

Dr. Sebastian Polak-Rottmann

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education

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

title of thesis: “Über die Reziprozität des Freuens bei politischem Handeln: eine qualitative Untersuchung des Zusammenhangs von subjektivem Wohlbefinden und politischer Partizipation in der Aso-Region in Japan“

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)

reviewers: Prof. Dr. Gabriele Vogt (LMU Munich), Prof. Dr. Cornelia Reiher (FU Berlin)

M.A. (2013-2017, 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 senior research fellow 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:

2025 (fall, accepted): 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): Aso Winter Field School (BA & MA)
2021 (winter term): Qualitative Field Research in Aso/Japan: Theory and Practice (BA & MA)
2021 (summer term): Seminar with free topic (BA)
2020 (winter term): Seminar on uncertainty and the everyday life (BA)
2019 (winter term): Seminar on political participation (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 January: short fieldwork trip to Noto Peninsula (Ishikawa) 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 (Kumamoto) on the COVID pandemic
2020 March: fieldwork in the Aso region (Kumamoto) on rural well-being
2019 summer: fieldwork in the Aso region (Kumamoto) on rural well-being
2018 autumn: fieldwork in the Aso region (Kumamoto) on rural well-being
2018 February: fieldwork in the Aso region (Kumamoto) 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 Lützel)

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)

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 Wiczorek (eds.): *Japan 2018: Politik, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. München: Iudicium, 211–241.

articles (not peer-reviewed)

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", *Archithese*, 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: “Reden ist Silber, Zuhören ist Gold”: Durchführung und Analyse qualitativer Interviews in 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, – 127–155. (with Florian Purkarthofer)

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

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

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

book reviews

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.

reviews for journals

Asian Anthropology, Contemporary Japan, International Journal of Asian Studies, Mitigation and Adaption Strategies for Global Change, Voluntas, Asian Review

paper presentations at international conferences

“Sanson nohenka to seiji: Gendai nihon no chiiki no nichijō de mieru seiji sankā” (Change and politics in rural villages – Political participation in everyday life in contemporary Japanese regions), *Nihon sonraku ken'yū gakkai dai 72-kai (2024 nendo) taikai (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”, *V/SJF 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)

“Shōshikōreika to rejiriensu o kizuki ageru katsudō no ‘ba’” (Demographic decline and the creation of places of resilience), *Nihon sonraku ken'yū gakkai taikai (Conference of The Japanese Association for Rural Studies)* (Yasugi, Dec. 2 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”, *EAJIS 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 sankā 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”, *EAJIS 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 EAJIS 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)”, *Kankyō 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

head of “ethnology” section at the 19th [Japanologentag](#) (accepted; Aug 2025)

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

representative of the employed staff at the German Institute for Japanese Studies (since Jun 2024)

organisation of [philosophical cafés](#) for German-speaking people living in Tokyo (since Fall 2024)

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 three volumes (*Research into Japanese society: Reflections from three projects involving students as researchers during the COVID-19 pandemic* (Institut für Ostasienwissenschaften, 2023), *Japan's New Ruralities* (Routledge, 2020), *Wiener Selektion japanologischer Methoden* (Institut für Ostasienwissenschaften, 2020)

memberships in academic associations

JAWS (Japan Anthropology Workshop)

Nihon Sonraku Kenkyu Gakkai

EASJ (European Association for Japanese Studies)

IDRiM Society

Nishi Nihon Shakai Gakkai

AAJ (Austria-Japan Study Group for Humanities, Social Sciences and Art)