



Multi-Scalar, Multi-Sectoral Participation in Haze Governance in Southeast Asia: Transboundary Publics in Singapore

Speaker: **Dr Helena Varkkey**
Visiting Senior Research Fellow,
Asia Research Institute, NUS

Chair: **Professor James D Sidaway**
Department of Geography, NUS

Date/Time: Friday, 8 October 2021, 3.30pm

Place: [online via Zoom](#)

Abstract

Haze is a product of in-situ biomass fires that become mobile as it moves across state boundaries in Southeast Asia. The literature on the governance of this transboundary commons has largely been fixed at the national or supranational scalar of reference. Hence, successes and failures tend to be evaluated based on policy and diplomatic (non)progress. I argue that haze should be treated as a challenge for transboundary governance and not merely transnational governance. Transboundary governance does not restrict the study of cross-border relations to national scales of analysis but encompasses resource connections that traverse borders at all scales of governance. Singapore's contribution to transnational governance through ASEAN cooperation and bilateral assistance has been well documented. However, Singapore is also the base for pioneering transboundary approaches to governing haze. It is the only ASEAN state to enact legislation to hold accountable business actors contributing to haze in Singapore. There have also been various multi-sectoral environmental stewardship initiatives to address haze coming out of Singapore, working at different scales. By focusing on the SIIA, PM Haze, and SEC, this talk explores how transboundary publics can fill policy gaps in transnational haze governance regimes. As a highly depoliticised city-state, Singapore's experience serves as a microcosm for ways forward within the broader ASEAN geopolitical culture favouring depoliticised engagement.

About the Speaker

Dr Helena Varkkey is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of International and Strategic Studies, University of Malaya. Her research focuses on the governance of transboundary haze pollution and the political economy of palm oil in Southeast Asia. More broadly, she seeks to understand how economic development can be reconciled with environmental sustainability in this resource-rich region. Her monograph on "The Haze Problem in Southeast Asia: Palm Oil and Patronage" was published in 2016. She is currently a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Asia Research Institute, NUS working on the SSRTG project "Sustainable Governance of Transboundary Environmental Commons in Southeast Asia" (TECSEA).

ADMISSION IS FREE – ALL ARE WELCOME

CONVENORS:  [Prof Henry Yeung](#)  [Prof Brenda Yeoh](#)  [Prof Lu Xi Xi](#)  [Prof James D Sidaway](#)

ENQUIRIES: Sakinah – 65163559