



Keynote 4

Island tourism in Japan: can the diversity of islands create diversity in tourism? (日本のアイランドツーリズム：島の多様性は刊行の多様性を生む出せるのか?)

Islands offer some of the most attractive destinations in worldwide tourism through their unique combination of natural and cultural factors. This holds especially true for “Southern” islands with their lure of eternal summer. In Japan, Okinawan islands certainly fall into this category. On the other hand, the countless other islands surrounding the “mainland” (=Hokkaido, Honshu, Kyushu, Shikoku, Okinawa main island) from North to South play a less prominent role on the tourism map. Research on islands in Japan traditionally focuses on two aspects: the uniqueness of each island and the challenges they face as less-favoured areas. This mirrors national policies supporting remote islands because they lose population and are considered disadvantaged.

However, recent years have witnessed the emergence of specialized forms of tourism like art tourism, cycling tourism, ecotourism, farm tourism and others, each restricted to individual islands or island groups. Among the success stories told, the involvement of actors from outside the islands appears as a decisive factor, but a closer look reveals dense and multifaceted networks between different actors on and off the islands. The pandemic posed a special threat to these new developments because islands with their aging populations and limited medical facilities are especially vulnerable to the risks of COVID 19. On the other hand, they offer outdoor leisure and less congested spaces combined with a feeling of distance from daily life, although many are situated conveniently close to urban centers, making them ideal destinations of microtourism. Can the uniqueness and diversity of islands in Japan become a model for diverse and possibly sustainable island tourism after the pandemic?



Prof. Carolin Funck (Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Hiroshima University)

Professor Carolin Funck is a professor for human geography at Hiroshima University, Japan. One of the first international scholars to research on tourism in Japan from a geographical viewpoint. Research themes include the development of tourism in Japan, sustainable island tourism and the contribution of tourism to rural development, with a regional focus on the Seto Inland Sea region. Recent research topics are cruise tourism in Japan and Germany, and resilience in island tourism. Her research has been conducted in close cooperation with local and regional authorities in Japan and she has worked in an advisory function on many committees connected to tourism development and regional planning.