



Instagramming the Countryside:

Social media and demographic change in rural Japan

Cornelia Reiher (Free University Berlin)

October 16, 2025

17:30-19:00

**Room 301, Building 10,
Sophia University**

In person only

No registration necessary

Cornelia Reiher is a professor of Japanese Studies at Freie Universität Berlin and PI of the research project "Urban-rural migration and rural revitalization in Japan" that was funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). Her main research interests include rural Japan, food studies, migration and digitalization. Her recent publications include the virtual special issue Urban-rural migration in Japan and Europe from a transnational and comparative perspectives in the *Journal of Rural Studies* (2024). Cornelia is also the editor of a blog on urban-rural migration in Japan that started in 2021: <https://userblogs.fu-berlin.de/urban-rural-migration-japan/>

Against the backdrop of a shrinking population and the decline of agriculture and local economies in rural Japan, local and central governments have launched initiatives to encourage city dwellers to move to rural areas. While authorities often utilize more traditional online and offline media, rural residents and urban-rural migrants have increasingly used social media to showcase and promote diverse rural lifestyles. This representation of rural areas attracts urbanites to move to the countryside, creates real-life connections and community and provides young creatives with employment. Based on online and offline fieldwork between 2018 and 2023, my presentation explores how residents in rural Kyushu use Instagram to negotiate rural lifestyles and community. I will show that Instagram not only represents rural Japan, but also produces new rural lifestyles and communities. The focus on rural change and the ways in which rural residents engage with Instagram from a qualitative and hybrid perspective, offers valuable insights into how social media is reshaping rural communities, lifestyles and urban-rural migration in contemporary Japan.

This event is organized by Megha Wadhwa (Assistant Professor, Department of English Studies, Sophia University).

