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Implementing the Concept of "housing support" in a Super-aged Society*

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This article discusses the implementation of "housing support" in Japan as a super-aged society, using findings of a mixed methods survey conducted at a public housing estate. The concept of housing support was introduced in the context of housing policy reform in the mid-2000s. The non-conventional combination of "housing" and "support" implies the perceived growing necessity of personal social services as basic resources for securing residence. However, the roles and characteristics of housing support have not been adequately investigated. This article focuses on a public housing estate experiencing rapid aging and delineates how the discrepancy between formal institutions and the necessity of multidisciplinary co-operation have taken form in the consciousness of stakeholders. The clarification of the development process of housing support services in the public rented sector at a neighborhood level proposes a useful reference point for the implementation of the concept in the private rented sector, as envisaged by the Housing Safety Net Act (2007, significantly revised in 2017). This article also presents a preliminary discussion for a comparative sociology of residential relations or the tenant/landlord relationship with reference to the concept of housing management. Japanese society is currently confronting the challenge of reconstructing housing management, which has been overlooked in the formation process of the welfare state. This challenge is shared by a number of Asian societies.

Keywords: *super-aged society, policy reform, housing support, "asset-holders", housing management*

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Introduction

In Japan, authority over various public policies including housing policy was transferred from the central government to local governments beginning in the mid-2000s. Due to this reform, there was an increase in the amount of discretion local governments placed on the development and management of public real estate. In 2006, the Basic Act for Housing was enacted. This Act replaced the Act on Housing Construction Plan of 1966, which had embodied the housing policy led by the central government. The demise of the nationwide plan for housing provision had the effect of limiting public housing to a more residual role (Hirayama 2012).

During devolution reform, under austerity and perennially stagnating economic conditions, the entry of a wide range of housing suppliers other than the government had been emphasized. The expectation was that private rental housing would make up for the shortage in public housing. The 2007 Act on the Promotion of Offering of Rental Housing to Persons Requiring Special Assistance in Securing Housing (commonly known as the "Housing Safety Net Act") adopted a novel approach that granted private rental housing the role of social housing. Specifically, it aimed to increase the supply of affordable rental housing for persons requiring special assistance in securing housing (such as low-income earners, disaster victims, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and households caring for children).

However, the Housing Safety Net Act initially lacked any substantial measures to provide suppliers and residents of private rental housing with financial assistance. At this stage, it was merely an abstract stipulation designed to serve the establishment of a "council of housing support" comprising local governments, real-estate agencies, support groups, and other local entities. In 2017, the Housing Safety Net Act underwent a full-scale revision and prescribed assistance, supervision, and guidance for registered landlords. This revision also included regulations related for "housing support corporations", which are non-profit organizations or private companies designated by prefectural governments.

Although details of its structure are yet to be fully fleshed out, the introduction of the concept of "housing support" (*kyojū shien*) to housing policy is noteworthy. The non-conventional combination of "housing" and "support" implies the perceived growing necessity of personal social services as basic resources for securing residence. Housing cannot be equated to the provision of physical facilities alone. It entails various kinds of services.

Focusing on this aspect will help in connecting housing with other institutions of the welfare state (Spicker 1989; Sprigings 2017).

Therefore, housing support should not be confined to the complement of the stagnating public housing sector. It could lead to a significant change in the demarcation between housing and welfare policies. However, the roles and characteristics of housing support have rarely been investigated. The author has previously discussed the context of the current shifts in policy agendas in the Japanese housing system from a historical perspective (Sukenari, forthcoming). This article's purpose is to examine the implementation process of housing support based on a mixed methods survey conducted at a public housing estate, *Hidamari Danch,* where a majority of households are the elderly living alone. The second and third sections describe practices of the residents and discuss the sustainability of their activities, respectively. The fourth section focuses on the coordination of housing and welfare services. The last section proposes a conceptual consideration of housing support from a comparative perspective.

Rapid aging in a public housing estate

Concentration of people with welfare needs

In Japan, public (or municipal) housing (*kōei jūtaku*) is an arrangement through which local governments, subsidized by the central government, provide low-rent housing for people struggling to afford housing. Currently, approximately four million people in Japan are living in two million units of public housing. While public housing is the dominant measure for social housing, the number of available units tends to be fairly low and has never been increased with the exception of housing for disaster recovery ("Restoration Housing").

Public housing was initially designed for a wide range of lower income households. However, by the 1970s, its role began to be confined to serving only the most disadvantaged groups. It has been "removed from the normative housing ladder and been positioned as an isolated sphere" (Hirayama and Izuhara 2018, p.64). Since eligibility for public housing has been further restricted since the mid-1990s, it has become difficult for anyone who is not in extremely challenging circumstances to benefit from the scheme.

The Housing and Land Survey (HLS) conducted in 2013 estimates that

the one-person households aged 65 and over account for a quarter of households living in public housing. Regarding income, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Tourism (MLIT) reports that 78.1 percent of the households living in public housing belongs to the lowest decile group (Housing Development Division, Housing Bureau, MLIT 2018).

Hidamari Danchi is a public housing estate owned by the X city government. X city is an ordinance-designated city in the Greater Tokyo Area. The estate is located in the peripheral region of X city, half an hour by train and bus from the city's center. There are low density detached housing areas and rural areas adjacent to this estate.[1] *Hidamari Danchi* comprises 42 five-story buildings containing approximately 1,400 two-bedroom dwelling units[2].

As it was established in the mid-1960s for those who migrated to industrialized urban areas during the period of high economic growth, the housing development was intended for workers' households with young children. A municipal primary school positioned in the center of the site plan gives us an indication of who the original target residents were. In the mid-2000s, this estate underwent a major renovation including the installation of elevators, interior barrier-freeing (improving accessibility), and improvements to plumbing. The refurbishment was designed to better accommodate the aging residents.

The age distribution of *Hidamari Danchi* as a neighborhood is extremely lopsided. In January 2016, it had around 1,300 households with 1,900 residents. While the proportion of people aged 65 and over was 60.5 percent, people aged 75 and over accounted for 31.8 percent of the population. The number of one-person households aged 65 and over was around 700, over half of the total number of households. The demographic data represents the potential needs for welfare services in this area.

When the local government initiated an experimental program titled "The Model Project for Visiting and Advising Isolated and Deprived Elderly People" (FY2014-2016), *Hidamari Danchi* was selected as the main site for the project.[3] This program was subsidized by the Health and Welfare Bureau for the Elderly, Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) along with

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[1] Regarding the land-use zoning system under the city planning law, the location of this estate can be described as a "Category 1 medium-to-high-rise exclusive residential district" wedged between a "Category 1 low-rise exclusive residential district" and "urbanization control districts".

[2] The size of the units is typically around 40 square meters.

[3] The author was engaged in the national grant program as a member of the advisory committee (FY2014, 2016).

other programs proposed by local governments across the country. Thus, *Hidamari Danchi* has been regarded as the frontline of the rapidly aging population issue in metropolitan areas in Japan. We can also observe a rearrangement of welfare policy and housing policy in this program. The concept of housing support was contextualized in the reforms of elderly care provision that center on community-based care instead of facility-based care. Secure housing has been increasingly located at the core of community-based care in policy debates (Shirakawa 2014; Yamazaki 2017).

Challenges and capacity of residents

The study group led by the author conducted a postal questionnaire survey to all residents of *Hidamari Danchi* between the ages of 60 and 84 during autumn 2015.[4] Contrary to the apparent homogeneity of the public housing estate as a residential environment, it contains residents in diverse situations. We focused on social isolation (Townsend and Tunstall 1968; Wenger et al. 1996) and asked about the frequency of contact (both face-to-face and non-face-to-face) with "family members and relatives whom you are not living with", "friends and acquaintances in the estate" and "friends and acquaintances outside of the estate". Respondents who had contact with any person categorized above less frequently than once a week were classified as socially isolated.

Respondents were categorized into four groups according to frequency of social contact and the size of household: (A) "living alone and socially isolated", (B) "living alone and not socially isolated", (C) "not living alone and socially isolated" and (D) "not living alone and not socially isolated". The number and ratio of each category was as follows: 16.6 percent, or 56 people, lived alone and were socially isolated (A); 45.0 percent, or 152 people, lived alone and were not socially isolated (B); 9.5 percent, or 32 people, lived with other person(s) and were socially isolated (C); and 29.0 percent, or 98 people, lived with other person(s) and were not socially isolated (D). Particularly important was the fact that people who were living alone and socially isolated (A) were relatively young. In addition, those who lived with other person(s) but lacked moderate social contact outside of the household (C) had poor self-perceived health, both physically and mentally.

Some residents recognized situations of their neighbors and tried to

[4] This survey was carried out as part of a social survey training programme of the department of sociology, the University of Tokyo (FY2015-2016).

tackle the problem themselves. The residents' associations[5] (*jichi-kai*), the Neighborhood Council of Commissioned Welfare Volunteers (*minjikyō*) and the Neighborhood Council of Social Welfare (*chiku shakyō*) are among the key actors. Leading members of these voluntary organizations initiated communal watching activities and provided small and large opportunities for social interaction expected to prevent the exacerbation of isolation that eventually leads to dying alone. These activities are constantly supported by staff members of the ward office (a branch of the X city government) and the Community General Support Center (CGSC).[6] They periodically hold meetings at the estate for knowledge sharing and planning agendas. Therefore, *Hidamari Danchi* cannot simply be described as a destitute neighborhood with a pile of challenges. It is also a local community where residents and relevant parties have gained the experience and capacity to respond to problems.

Uncertain future of mutual support

"Asset holders" in a public housing estate?

In *Hidamari Danchi*, several tasks that require substantial effort are shared among dozens of leading members of local organizations. Besides voluntary watching activities, residents' associations organize regular events such as sports meetings and seasonal festivals. They also manage the estate's communal area including green spaces and assembly rooms. It is notable that aged residents themselves work on the maintenance of the living environment. The questionnaire survey showed that 54.9 percent of the respondents gave positive responses to the prompt, "I want to do something beneficial for this estate."

However, most leaders of residents' associations have additional posts in related organizations. Typically, they are aged around 70 and have lived at the estate for more than 30 years. Although each position has an age limit, the continuation of duty beyond such limits had become normal. We conducted interviews with principal members of residents' associations between 2015-

[5] The local government obliges residents of public housing to become members of residents' associations. There are 12 residents' associations in this estate. Of these, 11 associations have banded into a united association.

[6] CGSC is a statutory institution established by local governments based on the Long-Term Care Insurance Act. It provides residents of small areas with general support for home care services.

2017. We also interviewed 22 residents from the respondents of questionnaire survey in the summer of 2016. Interviewees included leading members of local organizations. Based on the collected data, we can describe their profiles, practices, and opinions.[7]

Takashi (aged 70s, male, living in the estate for more than 30 years, not living alone) is a Commissioned Welfare Volunteer (CWV) and had been a board member of the united residents' association for several decades. He routinely gives counsel to residents living not only in the area of his responsibility but also in other areas of the estate, where the CWVs in charge cannot effectively carry out their missions. He usually acts as a voluntary link between people and official institutions. Occasionally, he attends to urgent cases in the hospital, helps other residents manage money, and safeguards the spare keys in case of emergency. As he admits, these tasks go beyond a CWV's ordinary responsibilities and come closer to the role of adult guardianship.

Michiko (aged 70s, female, living in the estate for more than 30 years, not living alone) is also a CWV and has additional posts in several local organizations. She is a Promoter of Healthcare Activities and a member of the Women's Association for Rehabilitation Service. She also organizes physical exercise, handicraft, and other classes. On weekends, she works for a group home for the intellectually disabled. Michiko says, "*Hidamari Danchi* itself is like a large nursing home." Needless to say, there are marked differences between nursing homes and public housing estates. "As there is no care staff [inside the estate], we, the CWVs, have to provide adequate support," she says. As the number of people in need of help has increased, the subjective responsibility of CWVs is growing heavier. "I feel rather relieved when people are admitted to the hospital," Michiko adds.

As discussed, public housing targets people with low incomes who have difficulties affording decent dwellings. However, residents are far from homogeneous. Data from the questionnaire survey shows that leading members of local organizations tend to have longer durations of residence, abundant social relationships, and children who live with them or near the estate. They can be described as "asset holders": those who have a wealth of knowledge about the institutions and experience solving problems of mediating between the people with needs and the professionals and facilities which provide specialized services.

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[7] The names of the interviewee are pseudonyms. All information is presented as recorded at the time of the interview.

Sixty years ago, in a classical study on Japanese urban neighborhoods, Ronald P. Dore posed an essential question about why the inner areas of Tokyo were not trapped in social disintegration (Dore 1958). He highlighted the vital role that formalized neighborhood relationships, represented by *tonari-gumi*, "neighbour groups of from ten to twenty households," that were "formed as subsidiary organs of the ward [or neighborhood] associations [*chonai-kai*]" (Dore 1958, p.256), played in the settlement of migrants from rural areas to the urban environments. "The existence of established patterns of neighbour relations as a 'social fact' also makes it easier for newcomers to initiate formal relations within the framework of which informal relations of intimacy may grow" (Dore 1958, p.258). Similarly, Konno (2001), an urban sociologist, analyzed the cumulative development of community organizations in an inner area of Kobe and shed light on the "ethos" shared by local residents. He described the ethos as: "while the successful person with a self-owned business consolidates credence in the neighborhood through taking the positions of responsibility in local organizations, factory workers and self-employed workers wish to follow in the steps of them" (Konno 2001, p.178).

Both Dore and Konno conducted ethnographic research in physically (residential, commercial, and industrial) and socially (occupations, income, and properties) mixed neighborhoods. It is intriguing that a comparable situation can be observed in a public housing estate, which has been considered one of the most homogeneous residential environments.

Sustainability of activities

Some "asset holders" in *Hidamari Danchi* are willing to take on roles of supporting disadvantaged residents. However, the fact that they had started to live in this estate before eligibility of public housing was narrowed down indicates that the transmission of their roles to the next generation is quite difficult. In fact, as Michiko mentions "having no time" and being "full of feeling of being chased [or overwhelmed]", emphasizing that psychological and physical burdens of "asset holders" are reaching critical limits.

Shinji (aged 40s, male, living in the estate for more than 40 years, living alone) is a particularly young chairperson of a residents' association who was born and brought up in the estate. The death of his father, who had taken up significant positions in local associations, motivated him to become committed to the organization. His status as a self-employed worker based in his home enables him to continually be engaged in communal activities. He

aptly labels the situation where responsibilities and tasks are concentrated to a small portion of residents as "octopus-legs-like wiring [or overloaded sockets]." This metaphor implies that there are excessive burdens and possibly impending danger.

Masao (aged 70s, male, living in the estate for less than 10 years, living alone) had been forced into homelessness for five months due to being evicted for being in rent arrears. He managed to find a job while he was staying at a public shelter for homeless people and moved into a privately rented apartment. Suffering from the high rent, he repeatedly applied for public housing and was eventually allowed to move into *Hidamari Danchi*. Soon after he started his life at the estate, he became a board member of the residents' association with enthusiastic encouragement from other members. However, he is quite pessimistic about the future of the association. He says, "I consider [the activities] to be unsustainable. Though I am currently engaged in them, I don't know if I will continue next year. I suppose other associations [in this estate] are the same."

Takashi (previously mentioned) continues, "I asked [the managers of the estate] to conduct interviews with prospective tenants. I declared that we would be ready to support applicants who would be co-operative with the residents' associations. However, if they were reluctant, we would refuse to accept them." We heard similarly from other residents. Residents' associations and other neighborhood organizations have no authority over the selection of tenants. Takashi himself acknowledges that his (and his colleagues') request sounds bizarre. However, this institutionally unreasonable suggestion is rooted in a sense of justice. He takes pride in the autonomous management of the neighborhood and has a strong sense that there is vulnerability concerning maintaining the order of the local community. An earnest commitment to communal activities is inextricably linked with evaluating residents based on their contributions to the neighborhood and rejecting allegedly inappropriate tenants.

In *Hidamari Danchi*, mutual support among residents has been barely maintained under difficult conditions. Regarding sustainability of the local community, there are compounding difficulties. According to our survey, 56.8 percent of respondents felt annoyed with "residents who didn't follow rules" to a lesser or greater degree. The responses to the free-answer questions revealed the possibility that some troubles among residents had resulted from mental illness and dementia. Takashi's proposal of interviews with applicants stems from the need to know the physical and mental conditions of new tenants. The segmented provision of care services and

disconnection of welfare administration from the housing management complicate the situation.

From the perspective of housing policy, the restriction of eligibility for public housing has been justified as a proper distribution of limited resources. In the Government Project Review, a self-assessment of policies conducted by each ministry, an external evaluator of MLIT commented that "there is a possibility that even people whose household finances have become a bit more leisurely are still in [public housing]. The issue is that such people cling to vested rights. They should vacate as soon as their economic circumstances improve and they no longer meet the criteria" (Naikakukanbō 2014, p. 8). However, it is likely that this strategy will lead to serious conflicts among residents unless the housing and welfare services coordinate.

Approaches to a multi-layered support

Coordination between relevant actors

As aforementioned, the local government conducted a pilot program, "The Model Project for Visiting and Advising Isolated and Deprived Elderly People" (FY2014-2016). The project was executed by the Community General Support Center (CGSC) located adjacent to the estate.[8] CGSC recruited temporary staff with qualifications in care support or social welfare to make door-to-door visits to selected residents. The main targets of the visits were new incomers and seniors over the age of 75 who were not public assistance (welfare benefits) recipients and did not use long-term care insurance services or medical services. They were presumed to suffer the risks of social isolation and strained conditions.

The agendas decided after the visits were as follows:

(1) Establishing a procedure to work through critical incidents;
(2) Supporting isolated residents (especially incoming residents);
(3) Collecting information on potentially vulnerable households (especially social withdrawal and mental illness).

Regarding critical incidents, leading members of local organizations had complaints about the lack of coordination between departments in the local government. The housing department and the Local Housing Supply

[8] The administration of CGSC is designated to a social welfare corporation by the X city government.

Corporation (LHSC), as the designated administrator of the estate, did not participate in the pilot program, "The Model Project for Promoting the Communal Watching Activities for the Elderly People Living Alone" (FY2010-2012). The subsequent model project advanced coordination of housing and welfare administrations.[9]

At first, the welfare department had to ask for residents' information from the housing department on the grounds of approval of the council for personal information protection to make visits to targeted households.[10] The housing department and LHSC finally decided to at least participate annually in the periodical Local Meetings for Communal Watching Activities (*mimamori kaigi*). In April 2016, the procedure to work through critical incidents was established, and the division of roles of relevant actors was clarified. According to the procedure, if residents noticed something out of the ordinary and it lasted for a certain period, the LHSC would handle the situation.

Expanded scope of application

CGSC recruited a paid facilitator and initiated a weekly community café in January 2016. When the experimental program ended in March 2017, the united residents' association took over the café. Leading members of local organizations made efforts to secure opportunities for interaction among residents. However, their activities were necessarily centered around maintaining existing social relationships. The final report of the official program highlighted the major challenge that remained unaddressed: how to make socially isolated residents attend consultations. Supporting isolated residents and collecting information on potentially vulnerable households are both burdensome tasks.

In April 2019, the local government introduced Life (or Livelihood) Support Advisors (LSA) as a new measure in *Hidamari Danchi*. LSAs recruited by the CGSC reside in a communal building of the estate during daytime hours on weekdays. They provide residents with consultation and guidance for daily life. Shinji (previously mentioned) writes on his blog as a

[9] Indeed, the housing department and LHSC had looked beyond the physical and financial aspects of public housing. According to the interview with the manager of Local Livelihood Support Centre (LLSC) for persons with mental disabilities (December 22nd, 2015), they held meetings with CGSC and LHSC to discuss measures for antisocial behaviors of residents.

[10] The data about the usage of medical care and nursing care was received from the prefectural health insurance administrator.

principal member of a residents' association, "I appreciate their efforts in engaging in the task of dealing with residents who are living alone and suffer considerable degrees of dementia. Previously, those who had dementia were at a loss when it came to whom to consult unless they received long-term care insurance services or public assistance. After all, residents in the immediate area had to deal with any emergencies. Though the fundamental conditions have not changed, the introduction of LSAs have reduced our physical and mental load in the event of emergencies."[11]

The LSA is an institution that dates back to the 1980s (Kikuzawa et al. 1995). It was initially designed for public housing exclusively for the elderly, named the "Silver Housing Project." Although the provision of Silver Housing has been quite limited, the long-term care insurance system finances the application of this framework to public housing for the general population. The redefinition of LSA represents the reconfiguration of housing and welfare policy. Nonetheless, the expansion of LSA to the private rented sector and the owner-occupied sector has a long way to go.

The development of support for disaster victims has implications for this issue. The scale of damage from the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami was enormous, and it was clear that newly built temporary housing alone would be insufficient, so "private rental housing-turned-temporary housing units"—governmental action that utilizes private rental housing as temporary public housing—were introduced on a large-scale. This type of temporary housing originally lacked regular livelihood support. In the aftermath of the 2016 Kumamoto earthquake, official support included livelihood-support for disaster victims who were accommodated in both purpose-built temporary housing units, private rental housing-turned-temporary housing units, and those who remained in damaged private homes. However, disparities of support between different types of housing continue to be problematic (Sukenari, 2017a).

Conclusion: The (re)construction of housing management

This article delineated how the discrepancies between formal institutions and the necessity of multidisciplinary co-operation have taken form in the consciousness of stakeholders. The local government has three domains of

[11] On the other hand, he criticizes the housing administration of the local government which allocates dwelling units for the general population to applicants with dementia who are living alone.

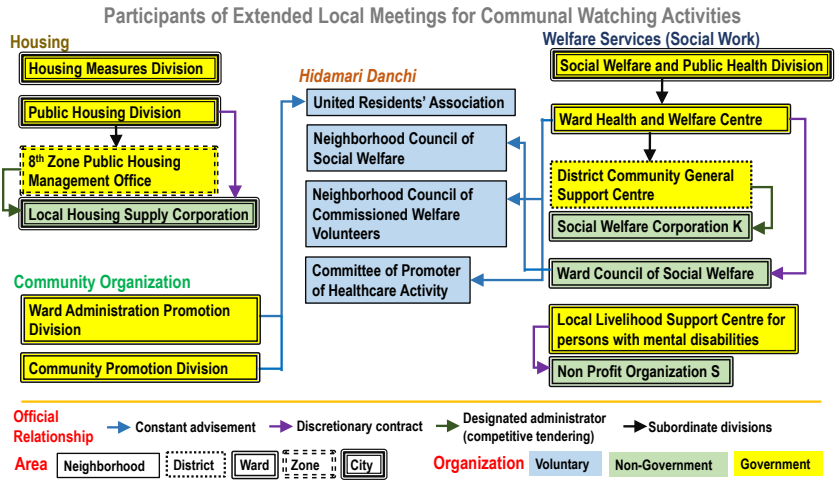

Fig. 1.—Participants of Extended Local Meetings for Communal Watching Activities

administration regarding this neighborhood: welfare services, housing, and community organizations. Among these domains, housing has an exceptional position within the administrative unit as well as in its relationship to voluntary associations. The former lies in the fact that the ward office does not have a housing division; the housing management office of LHSC is located outside the ward. Regarding the latter point, welfare service divisions and community organization divisions have regular contact with the United Residents' Association, Neighborhood Council of Social Welfare, and other local groups, whereas housing divisions lack regular opportunities for communicating with them (interview with Public Housing Division, January 26th, 2016).

In the light of the framework of local governance, *mimaori kaigi* (Local Meetings for Communal Watching Activities) ensured the continuous engagement of housing officers and facilitated liaisons with practitioners from other domains and leading members of local groups. These meetings have been constructed as integral parts of a virtual "council for housing support" at a neighborhood level. In other words, the situation of *Hidamari Danchi* until the mid-2010s indicated that multidisciplinary co-operation for housing support is not easy even in a public housing estate for which the local government has managerial responsibilities. The clarification of the process for the development of housing support in the public rented sector proposes a useful reference point for the implementation of the concept in the private

rented sector, as envisioned in the Housing Safety Net Act.

However, the significance of our findings is not limited to their implications for policy research. It can also be connected to a comparative sociology of residential relations or the tenant/landlord relationship. Although "housing support" is a newly introduced concept in the Japanese context, it seems to share a common ground with the conventional and somewhat controversial British concept of "housing management" discussed chiefly concerning the public rented sector (Power 1987; Pearl 1997). Spicker (1989) shed light on "the role of housing as a social service in the context of a welfare state" (p. 134) and proposed a model of housing management centering on "service to disadvantaged people and the wider community" (p. 135) rather than the maintenance of a property.

Around the year 2000, housing researchers intensively discussed the profession of housing managers from a social constructionist point of view (Franklin & Clapham 1997; Franklin 2000; Casey & Allen 2004; Casey 2008). In a recent book, Sprigings (2017) noted the difficulty in identifying the tasks and activities of housing management. Housing management is intricate work consisting of complex and perpetual negotiations among tenants, landlords, and related institutions under the changing political climate.

While the "uncertainty" of housing management is a "weakness" of this occupation—"lack of consistency of service that tenants can expect around the UK; weakness of professional status and professionalism in approach; vulnerability to policy changes that can shift a housing manager's focus in erratic and often conflicting ways"—it could be considered "a strength … in giving it huge adaptability in helping people in housing need (in theory housing managers could do almost anything they chose to)" (Sprigings 2017, p.17).

He depicts the comprehensiveness of housing management by referring to good practices in Scotland. The tasks listed in Sprigings (ibid., p.29) could be categorized as follows i.e., property management, such as "void management", "rent collection and rent arrears", "repairs and maintenance" and "energy efficiency"; assessment and fulfilment of housing need, such as "housing advice services", "housing allocations" and "(resolution of) homelessness"; and community governance, such as "dealing with ASB [antisocial behaviors] and racial harassment", "housing management and community care" and "tenant participation." The core of these diverse operations lies in the concept of "service". He concludes, referring to Marshall (1981), "housing management could easily be considered among the personal social services as well as part of the physical, social, and cultural environment

that make up 'community services'"(ibid., p.36).

In this regard, our study revealed at least three distinct characteristics of housing management. First, a large part of the value of the services is extracted from the building structure. Second, both professionals and residents themselves are providers of services. Third, self-service or self-provisioning is often conducted collectively. The engagement of professionals in housing is relatively limited. As housing is an industry with low barriers to entry, most services related to housing are provided in diverse ways by miscellaneous providers who are external to the formal market. To reside is not merely to consume the commodity of housing. It also includes the dynamic practices that affects and constructs the environment. In other words, to reside entails both consumption and production. To reside is to construct a "home" that crosses generations and households by maintaining dwellings through co-operation with those living adjacently. The interstices between housing and home are filled with indefinite, unnoticed, and unpaid services. Therefore, the assessment of the need for housing could be elusive.

British housing management has been under the remit of social services due to the historical condition of a vast social housing supply and the legacy of social work that prioritizes the improvement of the residential environment. The recognition that housing management is a profession has permeated, even though it is regarded as an "invisible" occupation (Casey, 2008). Japanese housing policy has not only marginalized social housing but has also confined management practices to their financial and physical aspects (cf. Nakajima, 2001).

However, the fact that housing management has not been established as a profession does not necessarily mean that it lacks function in Japanese society. A comparative perspective contributes to detecting a functional equivalent. It is beneficial to turn our attention once again to the sociological observations on the capability of a formalized social relationship in a neighborhood for finding and solving problems (Dore 1958; Konno 2001). A rapidly aging population, individualization, and frequent disasters have undermined the basis of latent or unnoticed housing management practices.[12] As our survey suggests, Japanese society confronts the challenge of reconstructing housing management that has been overlooked in the process of the formation of the welfare state. This challenge is surely shared

[12] Whether the newly introduced services such as LSA and other housing support measures will assist and help maintain the conventional organizations and practices or replace their functions and weaken the social relationship among residents is a crucial question.

with a number of Asian societies.

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