Welfare Conditionality and Citizenship: The Case of Japan

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INTRODUCTION

- Traditional welfare regime in Japan -- insufficient state welfare, strong dependence on families and corporations
  → **Dysfunctional under demographic change and post-industrialisation**
  ↓
  A series of welfare reforms are ongoing

*How will the ongoing welfare reforms change the nature of citizenship in Japan?*
PURPOSES

- Brief introduction on characteristics of welfare reforms in 2010’s
- Analysing impact of welfare reforms by focusing on welfare conditionality
- Discussions over future nature of citizenship in JAPAN
Viewpoint:
“Welfare Conditionality (WC)”

- Traditional form of WC in Japan:
  - less universalistic benefits
  - weak state responsibility for care services
→Less supportive, highly conditional
  
Increase in those excluded (both institutionally and socially)

- How will this situation be changed by recent welfare reforms?
What is the content of ongoing welfare reforms?

1) Act on Services and Supports for People in Need (2015)
   - Establishing “the secondary safety-net”
     - covering low income households as well as those on public assistance
   - Strengthening personal support for people in need
     - providing careful, detailed, and inclusive supports according to individual’s needs and circumstances
     - applying a “staying-close-beside” approach
What is the content of ongoing welfare reforms in Japan?


- Structuring local community as a base of comprehensive care system
  - providing integrated public supports against individual / family’s multiple problems
  - encouraging the people living in a community to cooperate with each other “on their own initiative”

- Realising inclusive local community as a result
ANALYSIS: Has the form of WC been changed?

- **Supports improved** qualitatively and quantitatively
- Not-oppressive, **consensus-building approach** for continuous relationship
- Sanctions exist, but **rarely executed**

Form of WC has been changed

- Positive impacts on recipients will be expected but....Are there any matters of concern?
DISCUSSION: A Road to inclusive Society based on republican citizenship?

- Formation of republican citizenship from above?
  - Apparently not. It would be rather a system of **mutual-duty** among the citizen.

- Concern over excess inclusiveness: “bulimia” (Young 2007)
  - people could be excluded more harshly once they can’t meet govt’s expectation / proposal.
DISCUSSION: Agency, Autonomy, and Nudge

- What enables such an excess inclusiveness?
  → WC as “Nudge” (Thaler and Sunstein 2008)
  -- Expertise of behavioural economics applied to implementation of Social Policy
  -- people mostly accept government’s proposal

- In such circumstances, what does it mean by “agency”?

- A conventional view on individual autonomy in social policy should be also reexamined.
CONCLUSION

- Recent welfare reforms has been changing configuration of WC in Japan.
- New WC may promote social inclusion
  → But... lack of guarantee of citizens’ rights and excess inclusiveness should be concerned.
- WC as “Nudge” and its consequence
  → Reexamination on “agency” and “autonomy” might be a new question for social policy.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION
REFERENCES (partly)