhi Displacement Mapping Team

Thea Gelbspan (Membership and Solidarity Coordinator, ESCR-Net, International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, USA)

10:30am-10:45am **Coffee break**

10:45am-12:15pm **Strategies against evictions and displacement: Law and mobilization**

Chair: Rodolfo Stavenhagen (Former UN Special Rapporteur, Rights of Indigenous Peoples)

Nelson Saule, Jr. (Former National Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, Brazil)

Usha Ramanathan (Leading Independent Legal Researcher, India)

Malavika Vartak (Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Policy Coordinator, Amnesty International, UK)

David Ntseng (Project Manager, Church Land Settlement Programme, South Africa)
12:15pm-1:15pm **Lunch**

1:15pm-2:45 pm **Coping with and responding to evictions and displacement: Memory, return, occupation**

Chair: Tony Samara (Senior Program Manager of Land Use and Housing, Urban Habitat, USA)

Juan Xi (Professor of Sociology and Urban Studies, University of Akron, USA)

Lydia Lowe (Executive Director, Chinese Progressive Association, USA)

Larry Vale (Professor, MIT, DRAN Faculty, Director, Resilient Cities Housing Initiative)

Priti Narayan (Journalist, Transparent Chennai, India)

2:45pm-3:00pm **Coffee break**

3:00pm-4:00pm **Working groups: Drawing lessons from specific strategies against displacement**

Working Group 1 – Strategies before Evictions

Working Group 2 – Strategies during Evictions

Working Group 3 – Strategies after Evictions

4:00pm-4:45pm **Presentation of group work and discussion**

With observations from Andres Del Castillo (City Life/Vida Urbana), John Mwebe (International Accountability Project), and other participants

4:45pm-5:15pm **Reflections on the themes and a way forward**

Balakrishnan Rajagopal and Miloon Kothari (DRAN/MIT)

5:15pm-5:30pm **Final remarks**

Albert Scharenberg (RLS–NYC)
The Displacement Research and Action Network, an initiative of the Program for Human Rights and Justice at the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT, is the first-ever inter-disciplinary and cross-sectoral global network on displacement. Founded in 2012 by MIT DUSP Professor Balakrishnan Rajagopal, the Network has been shaped by Miloon Kothari, the former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, a visiting scholar at DUSP, with contributions from Olivier De Schutter, the former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and many other leading experts from MIT and elsewhere. The Network brings together activists, academics and policy makers to build new theory and evidence of the increasing incidence of mass internal displacement around the world due to development, conflict, or climate disaster.

The Network’s main goals are to:

• Provide a platform that connects activists, planners, scholars, policymakers and human rights practitioners, and allows displaced populations to share their stories;
• Co-produce knowledge about drivers, causes and consequences of displacement through research and the development of new tools and technologies, including methodologies of mapping displacement;
• Contribute to the implementation of existing national and international human rights standards on displacement and the evolution of, where necessary, new global normative and policy frameworks on displacement, housing and land rights;
• Assist local communities, civil society networks and social movements to better analyze the impacts of displacement and increase knowledge of advocacy tools that challenge forced displacement.
• Influence country-level normative and regulatory frameworks in collaboration with national-level civil society groups and academic networks.
The Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung is an internationally operating, progressive non-profit institution for civic education affiliated with Germany’s “Die Linke” (Left Party). Active since 1990, the foundation has been committed to the analysis of social processes and developments worldwide. In cooperation with organizations around the globe, it works on democratic and social participation, empowerment of disadvantaged groups, alternatives for economic and social development, conflict prevention, and peaceful conflict resolution. Its international activities aim to provide civic education by means of academic analyses, public programs, and projects conducted together with partner institutions. In order to be able to mentor and coordinate these various projects, the foundation has established 17 regional offices around the world. The RLS has been granted special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 2013.

**THE NEW YORK OFFICE**

The foundation’s New York Office, located at 275 Madison Avenue, opened its doors in 2012. It serves two major tasks: to work on issues concerning the United Nations, including collaboration with people and political representatives from the Global South, and to work with North American (U.S. and Canadian) progressives in universities, unions, social movements, progressive institutions, and think tanks. The office’s Co-Directors are Stefanie Ehmsen and Albert Scharenberg.

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