



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH
TREADMILL OF PRODUCTION AND METABOLIC RIFT IN
CECIL RAJENDRA'S SELECTED POEMS**

SUHADA BINTI FADZIL

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By

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**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
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June 2018

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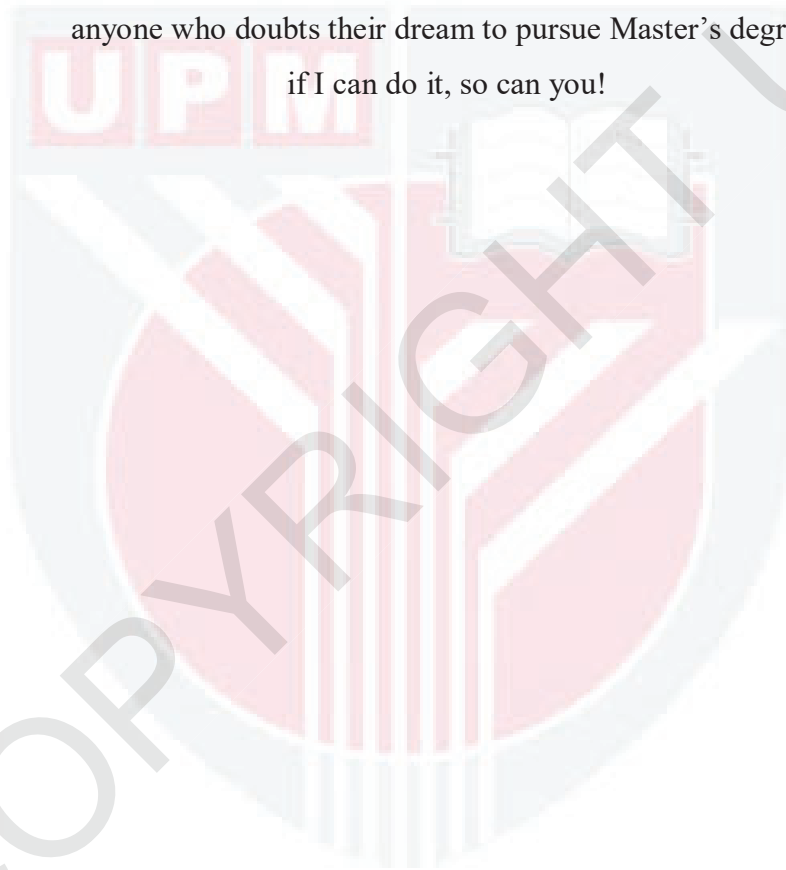
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research firstly
to my parents Fadzil Karyadi and Kasmawati Mas'od
who have always loved me unconditionally.

And to the rest of my family members
who have always been supportive towards what I do.

Also to all of my school teachers and lecturers whom I am truly grateful of having.

Last but not least, this research is dedicated to
anyone who doubts their dream to pursue Master's degree,
if I can do it, so can you!



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

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SUHADA BINTI FADZIL

June 2018

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Malaysia being one of the developing countries has always been ambitious in its journey to achieve the status of a 'developed nation' by year 2020. Unfortunately, the capitalist nature of its economic system has endangered the country's most treasured heritage, which is its environment and natural resources. Therefore, there is an increasing concern about the effects of development on the environment, which have been taken for granted in the pursuit of economic progress. The emerging awareness has driven Malaysia to also work on achieving sustainable development especially when environmental sustainability is one of her goals. Changes in the environment caused by development have caught the attention of Malaysian authors and going green to preserve the environment is emerging as a popular theme in many literary works. Cecil Rajendra is among the Malaysian authors who consistently deal with environmental issues in their works. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to analyse the relationship between Malaysia's development and its environmental sustainability in Cecil Rajendra's selected poems produced during the period from 1978 to 2004. The objective of this study is to examine the way Cecil Rajendra illustrates Malaysia's development and to investigate the poet's views on Malaysia's environmental sustainability in his selected poems. This research involves the use of two concepts under the theory of eco-Marxism which are 'treadmill of production' and 'metabolic rift'. The findings of this research show that Rajendra illustrates Malaysia's development as capitalistic and destructive to nature as it causes environmental degradation and his views of Malaysia's development is that the country is not environmentally sustainable due to the effects of development towards the entire ecosystem.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sastera

**PEMBANGUNAN DAN KELESTARIAN ALAM SEKITAR
MELALUI ‘TREADMILL OF PRODUCTION’ DAN ‘METABOLIC RIFT’
DALAM SAJAK TERPILIH CECIL RAJENDRA**

Oleh

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Malaysia sebagai sebuah negara yang sedang membangun sentiasa bercita-cita tinggi untuk mencapai status ‘negara maju’ menjelang tahun 2020. Malangnya, sifat kapitalis dalam sistem ekonominya telah mengorbankan khazanah negara yang sangat bernilai iaitu sumber semula jadinya. Oleh itu, ianya merupakan satu kebimbangan apabila isu alam sekitar diambil mudah dalam usaha negara mengejar pembangunan. Kesedaran yang muncul telah mendorong Malaysia untuk turut berusaha mencapai pembangunan yang mampan terutama sekali apabila salah satu matlamatnya terdiri daripada kelestarian alam sekitar. Perubahan pada alam sekitar yang diakibatkan oleh pembangunan telah menarik perhatian penulis-penulis Malaysia memandangkan alam sekitar merupakan salah satu tema popular dalam karya sastera. Cecil Rajendra adalah di antara penulis-penulis Malaysia yang konsisten dalam menulis sajak mengenai isu-isu alam sekitar. Oleh itu, tujuan utaman kajian ini adalah untuk menganalisa hubungan di antara pembangunan Malaysia dan kelestarian alam sekitarnya dalam sajak-sajak terpilih Cecil Rajendra bermula dari tahun 1978 hingga 2004. Antara objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti cara Cecil Rajendra memaparkan pembangunan Malaysia dan untuk menyiasat pandangan penyajak mengenai kelestarian alam sekitar di Malaysia dalam sajak terpilihnya. Kajian ini dilaksanakan dengan menggunakan dua konsep di bawah teori eko-Marxisme iaitu ‘treadmill of production’ dan ‘metabolic rift’. Penemuan akhir kajian ini mendapati Rajendra memaparkan pembangunan Malaysia sebagai kapitalis dan perosak alam sekitar kerana ia menyebabkan pencemaran alam sekitar dan penyajak juga berpendapat bahawa pembangunan di Malaysia adalah tidak lestari dari aspek alam sekitarnya kerana ia memberikan kesan buruk kepada seluruh ekosistem.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Term	Meaning
FMP	First Malaysia Plan
NEP	New Economic Policy
NDP	National Development Policy
NEM	New Economic Model
MLIE	Malaysian Literature in English



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Malaysia, formed in 1963 when independent Malaysia came together with Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak is known as one of the most rapidly developing countries in Asia. Although Singapore withdrew from the federation two years later, this multiracial nation has embarked on an ambitious development path with aspirations to be a fully developed nation by year 2020. As a new emerging nation, it has been consistently ranked among the most successful nations in Asia. The country's natural resources are seen as the most fundamental aspect for Malaysia's economic development, spurred by the wealth of its natural resources (Yusoff and Bhattasali v), specifically tin, rubber, palm oil and petroleum to generate growth (Yusoff et al. 1). Malaysia's economy has its roots during the British colonisation of Malaya (the current Peninsular or West Malaysia) until the Federation of Malaya achieved independence in 1957. Following the formation of Malaysia in 1963, the expanded nation embarked on its own economic journey with a series of five-year development plans, the first launched in 1966.

Independent Malaya built on what the Colonisers had started and left behind and later Malaysia continued with the development initiatives. One of the main objectives of the First Malaysia Plan (FMP) was to improve the living standard of the rural people and the lower income groups by increasing their productivity. Malaysia being a multiracial country stays focused on sustaining the equity among the people and unity is crucial in order to suit its heterogeneous nature. Malaysia's ideology of development focuses more on unity and economic growth in its goal of nation building. Since independence, Malaysia's economic and social development strategies have been formulated within the framework of a succession of national five-year development plans. In 1970, the New Economic Plan (NEP) was introduced by the government and the long term policy (1970-1990) aims to revive both Malays as well as the non-Malays' share of the economic cake. When implementing the NEP, the government used the export-oriented strategy as a double-edged sword to achieve both economic growth and equity.

The NEP was later replaced with National Development Policy (NDP) which consisted of the sixth and seventh (1991-2000) continuous plans. This was when Vision 2020 was introduced as the broad policy direction for Malaysia. It provides a much-needed guideline for becoming a fully-developed and industrialised Malaysia by the year 2020. It was in Vision 2020 that the term "sustainable development" was first highlighted. According to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, all five-year national development plans of Malaysia have underlined the elements of sustainable development which encompasses sustainable economic growth, with equitable distribution among society, balanced development,

access to basic infrastructure and utilities, access to education and healthcare services and mainstreaming of environmental conservation (United Nations). In 2009, Malaysia introduced the New Economic Model (NEM), which further encouraged the pursuit of sustainable development based on three goals, namely, high income, inclusivity and sustainability (United Nations).

Despite the goals of the balanced economic and environmental factors in the sustainable development vision, Malaysia's development still appeared to be destructive to nature. According to Khalil et al., "Malaysia faced the tension between economic incentives and the claim for ethical consciousness with regard to the environment" (460). It can be inferred that it is challenging for Malaysia to be fully developed without exploiting the natural resources. Environmental resources exploitation, which acts as economic generators have led to a steady increase in the degradation of Malaysia's natural environment (Mokthsim and Salleh, 299). The environment is also constantly threatened due to the destruction of natural resources to meet the increasing human demands and development activities (Rahman 59). Therefore, it is crucial to examine the country's historical facts of the economic system in order to investigate the cause of Malaysia's environmental issues.

Malaysia's ideology of economic development always falls back on its pre-independence historical facts which support the idea of the exploitation of natural resources through capitalism. Capitalism was introduced to the country through colonialism when Malaysia supplied Britain with the needed raw materials for its industrial development (Tajuddin 101). However, why do we blame capitalism as the cause of environmental degradation in Malaysia? This is because, the nature of the capitalist system according to John Bellamy Foster in *Ecology Against Capitalism* is profit-driven (10) and the system operates with high natural resources exploitation. According to Clark and Foster in *Marx's Ecology in the 21st Century*, the increasing scale of capitalist production generates the widespread ecological degradation and pollution in a finite world, and the exploitation of nature endangers and disrupts cycles and processes that play a crucial role in the regeneration of ecosystems (145).

Malaysia has seen extensive land use change treated to government developmental policies. In the 1960s and 1970s, the country's economic development was primarily dependent on the agricultural sector which required the conversion of forested areas into agricultural land, mainly for oil palm and rubber plantations. Despite a move away from agriculture towards industry and services, there is still tension, and indeed perhaps growing inequality, both between cities and rural areas, and within cities themselves (Patke and Holden 21). According to Abdullah and Nakagoshi,

In the 1980s, there was a major economic transformation to focus on the manufacturing sector...[and] as a result, there has been an increased demand for land, which includes the removal of permanent forest reserves and state forests [and] all of these

changes have been identified as major causes of environmental degradation (264).

As the people are all hoping for positive changes in development, our natural resources however are sacrificed and this has affected Malaysia's environmental landscape in many ways. Being one of the countries endowed with natural resources, Malaysia has been widely criticised for its inconsiderate use of natural resources. The country has also been globally condemned as its rapid economic growth is simultaneously interrupting the environmental sustainability and threatening the wellbeing of future generations. According to Saadatian et al., among the main pressures that threaten Malaysia is the land-use change, pollution and introduction of exotic species which may lead to unsustainability (263). It can be inferred that it is challenging for Malaysia as a developing country to economically grow and at the same time maintain its environmental sustainability. According to WWF Malaysia, from 1983 to 2003, there was a reduction of about 4.9 million hectares - an average of 250,000 hectare of forest being lost annually due to the implementation of development ("Forest").

When development started to take place in 1970, the pollution of both water and air has been constantly increasing due to the mushrooming of factories. Malaysia's development has also caused huge impacts on the ecosystem and thus endangering the livelihood of the people and threatening the wildlife. According to Chuan, "economic, social and political objectives [which] have to be achieved through development, have greatly taxed the nation's natural resources, such as land, forests and water, while the discharge of wastes of various kinds has resulted in the degradation of rivers, the seas and air" (3).

Since "nature has been one of the treated themes in [Malaysian] literature" (Ahmed and Hashim 3), "environmental issues have attracted the attention of many writers" (Mamat et al. 118). Therefore, Malaysian writers, like their counterparts in many other countries, are the ones who are affected by the environmental issues and the changes in the environmental landscape, and will definitely be drawn into examining the environmental issues in their works. The Environmental movement in Malaysia is still new and was not much mentioned until the 1960's (Mamat et al. 118). Also, Malaysian writers who dealt with the issue portrayed the reality of the country's environmental situation and have been critical of the way the environmental concerned with the way the issue has been handled. As Huggan and Tiffin have asserted, "One of the central tasks of post-colonial Eco criticism as an emergent field has been to contest and also to provide viable alternatives to western ideology of development" (27). Malaysia after independence should no longer be influenced by the way the colonisers moulded the country. Instead, it should have its own ideas of development that will suit its heterogeneous nature. Literary writings should be taken seriously as the critics, views and opinions of the people threaded into the works will help offer ideas in support of nation building.

The environmental degradation caused by development has inspired Malaysian writers to stand up against the environmentally unsustainable development plans. The antagonistic relationship between development and the environment have also preoccupied local writers writing in English such as Muhammad Haji Salleh, KS Maniam and Cecil Rajendra, to name a few. Among these writers, Rajendra is the most consistent in writing about environmental issues. Most of his works revolve around the concern about the environmental degradation and its threat to the ecosystems. Rajendra who has been writing since 1965 has been critical of the uneven development of Malaysia and how it has drastically caused changes in the ecosystems. His works mostly discuss “oppression, injustice and exploitation, corruption and greed, want, hunger and poverty, and ecological ruin” (Addison). Rajendra emphasises that these are issues that must be adequately addressed before any country can aspire to achieve developed nation status.

Rajendra champions the protection of the poor as they are the people who are greatly affected by the country’s uneven development. The poet is consistent in maintaining his viewpoint in his criticism and is hopeful for a better Malaysia. This includes his concern about environmental sustainability for future generations. Through his poems, Rajendra takes the authorities to task for their biased economic planning and the absence in their agenda of environmental sustainability and thus indirectly, ignoring the well-being of the people. He concentrates more on issues untouched by other poets, such as politics and government policies in Malaysia (Ariffin).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

A country with an exceptional green and beautiful landscape like Malaysia, cannot fail to inspire Malaysian authors (be they poets, short story writers, novelists, or playwrights) to write about it and celebrate its beauty and values (Ahmed and Hashim 4). Malaysian literary field encompasses many issues including environmental issues yet not many studies have focused on these issues as the subject “is fairly new” (Ahmed and Hashim 3). According to Mamat et al., the environmental movement in Malaysia is still new and not much mentioned or discussed by any literary body (118). Although the Malaysian environmental scene has changed rapidly and significantly due to the advanced economic development (Hezri and Hasan 37) which has disregarded environmental sustainability for future generations. The literature reveals that there are few studies that have discussed the issue of the environment in relation to development in Malaysia despite the increasing awareness.

Among Malaysian scholars that have studied Eco criticism are Agnes Yeow Swee Kim and Zainor Izat Zainal. Agnes studied the eco-apocalypse visions in Malaysian poetry in English while Zainor investigated the environmental attitudes in contemporary Malaysian novels in English. These two studies have opened up the real environmental issues discussed in Malaysian literature in English and efforts should be made towards more focus in future research of environmental studies in Malaysian Literature in English (MLIE).

Furthermore, there are also very limited studies that have discussed Cecil Rajendra's works despite his consistent environmental-theme poems. In the field of literature, previous scholars like Mohd Siddik Ariffin, Agnes Yeow, Gautaman Ganesan and Elangkeeran Sapabathy, Saroja Dhanapal and Kalai Vaani Rajandram have studied Rajendra's poems in light of different theories such as environmentalism, orientalism and eco-criticism and focused only at either the representation of physical environment or Rajendra's style of writing and its influence. This present study however ventures into different concepts which are 'treadmill of production' and 'metabolic rift' (both under the eco-Marxism theory) and unlike previous studies, this research does not only focus on the representation of physical environment in Rajendra's poems but also study the relationship between development and environmental sustainability.

Abdul Wahab Ali and Zainor Izat Zainal studied Malaysian development in literary works of poems and novels. Ali studied the attitude of Malaysian poets towards socio-economic development and divided Malaysian poets into two categories. The first category is poets who are hopeful for development and write on the positive effects of development while writers in the other category write about their disappointment towards development (Ali 322). The emerging development in the 1970's was new to Malaysian poets at that time, having no clue on how far development will change their lives. Ali's study ventured on the social effects of development. Zainal on the other hand studies on how development threatened land in Malaysian novels. Her study focused on Malaysian development in contemporary Malaysian novels, which reveals the authors' multiracial views on and criticism against development. To summarize, these two studies look at Malaysian poets' attitude towards development and the multiracial views and criticism on development respectively. This present study on the other hand, focuses more on development and environmental sustainability in Cecil Rajendra's selected poems.

Although environmental sustainability is closely related to development, yet there are limited studies on environmental sustainability especially in Malaysian literature in English. There are studies on Rajendra's poems on development but none has discussed at length the relationship between development and environmental sustainability in his poems. Environmental sustainability studied by previous scholars are mainly in the field of science. Saadatian et al, Hezri and Hassan, Mokhtsim and Salleh, to name a few, study environmental sustainability in the Malaysian context, specifically on the evolution, related policies and ways to achieve sustainability.

Therefore, to bridge these gaps, this present study examines how development and environmental sustainability are discussed in Cecil Rajendra's poems using the concepts of 'treadmill of production' and 'metabolic rift'. The concern with environmental sustainability in this study is that natural resources have not been sustainably utilised in the on-going process of development thus threatening the environmental needs of future generation. Therefore, in light of this environmental

concern, this study is hoped to add on to literary critical practice in Malaysian Literature in English, focusing on the ecocritical approach.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to examine Cecil Rajendra's views on development and environmental sustainability based on the selected poems written between 1978 and 2004. Environmental issues have affected the livelihood of Malaysians and threatened the country's ecological systems. It is necessary to identify the environmental issues caused by development. The first objective of this study is to examine the way Cecil Rajendra illustrates Malaysia's development in the selected poems. The second objective is to investigate Cecil Rajendra's views on environmental sustainability in the selected poems.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the research objectives, the research questions are as follows:

How does Cecil Rajendra illustrate Malaysia's development in his poems?

- i. What are Cecil Rejendra's views on Malaysia's environmental sustainability?

1.5 Conceptual Framework of the Study

The nature of the capitalist system which is profit-driven embodies the idea of maximum exploitation of nature and this has caused significant adverse impacts on both the environment and the people. Malaysia's capitalist economic development has taken its toll on various aspects of the environment, thus causing environmental degradation. Therefore, this study looks at two concepts under the theory of eco-Marxism in order to investigate the relationship between development and environmental sustainability in Malaysia. The concepts of treadmill of production and metabolic rift are chosen in this research to examine Cecil Rajendra's views on development and environmental sustainability.

The concept of treadmill of production refers to the production that leads to the increase of environmental problems especially in capitalist developing economies. The concept was proposed by Allan Schnaiberg to describe environmental degradation caused by human capitalist activities (Stretesy et al. 4). It is the understanding of capitalism's relationship with the environment in terms of the extraction of natural resources (Islam and Hossain 146). This concept proposes the idea that the mode of production of the capitalist system is a never-ending cycle through maximum natural resources exploitation which results in environmental

degradation. In this study, the concept of treadmill of production is used to determine whether the capitalist method of production in Malaysia's development contributes to environmental degradation.

The second concept that will be applied in this study is the metabolic rift. It is Karl Marx's key concept of ecological crisis tendencies under capitalism. Metabolic rift is the term that Marx used to explain the crack in the metabolism or the interdependence and relationships between human and nature. As Foster and Burkett assert, Marx's concern about ecological sustainability arises from capitalist production that causes a metabolic rift' between humanity and nature (403). Therefore, in this study, the concept of metabolic rift is applied to examine whether capitalism in Malaysia leads to the separation between human beings and nature. Furthermore, this concept is also used to study the effects of development on environmental sustainability in Malaysia based on the relationship between human beings and nature.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Firstly, this research will contribute to the body of criticism on Cecil Rajendra's works. This will inspire scholars to further examine the poet's views on certain Malaysian issues that have not received the attention they deserve. Secondly, this research will extend the literary critical practice of Malaysian poetry in English by focusing on the environmental perspective and at the same time adding to the debate on development in Malaysia. Thirdly, this research will broaden the discourse of development and environmental sustainability in the literary field. It is hoped that this research will shed light on the interconnectedness between society and the environment, bearing in mind that development will continue as Malaysia marches on towards achieving fully-developed nation status by 2020. The greater demand for economic development and human activities justify the need for more effective and environmentally sustainable practices for the country.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This research focused on Cecil Rajendra's selected poems taken from his five books of poetry published from 1978 to 2004. The books are *Bones & Feathers* (1978), *Hour of Assassins* (1983), *Child of The Sun* (1986), *Lovers, Lunatics & Lallang* (1989) and *By Trial 'N Terror* (2004). The selected poems were chosen based on the recurring themes and issues related to environment and development. Each of the selected poems portrays the environmental changes and degradation caused by Malaysia's development through Rajendra's voice. The selected poems will help this researcher to zoom in on Malaysia's development agenda in order to examine the country's environmental sustainability.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

As an environmentalist, Cecil Rajendra wrote numerous poems that champion the cause of justice for the environment, not only in the Malaysia context but also other Asian countries like Thailand, Philippines and India. However, this study only focuses on Rajendra's selected poems on Malaysia's development system and its effects on environmental sustainability. In examining the effects of Malaysia's development on its environmental sustainability, two concepts under the theory of eco-Marxism are chosen. Despite various concepts under the theory of eco-Marxism, this study only focused on the concepts of treadmill of production and metabolic rift. The first concept of treadmill of production is used to examine the illustration of Malaysia's development and the second concept of metabolic rift is used to investigate the state of environmental sustainability in Malaysia based on Cecil Rajendra's selected poems.

1.9 Definition of Key Terms

There are many recurring terms that are used throughout this thesis such as 'development', 'environment' and 'environmental sustainability'. Therefore, this section will provide the definition of each term.

1.10 Development

Although there are many definitions and theories of development, certain significant concepts of the definition of development should be noted. Wolfgang Sachs in *Dictionary of Development* defines development as the idea which oriented emerging nations through post-war history" (xv). Peet and Hartwick define development as "making a better life for everyone" (1). Micheal Todaro's definition of development is "the process of improving the quality of all human lives with three equally important aspects which are, to raise living level, to create a condition that is conducive for people's growth and to increase the freedom of choice of the people" (5). Development in this study is taken to mean the process of improving the quality of human lives mainly through the economic aspect.

1.11 Environment

According to Ayo Fatubarin, environment refers to all living organisms such as plants, animals, human beings and microorganism (54)". According to Larsson, 'environment' is defined as "water, air, soil, flora and fauna" (122). Environment, in the 1986 New Zealand Environment Act, is defined as "ecosystems and their constituent parts; all natural and physical resources; the social, economic, aesthetic and cultural conditions which affect the environment or which are affected by changes to the environment" (Larsson 122). In the Stockholm Declaration 1972, environment is defined as "especially representative samples of natural ecosystems" (Larsson 122). The term 'environment' in this study is taken to mean the space in

which living things such as human beings, animals and plants live and operate and their relationships in the ecological chain. In other words, the way these living things and their surroundings benefit one another.

1.12 Environmental Sustainability

‘Environmental sustainability’ according to John Morelli is a balanced condition of which human society are allowed to make use of its surrounding to fulfil its needs without restraining its surrounding from regenerating (5). Robert Goodland on the other hand define environmental sustainability as “the maintenance of natural capital” (10) which aims to improve human wellbeing by protecting the raw materials (3). Environmental sustainability in this research is taken to mean the maintenance of natural resources in order that action involving the environment today will not jeopardise the chances of future generations.

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