

Dr. Sebastian Polak-Rottmann

born: 13.09.1990

nationality: Austrian

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educational background

Dr. phil. (2017-2022, Japanese Studies, University of Vienna, with distinction)

supervisors: Prof. Dr. Wolfram Manzenreiter (Dep. of East Asian Studies, University of Vienna) and Prof. Dr. Birgit Sauer (Dep. of Political Science, University of Vienna)

M.A. (2017-2022, Japanese Studies, University of Vienna, with distinction)

supervisor: Prof. Dr. Wolfram Manzenreiter (Dep. of East Asian Studies, University of Vienna)

B.A. (2011-2016, Political Science, University of Vienna)

B.A. (2010-2013, Japanese Studies, University of Vienna, with distinction)

Junior & Senior High School GRG23 Vienna (2001-2009, "Matura" with distinction)

academic positions

since 2025 principal researcher and head of research cluster "Sustainability" (German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tokyo)

2022-2025 senior research fellow (German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tokyo)

2019-2022 research fellow (Dep. of East Asian Studies, University of Vienna)

2018-2019 research assistant ("Praedoc", Dep. of East Asian Studies, University of Vienna)

2017-2018 lecturer (Dep. of East Asian Studies, University of Vienna)

2015-2016 tutor (Dep. of East Asian Studies, University of Vienna)

2009-2010 civilian service at the Geologischen Bundesanstalt Vienna (GBA)

grants

09.2019 – 08.2022: DOC-team Stipendium, Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW)

07.2016 – 08.2016: Kurzfristiges wissenschaftliches Auslandsstipendium (KWA), University of Vienna

teaching

Department of Sociology, Sophia University:

2026 (winter term): Resilience and future of Japanese rural communities (BA)

2025 (winter term): Resilience and future of Japanese rural communities (BA)

Japanese Studies, University of Vienna:

2022 (summer term): Qualitative Analysis of Japanese Research Data for Social Sciences (BA & MA)

2021 (winter term): Qualitative Field Research in Aso/Japan: Theory and Practice (BA & MA)

2021 (winter term): Aso Winter Field School (BA & MA)

2021 (summer term): Basic Training in Research and Paper Writing II (BA)

2020 (winter term): Basic training in research and paper writing I (BA)

2019 (winter term): Basic training in research and paper writing I (BA)

2019 (summer term): Scientific Writing in Japanese Studies (BA)

2018 (summer term): Preparation for / Follow-up to the practical training/internship (BA)

2018 (summer term): Introduction to Japanese Studies - Preparatory Course for the StEOP-examination

2017 (summer term): Intercultural Learning (BA)

2017 (summer term): Introduction to Japanese Studies - Preparatory Course for the StEOP-examination

fieldwork in Japan

2025 June: fieldwork in Takamori and Minamiaso (Kumamoto) on resilience

2025 January: short fieldwork trip to Noto Peninsula focusing on resilience

2023 December: fieldwork in Okutama (Tokyo) on resilience

2023 June: fieldwork in Chizu (Tottori) on resilience

2022 February: online fieldwork in the Aso region on the COVID pandemic

2020 March: fieldwork in the Aso region on rural well-being

2019 summer: fieldwork in the Aso region on rural well-being

2018 autumn: fieldwork in the Aso region on rural well-being

2018 February: fieldwork in the Aso region on rural well-being

books and edited volumes

2024: *Wie politische Partizipation Freude bereiten kann: Sechs Dimensionen des subjektiven Wohlbefindens politisch handelnder Personen im ländlichen Japan*. Munich: Iudicium.

2023: *Research into Japanese society: Reflections from three projects involving students as researchers during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Vienna: Abteilung für Japanologie, Institut für Ostasienwissenschaften, Universität Wien. (with Antonia Miserka)

2020: *Japan's New Ruralities: Coping with Decline in the Periphery*. New York: Routledge. (with Wolfram Manzenreiter and Ralph Lützeler)

2020: *Wiener Selektion japanologischer Methoden: Jahrgang 2020*. Wien: Abt. für Japanologie des Inst. für Ostasienwiss. der Univ. Wien. (with Christina Gmeinbauer and Florian Purkarthofer)

articles (peer-reviewed)

(revision submitted): "From *ibasho* to resilience – Conceptualizing places of community-based care in two rural Japanese communities", *The Asia-Pacific Journal - Japan Focus*

2026 (accepted): "Flexible Problemlöser in der sozialen Wohlfahrt: Eine Fallstudie zum Management von Freiwilligenzentren in Japan und zu deren Beitrag zur gemeinschaftlichen Resilienz", David Chiavacci and Iris Wieczorek (eds.): *Japan 2026: Politik, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. München: Iudicum. (with Sigrid Haunberger)

2025: "*Yorokonde Morau*: The Shared Well-being Experience of Making Others Happy (and Feeling Happy Because of It)", *Social Science Japan Journal* 28/2. (with Dionyssios Askitis)

2024: "Happiness as a by-product – the impact of civic engagement on women's well-being in rural Japan", *Japan Forum*, 1–29. https://doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2024.2407780. (with Antonia Miserka)

2024: "Community-Based Care During COVID-19: Balancing Social Distancing and Social Care in Rural Japan – The Case of the Aso Region", *The Asia-Pacific Journal - Japan Focus*, 22/3/5. (with Hanno Jentzsch)

2021: "Of Dying Machines and Grievable Digital Lives: Framing War and Life in NieR:Automata", *Asien: The German Journal on Contemporary Asia* 158/159, 11–33. (with Christina Gmeinbauer)

2018: "The safest country in the world? Notions of risk and security in the Japanese private security industry", *Vienna Journal of East Asian Studies* 10, 83–106.

2018: "Das Ende des »Mythos« des sicheren Japans: Das Sicherheitsgefühl aus Sicht der japanischen privaten Sicherheitsindustrie", David Chiavacci and Iris Wieczorek (eds.): *Japan 2018: Politik, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. München: Iudicum, 211–241.

articles (not peer-reviewed)

2026: "農村地域にはコミュニカティブ・スペースが必要。ドイツと日本における現在の課題", Claudia Neu, Norio Okada, Sebastian Polak-Rottmann and Yoshiyuki Yama (eds.): 地方のためのコミュニカティブ・スペース。ドイツと日本の地方におけるコミュニティ強化のコンセプトと事例. Nishinomiya: Kwansei Gakuin University, 2–11. (translated by Nami Uchiyama)

2026: "レジリエンスの場。日本の地方におけるコミュニカティブ・スペースの形成と、耐性と適応力を備えたコミュニティの創出に関する考察", Claudia Neu, Norio Okada, Sebastian Polak-Rottmann and Yoshiyuki Yama (eds.): 地方のためのコミュニカティブ・スペース。ドイツと日本の地方におけるコミュニティ強化のコンセプトと事例. Nishinomiya: Kwansei Gakuin University, 41–51. (translated by Sanatsu Itaya)

2025: "Orte der Resilienz: Wo die Gestaltung von kommunikativen Orten zu widerstands- und anpassungsfähigen Gemeinschaften im ländlichen Japan führt", Claudia Neu, Norio Okada, Sebastian Polak-Rottmann and Yoshiyuki Yama (eds.): *Kommunikative Orte für ländliche Räume: Konzepte und Praxisbeispiele zur Stärkung der lokalen Gemeinschaft aus Deutschland und Japan*. Göttingen: Göttingen University, 34–41.

2025: “Ländliche Räume brauchen kommunikative Orte”, Claudia Neu, Norio Okada, Sebastian Polak-Rottmann and Yoshiyuki Yama (eds.): *Kommunikative Orte für ländliche Räume: Konzepte und Praxisbeispiele zur Stärkung der lokalen Gemeinschaft aus Deutschland und Japan*. Göttingen: Göttingen University, 10–19. (with Claudia Neu, Norio Okada and Yoshiyuki Yama)

2025: “Age positive: Wie Japan dem demografischen Wandel begegnet”, *Die Architekt* 2025/4. (with Ami Ogawa, Jorge Almazan and Marco Capitano)

2025: “Community Resilience and the Noto Peninsula Earthquake – Observations of a three-day trip to the disaster area”, *Sustainability in Japan and beyond*. https://sustainability.hypotheses.org/358

2023: “Being active and sharing happy moments: exploring the relationship of political participation and subjective well-being”, *Asian Anthropology*, 22/4, 293–297.

2023: “Rural spaces, remote methods—the virtual Aso Winter Field School 2022”, Sebastian Polak-Rottmann and Antonia Miserka (eds.): *Research into Japanese society: Reflections from three projects involving students as researchers during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Vienna: Abteilung für Japanologie, Institut für Ostasienwissenschaften, Universität Wien, 63–78. (with Hanno Jentzsch)

2023: “Cosmopolitan rurality and changing life in rural Japan – A discussion with John W. Traphagan and Sebastian Polak-Rottmann”, Sebastian Polak-Rottmann and Antonia Miserka (eds.): *Research into Japanese society: Reflections from three projects involving students as researchers during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Vienna: Abteilung für Japanologie, Institut für Ostasienwissenschaften, Universität Wien, 187–210. (with John W. Traphagan)

2023: “Gute Orte für das Alter: Bestandsrevitalisierung für eine kommunenbasierte Altenpflege”, *Architheses*, 4.2023, 18-23. (with Victoria Schweyer and Jana Wunderlich)

2021: “Exploring Rural Well-Being through an Interdisciplinary Lens: The ‘Shrinking, but Happy’ Research Team at the University of Vienna”, *Asien: The German Journal on Contemporary Asia* 158/159, 161–176. (with Dionyssios Askitis and Antonia Miserka)

2020: “Security for the Tokyo Olympics”, Barbara Holthus, Isaac Gagné, Wolfram Manzenreiter, and Franz Waldenberger (eds.): *Japan Through the Lens of the Tokyo Olympics*. New York: Routledge, 130–135.

2020: “Methodenmix: Ein interdisziplinäres Forschungsprojekt zu Wohlbefinden im ländlichen Japan”, Christina Gmeinbauer, Sebastian Polak-Rottmann, and Florian Purkarthofer (eds.): *Wiener Selektion japanologischer Methoden*: Jahrgang 2020. Wien: Abt. für Japanologie des Inst. für Ostasienwiss. der Univ. Wien, 65–87. (with Antonia Miserka and Dionyssios Askitis)

2020: “Epilogue: Think global, act peripheral in Japan’s new ruralities”, Wolfram Manzenreiter, Ralph Lützeler, and Sebastian Polak-Rottmann (eds.): *Japan’s New Ruralities: Coping with Decline in the Periphery*. NewYork: Routledge, 295–301. (with Ralph Lützeler and Wolfram Manzenreiter)

2020: “Introduction: Japan’s new ruralities”, Wolfram Manzenreiter, Ralph Lützeler, and Sebastian Polak-Rottmann (eds.): *Japan’s New Ruralities: Coping with Decline in the Periphery*. New York: Routledge, 1–24. (with Ralph Lützeler and Wolfram Manzenreiter)

2018: “Interview: Feldforschung in Aso”, *Minikomi Informationen des Akademischen Arbeitskreises Japan* 87, 53–58.

book reviews

2025: Book review of 『アクションリサーチという問い』: ポジショナリティ 、 Zeitgeist 、 そして「失敗」に関する一考察, *Sonken nenpō* 31/2, 30–34.

2024: “Hokkaido Dairy Farm: Cosmopolitics of Otherness and Security on the Frontiers of Japan: Paul Hansen, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2024, xii, 304 pp. + index, ISBN 978-1-43849-647-4 hb, https://sunypress.edu/Books/H/Hokkaido-Dairy-Farm.” *Japanese Studies*, 44/2, 260–262.

2021: “Cosmopolitan rurality, depopulation, and entrepreneurial ecosystems in 21st-century Japan: by John W. Traphagan, Amherst, Cambria Press, 2020, 296 pp., USD 109.99 (hardcover), ISBN: 9781621965022”, *Contemporary Japan: Journal of the German Institute for Japanese Studies Tokyo.*

2020: “In Heisei angekommen – eine Rezension zu Local political participation in Japan: A case study of Oita”, *Minikomi: Austrian Journal of Japanese Studies* 88, 68–73.

translations

2025: Translation of Yoshiyuki Yama: “Initiativen zur Gemeindeentwicklung in Japans entvölkerten Gebieten. Kollaborative Ethnografie und der Versuch eines philosophischen Cafés als kommunikativer Ort”, Claudia Neu, Norio Okada, Sebastian Polak-Rottmann and Yoshiyuki Yama (eds.): *Kommunikative Orte für ländliche Räume: Konzepte und Praxisbeispiele zur Stärkung der lokalen Gemeinschaft aus Deutschland und Japan*. Göttingen: Göttingen University, 66–73.

2025: Translation of Norio Okada: “Raumdesign als Ziel der Revitalisierungsinitiative Japan 1/0. Wie durch die Begegnung mit anderen gemeinsam ein kommunikativer Raum geschaffen wird ”, Claudia Neu, Norio Okada, Sebastian Polak-Rottmann and Yoshiyuki Yama (eds.): *Kommunikative Orte für ländliche Räume: Konzepte und Praxisbeispiele zur Stärkung der lokalen Gemeinschaft aus Deutschland und Japan*. Göttingen: Göttingen University, 48–55.

paper presentations at international conferences

“Redefining Decline through Sustainable Food Production” (poster presentation), *DWIH conference on Sustainable Consumption and Production* (Tokyo, Dec. 1 2025).

“Caring Communities and Assistive Technology in Japan.”, *Workshop: Co-Design of Socio-Technical Innovations for Community Care.* (Tokyo, Oct. 10 2025; with Franz Waldenberger)

“Supplementing Activities Of Resilience In Rural Japan – Designing Places That Enhance Disaster Risk Management”, *The 15th International Conference of IDRiM Society*. (Samos, Sep. 30 2025)

“Orte der Resilienz schaffen – Wie sozialer Austausch in Zeiten demografischen Wandels möglich gemacht wird”, *Japanologentag 2025*. (Frankfurt, Aug. 22 2025)

“Community-Based Integrated Care in Japan: A case for social innovation”, *SASE 2025*. (Montreal, Jul. 12 2025)

“Sharing happiness with others: Exploring rural perspectives on well-being in Austria and Japan”, *Austrian Pavilion at the EXPO 2025*. (Osaka. Jun. 26 2025).

“Institutional innovations – Japan’s community based integrated care system.”, *Addressing the Aging Challenge in Europe and Japan - Insights from the INNOVCARE Project.* (Tokyo, Jun. 20 2025, with Franz Waldenberger)

“山村の変化と政治—現代日本の地域の日常で見える市民参加” (Change and politics in rural villages – Political participation in everyday life in contemporary Japanese regions), 日本村落研究学会第 72 回（2024 年度）大会 (*72th Conference of The Japanese Association for Rural Studies*) (Ryukyu Univ., Nov. 30 2024)

“Redefining rural life: Discussing sustainability in Japan’s countryside in times of population decline”, *VSJF Annual Conference 2024* (Berlin, Nov. 16 2024)

"From well-being to spaces of resilience in the Aso region", *Aso 2.0 and beyond: Reflections on a decade of rural well-being research in Japan*. (Vienna, Nov. 1 2024)

"Between ibasho and resilience: Creating spaces for older people in two rural Japanese communities", *International Symposium on Global Aging and Diversity: Counter-Hegemonic Narratives of Aging: Identity, Space, and Belonging.* (Kyoto, Oct. 6 2024)

"少子高齢化とレジリエンスを築き上げる活動の「場」 (Demographic decline and the creation of places of resilience)", 日本村落研究学会大会 (*Conference of The Japanese Association for Rural Studies*) (Yasugi, 2 Dec. 2023)

"Considering Games as Research Frameworks: Game Design as a Method of Knowledge Production in the Case of Resilience of Rural Communities in Japan", *7th Annual Global Creative Industries Conference* (Kobe, 11. Nov. 2023, with Christina Polak-Rottmann)

"Acting in concert, rather than swimming against the current. Everyday life and political participation in rural Japan", *EAJS 2023* (Ghent, 18 Aug. 2023)

„Yorokonde morau – über den Zusammenhang zwischen politischer Partizipation und Wohlbefinden im ländlichen Japan", *18. Deutschsprachiger Japanologentag* (online, 24.-26. Aug. 2022)

"Rural spaces, digital methods: A remote perspective on social welfare provision in Aso", *31st JAWS Conference: Research on Japan in the (Post-)COVID-19 Era* (Barcelona, 6.-9. Jul. 2022, with Hanno Jentzsch)

"'Yorokonde moraete, yokatta' – Seiji sanka to shukan-teki kōfukukan no kankei ni kanshite shitsu-teki chōsa no kekka happyō", *Nihon Chiiki Seisaku Gakkai* (online, 25.-26. Jun. 2022)

"From 'Hornless Cows' to 'Heroines' of Rural Japan - A Study on Women's Engagement in Community Matters", *EAJS 2021 - 16th International Conference of the European Association for Japanese Studies* (online, 28. Aug. 2021, with Antonia Miserka)

"Vulnerable Machines—Negotiating Non-Human Life in NieR:Automata and Detroit: Become Human", *Replaying Japan 2021* (online, 10. Aug. 2021, with Christina Gmeinbauer)

"The Impact of Rural Landscapes on Subjective Well-being - The Case of the Aso Region", *Association of Rural Planning International Seminar* (online, 27. Feb. 2021, with Antonia Miserka)

"Uncertainty as a Crossroads for Reinterpreting Subjective Well-Being - The Case of the Aso Region in Japan", *12th Annual CUHK Anthropology Postgraduate Student Forum* (online, 29. Jan. 2021, with Antonia Miserka)

"Yorokonde morau – Experiencing Well-being in Rural Japan by Making Others Happy", *16th EAJS Workshop for Doctoral Students* (online, 29. Oct. 2020)

"Contested Ruralities in Japan: Discussing (Well-)Being in Aso, Kumamoto", *Asia's New Ruralities* (online, 12. Aug. 2020, with Stefan Hundsdorfer and Dionyssios Askitis)

"'Shrinking, but Happy': Combining Differing Qualitative Approaches on Well-being Research in the Aso Region (Kumamoto), *Kankyô Seisaku Bunkakai* (online, 11. Jun. 2020, with Antonia Miserka)

"Beyond Causality: How Subjective Well-being Shapes Political Participation in Rural Japan. A Case Study of Aso, Kumamoto", *Ritsumeikan International Postgraduate and Academic Conference* (Kyoto, 21. Feb. 2020)

"Participating is Fun: Local Political Participation and Subjective Well-being in Rural Japan", *JAWS Workshop 2019* (Aarhus, 16. Apr. 2019)

„Japans passive Landbevölkerung? Eine Betrachtung der Vorstellungen von politischer Partizipation und Demokratie in der Aso-Region in Kumamoto", *17. Deutschsprachiger Japanologentag* (Berlin, 30. Aug. 2018)

administrative tasks in academia

editor of research blog *Sustainability in Japan and beyond* (since Mar 2025)

leader of the multidisciplinary research cluster "Sustainability in Japan" (since Jan 2025)

organisation of international workshop on doing fieldwork in rural and urban spaces (Sep 2025, University of Vienna)

chair of ethnology section at the *Japanologentag 2025* (with Anna-Maria Stabentheiner)

organisation of international workshop on town-making adaptive governance (Jan 2025, DIJ)

representative of the employed staff at the German Institute for Japanese Studies (Jun 2024–Nov 2026)

organisation of international workshop on communicative spaces in rural Japan (Dec 2023, DIJ)

organisation of international workshop on happiness studies (Mar 2019, University of Vienna)

organisation of international conference VSJF 2017 (Nov 2017, University of Vienna)

editorship of five volumes

memberships in academic associations

JAWS (Japan Anthropology Workshop)

Nihon Sonraku Kenkyu Gakkai

EAJS (European Association for Japanese Studies)

IDRiM Society

Nishi Nihon Shakai Gakkai

AAJ (Akademischer Arbeitskreis Japan)