

About the Author

Helena Varkkey is a political scientist based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Her area of specialization is political geography and environmental politics in Southeast Asia, especially the global politics of palm oil and haze in the region. For the past fifteen years of her academic career she has been researching issues of sustainability and governance within the palm oil industry. Her monograph, published in 2016, explores how political patronage can affect land use patterns in ways that can lead to unsustainable plantation expansion and fires, resulting in the persistent transboundary haze across Southeast Asia. Since then, she has broadened her research scope to include other related issues in the sector to better understand how development and sustainability can truly exist hand in hand in this part of the world, which is so blessed with natural resources. Over the years she has worked with social scientists from differing backgrounds (including economics, sociology and anthropology) as well as natural scientists (including soil, agriculture and atmospheric scientists) to further comprehend the complexity of this “wicked problem”. She maintains an academic blog at helenavarkkey.wordpress.com.

