



September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018, 18:30h

## Shrinking but Happy?

**Investigating the Interplay of Social and Individual-Level Predictors of Well-Being in Rural Japanese Communities**

Dionyssios Askitis, University of Vienna

Rural communities in Japan have been facing accelerating structural and demographic decline in recent decades. Yet, there is limited evidence on how these challenges impact communities and the quality of life of their inhabitants in Japan. Much of the available international data shows that rural municipalities report higher subjective well-being than urban areas despite being affected by greater structural decline in objective well-being indices.

Considering the strength of social networks documented in these types of communities as well as studies showing largely beneficial effects of social networks on well-being in general, the findings warrant further investigation into the role of social capital in the apparent persistence of rural happiness. Meanwhile, both the degree of social participation and subjective well-being have been closely linked to the individual level, particularly the personality factor extraversion, pointing toward a possible interaction effect.

This presentation will introduce a comprehensive, multidimensional approach to well-being, sensitive to individual and 'Japanese' constructions of happiness, and provide tentative insights into well-being in the rural Japanese town of Aso, Kumamoto Prefecture, which is average in terms of its demographic and economic situation.

*Dionyssios Askitis is a PhD student at the Department of East Asian Studies at the University of Vienna with a background in Clinical Psychology and Japanese Studies. As part of the interdisciplinary DOC-team on "Social Capital and Well-being in Declining Regions" funded by the Austrian Academy of Sciences, he is investigating intersections of social and individual-level predictors of well-being in Aso, Kumamoto within the research cluster Aso 2.0: Regional Well-Being in Japan at the University of Vienna.*

### About:

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### Venue:

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