

CHINA CROSSROADS

Monday, April 1st, 2024, 19:30 – 21:00

Rural-Urban Migration and Agro-Technological Change in Post-Reform China

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How do rural Chinese households deal with the conflicting pressures of migrating into cities to work as well as staying at home to preserve their fields? This is particularly challenging for rice farmers, because paddy fields have to be cultivated continuously to retain their soil quality and value. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and written sources, this book talk describes farming households' strategic solutions to this predicament. It shows how, in light of rural-urban migration and agro-technological change, they manage to sustain both migration and farming. It innovatively conceives rural households as part of a larger farming community of practice that spans both staying and migrating household members and their material world. Focusing on one exemplary resource – paddy fields – it argues that socio-technical resources are key factors in understanding migration flows and migrant-home relations. Overall, this talk provides rare insights into the rural side of migration and farmers' knowledge and agency.

[Lena Kaufmann](#) is Senior Researcher and Lecturer at the University of Zurich and an incoming SNSF Ambizione Fellow at the University of Fribourg. Trained as a Social Anthropologist and Sinologist in Berlin, Rome, and Shanghai, her research foci include migration, rural-urban relations, agro-technological transformation, as well as Swiss-Chinese entanglements in digital infrastructures. She is the author of [Rural-Urban Migration and Agro-Technological Change in Post-Reform China](#) (2021) and the spokesperson of the Regional Group China(s) of the German Anthropological Association.

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