

CURRICULUM VITAE

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BRIEF PROFILE

I am a social scientist based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. My area of specialization is political geography and environmental politics in Southeast Asia, especially on the politics of palm oil and atmospheric pollution (haze) in the region. For the past 15 years, I have been researching issues of sustainability and governance within the palm oil industry. My monograph explores how political patronage can affect land use patterns in ways that can lead to unsustainable plantation expansion and fires, resulting in persistent transboundary haze across Southeast Asia. Since then, I have also engaged with other related issues in the sector, with the aim to better understand how development and sustainability can coexist in this resource-rich region. I have worked with social scientists (including economics, sociology, and anthropology) and natural scientists (botanists, soil scientists, agriculturists) to further comprehend the complexity of this “wicked problem”.

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

- **Senior Lecturer, Department of International and Strategic Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Malaya (2007 - present)**
- Visiting Senior Research Fellow, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore (2021)
- Deputy Director, Asia Europe Institute, University of Malaya, 2015-2016
- Tutor, Department of Government and International Relations, University of Sydney (2009-2011)
- Media Planner, Zenith Optimedia Malaysia (2005-2007)

EDUCATION

- PhD (International and Strategic Studies), University of Sydney, Australia, 2012
- MIntS (Merit) (International Studies), University of Sydney, Australia, 2008
- BCom (Hons) (Corporate Communication), Universiti Putra Malaysia, 2006

SELECTED ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

Books

- Varkkey, H. (2021) *The Forests for the Palms: Essays on the Politics of Haze and the Environment in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing

- Varkkey, H. (ed.) 2018. Local and Transboundary Haze. Kuala Lumpur: Academy of Sciences Malaysia
- Varkkey, H. 2016. The Haze Problem in Southeast Asia: Palm Oil and Patronage. Oxon: Routledge.

Chapters in Books

- **Varkkey, H.**, Bahçecik, S.O., & Latif. M.T. (2020). Chapter 1: ASEAN in Regional Environmental Governance: Bright Prospects or Hazy Future?. In C. Ergenc (Ed.), ASEAN as a Method: Re-centering Processes and Institutions in Contemporary Southeast Asian Regionalism. London: Taylor & Francis
- Varkkey, H. (2020) Government communication on transboundary haze: The nexus between public health and tourism. In S. L. Pak (Ed.), Sustainable Development: Asia-Pacific Perspectives. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Varkkey, H. (2019) Transboundary Pollution. In S. Maisel (Ed.), Oxford Bibliographies in Political Science. New York: Oxford University Press
- Varkkey, H. (2019). Preventing Dispute over Haze Through Regional and Local Governance. In M. Oishi (Ed.), Managing Conflicts in a Globalising ASEAN. Singapore: Springer
- Varkkey, H. (2019). Transboundary Haze, ASEAN, and the SDGs: Normative and Structural Challenges. in R. Holzhaecker & D. Agussalim (Eds.), Sustainable Development Goals in Southeast Asia and ASEAN: National and Regional Approaches. Leiden: Brill Publishing
- Varkkey, H. (2018). Singapore's Transboundary Pollution Act 2014: Prospects and Challenges in Pollution Across Borders: Transboundary Fires, Smoke and Haze in Southeast Asia, ed. Quah, E. Singapore: World Scientific

Journal Articles

- Choiruzzad, S.A.B, Tyson, A., & **Varkkey, H.** (2021) The Ambiguities of Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil Certification: Internal Incoherence, Governance Rescaling and State Transformation. Asia Europe Journal
- Khan, M. F., Hamid, A. H., Ab Rahim, H. Abdul Maulud, K. N., Latif, M. T., Mohd Nadzir, M. S., Sahani, M. Qin, K., Kumar, P., **Varkkey, H.**, Faruque, M. R. I., Ng, C. G., Ahmadi, S. P., and Yusoff, S. (2020). El Niño driven haze over the Southern Malaysian Peninsula and Borneo. Science of the Total Environment, 730, 139091
- Lupascu, M., **Varkkey, H.** & Tortajada, C.(2020). Is flooding considered a threat in the degraded tropical peatlands?. Science of the Total Environment.
- Thornton, S., Cook, S. Astiani, D., Hapsari, K., **Varkkey, H.** Cole, L. Dargie, G., Sjogersten, S., Zawawi, N., and Page, S. (2019). "Pushing the Limits": Experiences of Women in Tropical Peatland Research. Marine and Freshwater Research
- **Varkkey, H.**, Tyson, A. & Choiruzzad, S. A. (2018). Palm Oil Intensification and Expansion in Indonesia and Malaysia: Environmental and Socio-Political Factors Influencing Policy. Forest Policy and Economics. Vol 92, July 2018, pp. 148–159
- Tyson, A., **Varkkey, H.** & Choiruzzad, S. A. (2018). Deconstructing the Palm Oil Industry Narrative in Indonesia. Contemporary Southeast Asia, 40 (3)

- Evers, S; Yule, CM; Padfield, R; O'Reilly, P; **Varkkey, H** (2017). Keep wetlands wet: the myth of sustainable development of tropical peatlands - implications for policies and management. *Global Change Biology*
- Wijedasa, L. S., et al. (2017). Denial of long-term issues with agriculture on tropical peatlands will have devastating consequences. *Global Change Biology*. 23(3)
- Varkkey, H. 2014. Regional cooperation, patronage and the ASEAN Agreement on transboundary haze pollution *International Environmental Agreements-Politics Law and Economics*.

Commentaries

- Varkkey, H. (2020) [Environmental Resilience and Governance in Southeast Asia, in LSE Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre Blog](#), 28 December
- Smith, T.E.L. and **Varkkey, H.** (2020) [COVID-19, Southeast Asian Haze, and Socioenvironmental-Epidemiological Feedbacks](#), LSE Southeast Asia Blog, 16 Sept
- Varkkey, H. "[Malaysian palm oil: National pride and prejudice through the years](#)", in *The Asia Dialogue*, 3 June
- Varkkey, H. (2020) [Palm oil politics still threaten EU–Malaysia ties](#). *East Asia Forum*, 2 April.
- O'Reilly, P., **Varkkey, H.** Choiruzzad, S.A.B., & Padfield, R. (2020). [The Value\(s\) of Palm Oil. Fulcrum Commentaries](#). 24 December
- Astuti, R., **Varkkey, H.** and Tan, Z. D. (2019) [Three things Jokowi could do better to stop forest fires and haze in Indonesia](#), *The Conversation*, 31 July

SELECTED RESEARCH GRANTS

- Bite-Size Climate Action: Online Modules for Malaysian Youth, PI, **British High Commission Kuala Lumpur**, Communicating Science for Climate Action, 2021
- Environmental Governance, PI, **Universiti Malaya**, Grand Challenge, 2018-2021
- The Design, Communication and Impact of Evidence-Based Forestry in Indonesia, Co-PI, **British Academy IPM Scheme**, 2016-2019
- Sustainable Governance of Transboundary Environmental Commons in Southeast Asia ([TECSEA](#)), Work Package Leader (Biomass Burning and Haze), **Social Science Research Council Singapore** 2017–2022

SELECTED CONSULTATION PROJECTS

- Consultant, Final Review of the Roadmap on ASEAN Cooperation towards Transboundary Haze Pollution Control with Means of Implementation for **ASEAN Secretariat**, 2020-2021
- Chief Editor, Report on Local and Transboundary Haze Report for **Academy of Sciences Malaysia** (presented to Prime Minister's Department, Malaysia), 2017-2019
- Subject Area Expert (Environmental Politics), Report on Determining Malaysia's Foreign Policy Position as a Middle Power for **Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia**, 2016-2018.