

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

Gender and Sexuality in East Asia

(Joint Social Science and Humanities Study Group)



March 16, 2021, 6:30pm (JST)/10.30am (CET)

Ryokan: Mobilizing Hospitality in Rural Japan

What does it take to produce one of Japan's most relaxing spaces: the ryokan? In this talk, I share the behind-the-scenes work required to keep a traditional Japanese inn running smoothly, from the daily tasks of cleaning, serving, and making guests feel at home, to the generational work of producing and training a suitable heir who can carry on the family business.

In this talk I share insights from nearly two decades of research in and around Kurokawa Onsen (Kumamoto Prefecture), including a year spent welcoming guests, carrying luggage, scrubbing baths, cleaning rooms, washing dishes, and talking with co-workers and owners about their jobs, relationships, concerns, and aspirations. I share how Kurokawa's ryokan mobilize hospitality to create a rural escape in contemporary Japan. I highlight the strictly gendered work found in the ryokan, and I contrast the generational work of ryokan owners from the daily embodied labor of their employees. I share the realities of ryokan work—celebrated, messy, ignored, exploitative, and liberating—and introduce the people who keep inns running by making guests feel at home.

Chris McMorran is Associate Professor of Japanese Studies at the National University of Singapore. He is a cultural geographer of contemporary Japan who researches the geographies of home across scale, from the body to the nation. He also has published research on tourism, disasters, gendered labor, area studies, and field-based learning. He is co-editor of *Teaching Japanese Popular Culture* and co-producer of *Home on the Dot*, a podcast that explores home in Singapore through the lives of NUS students

About

The *Gender and Sexuality in East Asia*-Lecture Series is part of the DIJ's Social Science and Humanities Study Groups. The events are open to all. Further information can be found [here](#).

Online Presentation

Registration required via email to kottmann@diitokyo.org until March 15, 2021.
Log in data will be provided after registration.