11 Opening up the Welfare State to 'Outsiders'

Pro-Homeless Activism and Neoliberal Backlashes in Japan

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Abstract

This chapter examines local/national trajectories of social movements for homeless people, arguing that 'pro-homeless' activism has fundamentally improved the Japanese welfare state. State-led high growth historically allocated resources favouring capitalist expansion, not people's welfare. This tendency hit the homeless the most. In turn, this has given pro-homeless activism significant potentials and capacities. Firstly, pro-homeless activism has dominantly taken local forms, improving welfare provision at welfare offices. Secondly, in the late 2000s, activism won achievements at the national level, by reframing homelessness as a national problem. Thirdly, the wholesale inclusion of the homeless/poor has evoked their *re*-marginalization. Today, neoliberal/neoconservative forces are advancing anti-poor politics to revoke movements' prior successes, paradoxically testifying to the power of pro-homeless activism in developing the welfare state.

Keywords: social movements, social exclusion, neoliberalism, welfare-workfare transitions, poverty

At the endpoint of the high-growth era and notorious 'bubble economy,' in the 1990s, Japan entered a new period of socio-economic instability. Over these decades, homelessness grew although the quantitative aspect could not be compared, for example, to the rise of homelessness in the United States in the 1980s when HUD (the Department of Housing and Urban Development)

estimated the number of homeless street people at around 300,000 (Rossi 1989: 37-38). According to official counts organized by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), homeless people living in Japanese public space was below 30,000 at its peak during the early 2000s (MHLW 2003). This number seems insignificant even after taking into account Japan's smaller national population. That estimation, however, seriously underrates the impact of homelessness in post-high-growth Japan. For one thing, homelessness in and after the 1990s radically challenged Japan's well-organized construction of urban public space as well as the nation's homogeneous self-portrait of domestic society as 'all-one-hundred-million middle class' (*ichioku sō chūryū*). For another, it sent a palpable sign to many that Japan's state-led development, which had once enjoyed an international reputation for equality, was now in crisis. Moreover, homelessness was the harbinger and herald of the 'generalized poverty' which Japan was to experience to the present day.

Yet, there is a completely different angle from which we can assess the impact of homelessness in Japan: that of the social movements for homelessness. These movements are what this chapter calls 'pro-homeless movements,' which grew during and after the 1990s and played a fundamental role in changing local and national modes of citizenship. While the core programme of Japan's citizenship for the poor – Public Assistance – took its current form in the early 1950s, it was unable to effectively contribute to poverty alleviation for the most needy for a long time. The national programme rejected those who were most impoverished and in need of public support. When the rise of homelessness reminded citizens and political leaders of this weakness of the welfare state, pro-homeless activists and volunteers stood up and started redressing the exclusive nature of this citizenship. Owing to their extreme sensitivity to citizens' rights, to the 'fringe politics' of exclusion and inclusion, pro-homeless movements have played a special role in contemporary Japan – namely, improving the circumscribed welfare state by opening it up to its 'outsiders.' By tracing local and national trajectories of this 'opening up,' this chapter assesses how and to what extent the Japanese welfare state overcame its exclusive character between the 1990s and 2010s.

I do not claim that this welfare state lacked any instances of improvement before the 1990s. Positive developments took place, for example, in the 1950s, 1970s and 1990s, when new systems of provision materialized (Calder 1988; Peng 2005; Shinkawa 2005). By and large, however, even the periods of expansion improved only those measures that targeted 'worthy' – child-raising, disadvantaged, and elderly – households; this could be understood as a ramification of Japan's productivist welfare regime (Kwon 2005). At

any rate, it was in this context of exclusion that pro-homeless activists, supersensitive to the unnoticed and unresolved plight of the homeless, played key roles in changing the status quo, not only for those without a roof or home but for the entire nation. Overall, this chapter's analysis shows that social movements for the homeless became the 'game changers' of the welfare state in post-high-growth Japan. In what follows, I first look at the local pro-homeless movements that changed the local conditions of the citizenry beginning in the 1990s. I further argue that a new pro-homeless movement in the late 2000s played a pivotal role in improving the Japanese welfare state nationwide. I reveal that the wholesale inclusion of various (previously excluded) impoverished populations in the welfare state provoked a backlash politics of neoliberalism and widespread popular discourses on 'welfare dependency.' I conclude that these neoliberal responses are now necessitating that radical activists reposition themselves in the new, unfolding political landscape of 'workfarist regulation' (Peck 2001).

While this chapter elaborates the central themes of this volume from a unique perspective, its discussions are pertinent especially to two chapters. Chapter 8 (Chiavacci) considers the influence of civil society actors to labour immigration policy in Japan. This chapter, focusing similarly on social actors working for the population marginal to mainstream society, explore national and local spaces in which these social actors can have the rule-changing influence on state actors. Chapter 9 (Ogawa) considers the contradictory ways in which Japanese non-profit organizations become, at once, a tool of neoliberalization and leverage for participatory democracy. This chapter resonates with this research interest as it locates Japanese social movements in the ongoing dynamism of neoliberalization.

Local and National: Two Spaces of Activism

In Japan, the historical pattern of the Japanese welfare state has conditioned homelessness and social movements for the homeless. The state has a progressive framework of citizenship for the poor (see the next section), yet, individuals who were without fixed addressed, able-bodied, unmarried, and male were largely rejected as they were considered employable individuals capable of supporting themselves in the labour market. They thus constituted the 'unworthy' poor categorically located outside of the Japanese welfare state, whose receipt of public support was considered to deteriorate their work ethic and promote the self-destruction of their 'able bodies.' Their survival process was located outside of Japan's 'welfare through work' (Miura

2012), the enterprise-level system of welfare provision for core labourers. As a result, not a few Japanese citizens historically suffered low-wage problems and poor living conditions even in boom years (MHL 1962). They also formed a body of the 'working-poor' population whose existence was elusive (Eguchi 1979). The important thing is that the exclusion of these poverty-stricken labourers and citizens from the Japanese welfare state occurred at the local (rather than national) level because the state gave the welfare office a considerable degree of discretion over everyday decision-making with regard to the applicants.

The localization and denationalization that one finds in the operation of citizens' rights and programmes for the 'unworthy' poor were both threats and opportunities for the pro-homeless movements. It was problematic because the state's responsibility was obscured and because national-level standardization was difficult. At the same time, however, the localized system presented some opportunities within the municipality. Due the localized procedure of decision-making, movements could perhaps change the trajectory of municipal decisions by influencing them. Activists may have been able to change the attitude of rank-and-file workers and higher administrators in the municipality in such a way that the municipality responded more positively to the 'unworthy' poor by using citizens' rights and programmes for citizenship. The possibility of such local-level improvement was dependent on the construction of sound strategies by the movements. If deployed appropriately, by reflexively responding to the exclusive ethos of the gatekeepers, these tactics proved capable of advancing the inclusion of the homeless within the municipality concerned.

This might sound hypothetical. However, real improvements did transpire. Local conditions for homeless citizens really have been improved through the cumulative actions of pro-homeless activists vis-à-vis the welfare office and other sections in the municipality (e.g. Yamasaki et al. 2006). Nonetheless, this approach did encounter problems, such as non-standardization and uncertainty. Supporters and the homeless could hardly expect a more desirable, nationally standardized situation in which every needy individual would receive national benefits across Japan no matter where they lived and how they approached the welfare office. Hypothetically, one way exists to overcome the limits of the locality: nationalization. Activism might construct national spaces and strategies, in such a way as to make national (not local) organs attentive to the plight of the homeless. Such nationalization remained a hypothetical possibility for quite a long time, but a new pro-homeless movement came into being in the late 2000s and effectively nationalized citizenship politics for the homeless and other poverty-stricken labourers

and citizens. At the same time, this nationalization had an unexpected corollary as it also nationalized adversarial forces that disagreed with benevolent inclusion. Today, movements have to justify their progressive causes more reflexively at the national level vis-à-vis the ongoing backlash politics and the lay audience.

What Is Good about the Japanese Welfare State? Benign Laws as a 'Hope'

The ungenerous character of the Japanese welfare state is widely acknowledged (Esping-Andersen 1989, 1997; Estevez-Abe 2008). How could activists make this welfare state attentive to the 'unworthy' poor locally and nationally? Answering this question demands a closer look at the legal system. The best part of the Japanese welfare state resides in the way it benevolently legalizes 'livelihood rights' (*seizon ken*) as the sacred rights of all citizens, regardless of their prior contributions and social attributes. The constitution establishes the livelihood rights in a rigorous universal manner by declaring: 'All people shall have the right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living' (art. 25). To realize these livelihood rights, the Public Assistance Act of 1950 constructs the framework of Public Assistance, saying: 'The minimum standard of living guaranteed by this Act shall be where a person is able to maintain a wholesome and cultured standard of living' (art. 3). Essential benefit programmes in Public Assistance – income, medical and housing benefit – are expected to serve as practical tools to maintain the livelihood rights of all citizens. Even more, the act has clauses that facilitate the flexible mobilization of Public Assistance, enumerating unique problems unhoused individuals can have (arts 4, 10, 38).

This highly benevolent legal conception of livelihood rights becomes a weapon for activists when they ask local/national authorities to include the homeless in the rights to national citizenship. Realistically speaking, there are obstacles. Most obstructing, court cases such as *Asahi vs Horiki* (1967) have powerfully established that the benevolent clauses of livelihood rights merely set an 'effort target' – not a real goal – for the Japanese welfare state.[1] Judgements like this one served as powerful excuses for the local authority to exclude the poor from Public Assistance even when they

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1   In this court case, the Supreme Court declared that 'Article 25 of the Constitution declares [livelihood rights] only as the liability of the state and it is no intended to provide each Japanese citizen with rights in a concrete sense.' The irrationality of this judgement in light of the

suffered homelessness, suggesting that the benefits would only promote their self-destruction and a weakened work ethic. Despite such conservative and patronizing interpretations, however, the benevolent livelihood clauses could be construed in a more inclusive and universal manner if one only reads them straightforwardly. This possibility has inspired local and national activists to allow the authorities to maintain the livelihood rights of the homeless. I do not say that the 'gatekeepers' of livelihood rights – local and national authorities – automatically opened up the welfare state upon request. To begin with, such instances of relaxation were rare. Whenever and wherever they took place, innovative, thoughtful and painstaking processes of activism lay behind the local and national authorities' acts of 'benevolent' inclusion. The following analysis takes instances from the Tokyo-Yokohama metropolitan region; the next section explains its key geographical and historical attributes.

Field Setting

The central area of the Tokyo-Yokohama region is the focus of this chapter. This geographical area is worth illuminating for two good reasons. First, it has major urban enclaves (*yoseba*) populated by precarious day labourers and the homeless, and these inner-city enclaves have nurtured pro-homeless movements within Japan's burgeoning cities. The enclaves of *yoseba* in the Tokyo-Yokohama area – San'ya (in Tokyo Metropolis) and Kotobuki (in Kanagawa Prefecture) – have accommodated homelessness-prone day labourers. Living in *yoseba*, day labourers found affordable hotels and casual labour markets opening on/off the streets. As such, *yoseba* was the space for day labourers, whose less-skilled workforce was vitally needed by Japan's unfolding industrialization, at docks, in construction sites, on manufacturing lines, etc. As day labourers suffered economically unstable conditions, they underwent episodic homelessness, triggering local homeless movements even before the 1990s (Aoki 1989; Hayashi 2014a). In and after the 1990s, many of them run into homelessness on a chronic basis. In this historical context, the inner-city areas of *yoseba* have strengthened their character as the strongholds of pro-homeless movements.

   While the existence of *yoseba*, and its history of internalizing 'safe spaces' (Tilly 2000) for pro-homeless activism, offers the first rationale for my

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Constitution has evoked waves of pro-poor litigations but they have not seen a major withdrawal of this declaration in the court sector.

geographical selection in this chapter, the second justification comes from the rise of pro-homeless movements outside of the inner-city districts of *yoseba*. Tokyo Metropolis and Kanagawa Prefecture both came to host pro-homeless movements beyond the urban enclaves of *yoseba* (for the case of Tokyo, see Hasegawa 2006). In Tokyo Metropolis, several pro-homeless groups – such as Sinjuku Renrakukai (in Shinjuku Ward) and Nojiren (in Shibuya Ward) – started work during the 1990s in Tokyo's major central business district, and these groups were followed by a further proliferation of new pro-homeless groups in the run-up to the 2010s. In Kanagawa Prefecture, social movements for the homeless also spread to the spaces outside of the traditional enclaves of *yoseba* in the 1990s and 2000s. The next two sections take up cases from the Tokyo-Yokohama region for these reasons.

Opening up the Welfare State Locally: Social Movements in Kanagawa in the 1990s and 2000s

Pro-homeless Activism in Yokohama

During the 1990s, homelessness grew in and outside of the inner-city districts called *yoseba*, which exist in every metropolitan region in Japan. In the small area, *yoseba* accumulates various functions needed for the life of day labourers – functions of the labour market, accommodation, dining, socialization, etc. – and it became the hotbed of homelessness that visited day labourers in the 1990s and 2000s. At the same time, *yoseba* became the hotbed of pro-homeless activism. Old and new participants stood up for the plights of homelessness-prone day labourers and promoted local waves of activism. As such, *yoseba* in metropolitan regions turned into the stronghold of social movements for the homeless (for the case of Tokyo Metropolis, see Hasegawa 2006). This chapter shall take a case of *yoseba* activism from the Kotobuki district, which is situated in the city of Yokohama.

   In many cities, social movements for the homeless in these formative years concentrated on agitating against anti-homeless evictions, for one thing, and on providing food and medical services to the homeless, for another. While these issues gained importance in the Kotobuki district – Yokohama's inner-city area of *yoseba* – the city's uniqueness was that the issues of livelihood rights and Public Assistance were recognized as hugely important by local activists from the beginning. While this focus on the 'social rights' of homeless people would later become widespread in other cities, Yohoama's pro-homeless activism and its offshoots in Kanagawa

Prefecture were the forerunners of this movement strategy: opening up the welfare state to the homeless locally.

One reason why activists in Kotobuki were so able to pronounce the politics of homelessness in terms of social security can be found in the local history. In the 1970s, activism attempted by the Kotobuki Day Labourers Union repeatedly asked the municipality to maintain the livelihood rights of homelessness-prone labourers, causing the municipality to produce a local framework of provision (Nomoto 1977). When homelessness grew in the 1990s, new and old activists stood up for the homeless by relying on this local history of activism back in the 1970s, thereby reactivating the old focus on citizenship issues in the new context.

In promoting the livelihood rights of the homeless, two courses of actions existed for local activists. On the one hand, they could push the municipality to offer a local framework of relief. That was a real possibility in the city of Yokohama because this particular city, as I have just mentioned, had a history of creating and using the local system of relief for homelessness-prone day labourers. Back in the 1970s, Yokohama's inner-city district hosted an indigenous form of day labourer activism, which pressed the local authorities regarding the rights of day labourers through negotiations as well as more physical measures. The municipality itself was led in the 1960s and 1970s by the progressive mayor Ichio Asukata. Despite having Socialist Party credentials, he failed to curtail the harsh methods of the police. However, he did involve the movements in local governing processes. In the light of the historical experience, activists in the 1990s expected a certain degree of continuity in the regulations to take place, making local policy somewhat more responsive to the needs of the homeless. On the other hand, the movements located in this local context could perhaps ask the municipality for something more than to rely on local relief: namely, the maintenance of the livelihood rights of homeless people by extending Public Assistance to them. If one reads the Constitution and the Public Assistance Act of 1950 literally, one can draw the conclusion that Public Assistance can (and should) be offered to the homeless. Practically speaking, however, asking the city to mobilize the Public Assistance programme for the homeless was an unusual idea since even the city of Yokohama had rejected that claim before the 1990s.

Located in this local history, movement participants in the Kotobuki district during the 1990s chose to pursue pro-homeless activism in both of these directions. Regarding the former direction – the reactivation of Yokohama's local relief system – the movement demanded the city implement the efficient use of hotel and food tickets. Around 1991, the municipality

Figure 11.1   Yokohama's local relief in the 1990s
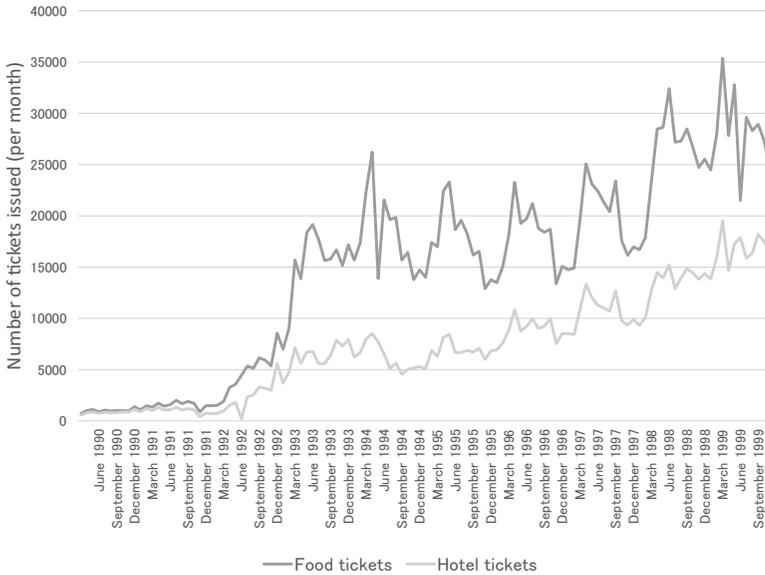
Source: Data in the Archives of Kotobuki Day Labourers' Union

had started mobilizing this local relief system to benefit the homeless. The problem was that the local relief system remained ineffective. The number of affordable hotels that could accommodate the homeless was limited, and the total number of hotel and food tickets issued by the municipality were also insufficient. The movement questioned the municipality about these problems. For that purpose, activists visited the welfare office on weekdays to monitor the municipality's operation of the local relief system. Activists also visited the welfare office to count the number of tickets being issued in order to ensure the city was allocating an adequate number. Further, the movement had discussions with municipal workers and demanded a better provision of hotel and food tickets. Figure 11.1 indicates the result: the numbers of hotel and food tickets issued per month skyrocketed in the 1990s.

To tell the truth, the movement's request for local relief faced a dilemma as a pro-homeless strategy: the request for local relief could serve to reduce the access of homeless people to the national programme of Public Assistance and the higher living standards that this programme could achieve. In this context, the request for local relief could constitute an admission that homeless people could be dissociated from Public Assistance. Local relief could be a rationale for the city's not using it. Extending this national

programme to the homeless demanded more time-consuming and costly work on the part of city officials. In order to solve this dilemma, in 1994, Kotobuki's homeless movement launched a new initiative, one designed to encourage the city of Yokohama to mobilize the national framework of Public Assistance for homelessness as well as to provide local relief. At the beginning, activists repeatedly held study meetings to understand the possibilities of this strategy, and they confirmed that the legal framework of Public Assistance had substantial capacity to help the homeless. In 1994, activists in the Kotobuki district formed a new body entitled the Group for Winning Livelihood Rights (Seizon Ken Wo Kachitoru Kai), a collective that dealt with the specific issue of Public Assistance.

At this point, I shall settle a question readers might have: Why was activism in Yokohama focused on welfare-providing issues and seemingly neglectful of its root causes, such as the labour market and wage relations, from which labourers' homelessness issued? In point of fact, homeless activism in Kanagawa Prefecture repeatedly asked the municipality, and even the national state, to ameliorate unemployment and homelessness by providing public work, so their original claim addressed the 'point of consumption' and the 'point of production' (see Hayashi 2014a). However, the latter part of their claim was rejected by the authorities. In the interests of space, I largely exclude this discussion from this chapter. For the same reason, I have also omitted my discussion of politics for public space and how activists opened up parks and streets for the homeless (see Hayashi 2013, 2018). It is sufficient for this chapter to say that the original construction of pro-homeless movements was multifaceted.

To come back to the Group for Winning Livelihood Rights, activists gathered in this coalition had meetings with municipal workers, in order to improve the issue of Public Assistance for the homeless. In particular, there were three big meetings between representatives of the movement and of the municipality in 1994. In summer 1994, one of these meetings mobilized 150 activists and homeless individuals against the health bureau of the city. On that occasion, the movement vocally demanded the non-discriminatory application of Public Assistance for any homeless individuals who wanted it. The municipality declined this inclusive idea, concerned that it would only deteriorate their work ethic and promote their self-destruction – a rationale that has been used historically when excluding the homeless.

Turning down the full inclusion, however, the municipality made a key change in the local operation of the Public Assistance programme. The city of Yokohama decided to help (what one would see as) the most vulnerable elements of the homeless community – that is, those over 65 years old,

the sick and the injured – by using the framework of Public Assistance. This meant that the neediest sections of the homeless population were enabled to live, with the help of Public Assistance, in small individual hotel rooms in the Kotobuki district, eat decent food, receive proper medical treatments and buy other services. Such living conditions for the homeless would become possible only through the programme of Public Assistance. A core activist recalls how significant this change was (Interview Kondō 2006):

> We let them [the city of Yokohama] say, 'The city accepts the application [of Public Assistance] even if applicants have no addressed.' That was decisive. And it has led to our style [of rescuing the homeless]. [...] So, our movement bore significant fruit.

In short, Kotobuki's pro-homeless activists managed to expand the scope of the welfare state at the local level. On the one hand, they improved the local relief system for the homeless. On the other hand, the same activists made some parts of the local homeless population eligible for the programme of Public Assistance. This two-fold improvement at the local level meant that the historical limitedness of the Japanese welfare state was partially – but significantly – overcome for the homeless in the city of Yokohama. As other cities in the 1990s were still rejecting the right of homeless people to access welfare programmes, it represents a significant success on the part of pro-homeless activism in Yokohama.

Spreading Activism to New Cities

In this new section, I shall show that a similar type of pro-homeless movement – that is, movements that were supersensitive to the citizenship conditions of homeless people – subsequently spread to new cities in Kanagawa Prefecture. On this subject, the first thing to be mentioned is the increase in movement groups working in new cities outside of Yokohama. In 2001, ten cities in Kanagawa Prefecture (out of 33) came to have pro-homeless groups while the number was two in 1993. This increase suggests a higher capacity of pro-homeless activism in this prefecture generally. All the new groups (except one) had direct connections with activists in Yokohama's Kotobuki district at the time of their emergence, and they were the offspring of Yokohama's pro-homeless activism. Spreading pro-homeless movements to the new cities could not happen automatically. It took place by putting into practice a combination of the following two strategies:

1   *Stretching 'old' resources.* Faced with a general scarcity of resources, movements in new cities tried to mobilize resources held in the Kotobuki district. People in Kotobuki flew to new cities with food and blankets in order to support local homeless individuals there. This stretching strategy functioned typically for the nearby areas of Yokohama (such as Yokosuka and Kamakura).

2   *Cultivating 'new' resources.* Especially when activists succeeded in cooperating with local Christian churches – which are significant contributors to homeless movements in Japan – they enjoyed a development of new local resources. By 2001, activism in Fujisawa, Odawara, Chigasaki, Atsugi and Hiratsuka garnered significant support from local churches. In these cities, activists found new comrades, financial bases and various goods.

Through these activist scheme, essential resources and strategies of activism became available in new cities. On that basis, new groups engaged in the provision of food, blankets, clothes and information for the homeless. Even further, activist groups in new cities tried to reuse the political strategy attempted in the Kotobuki district: asking the municipality to unlock the welfare state locally. For this purpose, they sought to establish new channels of communication with policymakers and rank-and-file officials in the new cities.

Having discussions with the municipality was not a big problem. The real difficulty arose when the movements requested policy changes. As cities outside of Yokohama were smaller in size, their financial basis was more limited. Further, homelessness was often a new phenomenon in these cities and local authorities did not have much experience in helping the homeless. In this context, one focus of movement groups became the national programme of Public Assistance. When the new cities reported that they did not have a great deal of capacity to create a local relief programme for the homeless, the same cities could not find any good excuse to deny the homeless Public Assistance. In the case of Yokohama, the city's willingness and ability to create a local relief system was one reason not to allow all the homeless to rely on Public Assistance. Apparently, new cities could not use this excuse when excluding the homeless from Public Assistance.

With this in mind, activists held repeated discussions with local authorities to extend the citizenship programme of Public Assistance to the homeless. Let us take the instance of the city of Hiratsuka, lying in the southern area of Kanagawa Prefecture. In this city, activists formed a local movement group – the Hiratsuka Patrol – in 2001, initially, by stretching Kotobuki's resources and staff and, later, by constructing its own resource

Figure 11.2   A meeting between Hiratsuka's activists and the then Mayor Ritsuko Ōkura (seen at the back)

Source: Author's photograph

basis at the local church (the Hiratsuka Baptist church). As soon as they started homeless provision, they sought the possibility of getting the city to activate Public Assistance for the homeless. To this end, they had frequent meetings with local policymakers, in order to convince them that this municipality had a real capacity to help the homeless by means of Public Assistance.

Even though activists succeeded in convincing municipal workers of the validity of their legal interpretation, the problem existed that municipal workers had no practical knowledge about how to support the homeless by finding a room to rent and assisting them to reconstruct their life on that basis. It seemed very difficult for municipal workers to help each rough sleeper to the point where he/she became able to build a stable basis for life off the streets, primarily because supportive houses for the homeless did not exist at that time. Yet, the movement in Hiratsuka partially overcame this problem by finding several municipal workers who cherished the pro-homeless spirit of activism. A core movement participant in Hiratsuka recollects the positive change that took place in the municipality (Interview Yura 2006):

> The thing was that a municipal worker in the leading position [at the welfare office] changed. Sasaki-san was replaced by Ōhara-san. And then he started working on the issues of homelessness himself. [...] He went to homeless people when they became interested in applying [for Public Assistance].

As this case of Hiratsuka shows, the mobilization of Public Assistance was actualized in the new cities through the efforts of the movements and movement-municipality relationships. Furthermore, movement groups sought discussions with hospitals, the police and supportive houses run by private agents. All in all, movements wanted to convince these private service providers that they could provide reliable and friendly support to maintain the citizenship rights of homeless people. The general outcome of these progressive attempts was the opening up of the local welfare state to the homeless.

It should be noted that new pro-homeless activism outside of Yokohama internalized structural problems. Smaller cities outside of Yokohama encountered more obstacles regarding welfare and service provision due to budgetary constraints, manpower shortages and inexperience. In the city of Hiratsuka, the provision of Public Assistance to the homeless became limited even after the intervention of the movement, as some extremely homeless-friendly workers at Hiratsuka's welfare office were transferred from the welfare office to different branches in the municipality. In Japan, the welfare office's decisions on the applications for Public Assistance largely depend on the character of its staff and administrators. In this context, this personnel change posed a problem to the movement. Activists thought that this change was to restrain – if not abandon – the provision of Public Assistance to the homeless. Despite having such limits at the local level, homeless movements working in the new cities succeeded in ameliorating the long-lived inadequacy of the Japanese welfare state for the homeless.

Opening up the Welfare State Nationally: The Pro-homeless Movement in Tokyo in the Late 2000s

New Contexts of the 2000s

We have seen that social movements for the homeless have improved the welfare state locally. However, problems remained because the local promotion of the citizenship rights of homeless people can, without the

transformation of the Japanese welfare state per se, become uncertain at any time. In the late 2000s, a new pro-homeless movement appeared in Japan and triggered national-level changes to the Japanese welfare state. This movement facilitated the national bureaucracy's promulgation of progressive administrative codes of Public Assistance for the homeless. This section unpacks how and under what conditions this movement achieved transformation on the national scale.

Let us look at some general facts. During this period, Japan saw increasing numbers of citizens other than the impoverished segment of day labourers face the risk of becoming homeless. This civic awareness notably rose in 2008 when the world financial crisis hit Japan. At this critical time, export-oriented firms suffered the loss of overseas demand, and they announced plans to stop using unskilled dispatched workers. Dispatched workers, called 'temp workers' in English, are referred to as '*haken*' (the dispatched) in Japanese. Throughout the 2000s, the high availability of temp workers, itself a creation of prior neoliberal legal changes, greatly helped Japanese capitalism to reduce its wage costs and re-establish its global competitiveness. In the global financial crisis of the late 2000s, the increased number of temp workers became superfluous, and firms cruelly rejected them from the shop floor.

Conditions of temp workers were not identical with the homeless. Nonetheless, from the beginning, their character – especially that of unskilled blue-collar workers working in the manufacturing industry – was not very far from homelessness-prone day labourers: they were low-waged and mobile workers suffering severe scarcity in social capital. Furthermore, temp workers are the first type of labourers to experience dismissals in downturns. In the crisis of the late 2000s, these unfavourable conditions worsened, and the homelessness of temp workers became a real threat. I find in this process a sea change regarding the form of homelessness in Japan. In the 1990s, homelessness became a major phenomenon, but it was primarily limited to disadvantaged day labourers. In and after 2007, the dismissal of temp workers and their near-homeless condition started alarming general citizens – homelessness now seemed to be engulfing the core of Japanese society.

The Movement in Tokyo and Its National Impacts

The empirical subject of this section is a successful case of pro-homeless activism that emerged in this national context of economic and societal crisis, which Japan entered around the late 2000s. Located within this context,

a new movement used Japan's critical moment as a timely opportunity to nationalize pro-homeless causes and to advocate for the inclusion of homeless people in the welfare state. While the previous section's movement strategy was a local one that addressed citizenship at the level of the municipality in Kanagawa Prefecture, the new movement in this section tried to change (and succeeded in changing) the national understanding of citizenship entitlements. And, really, it became the hallmark of this nationalization movement. This national construction of activism learned much from the past successful/unsuccessful experiences of local movements; therefore, it should not be seen as a leap unrelated to past development. Rather, nationalizing attempts in the late 2000s became possible through the cumulative impact of local pro-homeless activism. Hence, the key point: local movements were the prehistory of the nationalizing movement.

At the heart of this nationalization was an encampment event in Tokyo that took place during the winter of 2008/2009, an event called the Overwintering Village of Temp Workers (Toshikoshi Haken Mura). The concept was to attract temp workers who had been dismissed from their jobs (and thereby lost the basic means of survival) as a result of the global financial crisis to Tokyo's Hibiya Park. The location of the park is very close to nationally important buildings such as the Diet, the Supreme Court, the Imperial Palace, the headquarters of national ministries, etc. In Hibiya Park, the movement planned to pitch tents, maintain soup kitchens and open windows of consultation for employment and livelihood problems, all of which were intended to accommodate and support the dismissed temp workers for the period between late December and early January. From the outset, the leaders had the clear intention of drawing the public's attention to this event. The geography of Hibiya Park, which is close to the 'centre' of national politics, was consciously selected for that purpose.[2]

The idea of the public encampment first emerged in November 2008 when the mass media reported that approximately 400,000 temp workers were likely to be dismissed by March 2009 due to the impact of the global financial crisis (*AS* 2008). Concerning the poverty-prone character of temp workers, Tokyo's activists reached the conclusion that the dismissed temp workers would become homeless and thus needed special support. Because

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2   Miura (2012) mentions this major social movement as a movement for non-regular workers and argues it had an impact as such. I further argue that it had a decisive impact on Japan's national discourses and legal frameworks because the leaders framed their claims as those for homelessness-prone and actually homeless workers. In other words, its strength was derived from its strategic identification with the 'outsiders' of the Japanese welfare state (see also Hayashi 2014b).

the temp workers most affected by the crisis and dismissals were expected
to be those mobile blue-collar workers working in factories and plants
and living in their dormitories, the danger was imminent that the loss of
employment would directly lead to the loss of housing – to homelessness.
Union activists and legal specialists quickly arranged a plan to provide
accommodation and other services for dismissed temp workers. At this
point, they incorporated a key figure into the circle, Makoto Yuasa, in order
to materialize the encampment plan.

After graduating from the University of Tokyo, Yuasa participated in
a famous pro-homeless group (Nojiren) in Tokyo's Shibuya Ward and is
considered to have much experience in pro-homeless events. The inclusion
of Yuasa in the movement was initially to receive some special assistance
in engineering the encampment event. However, the involvement of Yuasa
meant more than this to the movement. By the late 2000s, Yuasa was al-
ready an intellectual well known in leftist circles for his celebrated book
Han hinkon (Anti-poverty, 2008). With ample knowledge of pro-homeless
movements in the past, Yuasa soon began reconsidering the whole plan
(Nakajima et al. 2018). When the event started, it was clear to everyone
that this charismatic figure was leading it. What is more, he was seeing the
transformation of the circumscribed Japanese welfare state as a real chance,
finding in Hibiya Park the capacity to become a vortex of national-scale
transformation (THMJI 2009: 16, 22).

On 29 December 2008, in front of volunteers and homeless individuals
gathering in Hibiya Park, Yuasa – now a formal leader of the encampment
event – made an opening speech for the tent village, which formally lasted
until 5 January 2009. To understand the strong appeal that this event held
for the broader audience, I need to reemphasize the conjuncture. First and
foremost, the global financial crisis was engulfing the Japanese economy
and frightening the Japanese. Dismissed temp workers had already been
designated as the victims of this ongoing crisis by the media. The geography
of Hibiya Park attracted the attention of citizens and political leaders and
made them aware that the issue of temp workers was turning into the
issue of homelessness under the ongoing crisis. On top of everything, the
award-winning orator graduated from an elite university was now offering
the 'legitimate' interpretation of the crisis.

The confluence of these various contexts in the middle of Tokyo helped
the tent village event to enjoy a real resonance with a wider audience beyond
the narrow circles of the left-wing public. TV shows repeatedly covered the
event, running on the air heart-breaking personal experiences of being
unemployed, impoverished and homeless. These stories heightened the

public image of the unemployed workers as a homogeneous group of 'victims' (Jinbo 2009). Responding to this broad media coverage, as many as 1,692 volunteers gathered at Hibiya Park to help the homeless (Utsunomiya and Yuasa 2009). Moreover, well-known members of the national Diet – including Kan Naoto, who would later be appointed as Prime Minister – visited the tent village and expressed their solidarity with the general cause of the event as well as with the 505 homeless labourers gathered in the village (Utsunomiya and Yuasa 2009).

Of particular importance is the activists' relationships with the ministry. Yuasa and others embarked on innovative trials to exploit the channels of communication with the MHLW. The MHLW administers welfare policy and Public Assistance and – while movements in Kanagawa Prefecture tried to change the local authority – Tokyo's movement sought to change the national authority, in order to open up the Japanese welfare state to the homeless. Owing to the high level of support the movement received from the media and the public, and thanks to its cunning use of intellectual and symbolic resources, the venture succeeded.

First, the movement demanded that the MHLW let the homeless use its auditorium as a shelter, and the MHLW accepted this demand on 2 January 2009 (Utsunomiya and Yuasa 2009: 141). Second, also in response to activists, on 4 January 2009 the MHLW opened four more temporary shelters to accommodate homeless individuals, whose increasing number was now overflowing Hibiya Park (THMJI 2009; Utsunomiya and Yuasa 2009). Third, in March 2009, the MHLW made a delayed response to the movement by calling for the local welfare office to positively consider the application of homeless people for Public Assistance (MHLW 2009b). Finally, in December 2009, the MHLW handed a stronger version of circulation to local welfare offices for the same purpose, thus further strengthening the access of homeless people to Public Assistance all over Japan (MHLW 2009a).

The Rise and Fall of Citizenship: Neoliberal Backlashes in the 2010s

Neoliberal Backlashes against Universal Citizenship

The upshot is that Tokyo's pro-homeless movement cunningly grasped the crisis-riven situation of the late 2000s and turned this conjuncture into the opportune moment of transformation. It became possible through the mobilization of geographical, symbolic and intellectual resources to

Figure 11.3   Households of Public Assistance, 1975-2014
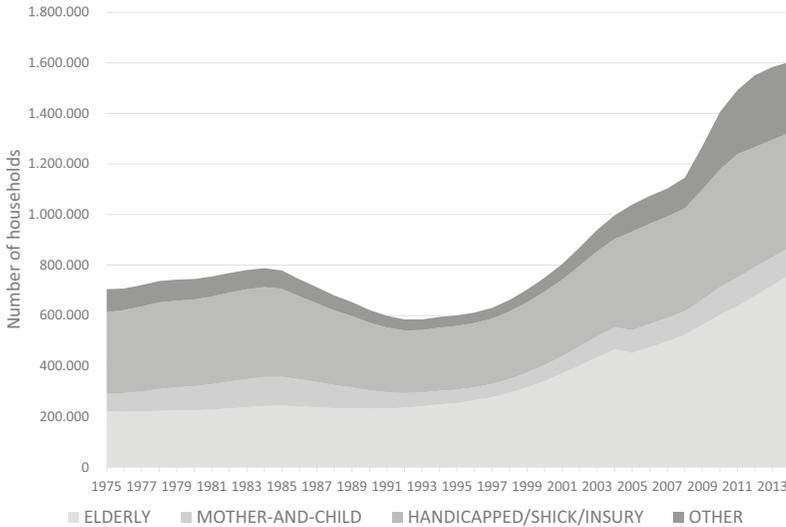
Source: National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (http://www.ipss.go.jp/s-info/j/seiho/seihoH28/H28-3.xlsx, 3 February 2018)

nationalize a pro-homeless campaign. After the public encampment event in winter 2008/2009, and after the MHLW promulgated the new administrative guidance of Public Assistance in 2009, Japan saw a real increase in Public Assistance recipients among those populations who had previously been rejected. A new pro-homeless movement, which clamoured for the rights of the homeless, led the Japanese welfare state to incorporate its 'outsiders.'

Figure 11.3 suggests how quickly this inclusion happened as it shows the long-term trend of Public Assistance recipients for different household types. Readers can see that the category of 'other households' (*sonota setai*) quickly increased after 2008. This category refers to those who had previously been excluded from the Japanese welfare state: those without fixed address, the able-bodied and the unmarried male populations. For this very reason, government statistics refer to them as a vague group of the unworthy 'other.' By contrast, the 'elderly,' 'mother and child,' and 'disadvantaged/ sick/injured' households were distinctly mentioned. This suggests that the state considered them to be the 'worthy' recipients. The fact that the other category grew after 2008 was the result of the MHLW's new legal interpretations, which pushed each municipality and local administrator to mobilize Public Assistance even for the homeless. As I have shown, that was the real political outcome of Tokyo's pro-homeless movement.

In contemporary Japan, however, this quick incorporation of the 'unworthy' poor into the national welfare programme has been evoking serious concerns on the part of bureaucrats, politicians, intellectuals and citizens. An MHLW bureaucrat concerns the increasing rolls of 'other households,' saying: 'Among the households of the "elderly," "mother and child," "disadvantaged/sick/injured," and "other" [...] we find an especially significant growth in "other households"' (CAO 2012). Politicians, intellectuals and the mass media shared this recognition and sometimes express sharp antipathy and animosity towards the poor on the rolls (e.g. Ikeda 2009; Takenaka et al. 2011; Katayama 2012; NHK News Crew 2012). The message was simple enough: there is now an increased population of 'welfare dependency' and we have to deal with it very carefully, in order not to further increase this population. Various conservative/neoliberal figures, who normally 'lived' in different camps, were lined up to persuade the nation of their underlying philosophy: let's re-exclude them once again. Thus, the nationalization of pro-poor politics also nationalized moments and forces that despised the inclusion of the poor.

While these antipathies represent one discursive reaction to the national inclusion of the 'unworthy' poor, more nuanced discursive constructs have also come into being. After the national acceptance of pro-poor causes by means of citizenship in the 2010s, wider debates have emerged about how Japan can address the increasingly omnipresent and omnipotent character of poverty in society. The pre-existing 'gap society' interpretations and arguments, which circulated in the mass media, publications, and internet spaces and constructed the self-images of 'poor us' until the 2000s (for an overview, see Chiavacci and Hommerich 2017), are now in the process of re-articulation, affecting the discourses of national politics in major ways (Chiavacci 2018).

These national concerns about the 'welfare dependency' problem can be ideological. Yet, the strong sensitivity to the 'unworthy' poor has structural roots in political economy. That is, Japan's massive national deficits delimit total welfare spending, and Japan's serious aging/depopulation trends demand the special allocation of budgets, to the exclusion of what one might conceive as the 'unworthy' poor. It is this resource-allocation problem – a structural 'root cause' – that now facilitates the formation of ideological constructs and neoliberal backlashes against the 'outsiders.' In this context, Japan until the late 2010s, had already advanced a series of reforms to reduce the rolls of Public Assistance and relocate its recipients into the labour market. At the core are efforts of bureaucrats and politicians to forge the Japanese version of a 'workfare state' (Peck 2001) and to replace the traditional welfare policy with a more market-driven 'workfare'

policy. Because these neoliberal reforms have been advanced cunningly, it is becoming hard for pro-homeless and pro-poor activists to wage effective campaigns against them.

– In 2012, the Japanese government announced the final draft of a comprehensive tax and social welfare reform, which determined that Japan's public welfare is overloaded and called for radical reform by establishing the 'second layer of the safety-net' (i.e. more time-limited provisions of support) outside of the first layer of Public Assistance (CAS 2012: 7).

– Beginning in 2013, the Japanese state started radically slashing the benefit level of Public Assistance. Between 2013 and 2015, there was a reduction of approximately 6% in the benefit level. In 2017, a further reduction was suggested.

– In 2014, the Act for Promoting Social Welfare Reform was enforced, which targets the 'best balance of self-help, mutual help, and public help' (art. 2), and demands a reduction of Public Assistance by constructing a work-first policy (Additional Clause, art. 2).

– In 2015, the Act for the Self-Support of Needy Persons was enforced and created the space of workfare policy by founding the 'consultation assistance programme for the self-support of needy persons' (art. 1).

– In 2015, the Public Assistance Act of 1950 itself was revised to add to the Public Assistance programme a new incentive system for the recipients, designed to encourage their quick job search after being on the rolls.

In short, the neoliberal reform of the welfare state in the 2010s has already produced the new space of workfare on the national scale. As a result, Public Assistance – Japan's core welfare programme – became tightly integrated with the national realm of workfare, thereby establishing the continuity of welfare-workfare systems and promoting the transfer of the needy to the labour market. The Public Assistance programme was systematically made remote especially for those who were considered as 'unworthy' recipients – such as able-bodied, unmarried and male populations – and the welfare office of the locality was redefined, for these populations, as the frontline of 'workfarist regulation' (Peck 2001). Furthermore, the Japanese state set ambitious targets for each municipality to achieve the curtailing of Public Assistance recipients by relocating them to the new workfare system and the labour market (MHLW 2018).

    While these neoliberal reforms, which are still ongoing, were the state's response to the general increase of welfare budgets and national deficits

in Japan, the previous inclusion of the 'outsiders' in the welfare state was not unrelated. In drawing up these reforms, the central concern of policymakers was that the number of recipients belonging to the 'workable age group' had increased and that it represented a critical situation that departed from traditions of the past when Public Assistance was for the elderly, injured/sick and disadvantaged populations (MHLW 2013: 4). When Japan embarked on the neoliberal reforms, policymakers targeted especially those who were previously considered as the 'outsiders' of the welfare state.

Rediscovering the Pro-homeless Cause

In the upbeat phase of Public Assistance increase beginning in the late 2000s, which was consolidated through Tokyo's tent village movement and resulting politics, pro-homeless activists felt their relationship with local authorities was improving, as municipalities became ever more willing to accept the application of homeless people to the national citizenship programme. At the same time, in this phase, it became clear to everyone that the number of homeless who 'lived' on the streets had significantly decreased due to public welfare provision and also because the authorities strengthened anti-homeless policing at the street level. The rationale was that the remaining homeless individuals on the streets were eager 'outsiders' of Japanese society who intentionally preferred street-based life and that, therefore, these most 'unworthy' poor could be evicted even from the streets.

Given this new context, the unintended consequence of the improved welfare state, the movements' strategy began to diverge. First, the majority of pro-homeless activists redefined their role as the supporters of ex-homeless individuals now housed by welfare measures. Movements that adopted this strategy heightened the degree of collaboration with authorities and sometimes ran dormitories for ex-homeless individuals on Public Assistance. Second, a few activists pursued a different strategy. That is, they stuck to street homelessness in order to problematize the ongoing exclusion of the homeless from the welfare state and society. Activists adopting this strategy could sometimes not be clearly distinguished from the former group. In the case of Kanagawa Prefecture, the same activists, who radically opposed the authorities' anti-homeless policing, closely collaborated with municipal workers when they accommodated ex-homeless individuals in their dormitory houses. Despite this complexity, there were undoubtedly some activists who were still firmly committed to the assistance of homeless individuals remaining (and being 'trapped') on the streets.

What about activism in the most contemporary phase of neoliberal backlashes? The Japanese landscape of pro-homeless movements in this latest period is 'fixed.' However, what can be said is that the mounting pressure for welfare-state retrenchment for the sake of a workfare policy – pressure exerted by conservative politicians, bureaucrats, intellectuals and citizens – is presenting formidable challenges to activists working for homeless and ex-homeless individuals. For one thing, the much deteriorated rate of Public Assistance in the current period is already inspiring fear among ex-homeless individuals housed in dormitory houses run by movements, thereby causing uneasiness among activists. The manager of one such dormitory for ex-homeless individuals, run by a movement organization in Kanagawa Prefecture, told me that the lowered amount of Public Assistance has directly worsened the level of services they can provide for ex-homeless residents in the dormitory house, changing homeless movement relationships for the worse (Interview Matsumoto 2018).

For another, activists say that the deteriorated conditions of the Japanese welfare state at the current time, as well as the intensification of anti-homeless policing in the streets, should revitalize the meaning of pro-homeless movements. They dare to make this hypothetical comparison: if today's public space were subject to the same (lower) level of intensity regarding anti-homeless policing as it was ten years ago, not a few homeless individuals would choose to stay in parks and streets rather than to leave them and rely on Public Assistance. The reasons are that the rate of assistance has already declined and that it is set to further deteriorate over the next few years, and that parks and streets were more 'livable' for the homeless before the 2010s. In this regard, one activist vocally claims (Interview Takazawa 2018):

> There are some homeless people who can do better by living in the streets than by leaving them. [...] Unfortunately, citizens do not understand this way of living a life. Citizens harshly think that such homeless people are criminals. They castigate the homeless on that ground. [...] The job of our [pro-homeless] movements is to change [the views of] such society.

This statement, made by a veteran activist in Yokohama, suggests that a potential new avenue for pro-homeless movements is now emerging amidst the neoliberal backlashes. That is, the ongoing reduction in welfare spending and the resultant degradation of livelihood rights, which have powerfully destroyed the legal basis of the welfare state, could be combated by movements that support the homeless and homelessness-prone labourers 'living' in public space.

Conclusion

Due to their sensitivity to citizenship problems, social movements for the homeless have played significant roles in improving Japan's welfare state, especially after the early 1990s. It was a time when the nation reached the endpoint of post-war development, whose good growth capacity had masked the malfunctioning of the welfare state. By clamouring for the opening up of public-welfare measures to the 'outsiders' of the welfare state, activists have tried to produce better safety net conditions, nationally and locally, for the homeless and other impoverished populations. To this end, the institutions of consumer rights and public provision in the welfare state, which had long dismissed the homeless, have become the targets of activism. The livelihood rights enshrined in the constitution, and the Public Assistance programme established by the Public Assistance Act of 1950, had been implemented in a highly restricted way regarding homeless people even though they have strong potential to ameliorate homelessness. Pro-homeless activists have found in the gap – a cleavage between citizenship clauses and their real operation – a chance to improve the circumscribed welfare state of Japan.

Before the late 2000s, activists tried to persuade local authorities to construct a local mode of welfare provision for the homeless. These trials were based on their critical interpretations of the law, which emphasized the 'worthiness' of homeless individuals. The inner-city area of metropolises populated by day labourers – segregated districts called '*yoseba*' – became a hive for such pro-homeless activism. In the case of the city of Yokohama, the municipality responded to the activists by mobilizing Public Assistance – the core programme of the Japanese welfare state – for elderly and sick/injured homeless persons. While this decision was progressive in itself, the city also revitalized its local relief system for the local homeless population. As similar types of movement-regulation dynamics spread to other cities in Kanagawa Prefecture, by the 2000s, this area became a major hotbed for local welfare states attentive to the plight of the homeless, creating new conditions of citizenship in the prefecture.

In the late 2000s, an entirely new form of pro-homeless movement came into being in Tokyo, which ambitiously sought to change the Japanese welfare state at the national level. The (potential) number of precarious homeless labourers quickly increased during the winter of 2008/2009 as a result of the global financial crisis. In response, the movement set up a 'village' of tents, soup kitchens and consultation windows in the middle of Tokyo's central business district, just in front of politically important buildings of

the Japanese state. As this cunning choice of geography was combined with the strategic use of symbolic and intellectual resources, which were largely 'personified' by orator Makoto Yuasa, the movement succeeded in attracting much public attention and persuading the MHLW, the national gatekeeper of Public Assistance, to open up the core programme of citizenship to the homeless at the national level. While this facilitated the inclusion of the homeless into the Japanese welfare state, in the 2010s, Japan ran into yet another new phase of neoliberal backlashes and workfare-state building, leading to the deterioration of citizenship for the poor. In this context, pro-homeless activism is gaining new importance in combating neoliberalism and promoting a better welfare state at the national and local levels.

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