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Socially-Excluded in the City:
The Recent Transformation of Homelessness Support and
Different Paths toward Self-dependence for the Homeless in
Japan

近年日本における多様化するホームレス現象とその自立
支援の変容

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Reinventing Public Service Provision for the Socially-Excluded in the City: The Recent Transformation of Homelessness Support and Different Paths toward Self-dependence for the Homeless in Japan

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Introduction

With the burst of the bubble economy, changes in family patterns and failures on the side of existing social provisions, homelessness has become increasingly a frequent and common sight in the urban public spaces of Japan. Gradually but steadily, the homeless have settled themselves in public parks, shopping arcades, underground bypasses, street sides, under flyovers, on river banks etc. This ‘takeover’ of public parks, which before held the meaning of spaces for leisure, meeting points and family/friends activities, initially created grudge and displeasure from the part of city residents as the meaning and images of parks had changed in an unfamiliar way. Tents and shacks on the sideways of streets became the focus of security issues and the like, as these streets serve the function of school commuting etc. In this way, the homeless have had a considerable impact on not only the cityscape but also to a certain extent on the daily lives of the city residents. Not surprisingly, the homeless have become the object of harassments and government led preparations of eviction. In other words, they have taken on ‘the role of marginalized actors in public space as a focus of social exclusion’ (Mitchell, 2003: p.5). It is incorrect to say that the homelessness problem in Japan is solely related to the socio-economic situation of the latter 1990s. Homelessness has existed way before. The main difference with the current situation is the fact previously homelessness had a more ‘hidden’ character and was mainly constricted to daily labor districts (*yoseba*) where it was contained as well (Mizuuchi, 2003, Aoki 2000). Sporadically vagrants wandering around in stations and underground bypasses could be spotted, but this type of homeless individuals didn’t cause any commotion due to their low profile character. Coupled to the spillover of the *yoseba* districts and the recent emergence of homeless who had no experience with the daily labor market or forms of vagrancy, the issue spread throughout the major cities at first, and appeared afterwards in local cities as well.

In 2006 the authors have conducted a national survey on the present state of homelessness in Japan. In order to capture the full scope of the recent conditions, the authors have visited 52 homelessness support organizations (hereafter abbreviated to ‘HSOs’) in 43 cities and interviewed a number of rough sleepers in each city as well. Based on the result of this survey, this paper will clarify the transformation of homeless support movements and the emergence of new ways of self-dependency. In this light the paper also considers the efforts against social exclusion and challenges to existing kinds of public service provisions.

Towards a National and Local Framework for Homelessness Policy

The increased ‘visibleness’ of homelessness created the urgency for city government bodies and the central government to create efficient measures to tackle the problem in a way that the homeless could be included back into society and out of the public scene. The enactment of the Special Measures Law for the Self-dependent Life of the Homeless in 2002 (hereafter referred to as the “Self-dependency Law”) is the

embodiment of the central government measures outline. This law provides a framework that offers a wide range of options for the homeless to regain a self-dependent life. The Self-dependency Law was formulated by the demand of the major cities like Tokyo and Osaka which needed this proper framework in order to efficiently use resources to deal with the homelessness issue. The Self-dependency Law is centered on the provision of regular jobs, which is considered to be the main concept of making homeless individuals self-dependent again. The practical realization of these job provisions takes place in the so-called “self-dependency support centers”, where the homeless are institutionalized for a period of three to six months¹. In addition to job introduction, these centers also offer training and services to increase the chances to smoothly attain and retain a regular job. By securing regular jobs, the center gives incentives to save up enough capital for deposit money and first months of rent in order to transfer them into private apartments. This transfer forms the last stage to a self-dependent life. The self-dependency support centers are run by social welfare corporations which are commissioned by the city government. They only accommodate homeless individuals who seem able to perform a regular job. In the case of Osaka, those unable to perform regular jobs (for physical or mental reasons) are directed to rehabilitation or relief centers where they are offered support in obtaining livelihood assistance. In cities like Nagoya, Kitakyushu, Sendai, Kawasaki, and Sakai, support in livelihood assistance is provided by the self-dependency support centers as well².

Figure 1 is an overview of the public provision for the homeless per city. Major cities like Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya and Yokohama are all provided with assessment shelters. Here, the homeless enter through the introduction of outreach patrols or consultation at the social welfare office. After examination, they are after approximately two weeks to one month transferred to self-dependency centers or other welfare facilities. The severe mental cases and physically handicapped are appointed to rehabilitation centers and hospitals by the outreach patrols themselves. In the more local cities like Fukuoka, Ichikawa, self-dependency support homes are also provided. In contrast to the self-dependency support centers, these are individual room apartments publicly rented from the private sector, managed by NGOs and integrated into the local policy. Similar to the centers, in these apartments the homeless are offered job introduction support or livelihood assistance. These homes are also available in Sapporo, Niigata, Sendai, Chiba, Wakayama, and Hiroshima etc., but are solely run by support NGOs due to the unavailability of public funds. Most of the local cities however (marked by the red spots in figure 1) don't have any form of self-dependency accommodation.

Except for Tokyo, major cities such as Osaka, Nagoya, Yokohama and Kawasaki also have park (station) shelters installed. These short-term shelters serve on a night-basis and offer accommodation as a rule for those residing in the park. In Osaka and Nagoya, these shelters have been constructed in line with the forced evictions that have taken place before. On the other hand Tokyo decided to give forms of housing aid so the homeless could be directly guided into private apartments. These park shelters however are not provided in the local cities. In contrast to the major cities, the homeless have been unable to penetrate these public park spaces and occupy them. The difference of the homeless population scale in major and local cities has been responsible for this. After 1996, the number of homeless tent dwellers in the major cities increased precipitously by the hundreds, making it impossible for park keepers to keep control over the situation and therefore leaving no other option than to allow this problem to escalate. It didn't come so far in the local cities. As soon as any form of tent settlement appeared, park keepers would deal with the problem themselves, strongly recommending or even forcing these tent dwellers to look for other resorts. Consequently, the only form of fixed habitation in local cities has been restricted to more or less remote spaces under

bridges and on river banks, or to wander around in stations and arcade shopping streets. The river banks are the legal domain of the national government, therefore making it legally impossible for city governments to organize evictions or confiscations. Besides the public sector policies, private sector related HSOs have come to fulfill an immense role in providing support and assistance for the homeless in Japan.

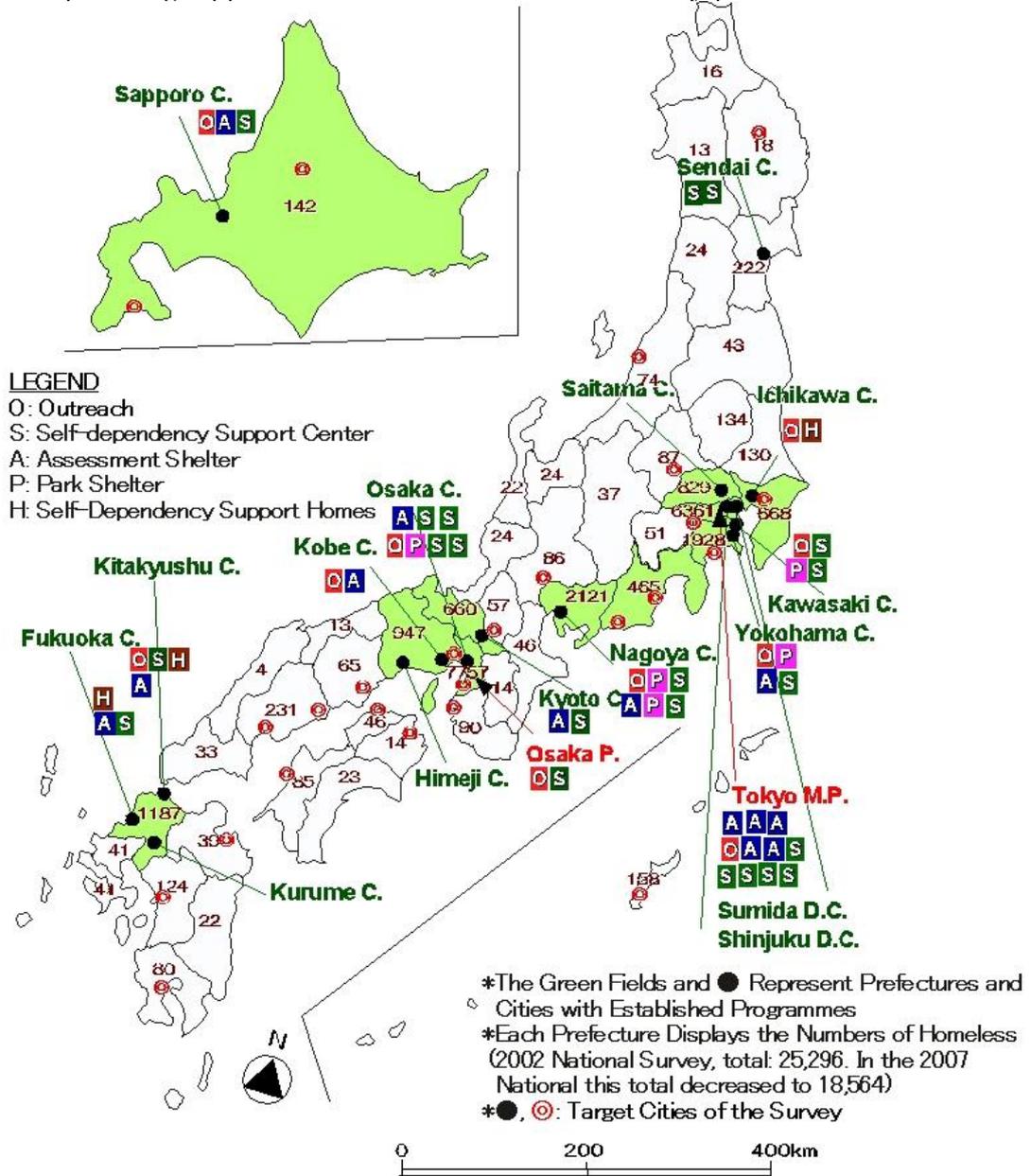


Figure 1: The Status of Public Sector Homelessness Support in Japan and Actual Condition on Prefecture and City Scale.

It was exactly around the period of the formulation of the homelessness law that these support movements rapidly spread out from the major cities to engage in the more local parts of the country and therefore the content of their support activities transformed as well. The definition of homelessness in Japan is limited to only the state of rough sleeping, meaning only those being ‘roof-less’, excluding those in shelters and other forms of unstable housing. The transformation of homelessness support activities, coupled with the public sector policies, has resulted in new ways or put in other words, new options, a new set of choices for the homeless to regain self-dependency.

The Reawaking of Support Movements in Japan

The processes into homelessness are complex although one can discern a trend that those who hold human capital in Japan don't easily end up living in the streets (Iwata, 2007). It is this lack of human capital that has left the homeless in need to rely on material support from support movements or to be able to secure stable elements such as fixed forms of habitation and (mainly informal) means of income.

Considering homelessness not merely being a problem of rough sleeping but also to a wider extent of those on the verge of becoming homeless and those who finally have escaped homelessness but cannot seem to fully reconnect with society, it is reasonable to say that the HSOs have created a basic level of livelihood opportunities for the homeless. Before, these opportunities were mainly offered in the *yoseba* districts, where the daily laborers come to search for work, as well in the hostel and flophouse areas where they were housed on a daily rent basis. These districts were located in Kamagasaki (Osaka), San'ya (Tokyo), Kotobuki (Yokohama), Sasajima (Nagoya) and Chikko (Fukuoka). Labor movements in the 70s, backed up by student movements, set up soup kitchens run by Christian organizations, nighttime outreach patrolling and afterwards day centers in order to offer the daily laborers support in times of unemployment and to protect them from crime syndicates and malignant construction companies. In this way they struggled for the rights of the daily laborers and created means of access to labor related forms of social assistance.

In these *yoseba* and flophouse areas, daily laborers with unstable incomes faced the acute danger of becoming homeless. As soon as they became entangled in a roofless life, they were discriminated and stigmatized by society as beggars or vagrants, thus leaving them excluded from the everyday society. Up until the 90s, homelessness was a game of survival where the line of being taken up in an emergency hospital or die in the streets was very thin. Apart from medical intervention, there was no policy whatsoever to deal with rough sleepers. The sudden transformation of support movement after the 90s was a partial switch from labor movement and neo-left wing inspired student movements to housing and *machi-zukuri*³ related movements. This was the result of factors such as the aging of daily laborers and the sudden increase in unemployment due to the *Heisei* Recession after the bubble economy, giving rise to the homelessness dilemma of the latter 90s. Almost simultaneously, blue tents appeared in shocking numbers in public spaces such as public parks, river banks and station terminals throughout every major city in Japan, making homelessness visible to civic society. In Tokyo for example, where instead in the *yoseba* of San'ya a carton box settlement emerged in Shinjuku, one of the famous areas of representative space of the metropolis, the sight of this scenery struck the eyes of many city residents and tourists.

This public impact of the spillover process of the *yoseba* and the drastic increase of homeless in public spaces has been two-fold. As previously stated, the escalation of the homeless issue in public spaces aroused social discontent but on the other hand it also created an opportunity to raise social awareness about an issue which before was merely stigmatized and discriminated against. This social awareness gave impulse to certain individuals and volunteering organizations to commence support assistance in major as well as local cities. In a sense, this process resembles the former social movements of anti-pollution and Buraku⁴ liberation in the 70s and the *machi-zukuri* movement in response to the aftermath of Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, where all support actions were organized by civic group initiatives. A such, homelessness became partially recognized as a social issue whereby certain individuals felt the need to organize support movements and volunteering activities to cover the inadequacy and incapability of

governmental responses.

Amidst the process of forced evictions in the late 1990s and early 2000, some support movements stepped away from their opposition stance and began to grope cooperation with the city government, based on the notion of negotiation. It was around this time that these movements organized themselves into NGOs and/or legal bodies in order to back up this process. The threshold of this cooperation process was the introduction of a homelessness support policy on part of the central government acting as a guardian for the city governments. In this way the concept for self-dependency was introduced and regular job introduction was brought forward to serve as the main foundation of the concept. In addition, the admission of livelihood assistance was made possible for those who were in a physically restricted condition, and those who rejected every sort of support policies and preferred to continue using public spaces became the object of forced eviction. At first this policy was introduced in Osaka and Tokyo in 1999 and afterwards with the official formulation of the Homelessness Self-dependency Law in 2002, it was applied nationwide.

With the shift from resistance and struggle to negotiation and cooperation, the fielding extent of homelessness support movements gradually expanded and in a certain way, these movements became subjected to confusion and inner tensions. Support organizations that held on to resistance and struggle as their main identity kept on stressing the demand and struggle for the living rights of those who wish to continue their homeless way of living. In practice, these demands focused on the possibility of public spaces to function as addresses for resident registration and legal squatting or sheltering, and in the most extreme case on the entire liberation of these spaces or even full autonomy over it in an anarchistic kind of way. On the other hand, the support movements that shifted towards a negotiation based attitude gave priority to cooperation, witnessed primarily in the local cities. These organizations changed into full-pledged NGOs sharing the objective of co-developing a ‘one-stop service’⁵ in which support is directed first to the attainment of livelihood assistance and afterwards to support for the transition into private apartments. From this perspective one can thus say that the support movements have diversified. It is important to note though that the central government’s policy, which as stated above uses regular job introduction as its billboard, collides with this livelihood based approach.

In an attempt to restore ‘the original function’ of public parks as a space for leisure etc. (Toda, 2005: 82), Tokyo started the “Housing First” policy⁶ initially in Toyama and Chuo Park in Shinjuku and afterwards in other large parks as well. The concept of this policy is to move the tent dwellers out of the parks into private apartments let by the Metropolitan Authority for a duration of maximum two years (contract renewal is possible). The rent is thus subsidized and the homeless individual only needs to take on the additional costs like electricity, gas, food etc. Yasue (2005) has pointed out some shortcomings of this policy. These range from inadequate public provision of temporal work to the problem of the very objective of the policy, being namely a mere attempt to expose of the tent settlements instead of trying to secure an apartment life for the homeless in general⁷.

Consultation on the Spot: What Do the Homeless Need?

Apart from those who strongly resist and prefer to continue their life in the public spaces, the homeless in Japan have been offered no choice but to escape their state of homelessness by becoming self-dependent by engaging in regular jobs or by attaining livelihood assistance. As stated above, the short-term shelters and self-dependency support centers were installed for this purpose. With the creation of regular job

introduction, support for attaining livelihood assistance, and the choice to remain occupying public spaces, the pattern of homelessness has diversified as well.

The HSOs in the major cities have mainly concentrated their support activities on the assistance of those homeless male singletons who reside in blue tents in parks and under flyovers and those who settled in carton boxes in stations, the so-called 'fixed type of habitation' group. In contrast to those who wander around and thus have no fixed form of habitation, this type of homelessness has been the most easy to detect and most easy to assist⁸. There are almost little to no cases in Japan of homeless individuals illegally occupying abandoned houses or women or families residing in a fixed form of homelessness. Also the local government homelessness policies have been mainly giving priority to only this fixed type of homelessness. Like in the major cities, self-dependency is promoted through regular job introduction and livelihood assistance by means of transferring the homeless from public spaces into private housing. Not being bound to the central government's framework, these local governments have presented both ways of self-dependency on the spot during outreach patrols and were relatively successful in persuading some of the homeless to give up their way of living and move into apartments⁹. However, like in the case of the major cities, there was no provision in this policy whatsoever for those homeless individuals who are independent, or "self-providing" as the authors prefer to express it, meaning that they experience relatively few difficulties at all being homeless as they reside in fixed habitation and have steady incomes from informal sector miscellaneous jobs.

In the next part we will discuss some of the results of the survey, namely the factors that mostly influence the will and decision to remain homeless and where policy and homelessness support activity seem to fall short. Moreover, we will also pick up the more representative voices and consider their reasons against institutionalization and other forms of support.

Cross Analysis Survey Results

What makes the basic level of livelihood possible for the fixed type of homeless is the fact that these homeless are in relative good health, able to perform physical labor such as collecting recyclable resources and don't or only very slightly suffer from any form of mental disease. These factors are closely related with the intention to resist public service provision and to the level of self-provision these homeless have attained. And indeed, the cross analysis regarding the intention to continue being homeless or to escape homelessness with the type of habitation shows us that the type of fixed habitation is more inclined to the continuation of being homeless (Fig. 2). Those with a stable place to reside thus show a greater percentage to continue their present condition. A steady place to reside offers the possibility to stock material needed to perform informal and formal sector labor. In case of tent settlements there are most of the time informal networks and a sort of community sense of looking after one other. Homeless individuals who are looking after another individual or who find themselves in a mutual dependency relationship with another individual are less inclined to give up their actual way of living. Also striking is the percentage of those with unfixed habitation shows a much greater determination to becoming self-dependent again, with the use of public provision or support from homelessness support movements. Also, the unfixed type shows a substantial amount of those unable to determine whether they should change their determination or not. The lack of self-determination and not having a steady place to reside is what makes these homeless individuals doubt if they can be self-providing.

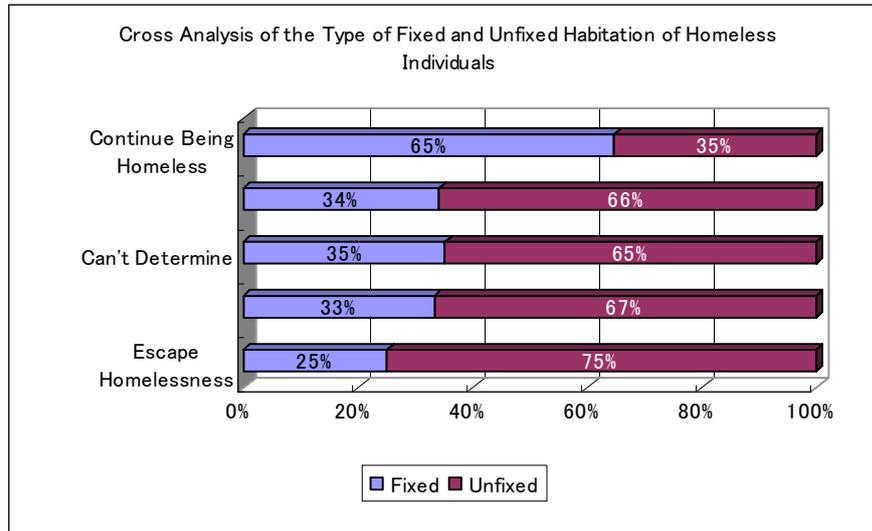


Figure 2: Cross Analysis of the Intention to Continue or Escape Homelessness with Type of Habitation.

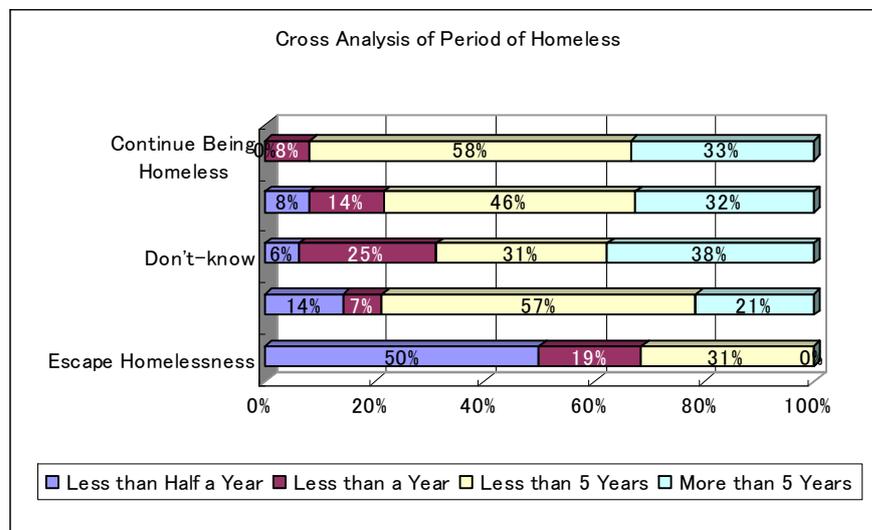


Figure 3: Cross Analysis of the Intention to Continue or Escape Homelessness with Period of Homelessness.

The major factor considering the decision to remain homeless is the duration of the period of homelessness (Fig 3). Those who have been homeless for less than a half year show great determination to change their situation. Obviously, this group hasn't become used yet to the hardship of everyday survival that the homeless face. Despite this fact however, almost one out of ten already is determined to continue being homeless. This is presumably related to whether the homeless individual possesses a form of fixed habitation or not, and to those who consider giving up their homeless life as no option. Those who have been homeless for a long time are fairly adapted to their way of live and are most of the time self-providing. None of the individuals who are homeless for more than five years interviewed have the intention to actively escape homelessness. Many of these show no intention because they have already given up on society and don't expect their situation to change. Others take pride in the fact that they are self-providing and there are also those who feel that they won't be able to adjust to an apartment life again.

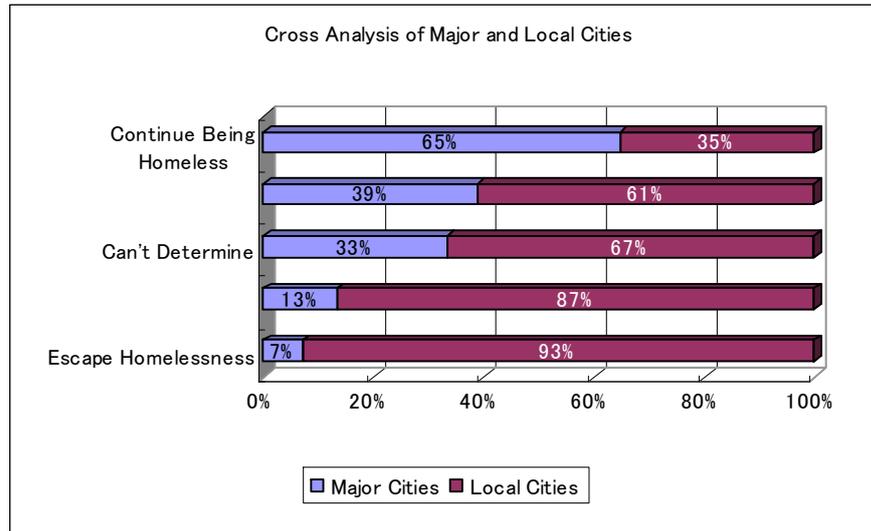


Figure 4: Cross Analysis of the Intention to Continue or Escape Homelessness with Major/Local City.

The activities of HSOs in Tokyo and Osaka are also reflected in this outcome. They have made it relatively easier for the homeless to survive in the streets or public parks because there is a longer history of committed HSOs. Figure 4 is a cross analysis of the intention to continue or escape homeless in major and local cities. The difference is striking: apart from the fact that the major cities have longer histories when it comes to homeless support movements, the feasibility of erecting tents in public parks also plays a great role. In a negative sense, this has given the type of homeless who are in a state of confusion due to alcohol addiction and mental problems more confidence to survive in the streets. Results have also shown us that there is also a larger share of long-term homeless individuals in the major cities due to this fact.

Representative Voices of the Homeless

We have mentioned before that the reasons for becoming homeless vary from person to person and are very complex. This complexity makes it difficult to develop a set of prevention measures for those who are facing danger of becoming homeless, albeit a more total approach towards tackling homelessness would be more effective than the current one (Yamazaki et al, 2006)¹⁰. The complexity of becoming homeless is also reflected in the complexity of escaping it. Government policy has tried to cover all the homeless, mainly through the concept of regular job introduction and in lesser extent through the provision of livelihood assistance. This means however that the individual needs of the homeless are generalized and that therefore individual needs are left unaddressed. HSOs have a wider understanding of the scope of the complexity, but of course this doesn't mean that they are therefore able to effectively address these matters.

During the nationwide interview of homeless individuals in our survey, we were able to distinct some representative individual issues that prevent the homeless of becoming self-dependent again. As these cases are mostly cases of self-providing individuals, public policy and HSOs have been rather unsuccessful to reintroduce these individuals back into society and make them self-dependent again. What follows is an introduction of common factors which obstruct a return to society, representing the sentiment of the homeless themselves.

The generalizing character of public service policy and its practical execution collide with the individual needs and values of the homeless. The idea of institutionalization is

unattractive in itself. Institutionalization implies the adaptation to several rules and regulations, resulting in the restriction of free behavior. Those seeking assistance in becoming self-dependent again accept these restrictions, realizing that this may be for the better. Even if engagement to self-dependency is strong, not everybody is cut out to be subjected to a restricted life of rules. Especially those who have been homeless and fairly unrestricted in their way of living for a long period, find the concept of shared accommodation in shelters and self-dependency centers unattractive. Mainly issues of privacy make it hard to complete rehabilitation and the dependency on the institution creates anxiety in regard to how life will be after the completion of rehabilitation. The greatest problem however lies with the cases that were unsuccessful in becoming self-dependent after completion. The reasons why they failed are related to insufficient back-up and time to adapt to the regular job introduction programs. The center residents are supposed to find a regular job and continue this job after six months and built up a self-dependent life on their own from there. Some need more time and require a financial basis to rely on when they are unable to continue or want to change their present job. The psychological consequences are substantial. Although they have sacrificed their relatively free lives in order to be self-dependent again, they failed. The reasons for this vary but many of them feel that if they would have had more and longer back-up, they may have been successful. As these individuals return to the streets and parks, the word on the inadequacy of these facilities spread out and demotivates others to enter.

More basic, personal motivations are at play as well. A fair share of the amount of homeless individuals consist of those who have fled or chosen to abandon their previous situation. These relate to family situation, debts, injuries, alcohol/gamble addictions and the lack of social skills. Those who have seized contact with their family apparently do so because they don't wish to put any burdens on them, or because their sense of pride prevents them to confess their actual condition of homelessness. Possible enrollment in a facility is then rejected out of fear that their situation will come to light. Even more complex are those on the run from debts. They fear that as soon as they enroll in a facility or acquire an official address they may be discovered and localized. Those addicted to alcohol and gambling^{1 1} have no self-confidence whatsoever of being able to live a normal apartment life. Realizing the inability to save up money, they chose not to improve their situation. Finally, there is also a small share of homelessness individuals who are completely disillusioned about society and wish to be left alone. These individuals are very hard to reach, even for HSOs which are turned away by them or only permitted to watch over them for a longer period in case of emergency etc.

The resistance to institutionalization is only a matter in the major and some local cities. In the local cities where public funded accommodation is inexistent, the needs and aspirations of the homeless differ as well. As we have mentioned before, the application of livelihood assistance forms the most effective means to assist the homeless into an apartment life. Besides those who reject assistance because of personal issues, others reject livelihood assistance because it conflicts with their own perception of self-dependency. Being dependant on social welfare is not considered being self-dependent. Those having an income from miscellaneous jobs don't see a need in switching to livelihood assistance and take pride in the fact that they are working for a living. Rather, if a return to society and the move into an apartment life is to be realized, having a regular job is considered to be a prerogative.

Also remarkable is that a large share who chose to continue being homeless and were regularly employed before, plan to continue until they are eligible for pension. Only from then they will consider moving into an apartment.

All the issues we have just described have been very representative obstacles for the homeless to pursue a return to society and thus a self-dependent life. All over Japan,

these issues have been referred to by the homeless making their situation special, or in other words stressing their exclusive need to dwell the spaces in the respective areas they depend on to do. NGOs have tried to address issues like debt repayment, medical and addiction consultation but have been rather unsuccessful in setting up an effective framework to do so. Government policy has fallen short in these problem areas as well but more importantly, has still refused to recognize these issues as valuable reasons for the homeless to continue living in public spaces. This has resulted into the well-known eviction orders and evacuations (Iwata, 2007: p.160). By evicting the self-providing homeless and thus taking away their livelihood basis, their option to continue the way they were living becomes difficult as they have no space, no 'home' anymore to rely on for their miscellaneous work. The objective then is that these homeless find their way into rehab facilities but the reality is that at least an equal share of them move on to search for other public spaces to dwell. HSOs have tried to intermediate this dilemma. These gaps in homelessness policies and counter actions of the major as well local cities have manifested because policy so far has only targeted those homeless individuals who are able and willing to accept the existing forms of public social provisions. There is yet no proper framework to deal with those individuals who are self-providing and choose to continue dwelling the streets and public spaces in the city. However, if homelessness policy is to be able to cover the self-providing homeless, their voices and demands have to be reconsidered and taken notice of through more flexible public social provisions and considerate approaches to the public spaces issue.

Conclusion

The impact of the problem of homelessness in Japan has left its mark on the urban images of Japan. Through the occupation of public parks and streets, forced evictions, the installment of shelters and self-dependency centers in problem target areas, the homeless have ended up in a situation of social isolation and exclusion in the city. This doesn't necessarily mean that city governments are actively pursuing exclusion^{1 2}. It is a rather a result of the flaws and failures in existing public social provisions and the inexistence of such in the local cities that don't have any.

In regard to the occupation of public parks and streets, these same public spaces are generally considered to have become 'places of resistance, which involves the occupation of particular sites involving new spatial and social practices'. (Bridge and Watson, 2003: 258). In the case of Japan this is partially true: in particular regarding to public parks and *yoseba* districts, support movements have nested themselves in these places to provide material and consultation support for the homeless on the one hand, and on the other have used these places to demonstrate against public policies that deny the homeless' living rights and often result in forced evictions. However, these spaces have also become arenas for consultation and negotiation, making them conflicting spaces similar to the identity crisis of homelessness support organizations.

In many other capitalist cities, the strategy to include the homeless (and socially excluded in general) back into society is based on the reintroduction to the labor market (Gough et al, 2006). Japan uses the same strategy tools, hence the centrality of regular job introduction programs in national and local homelessness policy. So far, only Tokyo has tried a different approach by applying the "Housing First" approach. Both have their positive and negative aspects.

Addressing the gap of full coverage of public social provision and of HSO assistance to those who are self-providing is becoming more and more an imminent matter. This gap has revealed itself against the background of existing public social provision in the major cities and of the lack of such in local cities. In practice, policy has

been more effective through the provision livelihood assistance. This however conflicts with the government's initial idea of self-dependency by regular labor and civic consensus which favors the same concept. The NGOs have come to a full understanding of the importance of applying livelihood assistance and their actions and demands have made it easier for the homeless to obtain access to social security. This doesn't mean that they don't consider labor to be important. They have realized that is more feasible for the homeless to engage into forms of shared work instead of regular jobs. These, most of the time public works, don't generate much income but in combination with livelihood assistance, offer a stable basis of livelihood and living improvement.

With the consequential creation of multiple options toward self-independency, a distinct group of homeless now perceive the self-independency concept as to be identical to their state of self-provision and thus see no need to comply with governmental provision or NGO support. Their choice of remaining homeless however becomes then an issue of having a right to dwell in the city and inhabit its public spaces. There is a discussion going on within the government now whether it is meaningful to stick to the labor principle for promoting social inclusion. Some also suggest installing drop-in centers for mainly those who deliberately remain to dwell in public spaces. Critics disagree with this plan because it won't cut back the numbers of homeless. Especially in regard to the reevaluation of the Self-dependency Law, which is planned for 2007, a reconsideration of this type of homeless and how to reinvent or even invent proper and efficient support for them might become necessary if social inclusion for the homeless in general is to be realized at all.

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- ¹ Some cases are allowed to stay up until nine to twelve months. Those unable to secure jobs during this fixed period are released back on the streets.
- ¹ The range of functions provided by the self-dependency support centers differs from city to city and is geographically based on the existence or inexistence of other welfare facilities such as rehabilitation and temporal relief centers which run under the livelihood assistance law.
- ¹ *Machizukuri* is the Japanese term for town planning taken up by civic organizations.
- ¹ Buraku are the segregated districts of outcast people in Japan.
- ¹ One-stop service is an all-round service to support homeless individuals on the spot. Starting with handing out free meals, outreach consultation is conducted and those who are willing to accept assistance are offered support, which is most of the time in the form of livelihood combined with housing provision. Afterwards they enjoy follow-up support as well.
- ¹ This policy is also named “The Transition into Communities Homeless Support Project”. The Metropolitan Authority of Tokyo decided to implement such different policy after having observed the situation of Osaka and Nagoya. Realizing that the park shelters don’t function too well in relation to eviction preparation, the Authority opted for a different approach. It marked also the initiation of Authority funded outreach teams.
- ¹ Yasue is the director of one of the NGOs which is entrusted with this project. The project has been running for three years now and although the objective was to connect the provided housing with job introduction, the reality is that almost half of the homeless residing in these apartments tend to be on livelihood assistance. The staff of commissioned NGOs have protected this project as it is to them an important tool for escaping homelessness but they are increasingly criticised by volunteer organizations that come up for the living rights of self-providing homeless. This issue is now being subjected to discussions of how to evaluate the Housing First project.
- ¹ In order to define the scope of the type of homeless with no fixed habitation more clearly, we have decided to describe this type as a state of homelessness in which a homeless individual has no steady form of habitation apart from night time. This doesn’t mean that these individuals have no fixed place to reside but that they have to clear their places during the day. This is mainly the case with homeless individuals sleeping in cardboard boxes in front of shops and station concourses.
- ¹ The bulk of this success in local cities is based on the provision of livelihood assistance. Regular job introductions have been less successful. This however is the case for local cities where public service provision is existent. The majority of local cities don’t provide these services and rely solely on the activities of homelessness support movement.
- ¹ The concept of this ‘total approach’ has been brought forward by the NPO Kitakyushu Homeless Support Organization as a reaction to the narrow definition of homelessness in Japan. The stress of this approach lies on the necessity of including support measures towards individuals who are in acute danger of becoming homeless and specific after-care to prevent relapse into homelessness. The organization believes that without such total approach and therefore extending the definition of homelessness it is impossible to address homelessness in an effective way.
- ¹ In contrast to many other countries, drug addiction is very minimal among the homeless in Japan.
- ¹ An example of this dichotomy can be found in Osaka. The assessment center is located in Maishima, in the most Western part of the city. It is on an artificially made island where the city’s incineration oven and sport-leisure facilities are located. Public transport is poorly provided and one has to cross a long catenary bridge if one wishes to go into the city. In overall this is a very isolated area, relatively far from the city center and with badly accessible if one doesn’t possess a car. In contrast to this is the self-dependency center in Kita ward. It is located in the direct vicinity of the city center and has very good public transport access. The center is also engaged in community work, offering various ways of support for social inclusion.

