18th European Research Conference
12th and 13th September, 2024
Venue: Central European University
Nádor 15, Budapest, Hungary

European Observatory on Homelessness

BMSZKI
Budapesti Módszertani
Szociális Központ és Intézményei

Seminar 22: Welfare Arrangements and Homelessness (Room: TBD) - Chair: **Volker Busch-Geertsema, DE**

Soshiro Yamada, Matthew D. Marr, Yusuke Kakita, Gakuto Kawamura and Hiroshi Goto, JP: The Sustainability of a Stable Life after Leaving Homelessness in Japan

The number of homeless individuals living on the street in Japan was reported to be 25,296 in 2003; however, by 2023, it had decreased to 3,065, marking a reduction of over 80% over the past 20 years. This decline stands out notably against the backdrop of increasing homelessness reported in many European countries. It is suggested that this reduction trend is attributable to three key characteristics of the general public assistance system (*seikatsu hogo*): generality, comprehensiveness, and expeditiousness.

While it is acknowledged that the effective functioning of *seikatsu hogo* has contributed to the reduction of homelessness in Japan, the question arises whether this fact can be simply evaluated as a "success story." This study focuses on the living conditions of individuals who have transitioned from homelessness to stable housing with receiving *seikatsu hogo*. Results from a tracking survey of approximately 600 former homeless individuals revealed the following: 1) Half of them are at risk of mental health issues, 2) Many former homeless individuals have narrow support networks, with low frequencies of interaction with relatives and friends, indicating social isolation, and 3) They feel stigma associated with receiving seikatsu hogo. These issues pose risks to the sustainability of their community life.

Support and policy goals regarding homelessness should not solely focus on reducing homelessness. To ensure the sustainability of community life even after transitioning to stable housing, it is necessary to prevent their social isolation and eliminate the stigma associated with receiving seikatsu hogo.

Soshiro Yamada, Japan is a professor at Nihon Fukushi University in the department of social welfare. He is looking at public assistance for homeless people in Japan. He is also interested in the life condition of people who were transferred from homelessness to permanent housing using public assistance.

Matthew D. Marr, USA is Associate Professor of Sociology Global and Sociocultural Studies, Florida International University. His research focuses on how experiences of inequality in contemporary urban America and Japan are shaped by contexts at different levels, from the global to the individual. Marr looks at strategic research sites including housing programs for people experiencing homelessness, "service hub" neighborhoods, and day labor markets.

Yusuke Kakita, Japan is a professor at Osaka Metropolitan University in the school of human life and ecology. He is researching about poverty, homelessness and social policy. The fields of his research are streets in urban area, temporary accommodation for homeless people, NPOs delivering support, local and central government.

Gakuto Kawamura, Japan is an associate professor at Rikkyo University in the college of community and human services. He has been researching ways to organize communities in large housing estates where many of the residents are socially vulnerable. He is also interested in the area effects of social exclusion.

■ **European Federation of National Associations Working with the Homeless AISBL**
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Hiroshi Goto, Japan is a professor at Rikkyo University in the College of Community and Human Services. He began his career as a social worker for a nonprofit organization supporting the homeless, San-Yu-Kai, in Japan. His current research interests encompass both local and global perspectives on homelessness. On the local level, he analyzes case records from homeless self-reliance support centers (transitional housing) in Japan. Globally, he conducts comparative studies of public assistance programs in the US and Japan.

Gregg Colburn, US: Homelessness is a Housing Problem: How Structural Factors Explain U.S. Patterns

In Homelessness is a Housing Problem: How Structural Factors Explain U.S. Patterns (University of California Press), Gregg Colburn and Clayton Aldern seek to explain regional variation in rates of homelessness throughout the United States. Colburn and Aldern find that housing market conditions offer a more convincing explanation than other common explanations of homelessness including, rates of poverty, mental illness, and drug use. A key contribution of this book is to highlight the importance of unit of analysis. In determining the risk of homelessness for an individual, poverty and mental health play an important causal role. But at the community level, the availability of housing explains why coastal cities (such as New York and Los Angeles) have five times the rate of homelessness of Chicago.

When presenting this research, a frequent question is whether this logic holds in other international contexts. I (Colburn) am currently working on an extension of this book in Canada. Based on discussions with scholars and advocates in Canada, it is likely that the logic of the book holds in the Canadian context given the relatively similar policy and housing market dynamics found in both Canada and the United States. But, there is an open question of whether the cost and availability of housing will have a similar effect in European nations that have meaningfully different social and housing policies than what exists in the USA. In this presentation, I will briefly share conclusions from our U.S. analysis and outline a research agenda (with hypotheses) for similar analyses across Europe.

Gregg Colburn is an Associate Professor in the College of Built Environments at the University of Washington. He publishes research on topics related to housing and homelessness and is co-author of the book, Homelessness is a Housing Problem: How Structural Factors Explain U.S. Patterns (University of California Press).
Gregg holds a M.B.A. from Northwestern University, and a M.S.W. and Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota. Prior to academia, he worked as an investment banker and private equity professional. Gregg serves as co-chair of the University of Washington's Homelessness Research Initiative and is a member of the National Alliance to End Homelessness Research Council.

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