

Guest Lecturer: Prof. Tsukasa Iga, PhD

Title

“Why and How Do I “Research”? My (sometimes failed) struggle to understand Malaysia”

Short Bio

Dr. Tsukasa Iga is an affiliated associate professor of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University. He specializes in political sociology and area studies in Southeast Asia, especially Malaysia. His research interests include politics and media, social movements, political scandal and accountability politics in Malaysia.

Session

Professor Iga titled his lecture “Why and How Do I Research? My (sometimes failed) Struggle to Understand Malaysia”. He uncovered the details of his research process: forming his research interest, applying theoretical insights from work by Hideo Otake on Japanese politics to explain ideological conflict in Malaysian politics in his Master’s thesis, conducting field research in Malaysia and shifting his research focus from the ruling party to media groups during his PhD. He emphasized that the media was one of the significant factors enabling the ruling party to maintain power for over 60 years. Over-relying on traditional media, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) neglected the internet media and lost majority in the 2018 election for the first time. Professor Iga’s field work includes interviewing, participatory observation and archive research. He stressed the importance of networking, cultivating friendly relationships and conducting background research on the interviewees’ profiles for successful fieldwork. He also discussed researcher’s dilemmas, i.e. trap of causal analysis, balancing academic and journalist approaches, originality and value added, comparison as a discursive strategy.

Professor Iga’s thought-provoking presentation inspired the participants to ask him many questions regarding possibilities to unite the opposition in Malaysia, his

evaluation of their current policies so far and his prognosis for their future policies, the real meaning of this victory for the minority groups, tips for comparative research in politics of the countries with considerable diversity etc.

By Ivanova Polina (立命館大学大学院国際関係研究科博士後期課程)