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**PEATLAND FIRES IN RIAU, SUMATRA: STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS OF A
"WICKED PROBLEM"**

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Indonesia's peatland fires, and resulting haze, represent a leading environmental concern, not only within those fire affected areas of Indonesia, but regionally and globally. These fires embody the challenges of "wicked problems": existing solutions have largely failed; the problem involves interdependencies and multiple drivers at different scales, and is often understood and explained in a number of different and contested ways. Yet, popular solutions to fire are often simplistic, short term and technology-driven. Further, widespread "finger-pointing" about the causes of fire (e.g., between communities and corporates), fails to reflect the complexity of the issue, causes discord, and impedes productive problem-solving. Policy instruments that do not engage with the underlying motivations of agents, or that do not capture the complexity of the problem, are unlikely to result in desired behavioural change. We contextualize problem-solving efforts with on-the-ground insights of how different actors experience and explain large fire events in Indonesia's Riau Province. This study draws on the results of perceptions surveys with a purposive sample of diverse actors in Riau (e.g., corporate actors, small farmers, absentee investors, domestic and Singaporean decision-makers). As part of a q-method enquiry, participants responded to a broad range of statements related to three dimensions of fire: its benefits, burdens, and preferred solutions. Respondents prioritized statements, revealing their underlying viewpoints and preferences. Using factor analysis, we identified how groups of perspectives are shared between stakeholders and construct distinct discourses. We map out and interpret the distinct discourses on 1) the benefits and burdens and 2) the solutions to the peatland fires in Riau. Further, we are able to examine which stakeholder groups, with different levels of power and interests are populating which discourse. Such insight identifies areas of agreement and those of contention, serving as a boundary object to facilitate negotiation and consensus-building within challenging policy debates.

Keywords: *peat fires, perceptions survey, q – method enquiry*