

## Research note

# Filmbegleitete Forschung zu aktivem Altern im ländlichen Japan

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### Summary

This article outlines the production process of a documentary film, which was created as part of the ethnographic project “Aged communities and active ageing — A case study of rural villages in the Japanese Alps.” Its aim was to present ageing in rural Japan to a wider public, by giving insights into the everyday life of two protagonists and introducing the services and infrastructure for elderly people provided by the municipalities. The fieldwork was conducted in three villages in Nagano and Yamanashi Prefectures, where the ageing rate is above the national average. The research schedule included two fieldwork stays, enabling us to visit the municipalities in different seasons, to intensify the relationship with the informants, and to specify the film pitch. At the production stage, cooperation with the local municipal office was crucial for obtaining access to informants and to being able to observe recreational activities for senior citizens — such as gymnastic courses or gateball training sessions. This article introduces the preparatory stage of film production, discusses the question of “participation versus observation” during fieldwork, describes the reactions of locals to the presence of the research team with their camera, and, finally, outlines the post-production process.

**Keywords:** Rural Japan, ethnographic film, qualitative research, active ageing

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