RESEARCH NOTES

Globalization and the Street Homeless in Metro Manila

New types of homeless people have emerged simultaneously in cities around the world. In cities of industrial countries the numbers of the "new homeless" have increased since the 1980s (Baumohl 1996; Aoki 2006). In cities of developing countries the numbers of the "street homeless" have also increased since the end of the 1990s (Levinson 2004). According to a professor of São Paulo University, who studies homelessness in Brazil, the numbers of street homeless in São Paulo increased in the 1990s and reached more than 100,000 people at the beginning of the 2000s (interview with Professor Maria Cecilia Loschiard Dos Santos, 15 August, 2001). Government officers, NGO activists, and social scientists whom I interviewed (Sept. 2006 to March 2007) said that the numbers of the street homeless are increasing in Metro Manila. There have been many street homeless in the past but their ranks are increasing rapidly now. A writer calls them the permanent and visible homeless in contrast with the squatter homeless (Padilla 2000, 5–6). The street homeless are becoming noticeable everywhere in the urban center. "They can be seen with their push carts along the seawall, on the sidewalks, under bridges and flyovers, in the middle of traffic islands, on the empty streets at night, on the lawns of cathedrals and in parks" (ibid.).

However, the street homeless have not attracted people's attention so far because their existence has been overwhelmed by the large-scale squatter problem. The problem of the street homeless has not been constructed as a *social problem* in the Philippines. Therefore, except for works on street children, there are few government reports and academic papers about them. However, even if such is the situation, we have to begin to study the street homeless because their existence will be an increasingly serious social problem.

Toward an Operational Definition

There are theoretical and operational problems about the definition of the street homeless. How can we distinguish the street homeless from the people who work on the streets and sleep at their houses at night? How can we distinguish the street homeless from the squatter homeless? What is a shelter or a house? Even though these definitional problems exist, we can insist that the street homeless are becoming a peculiar social group in Metro Manila.

How many street homeless are there in Metro Manila? We can only make inferences. The Department of Social Welfare and Development estimates that there are 50,000 to 70,000 street children in Metro Manila (Maligalig 2004, 10). Most street children live with their families on the streets. A staff member of the Jose Fabella Center (JFC), one of the public

accommodation units for the street homeless managed by the Mandaluyong City government, said that almost all children who were accommodated in their center had parents (interview with Ms. Manuela M. Loza, 4 Dec. 2006). Moreover, a short technical report made by the JFC points out that 61.4 percent of the 2,799 people who were accommodated in the first half of 2006 were street homeless who lived alone (JFC 2006). Based on these data, we can infer roughly but surely that there are much more than 100,000 street homeless, including street children, in Metro Manila.

Administrative officers and researchers told me that it is impossible to count the numbers of street homeless because they always move and have no permanent place where they sleep. However, most sleep constantly in some general area because it is hard for them to look for new safe places to sleep on a daily basis. Therefore, it is possible to count their numbers at least roughly, as we have done in Japan. It may be the job of the local government to get an accurate estimate. Certainly, it is not easy to discern the street homeless from the people who work on the streets but actually have their own houses and from the squatter homeless. But we can solve this problem by coming up with an operational definition of the street homeless.

Who are the street homeless? As far as I observed the people who were on the streets at the main points of Metro Manila and talked with some of them, the street homeless are composed of the following people: people working on the streets who have been evicted from squatter areas, who recently arrived from the provinces, ethnic minority groups of people who work as seasonal laborers, and street children and their families. There is some overlap between these categories, which also include the non-street homeless. Keeping this in mind, a tentative definition of the street homeless may be given as follows: *the street homeless are people who do not have permanent and fixed houses, who do not have relatives with whom they can live, and who live alone or in a family unit on the streets*.

Where are the street homeless? The street homeless have to find on the streets the basic necessities of life in order to survive. The places where they can find such necessities surely and at anytime are the places where many people gather and where goods circulate all the time. As far as I observed, the places where many street homeless sleep and live are Quiapo, Santa Ana, Cubao, Baclaran, Malate, Divisoria, Navotas, Luneta/Rizal Park, North Cemetery, and so on. There are many street homeless who were former squatter residents near squatter areas, who came from the provinces recently and who stay near long-distance bus terminals such as those in Baclaran and Cubao, who have stayed for many months or years in the Luneta/Rizal Park and North Cemetery, and many street children and their families in downtown areas such as Quiapo and Malate.

We can offer a summary picture of the street homeless based on the characteristics found in the JFC report mentioned above. The accommodated people were composed of various street homeless such as wanderers, beggars, and victims of squatter eviction. Males

comprised almost two-thirds of those people. They were distributed over a broad age hierarchy from infants to those with advanced ages. Similarly, the civil status of the accommodated people ranged from single to the widowed. The Sidewalk Operation Group of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority found some of them at the metropolitan central areas while others were found at the neighboring areas. And they were persuaded to go to the center. Many street homeless were former squatters who had been evicted from squatter areas, who rejected to go to relocation sites, and who came back from the relocation sites. Finally, they supported themselves by working as vendors, scavengers, car watchers, "barkers," beggars, and so on, and sometimes through illegal activities as snatchers, pickpockets, drug sellers, and prostitutes. The big three jobs of the street homeless are vendor, scavenger, and beggar, each of which can be divided into further subgroups. (A more in-depth analysis of the street homeless in Metro Manila is presented in Aoki 2008.)

Globalization and the Street Homeless

Why have the numbers of the street homeless in Metro Manila increased recently? We can obtain a clue from globalization theory. The emergence of the new homeless in industrialized countries has been analyzed in many studies by using "globalization" as a key concept, such as in the analyses of the new homeless in the United States (Koegel, Burman, and Baumohl 1996) and of the *nozyukusya* (homeless) in Japan (Aoki 2003). The concept of globalization has also been used in the analysis of the new marginality in Mexico (Castells 1983) and of other developing countries' homeless people (Levinson 2004). It may be said that globalization theory is one of the most influential ones to explain the relationship between globalization and homelessness.

How about the case of Metro Manila? The increase of the street homeless in Metro Manila can be explained by globalization theory at least partly. But we have two theoretical problems to be solved before we apply it to Metro Manila. First, is Metro Manila a global city? What is a global city? Second, in what process was Metro Manila globalized? What economic and political conditions prescribed by the economic history of the Philippines were there behind it? These questions have to be answered. But it is not our purpose to answer these questions here. Keeping this in mind, we ask why globalization has resulted in the increase of the street homeless in Metro Manila. An answer may be found in a process that itself is composed of four sub-processes, which function and relate to each other as discussed below.

Globalization has resulted in the expansion of the service economy, which has increased the life chances of the street homeless. First, because of the increase in business facilities, convenience stores, family restaurants, and the like in Metro Manila, life resources (such as scrap) on which the street homeless survive have increased. The opportunity for the street homeless to beg money has increased, too. This is the first pull factor that attracts poor people to the streets. Second, the expansion of the service economy has increased job

chances on the street such as those of vendors, scavengers, barkers, and carriers. Moreover, it has brought various new occupations, such as cleaner, sandwich man, car watcher, errand boy, and others, the poor could engage in with only a small equity capital and without any special knowledge and skills. These livelihood conditions have augmented the life chances of the street homeless, and form the second pull factor that draws the poor to the streets.

Globalization has brought about the informalization of labor, the flexibilization of labor, and the contractualization of employment in the Philippines (Sardaña 1998, 69–74). These trends have made workers' employment status unstable and have cut back real wages. They have worsened workers' livelihood conditions and strengthened the downward pressure on workers' status. This is the general background in which poor people became homeless. It constitutes the first push factor that drives the poor to the streets. This is particularly the case among those who do not have any safety net coming from relatives or friends.

Globalization has accelerated land redevelopment (Payot 2004,11). The market for real estate has expanded. Unused and abandoned lands have been redeveloped, and the gentrification of the inner city has proceeded. Government policies, such as on the privatization of public land, the improvement of dangerous areas, and the beautification of streets, have accelerated these processes too. As a result, the eviction of squatter settlements in the inner city has taken place. People who were not given residential lots, who rejected to transfer to relocation sites, and who returned from their relocation sites to Metro Manila have increased. Among them, people who did not have any relatives to rely on have stayed on the streets. *The biggest part of the street homeless is made up of former squatter residents*. This makes up the second push factor that forces the poor to go to the streets.

Globalization has brought on the financial crises of the government, which has been forced to cut down on expenditures. As a result, government could not achieve the purpose of its policies for the poor sufficiently. Firstly, it could not improve the unemployment situation. The unemployment rate of Metro Manila was 17.8 percent in 2000, 17.1 percent in 2003, and 17.2 percent in 2006 (NSCB 2007, 11–14). This situation can be seen as exerting a strong pressure on the poor people. Secondly, the government could not enforce the housing policy for poor people sufficiently. Only a few of the squatter people who had been evicted from squatter areas were given residential lots in relocation sites (Karaos and Payot 2006, 83). Thirdly, there has not been any fully articulated policy on employment and welfare targeted at the street homeless. There are no measures to assist the street homeless worthy of special mention, except emergency aid for medical treatment and six small temporary accommodation units in Metro Manila. All these policies have not been able to stop the poor from becoming street homeless.

Understanding Poverty
This research note is an initial interpretation of the processes through which globalization

breeds the street homeless in Metro Manila. The street homeless are formed as a social stratum through processes in which push and pull factors operate in tandem. The street homeless are the *symbolic* and *representative* product of globalization. The emergence of the street homeless, from which we can draw many theoretical implications, informs us that the conditions of labor and housing of the people at the bottom of the urban hierarchy are changing. Therefore, the causes and the character of poverty in the Philippines are changing too. The study of the street homeless gives us a clear-cut opportunity to understand what this change means.

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