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Ecological Modernization: in Malaysia: A Review of Pakatan Harapan's Manifesto During the 14th General Election Within the Context of Ecological Modernization Framework

Noor Asyhikin Binti Abd Razak*
Nor Azlin Binti Tajuddin**

Abstract: Ecological Modernization theory emerged during the 1980s in response to other environmental sociology theories that mostly denunciate industrialization and modernization as culprits of environmental degradation. The basic view of Ecological Modernization is to find a balance between development of society and nation as well as environmental protection. Some scholars believe that this is the best module to develop a country, while others criticize it as a pro-capitalist concept. As Malaysia is now pushing its status towards becoming a developed and high-income nation, people's wellbeing as well as environmental protection needs to be highly considered. Taking Ecological Modernization as fresh perspective to view the country's development plan, this paper aims to understand whether the essence of Ecological Modernization was embedded in Pakatan Harapan's political manifesto during the 14th general election. As political manifesto serves as initial policy making guidelines, it is imperative to understand the Pakatan Harapan future plans for the country.

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Keywords: Ecological Modernization, Pakatan Harapan, country's development, political manifesto, environmental policy.

Abstrak: Teori Pemodenan Ekologikal diperkenalkan sekitar tahun 1980an sebagai respon kepada pelbagai teori sosiologi alam sekitar yang ada sebelum itu, di mana kebanyakan teori tersebut menunding jari kepada kemajuan perindustrian serta kemodenan sebagai punca utama berlakunya kemusnahan alam sekitar. Asas utama Teori Pemodenan Ekologikal adalah untuk mencari keseimbangan dalam usaha membangunkan sesebuah negara dan masyarakat serta dalam masa yang sama memastikan keadaan alam sekitar terjaga. Sesetengah sarjana berpendapat bahawa teori ini adalah teori yang terbaik dalam usaha memajukan sesebuah negara. Namun begitu ada juga sarjana yang menolak teori ini dan menyatakan bahawa teori ini sebenarnya adalah pro-kapitalis. Sebagai sebuah negara yang sedang menuju ke arah negara maju dan berpendapatan tinggi, Malaysia perlu memastikan keadaan masyarakatnya terjamin dan dalam masa yang sama perlu memastikan setiap pelan pembangunan negara tidak membawa kerosakan kepada alam sekitar. Mengambil Teori Pemodenan Ekologikal sebagai satu perspektif baru untuk menilai pelan pembangunan Malaysia, penulisan ini bertujuan memahami sama ada inti pati dan idea di dalam Teori Pemodenan Ekologikal diterapkan di dalam manifesto politik Pakatan Harapan pada pilihan raya umum ke-14 yang lalu. Manifesto politik merupakan janji-janji awal sesebuah kerajaan untuk mereka merangka polisi negara, dan ia dapat mencerminkan pelan masa hadapan Pakatan Harapan untuk negara ini.

Kata Kunci: Teori Pemodenan Ekologikal, Pakatan Harapan, pembangunan negara, manifesto politik, polisi alam sekitar

INTRODUCTION:

As societies progressed from pre-industrial to post-industrial era, the surrounding environment changed as well. In finding a balance between the needs of human to progress and develop and the urgency to look at the environmental impact of these advancements, theorists of Ecological Modernization (EM) have proposed ideas that aims to reconcile economic growth and ecological targets (Mol, 1997; Berger et. al., 2001; Machin, 2019). In its early days, EM scholars challenged the ideas brought by early environmental conservatives which blame industrialization and modernization as culprits for environmental degradation. While they opposed such thoughts, they also agreed that modernization projects will no longer be able to expand if environmental and ecological

degradation continue to occur. Thus, they proposed that to maintain a sustainable growth of a nation, it's crucial that the core institutions for a modern society which include industrialized production system, capitalist economic system and centralized state should be included in the equation and not to be treated as main reasons for environmental degradation (Mol & Sonnenfeld, 2000).

In the race towards becoming a developed nation, trying to stand tall among the urbanized countries, Malaysia has somehow ignored the environmental consequences of its decisions. Some of the decision made are unsustainable and had caused major environmental damage. Since the 1970s rapid economic growth, natural resources in the country were used and extracted immensely. However, environmental topics were seldom discussed seriously. Most of the times the discussions were reactive or for a short period of time in response to environmental calamities. For example environmental disasters such as the bauxite crisis in Pahang, landside issues in Cameron Highlands, massive flood in the east coast states and Pasir Gudang chemical pollution appeared on the newspaper headlines, however, the discussions on these topics were seldom prolonged and usually faded away when the issues were no longer highlighted on media. Evidently, many of these environmental degradations are inter-twined with economic activities. As mentioned by Roberts (1994), it is undeniable that most of the economic activities will direct or indirectly create negative impacts to the environment. Correspondingly, the question that needs to be answered is how Malaysia can balance out the progress of the country's development whilst at the same time protecting the environment. To investigate this issue, one may look at the government's directions on this matter.

As a country that adheres to parliamentary democracy, the democratic government should aim to provide good life to its citizens not only economically but also by taking care of their well-being. This includes providing a safe and clean physical environment for the people so for them to be able to live a flourishing life. One of the ideas that has been suggested is the concept of sustainable development. Sustainable development is introduced in the Brundtland Report in 1987 it highlights the needs of development that will not only fulfill the needs of the present but also without compromising the needs of the future generation. However, there are scholars who perceive sustainable development as an uncomprehensive plan. For them, sustainable development

concept is seen as being too vague in its vision that it fails to overcome environmental issues holistically (Buttel, 2000; Berger et al., 2001; Gibbs, 2000). In a paper written by Huber (2000), he highlighted that among the NGOs and the industrial players they have viewed sustainable development contrarily. Whilst the industrial players and business conglomerate view sustainable development as strategy for them to grow their business while at the same time managing the environment, NGOs on the other side viewed sustainable development as concept that would hinder economic development. Thus, Huber suggested that to understand the gist of sustainable development it would be good to understand the idea and concept of ecological modernization as well.

The future of the environment depends on the actions taken today. It is important that if environmental problems are to be taken seriously, proper plan and strategies need to be lined out accordingly. Thus, as a country that is led by a government that was chosen democratically, it is essential to understand the government's mission and vision on the future of the environment. However, in ensuring that the planned environmental programs succeed, there are many issues yet to be solved. One of them is political involvement in directing solutions for the environmental problems in Malaysia (Hasan & Ismail, 1997). As such, EM framework will be able to explain this, as the main idea of EM framework is linkage of governance, industrial modernization and environmental problems (Spaargaren & Mol, 1992).

This paper discusses the conceptualization of EM as a framework in analyzing society-environment interactions, which might be entrenched in Pakatan Harapan's (Coalition of Hope) political manifesto either directly or indirectly. Although the party is no longer the governing political party as there had been a change of government in March, 2020, this paper will reflect upon the political manifesto of Pakatan Harapan (PH), as it's the most recent elected government of Malaysia with a solid manifesto. Political manifestos are usually referred for the initial policy making guidance of a government. Thus, it is beneficial to understand PH first plan towards the country's development, progress and also ecological perspective by studying its political manifesto. EM was chosen due to its comprehensiveness. As argued by Buttel (2000), EM is a holistic theory of sociology that will be helpful to explain not only the environmental issues but also theory of politics and state. The following parts of this paper are written with reference to Watts's

(2011) guidance on writing a conceptual paper. Following the literature review section, the next section will elaborate concepts and positions that reflects PH's presentation of EM in its manifesto. The interpretation and understanding of the application of EM will be discussed before the paper will end up with conclusion section.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

General Election in Malaysia and Political Parties' Manifesto

There are two types of elections in Malaysia i.e General Election and By-election. General election is held in Malaysia for the House of Representatives and State Legislative Assemblies. It may be held simultaneously, both the Parliamentary Elections (to vote for the/ House of Representatives) and State Elections (to vote for the State Legislative Assemblies). For all states in Peninsular Malaysia, simultaneous elections are held for both, state and parliamentary election. Where else, in Sabah and Sarawak there were years when the elections were held separately. By-election is held to elect a vacant position of a state or parliamentary assemblyman. General election should be held within 60 days after the dissolution of Parliament and State (Rahman, 2004). Between the nomination day and the polling day, with the minimum of seven days, candidates are allowed to campaign (Rahman, 2004). During this period, political parties, will list out its manifestation to the people.

The 14th general election in Malaysia was held on 9th May 2018. There were 222 parliament seats contested and 113 won by PH, hence, automatically allowing them to form a new government for Malaysia (Parkaran, 2018). It is a first time in Malaysia's history that Barisan Nasional was defeated. PH is a collation of four political parties namely PKR, DAP, PPBM and Amanah and led by the former 4th Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad.

During the campaigning period, PH came out with a 150 pages online book of the party's manifesto, entitled "Buku Harapan" (which literally translated as Book of Hope) that described the promises and policies the party intended to implement if it won the general election. The manifesto was built upon 5 pillars, which further sub-divided into 60 promises and out of that, 10 promises were to be fulfilled within 100 days. Five special pledges targeting for five different groups including

the Felda settlers, the Indian community, women, youth and senior citizens were also stated in the manifesto. It was also mentioned by Mahathir Mohamad in the booklet that the promises and pledges made in the manifesto will be fulfilled by PH leaders during its administration period. If they fail to do so by the end of its ruling term, they suggested to the people not to vote for them again in the next election (Pakatan Harapan, 2018). However, during the campaigning period, majority of the issues highlighted were not related to environmental issues. The main topics that were picked up by both PH and Barisan Nasional are issues of economics, race, religion and cost of living (Radu, 2018, Yu Leng, 2018, Ananthalakshmi & Chow, 2018, Barron, 2018).

There was however, modest environmental concerns raised in PH's manifesto. Promise No 39 is the **only** (out of 60 promises) promise that directly stated its concern on environmental protection. Nevertheless, there are other aspects of environmental concerns raised in the manifesto either directly or indirectly. Thus, it is crucial to understand these items critically as political manifesto is one way to understand how political parties define their understanding of the issues they brought forward. As a medium of communication with people, political manifesto is the initial idea where people can understand the direction of policy making of the political parties once they are in power (Dolezal, Jedenastik, Muller & Winkler, 2012).

Ecological Modernization

EM was introduced during the 1980s as a counter suggestion to those who came out with extreme ideas to solve the ecological and environmental problems occurring at that time mainly due to its concerns over the rapid progress of industrialization. Social scientists have tried to find the answer whether radical environmentalism such as demanding significant decreases in fossil energy usage, reversal of tropical forest destruction and biodiversity loss and increasingly strict regulation of industry would actually bring benefit to society and the world or otherwise. The first wave of EM inclined towards the notation that capitalist democracy is able to stand as an institution to improve the environmental problems at that moment (Buttel, 2000). The second wave of EM expended by including another important element for a change which is the social-politic. Social-politic is taken as a reality that is useful and should be analyzed alongside with advancement of

industrial and modernization. The third wave of EM further explores the globalization process, so it is now relevant not only for developed countries but as well as developing countries (Mol & Sonnenfeld, 2000; Buttel, 2000; Berger et al., 2010; Machin, 2019).

Recent scholars of EM agreed that social transformations as well as political innovations are expected to take part and change alongside with economic and technological improvements (Buttel, 2000; Berger et al., 2001; Hills & Welford, 2002). Spaargen & Van Vliet (2000) highlighted in its paper "Lifestyle, Consumption and the Environment", two essences of EM. The first one explains that the organization changes of production and consumption are associated with environmental problems. Second, they emphasized on the importance of strengthening the economy and technology in order to bring a change as to produce sustainable production and consumption cycle. Having said that, EM is a theory that takes a holistic approach and comprehensive measurement in ensuring that development and environmental concern is not being biasedly observed in moving towards a developed nation. As opposed to the radical environmentalists, there are also those who are so engrossed towards economic development that they perceive initiatives towards environmental protection as hindrance to further growth and development. However, EM brought a different concept by finding a balance between economic growths, environmental improvement, social and global equity as well as emphasize on global distribution (Berger et al., 2010).

According to Buttel (2000), EM can be applied within these four domains. First, EM serves as a good sociological theory. Second, it provides a basis for environmental policy making as it is realistic and does not incline towards neither radical environmentalist nor radical capitalist. Third, EM is suitable to be used for environmental management strategy, industrial ecology, eco-restructuring and such. EM emphasized on the improvements that can be made by private sectors especially the industrial and manufacturing sectors to reduce its waste and pollution. Finally, EM is a useful framework to apply for advancement or enhancement or environmental policy innovation or environmental improvement. This is also agreed by Berger et al. (2001) and Machin (2019) as they highlighted that EM provides room for development of environmental and economic policies and protection alongside with combination of synergistic effects that will create a

positive outcome and balance between economy advancement and ecological protection. Taking into account Buttel's idea particularly on his fourth suggestion of applying EM theory for the improvement of policies, it would be suitable to discuss the elements of EM in the context of PH's manifesto.

Scholars have suggested different ideas and perspectives in explaining the best version of EM. Berger et al. (2001), for instance highlighted the characteristics that would make EM a weak or a strong framework. According to them, there are four characteristics of weak EM. First, when the value of environment is measured solely by monetary. Second, when it only focuses on changes of the already industrialized and advanced nation-states. Third, when it forms unilineal path to ecological modernity. Fourth, when it focuses on only the main economic and political players such as technocrats, corporatists and politicians. He also highlighted four characteristics of good EM. First, EM considers broad range of societal players and not limited to certain targeted institutions only. Second, it considers opportunities from broader societal players. Third, it holistically covers international dimensions of the environmental concerns. Finally, to discuss EM with open thought that does not put a limit to any single view. As such it shows that strong EM framework fluid concept that provides an alternative orientation for every societal player to make a change on how they manage the environment.

However, to elaborate and conceptualize the reflection of EM in PH's manifesto, this paper will be guided by Mol & Sonnenfeld's (2000) five views of transformations from EM perspectives which are:

- i. Viewing science and technology as a medium of change. All these while science and technology were blamed as culprits for environmental degradation, however, EM values the role of science and technology and expect that science and technology to bring changes in solving and preventing environmental problems.
- ii. Expecting uplift on the market dynamics and economic agents to become agents of change in ecological reformation. This is the responsibility the economic actors, society and political institution.

- iii. A change in a role of nation-state to allow more players to be involved in environmental reform and to be more of a flexible and consensual governance.
- iv. Reform discursive practices and new ideologies to ensure that the environmental issues are seriously taken alongside with the economic and environmental interest.
- v. Transforming position, role and ideology of social movements so that it can change the ideas of “demodernization”.

However, the scope of this paper will elaborate and emphasize only on the top four views presented above.

ECOLOGICAL MODERNIZATION IN BUKU PAKATAN HARAPAN

Ever since independence, this is the first time the opposition party won the election and ruled the country and this is the manifestation of the hopes people had in order to see a change for the country not only politically, but as well as governmentally, socially and economically (Kamunri, 2019). Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad in his foreword notes in Buku Harapan, emphasized the hopes of PH which are “*Rebuilding the Nation*” and “*Fulfilling the Hope of People*” if the party become the governing government (Buku Harapan, 2018). The PH government even came up with its slogan, “Malaysia Baru” (which literally translated as New Malaysia) has the vision of bringing changes for the country’s future by addressing the mistakes committed by the previous government. In order to do so, the government reiterates its concern over equitable distribution of wealth generated by nation-state.

Developing the country is the main vision of Malaysia Baru as it directs the country towards a wealthier nation. Not only that, as described in Buku Harapan, alongside with the development of Malaysia, PH hoped that the economic status of the country will grow along well too (Buku Harapan, 2018). Begum et al. (2015) identified Malaysia as a rapidly developing country. They also found that Malaysia is on a positive economic, population and energy consumption growth. These growths however come with harmful consequences to the environment, as the study also noted that the level of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emission increases in correspond to economic growth and energy consumption. Excessive amount of CO₂ is known to cause environmental degradation such as air pollution. Hence, framing the PH’s development plan for

Malaysia as indicated in its manifesto using EM's approach which would offer a stimulating discussion.

Promise 39 entitled "Balancing Economic Growth With Environmental Protection" (Buku Harapan, 2018, p. 85) resonates very well with the essence of EM's perspective. Specifically, the first view of Mol & Sonnenfeld's EM perspective is very much presented in Buku PH. Promise no 39 from Pillar No 3 (Spur Sustainable and Equitable Economic Growth) highlighted the role of science and technology as one of the medium of change for the country's development and as a solution for the country to manage its environmental concern. Technology is important in transforming ecological changes. From EM perspective, technology is meant to be a controlling medium to mediate economic development and ecological protection (Frijns, Phuong & Mol, 2000). Under Pillar No 1, Promise No 10 of Buku Harapan, the government promised to "guarantee people's basic food needs and taking care of the welfare of farmers" (Buku Harapan, 2018, p. 32). Food is a basic necessity for human. And it is important for a state to ensure that the amount of staple foods generated is enough for everyone. As a nation grows, the number of people increases, thus, the need for food will rise. To ensure that the amount of food is always available, the government had suggested the use of modern agricultural technology to increase the production of rice, vegetables, raw materials, poultry, meat and fisheries. Environmental issues, such as deforestation and the usage of agricultural land for industrial and residential area had challenged the farming industry to maintain its production. Thus, by adopting modern technology in its daily production, this will help to increase its productivity. With this in mind, it can be said that a reflective of EM is reflected in the PH government's manifesto.

In addition, whilst elaborating on the issue of petrol subsidy for targeted group, PH also raised its concern over the environmental impact that might happen if there are too many private vehicles on the road. Thus, as an alternative solution, the party planned to enhance the public transportation system. Further elaborating on the same issue of public transportation, aside from expanding the public transportation access to outer urban areas, PH is also looking forward to jive into new technologically advanced system such as e-hailing service as part of its public transportation enhancement plan. This again shows that it is

difficult to separate technological advancement in order to overcome environmental problems.

Pillar No 3 of the manifesto highlights PH's vision to enhance a strong and sustainable economy for the country. We can relate this general idea with the second view of Mol & Sonnenfeld's. This view emphasizes the importance that stakeholders such as economic actors, politicians and society should play to change the market dynamics as well as bringing ecological reforms. By looking at Pillar No 3, PH is ready to make a transformation on the country's economic future. PH explained its concern over the last government's mistakes in handling the economy. This shows that the role that political institution plays is very important in influencing the economic future of the country. Aside from that PH highlighted the role economic players should undertake, this includes its concern over the risk of mis-development that might risk the environment. PH emphasized that development, whilst should bring economic growth to the country, it should not jeopardize the environment.

One of the issues highlighted in *Buku Harapan* is regarding the topic of land hoardings by giant developers as mentioned in Pillar No 1 Promise No 4. Instead of developing affordable housing after acquiring the land, the developers sleeve the lands without developing any houses in that area. Using EM framework, this issue can be viewed from an ecological perspective. As suggested by Mol & Sonnenfeld (2000), market dynamics and economic agents are important to take responsibilities as means of ecological reform. Mismanagement of lands had not only caused issues in house owning, but by clearing up lands and leaving it empty, it will potentially lead to either waste of land source or detrimental of the environment or both. Although these issues were not the concern of PH's manifesto (it emphasized more on the issue of house owning), but since it highlighted the misuse of land, the issue of environmental impact and reforms should be considered as well. To ensure the development of Malaysia is on track, there is a need to measure the capabilities of existing developers as they are one of the economic agents particularly in using available lands and also providing people with homes.

The manifesto also highlighted its concern on the issue of chronic capitalism the country was facing. Failure of large corporations and

capitalists to take into consideration the interest of society and the environment is highlighted in Promise 39. Additionally, PH also suggested green technologies and renewable energy to be implemented as part of the country's development plan to shift from the conventional technologies to something more sustainable for the environment. Industrial development is expected to become catalyst not only for environmental changes but also to increase the economic status of the country by creating more jobs as well as expecting higher economic returns. This statement reflects the first and fourth EM perspective suggested by Mol & Sonnenfeld (2000) which highlighted that new practice to tackle environmental issue is to be taken in light with economic interest.

DISCUSSION

The Government of Pakatan Harapan Philosophy

As suggested by Berger (2001), to understand EM theoretical framework, it should not be limited to a single perspective approach. EM framework is a complex and 'strong' theory of environmental sociology. As there are more 'players' in its guiding principle, it is not a one way approach as it tackles environmental problems from a different perspective. What differentiates EM theory from other theories is that it highlights the technological advancement as an effective mechanism to tackle environmental issues. In contrast to other theories that deemed technologies and development as the main culprits of environmental degradation. Decoupling industrial prosperity from environmental degradation through the enhancement of science and technology, as well as good leadership from the nation-state actors, is the main idea of EM. This principle is however found to be quite vague in reflective of the general philosophy of PH manifesto.

However, it is interesting to note that the philosophy is guided by the concept of *maqasid syariah* (the higher purposes of Syariah), according to PH which should be the holding framework as it will bring justice to all. From this point of view, the term "justice" itself might be explored and relate to every aspect which includes environmental and social justice. Considering such perspective, it shows that PH's planning of development does include the needs of environmental as highlighted on the previous section of this paper, however, further elaboration and assessment on the views of EM will be discussed below.

Science and Technology as a Medium of Change

The core value of EM is to view science and technology as a medium of change not only because it is part of what is defined as modern society itself but more importantly for the betterment of the environment (Mol & Sonnenfeld, 2000; Mol, 1997). In general, PH realizes the needs and importance of technology in today's modern world and how it will benefit the society in general and the environment in particular. The government suggested various technological ideas to enhance and replace the current system in the country. It is mentioned in Buku Harapan that the government expect the usage of green technologies to replace the current technologies to tackle environmental problem, and this is clearly highlighted in Promise No 39. Aside from that, the manifesto also suggested the usage of technologies on the whole social system which include transportation system i.e by introducing a mechanism to identify data for targeted petrol subsidy and upgrading of the e-hailing technology system, on agricultural system to maximize the productions of agricultural products, on wealth distribution and economic system, on healthcare system to provide sufficient equipment as well as on education systems including schools and higher education. Majority of the technological replacement/suggestions in the manifesto is part of the socio-technological approach as suggested by Mol & Sonnenfeld (2000), which is to replace the curative role of technology with a more preventative role. For example, technologies used to enhance the public transportation system will hypothetically reduce the usage of public vehicle thus reducing the amount of CO₂ emission.

However, although on the surface, it is clear that the government is concerned and realized the important needs of technological advancement in this modern world, we have to understand the technological base available in the country. As a developing country, its technology is relatively far behind developed countries, particularly those countries which are already moving towards EM and are very advanced in creating and adopting green technologies such as Denmark, Sweden, and Germany. These countries will benefit more on the ideas of EM as they have the capacity to do so with the amount of innovation on technologies. Compared with Malaysia, it has always been the end users of technologies from other countries, thus, is always lacking behind. As such, it is not easy to shift or to use technology as central institution for ecological reform (Mol, 1997). Besides, even if Malaysia has the

capacity of providing better technology, the next step is to support the adoption of green technology. Policy makers and technology providers should be on the same page so to understand each other's responsibilities on how to make use of the technologies, while at the same time not jeopardizing the environment but in fact will bring a positive shift to the environment (Hills & Welford, 2009).

Shift in market dynamics and roles of economic agents

One item that is repetitiously mentioned in Buku Harapan is its promise and hope for positive economic growth of the country. The PH leaders wish to change the monopoly of market by only a few people in power but rather to be shared equally among all the citizens. In the context of EM, market dynamic and economic agents are expected to play a role in the whole ecological shift. Economic agents are not limited to industrial players that has direct impacts to the environment, but rather it is inclusive of all economic players such as producers, customers, consumers, financial institution and such (Mol & Sonnenfeld, 2000). In Buku Harapan, the government, expect a change in the whole economic players and this includes those who are dealing with environmental activities. A direct example of this is clearly stated in Promise No 39, on the responsibilities of economic-actors that the government expect them to play. PH government promised that the party would be more cautious in choosing those who would have the mandate to manage flora and fauna activities. It will swerve away from cronies and capitalist to avoid misuse and mismanage of natural resource. PH further hopes that with the implementation of technologies, there will be more job opportunities opened for the people, so, in a way, there will be multi-benefits not only for the environment, but in terms of economic expansion and as well as social stability.

It is almost all through the manifesto that the PH government highlights its concern over economic shift, and these too can be viewed from EM perspective particularly in the roles that the government assigned for these economic actor. For example, Pillar 3 main discussion is about the economic growth of the nation. There are 10 promises in this pillar which includes Promise No. 39 which has been elaborated above. Aside from that, PH highlighted the roles that other economic actors should play such as traders, entrepreneurs as well as the role of women in increasing the economic status of themselves as well as for

the nation. PH suggested that entrepreneurs, particularly Bumiputra to play an active role and participate in the international market. It also planned to broaden its economic investment internationally by investing with giant countries such as China. With economic boost, the number of job opportunities for the people are also expected to increase.

EM suggested that economic growth as an imperative measurement for a country (Hills & Welford, 2009). PH had its plans of enhancing the economic growth of the country and it also highlighted the roles that economic players should play to execute its promises. However, another elements that would be beneficial to be looked at is the rules and policy that guide the actors. With good policy to adhere, economic actors can play hand in hand with the authorities, correspondingly, this could be explained on the third notion of EM below which is the transformation of the role of nation-state.

Taking into account Malaysia's current scenario, it is not an understatement to expect market dynamic would change soon as well as would not expect to see the economic players becoming ecological reform agents in the near future. As discussed by Hills & Welford (2002), market-based environmental reforms are not easily achieved and it is not universal. It requires a strong fundamental basis among the country's economic, political and social players. To start with, Malaysia's political scenario is not at its best. At times when the manifesto was published, PH did not expect that the party would win the country's general election. In May 2019, one year after it had ruled the country, Mahathir Mohamad confessed that PH made too many promises to the citizens as it didn't expect to rule the country ("The Day", 2019). On top of this, there are other issues internally and internationally faced by the party at that point of time.

Transformation in the Role of Nation-State

The third concept of EM suggested by Mol & Sonnenfeld (2000) is the role of nation-state. According to Mol & Sonnenfeld, EM expects that there should be a more flexible governance and less top-down national command and control. Compared with the other concepts of EM discussed in the manifesto, this is the only concept that does not reflect in Buku Harapan. The promises in the manifesto highlights the urgency of the government to relook at the existing policy and guidelines in order to maneuver the country towards a better nation.

As PH frequently highlighted on the mistakes made by the previous government, particularly on being too loose in its governance. The newly elected government planned to strengthen guidelines and policy as the main pillar to ensure that its promises and plans will be implemented accordingly.

Again, taking Promise No 39 as an example, as it clearly relates to environmental protection, the government, reiterate its 'power' on tackling environmental issue. As opposed to EM concept which suggested that there will be less top-down command (Mol & Sonnenfeld, 2000), what was mentioned in Buku Harapan is the opposite. PH promised that its environmental policies and regulations will be regularly reviewed. This shows that PH would want to look into detail on the environmental issues that had happened and will happen in the country.

Sustainable Development and EM

Although there are slight differences between EM and sustainable development concept, it should be noted that the two concepts are ideological and political concepts that particularly speak on the relationship between economy and the environment (Berger et. al., 2001). The basis of this is that both, EM and sustainable development emphasize on economic growth, environmental improvement, global and social equality and distribution. However, EM has a sharper focus on handling capitalists' political economy while sustainable development is rather lack focus (Berger et al, 2001). Thus it is also beneficial to understand EM concept in this manifesto by referring to any promises directly or indirectly to the Sustainable Development Goals. All of the five pillars and most their sub-promises in the PH manifesto can be mapped directly at least to one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example, under Pillar number 3, Promise number 33, the PH government promised "to set up Equal Opportunity Commission" which speaks volume with SDG number 10, "Reduce Inequalities".

As discussed in the previous sections, similar trends can be observed when ones compared the contents of PH's Manifesto and SDGs. Buku Harapan emulates many socio-economic dimensions of the SDGs, quantitatively as well as qualitatively. However, the same observation is not translated in regards to environmental concern. Out of 17 SDGs, 7 of them directly address environmental challenges (SDG 6,7,11,12,13,14 and 15). Whereas for Buku Harapan, as previously mentioned, only

Promise 39 directly discusses environmental issue. Given the fact that water is necessary to sustain life as well as economic activities, there is no special mention on protection of water resources, though climate change has been addressed specifically in this promise.

CONCLUSION

This paper asserts significance of EM as a framework to better understand the nexus between political institution, environmental protection and economic growth. Correspondingly, it is necessary to highlight the nexus of the three important elements of EM are sparsely and vaguely embedded in the PH manifesto. Instead, the PH government repetitiously reiterates its plans on developing the country and moving the country towards becoming an advanced nation. The directions of PH's manifesto, are inclined towards fixing the more 'important' things that need to be fixed urgently which are the economic and political stability rather than focusing on the needs of the environment in a larger context.

It might be too early for Malaysia to be one of the 'ecologically-modernized' country. Malaysia is lacking behind in terms of producing new technologies especially green technologies or becoming one of the world's leading industrial player in general. The roles need to played by actors at the nation-state level are also unclear. In the context of EM, Malaysia is yet to achieve the right balance between technological advancement, economic growth and environmental priorities. Considering some of the recent environmental disasters like chemical pollution in Pasir Gudang which endangered not only natural resources but also public health at large, assurance on better environmental practices that ensure minimal human and environmental impacts should be clearly and holistically integrated into political manifestos and policy-making of a democratic party. Political manifestos which promote an equilibrium between economic, environmental, and social well-being might even be a winning factor for any political parties in the future to claim their victories.

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