

Newsletter No. 4, July 2020

Warm greetings from Germany! I am currently back in my home town for private matters (mainly to give birth to my first child). I will stay in Europe for some months to conduct some field studies and hope to be able to provide you with exciting research results early next year. No one can foresee to what extent field work on regional revitalisation, which I plan to conduct in both Italy and Germany, will be possible, but I'll keep my fingers crossed all goes well over the next months.

With August around the corner, a quite unique term at KGU is about to finish. Nearly all classes have been conducted entirely online. Not only for the students, but also for the staff and faculty members, this was a completely new experience. Considering that the announcement to conduct online classes came at relatively short notice, the whole process went rather well, in my opinion. Students and professors alike got used to the new situation relatively quickly, and while some personal interaction would have been nice, I personally believe that this semester was a success in regard to students' academic achievements. With more time to find the best way to teach through modern media, I believe that online classes could even be a viable alternative to classes that require presence in the future.

The topic of online education is also highly interesting in the content of regional revitalisation, as many Japanese high school graduates leave their rural home town in order to pursue their higher education in a more metropolitan area. According to a survey from 2018, over 40 percent of young men who were considering moving to Tokyo did so in order to pursue their further education in the capital. This motivation was twice as pronounced as a wish to leave their home town and their parents behind. In other words, it is often not the desire to move away from the countryside or less urban that motivates young people to congregate in Tokyo, but rational choice, driven by the decision to receive outstanding education and thus hopefully good employment later.

If education was more decentralised, away from the big urban areas, or if more online courses were offered (including whole degrees completed online, requiring little or no presence at the actual campus), the exodus of young people from rural areas to densely populated centres could be reduced. Similarly, if more companies offered their employees to work (flexibly) from home, the need to move to Tokyo or other urban centres would often be considerably smaller.

While online education and home-office can, and will, never be the norm, it is important to think about how the Internet of Things could help support people from less urban areas to remain in their rural home towns. The recent developments around the Covid-19 pandemic have opened the eyes to many that personal face-to-face interaction might not always be necessary, and that working from home could not only be as efficient as working in an office, but that it is often also cheaper and more convenient for employers and employees alike. What is more, the possibility of working from home could enable many women currently outside the labour force to take up employment, contributing to GDP growth while increasing their family's disposable income.

I sincerely hope that we all learn from the corona pandemic, not only in terms of future infectious disease prevention, but also in regard to including the Internet, with its endless possibilities, more efficiently in our lives.

You will hear back from me at the end of September with more information about upcoming events. Due to my maternity leave, I will not be teaching next academic term. However, I will keep you updated about my recent research on rural development in Europe and, once bigger events resume again, about interesting opportunities for you to learn about regional revitalisation.

With the best wishes for your summer break,

Anna

Newsletter Subscribe <https://forms.gle/1nNGFcc8eZV9Kfdw7>

Newsletter Unsubscribe <https://forms.gle/qotYnqBpLDaTAneC9>