

Seminar 16: Measuring Homelessness (2) (Floor -1, Room 7)

Chair: Lars Benjaminsen, DK

Yusuke Kakita, Soshiro Yamada, Hiroshi Goto, Dennis Culhane, Kanako Nakano, Japan: Homelessness and Housing Exclusion in Japan from an International Perspective



Yusuke Kakita, Japan is an associate 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.

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.



Hiroshi Goto, Japan is a professor at Rikkyo University in the college of community and human services. He started his career as a social worker for a homeless support non-profit organization (San-Yu-Kai) in Japan. He is currently interested in both local-level and global-level research on the homelessness. The former is an analysis of case records of homeless self-reliance support centers (Transitional housing) in Japan, and the latter is a comparative study of public assistance in the US and Japan.

Dennis Culhane, USA is a professor of Social Policy at the University of Pennsylvania. He is a social science researcher with primary expertise in the area of homelessness and assisted housing policy. Most recently, Culhane's research has focused on the aging of the adult homeless population in the US.



Kanako Nakano, Japan is an associate professor at Otani University in the faculty of sociology. She started her career as social worker at emergency hospital and shelter for homeless people. The research fields are social work theory, supporting homeless people (especially, assistance to the homeless with intellectual disabilities), social work at shelters in Japan.

The number of homeless people in Japan has been lower than that of other developed countries as the definition of homelessness is different. The Japanese law defines homeless people as “people living rough.” However, the concept of homelessness in international discourses such as FEANTSA's ETHOS (European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion) is broader than that in Japan.

Our study attempts to perceive homelessness and housing exclusion in Japan by referring to broader concepts such as ETHOS. To that end, in 2021, we conducted an Internet survey on the experience of homelessness and housing exclusion. We received responses from 39,998 participants above the age of 18 in 14 high-population prefectures. Of them, 2,061 (5.2%) had experienced homelessness and housing exclusion; this rate is similar to the results of studies conducted in Europe and the United States.

Thereafter, from among these 2,061 respondents, we administered a questionnaire on 725 who had experienced homelessness and housing exclusion in the 5 years prior to the survey. Homelessness and housing exclusion experiences (multiple answers) were categorized as follows: 1) informal sector: living temporarily with acquaintances and friends (45.9%); 2) private for-profit sector: living in employee dormitories (30.9%), Internet cafes (26.9%); 3) public or non-profit sector: living in NPOs' housing using public assistance benefit (24.6%), shelter and hostel for homeless people (22.1%); and 4) living rough (19.7%), etc. The survey found that the number of homeless people in Japan was large in various categories other than "living rough," including in the informal and private for-profit sectors, which were unexplored previously. The findings suggest that through international comparisons with research conducted in other developed countries, one can gain a deeper insight into the situation in Japan, which could provide valuable suggestions for future policymaking.

Rory Hearne, Keith Adams, Kenneth McSweeney, IE: Understanding Ireland's Hidden Homelessness Crisis: A New Approach to Defining and Measuring Homelessness and Housing Exclusion in Ireland

Rory Hearne is Assistant Professor of Social Policy in Maynooth University Department of Applied Social Studies. He is author of 'Housing Shock; The Irish Housing Crisis and How to Solve it'.

Keith Adams is policy officer with the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, Kenneth McSweeney is research assistant and project worker in a homelessness service in Dublin.

The UN describes homelessness as "an egregious violation of human rights" requiring decisive action on HHE, including measurement and monitoring that can enable effective policy responses.

Policy can only be effective if it is responding to an accurately measured level of housing need. In Ireland, previously unseen forms of HHE have emerged in recent years and existing measurements are not capturing the scale of people affected, particularly the most vulnerable, including lone parents and children, women in domestic violence refugees, and Travellers.

While monthly statistics, using a narrow and contested definition, provide a monitoring mechanism; they are inadequate to capture the full scale of homelessness. Ireland's measurement of HHE has not been updated to respond to new groups affected by HHE, resulting in ineffective prevention responses. The European Commission (2019) highlighted Ireland's "unreliable and incomplete" statistics and an absence of "clear and inclusive definitions" which were hampering planning and effective policy solutions, and the report recommended the adoption of the ETHOS classification as the basis for a bespoke HHE database. Irish NGOs have also recommended the government publish a database on housing insecurity in line with FEANTSA's ETHOS framework, noting that, "regular, reliable and transparent data on homelessness is essential both for national policy and practice" (Focus Ireland, 2019). This paper outlines the findings from research funded by the Irish Research Council, which investigated the current measurement of homelessness in Ireland and discusses the potential and challenges in implementing the ETHOS framework in Ireland. It undertook interviews with key policy makers, experts and NGOs in the area in Ireland. It draws on ETHOS and human rights frameworks, to conceptualise and measure the nature and scale of homelessness and housing exclusion (HHE) in Ireland. It offers a comparative analysis of how Ireland's HHE compares to other countries using the ETHOS framework.