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Urban Migrants in Rural Japan

Between Agency and Anomie in a Post-growth Society

A virtual *u:japan* lecture by Susanne Klien



Thursday
2022-03-17
Lunch Lecture
12:30~14:00



<https://japanologie.univie.ac.at/ujapanlectures>



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Rural areas have generally been associated with stagnation, depopulation and lack of perspectives. In my book, published by SUNY Press in 2020, I aim to radically rethink the stereotype image of countryside in Japan and beyond. Drawing on nine years of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork across the country, I argue that the Lehman Shock in 2008, the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 and increasingly harsh conditions of the job market have set the path for a new role of rural areas as experimental grounds for innovative projects. I will focus on three themes that feature in the book. I will introduce selected narratives by urban newcomers to show the paradox between aspiration to a better work-life-balance and the reality of persistent overwork and (self-)exploitation.

Second, I will discuss changes in the way rural Japan has recently been presented in various media. Third, I will examine entrepreneurial projects and discuss how budding entrepreneurs negotiate their daily lives between self-determination and structural constraints. Last, I will reflect on fieldwork in rural Japan during the pandemic and the insights I have obtained through follow-up interviews with my interlocutors in 2021.

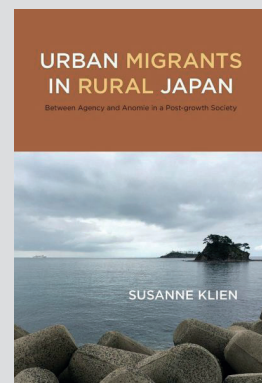
More details about the book:

<http://www.sunypress.edu/p-6846-urban-migrants-in-rural-japan.aspx>

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Susanne Klien (PhD, University of Vienna) is Associate Professor at the Modern Japanese Studies Program, Hokkaido University. Her main research interests include transnational lifestyle migration, intangible cultural heritage, regional revitalization and emerging forms of tourism, demographic change and alternative forms of living and working in post-growth Japan. Her monograph *Urban Migrants in Rural Japan: Between Agency and Anomie in a Post-growth Society* (State University of New York Press 2020) was awarded the 2020 Choice Outstanding Academic Title. She recently co-edited a special issue on the theme of *Exploring Rural Japan as Heterotopia* with Paul S. Hansen in *Asian Anthropology* (2022).



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