

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ Tokyo)

DIJ Study Group



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Inhabiting the Interstice: the regulation of post-bubble housing insecurity in Tokyo

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Before the speculative bubble in Japan's real estate market burst in the early 1990s, Tokyo experienced what is now plaguing metropolitan areas around the world: Real estate prices skyrocketed without wage growth at all levels of society keeping pace. When the crisis hit, the city experienced unprecedented levels of homelessness. In response, labor and housing markets were subjected to neoliberal restructuring. But what created greater housing insecurity in other parts of the world seemed to have the opposite effect in Tokyo - the number of officially recorded rough sleepers dropped significantly. How could this be?

Based on a reevaluation of Japanese literature and a thorough analysis of government, industry, and business reports, backed up by in-depth interviews conducted with both entrepreneurs and residents during field research in 2019, this presentation will outline four case studies of fragile housing to examine the regulation of homelessness as an expression of Japanese capitalism in crisis. By situating changes in the welfare regime, housing market institutions, residential architecture, and family models in the broader context of industrial transformation, I aim to outline how tendencies that we observe at the macro level are mediated at the meso and micro levels. This makes it possible to describe what the change in housing means for people in concrete terms, but also to understand its role in the stabilization of the political economy in more abstract terms. As a transdisciplinary object of inquiry, housing not only constitutes a necessary focus for policymakers, but also a compelling case for bridging diverse literatures ranging from political economy and the welfare state to human geography, urban planning, and even architecture. This multifaceted character presents both a formidable challenge and a promising opportunity for social scientists to theorize the complex interplay of space and time.

Lenard Görögh is a PhD candidate in the Department of Japanese Studies at Freie Universität Berlin. After completing his MA in Political Science and Japanese Studies, he began to focus on the housing market and sociology of housing which he tries to understand using theories of Political Economy. He is particularly interested in the Tokyo metropolitan region.

About:

The DIJ Study Group is a forum for scholars from all disciplines conducting research on contemporary or modern Japan. The event is open to all. This session is organized by Sebastian Polak-Rottmann.

Venue:

Online and DIJ Tokyo: <https://www.dijtokyo.org/access/>

Hybrid Event:

On-site participation: please register via email to polak-rottmann@dijtokyo.org until May 14, 2024.

Online participation: please register via our [webpage](#).