



DIJ Forum

Thursday, 9 April 2024, 18.30 – 20.00 (JST)

Moving to rural Japan – Film Screening and Discussion

Sonja Blaschke, freelance journalist

Tomoo Matsuda, Mitsubishi Research Institute

Japan's regions have been challenged by demographic decline and an aging population for some decades. Despite or even because of these challenges, a small number of people from urban centres of the country decide to move to rural areas. This DIJ Forum combines two different perspectives on migration patterns from urban to rural Japan. Filmmaker Sonja Blaschke introduces her film *Reisfeld statt Tokio* (in German, with English subtitles; 30min), highlighting the story of a young urban woman and her new lifestyle in a small village in the mountains of rural Japan. Tomoo Matsuda then introduces cases of urban professionals who decide to live temporarily or permanently in Japan's countryside. Challenging the traditional pattern of migration to the nation's capital, he illustrates the concept of "gyaku-sankin kōtai", exploring the merits of moving to rural areas.

Sonja BLASCHKE is a multilingual freelance journalist, online news editor, guidebook author and TV producer from Germany based in Japan. She reports mostly about East Asia, especially Japan and Taiwan. In 2022, she directed her first TV documentary *Reisfeld statt Tokio* (Rice Fields Instead of Tokyo) about young people moving from Tokyo to a remote mountain village to take up rice farming.

Tomoo MATSUDA is a research director at the Mitsubishi Research Institute (MRI) in Tokyo, focusing on active aging and local vitalization. He has been serving as advisor to many municipalities, including big cities and small towns. He proposes new rural lifestyles to urban employees – an approach he calls "gyaku-sankin kōtai" (<https://www.relation-ur.jp/>). He has been a visiting professor at Kochi University since 2014 and also serves as an advisor to Toyama city, Hamamatsu city, Isen town, and Otobe town.

The event will be held in English, admission is free. The film screening and presentation will be followed by a Q&A session and a small reception. To participate please register via email to forum@dijtokyo.org.

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