

## Public Development Sustainability Values: A Case Study in Sepang Malaysia

### Menilai Ciri Kelestarian Nilai Pembangunan Masyarakat di Malaysia: Satu Kajian Kes di Sepang Malaysia

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#### ABSTRACT

*The concept of sustainable development has been implemented in Malaysia for more than a decade. Nevertheless, the issues of unsustainability still persist, raising questions about whether or not the values held by local populations pertaining to development processes are compatible with sustainable development values. This study was conducted in Sepang, Selangor to explore the values of public in the development process by using qualitative approach. The data was gathered from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with the participants recruited through purposive sampling. Forty participants have participated in this study. The transcript was analysed using thematic analysis to identify the theme values and the values categories. This study has identified four themes and twelve categories of public values in development. The themes were freedom, security, environment and development. The sustainability characteristics of every theme and category were explored by comparing them to existing established sustainable development values. It was evident that every theme and category of values displays sustainability characteristics despite public limited knowledge about sustainable development concepts. These findings therefore concluded that in principle, the unsustainability issues in this area did not result from the incompatibility of public development values with those of sustainable development. The implication of these findings is that the value systems of local people are already in harmony with the concept of sustainable development and could be effectively integrated into the local sustainable development framework.*

*Keywords: Values; sustainable development; local; engagement; empowerment*

#### ABSTRAK

*Konsep pembangunan lestari telah diterima dan digunapakai dalam kerangka pembangunan di Malaysia selama lebih sedekad. Walaupun mempraktikkan konsep pembangunan lestari, Malaysia masih menunjukkan ketidaklestarian dalam pelbagai aspek. Ini menimbulkan persoalan tentang keselarian di antara nilai pembangunan masyarakat dan nilai pembangunan lestari. Kajian ini telah dijalankan di Sepang, Selangor untuk meneroka nilai pembangunan masyarakat tempatan serta menilai ciri kelestarian setiap nilai yang ditemui. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, data kajian diperolehi daripada temubual mendalam dengan peserta kajian yang dipilih menerusi persampelan bertujuan. Transkrip dianalisa secara analisa tema iaitu dengan mengenalpasti kategori-kategori nilai yang membentuk tema-tema nilai. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan terdapat empat tema dan dua belas kategori nilai pembangunan masyarakat. Tema tersebut adalah kebebasan, keselamatan, alam sekitar dan pembangunan. Ciri kelestarian setiap tema dan kategori nilai diperolehi secara perbandingan dengan nilai pembangunan lestari yang telah termaktub. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa setiap tema dan kategori nilai pembangunan masyarakat menonjolkan ciri kelestarian walaupun pengetahuan masyarakat tentang konsep pembangunan lestari amat terhad. Secara prinsipnya kajian ini merumuskan bahawa isu ketidaklestarian yang berlaku bukan berpunca dari ketidaksiharan di antara nilai masyarakat dan nilai pembangunan lestari. Penemuan kajian telah memberi implikasi berikut iaitu nilai pembangunan masyarakat tempatan adalah selari dengan nilai pembangunan lestari dan boleh diintegrasikan ke dalam kerangka pembangunan lestari tempatan bagi melahirkan suatu kerangka pembangunan lestari yang bersifat sepunya.*

*Katakunci: Nilai; pembangunan lestari; tempatan; keterlibatan; perkongsian tanggungjawab*

## INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is obviously a value-based concept. The concept's important elements include balance, limitation and capacity, and are determined by the process of measuring or valuing. Multiple components pronounced in this concept including the basic needs and well-being are defined by values. The indicators introduced in this concept, among which are the level of income, health and education, are significantly value-based. The goals promoted in this concept, including tolerance, justice, harmony and democracy, are either underlined by values or are values themselves. The importance of values in this concept is central to the issues of unsustainability. Are the values currently present in the concept in line with the values of the public? Are the public, as the largest stakeholders in development, agreed upon and upholding these values? With these questions, we will begin the quest to explore the sustainable character of public development values to resolve the issues of unsustainability from the perspective of values.

The concept of sustainable development was introduced by developed countries and therefore, the values underpinning this concept reflect the values promoted by those countries. Even though many countries have developed their own local sustainable development frameworks, the values which underpin the original concept are still prominent due to the process of direct adaptation. This would raise at least two potential consequences; firstly, that the proposed values might conflict with local values, and secondly, that local values that are important to local people might be disregarded. Both consequences could lead to sharply reduced participation of local people in the development process.

Values play significant roles in navigating sustainable development as they are of central importance in people's lives (O'Brien 2005; Witt 2011). People draw upon values to determine their private and public goals and construct the value frameworks that support those goals (O'Brien 2005). Griggs et al. (2013) argued that the goal-setting approach in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) succeeded in raising public and policymaking support. Values which have great influence in framing public goals are therefore very important in realizing sustainable development. After the financial crisis in Asia in

the late 1990s, Asian values were suspected of contributing to the crisis. The inadequacies of Asian values which mostly derived from religion and culture were investigated in relation to economic and development process. The most-critiqued Asian values during this period were the paternal values imposed by the government, including discriminating social hierarchies and collectivism (Sung-Joo 1999). The critiques argued that the absence of development-essential values including globalization, non-discrimination and individualism were reasons behind the collapse of the economies of Asian countries. Weber (1958) once argued that only Protestants have the qualities to revolutionize development effectively. If this argument is true, Malaysia as a Muslim country might be lacking in certain qualities essential for efficient development. On the contrary, Mahathir (2012), the former Prime Minister of Malaysia argued that Asian values including collectivism and respect the elders are the real strength of Asian and should be integrated with the western values in order to develop economically (Sivamurugan 2006). Therefore, we feel that it is crucial to learn whether or not the values held by the Malaysian public inhibit Malaysia's effort to develop sustainably.

In reference to previous studies, there are at least three constructs which might contributed towards the unsustainability characteristics of public values in development process which are the unsustainable criteria of public values (Inglehart et al. 2004); transformation of public values (Chamhuri 2000; Mahathir 2012; Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, Muhammad Haji Salleh & Abd Ghapa Harun 2011; Yahaya 2009); and, public attitude in development (Carr et al. 2012; Schudson 2007; Sneddon, Richard & Norgaard 2006). Theoretically, these three constructs might dissociate public development values from sustainability and hamper the sustainable development agenda in this country. Departing from this theoretical framework, this article is developed to analyze the sustainability characteristics of Malaysian public development values.

Sepang, an area in Malaysia was selected as the research area due to the rapid development process that has transformed this previously agriculture-based rural area to a patchwork of semi-urban and urban areas, through the development of Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) and Federal Territory of Putrajaya (the capital of Malaysia).

KLIA's operation is fully supported by highly-upgraded infrastructures and highways linking it to major trading points (e.g. Port Klang) and Kuala Lumpur. When Sepang was dominated by agricultural sectors, rubber and palm plantations produced its major commodities. In 2005, approximately 46.37 percent of the total area was designated for agricultural activities (a loss of 96.56 percent of the 2002 total agricultural area). This tremendous cutting back of agricultural lands indicates the nature of the major transformation Sepang has been experiencing in recent years.

Prior to the writing of this article, a study on Malaysian public values in development was conducted in 2010-2012 in Sepang, and part of the findings were published in a few journal articles (Zurina & Hukil Sino 2013; Zurina & Hukil 2012; Zurina, Abdul Samad & Hukil 2011). The findings give us an insight into the actual values of the public in regards to the development process. For the purpose of this article, we further analyzed the values identified to determine their sustainability characteristics.

## METHODOLOGY

### AREA OF STUDY

Sepang is located on the geographical coordinates of 2.8167 degrees north and 101.7333 degrees east. The number of residents in this 56.150 hectares area is 138, 100 at a density of 163 people per square kilometer. Sepang Municipal Council estimates the population would increase to 315, 540 people in 2015 at the rate of 6.47 per cent. Bumiputera comprises 65.10 percent of the total population. Residents in Sepang resided in 19 traditional villages, 4 new villages and 23 residential zones (Majlis Perbandaran Sepang 2007).

### PARTICIPANTS

Participants (designated as P) were selected through purposive sampling to represent the public and the decision makers in this study. The public participants were selected from each residential area consisted of the village heads of traditional villages (designated as TV), village development officers of new villages (NV) and chairpersons of communities committees (designated as CC) from residential zones. Selection of these groups

of people as participants is based on their active roles in development process in their area while acting as the facilitators and intermediary of the communities they represent with the Municipal Councils and District and Land Office. 35 public participants participated in this study. The decision maker participants were selected from Municipal Councils (MC) and District and Land Office (DL) personnel. MC and DL personnels were chosen as decision maker participants due to their active roles in planning, decision making and implementing development agenda in this area. 5 decision makers participated in this study.

### INSTRUMENT

This study adopted a qualitative approach to obtain the development values of the participants through focus group discussion. The instrument developed for this study was a pre-determined semi-structured questionnaire. The questions in this instrument were designed to explore the development values of the participants by addressing general and specific issues of development in this area in the context of hierarchy and preferences. The hierarchy and preferences of the participants were translated as their values towards development.

The sustainability characteristics of the values were obtained from systematic comparison towards established sustainable development values through content analysis. The values of the participants were used as the keywords throughout the content analysis in search for their match with the established sustainable development values. The values with matching terms and meanings indicated the presence of sustainability characteristics of the values.

A pilot study was conducted prior to the actual fieldwork to assess the reliability of the questionnaire to achieve the objectives of the research. A public participant and 2 officers of MC and DL participated in this study. The predetermined questions which guide the participants to certain directions were identified and eliminated. This is to assure the exploration of the values within the focus group discussion is conducted without biasness.

### DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSES

Data was collected through a series of in-depth focus group discussions and interviews using the

same instrument to obtain in-depth understanding of the meanings and definitions the participants gave (O'Neill 2001). In the beginning of the focus group discussions and interviews session, the participants were asked to give their opinion on the development process in their area. The discussion was then conducted multi-directionally with the participants allowed to voice their views on anything and at any time. All views expressed by the participants were noted as they indicated the values of the participants. The focus group discussion transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis to explore the main perspectives of the participants. Thematic analysis involves methodical reading through the verbatim transcripts and segmenting and coding the text into categories that highlight what the group discussed. The categories were derived from the issues raised by the participants. They were then assessed and compared, with differences noted. The categories were combined and assigned to major themes that provide a framework to explain the participants' values in the development process in their area.

This research adopted two types of triangulations which were triangulation of sources and analysts. Two groups of participants with different perspectives and views were selected in an effort to triangulate the sources of the data. Two independent analysts were appointed to conduct the thematic analysis on the transcripts in order to check on selective perceptions and illuminate blind spots in the interpretive analysis.

NVivo10 was used to manage the thematic analysis. In order to validate the analysis, the thematic results among the analysts were compared by comparing the kappa coefficient between them. The thematic results for each transcript were validated when the kappa coefficient value was equal or more than 0.7.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Four themes of values appear from the thematic analysis: freedom, security, environment and development. Each theme and its categories are thoroughly evaluated to determine their sustainability characteristics. The participants' excerpts are labeled as P and subsequent numbering, roles (TV- village heads of traditional villages), NV- village development officers of new villages;

CC- chairpersons of communities' committees; MC-Municipal Councils personnel; LD-Land and District Office personnel).

### FREEDOM

The theme value of freedom is comprised of six categories of values which are: identity, culture and tradition, integrity, privileges, rights and participation. These categories are grouped under the value freedom because their actualisations are highly associated with freedom. Except for the values of integrity and privileges, the other values in this theme are directly pronounced in various documents related to sustainable development. The values of freedom are elaborated in Principle 1 Stockholm Declaration (United Nations Conference on The Human Environment 1972) which declares that man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life. The value of identity in this study arose from the issues of communities' grass roots, the sovereignty of the national language, citizenship, and honor and dignity, in development.

"...development is required to achieve the well-being but not to the extent that jeopardize our grass root, our identity, our tradition..." (P1TV)

The participants showed strong opposition to development activities that threaten the communities' grass roots and the sovereignty of the national language and citizenship. The participants believed that these values need to be pursued as they reflect their identity. By preserving their identity, the participants are reassured that their communities will consistently be recognized, respected and honored.

"...kids should be taught national history and language at the primary level to nurture their citizenship to honor and respect our nation and safeguard its sovereignty in future development..." (P1NV)

The significance of freedom and identity in sustainable development was stated in various sustainable development initiatives which mentioned that all peoples shall have the right to their economic, social and cultural development with due regard to their freedom and identity. Among them is Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On 25th September 2015, a new set

of goals adopted to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda namely Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations 2015). Each goal has specific targets to be achieved over the next 15 years. The participants' value of identity also resembles one of Goal 11 SDGs target which is to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage including identity.

The value of culture and tradition is frequently addressed in sustainable development. It was mentioned during the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention (1972) which considered that the deterioration or disappearance of any item of cultural or natural heritage constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all nations of the world. The Great Transition (Raskin et al. 2002) argues that a cultural renaissance throughout the world rooted in pride, respect for tradition, and an appreciation of local human and natural resources, would unleash a new sense of possibility and optimism. The significance of culture in civilization was also enunciated in the Preamble of the World Charter for Nature (United Nations 1982) which stated that civilization is rooted in nature, which has shaped human culture and influenced all artistic and scientific achievement. Recently, it has been argued that culture has a separate, distinct and integral role to play in sustainable development (Burford et al. 2013; United Nations 2015; UNESCO 2014; Soini & Birkeland 2014). The participants concern for local culture and tradition arose from the arrival of foreign cultures through the mass arrival of foreign workers in Malaysia. Similar to the value of identity, the participants believed that perseverance of local culture and tradition is also important to sustain their honor and dignity, hence their survival.

"...the mega projects have brought in hundreds if not thousands foreign workers. These people are alien to us...their lifestyles...skewed our culture, tradition... honor and dignity is now nonsense...how are we going to be recognized and respected in the future?..."(P9CC)

The abovementioned Goal 11 of SDGs also shares similar view of the participants. In the document 'Realizing the future we want for all: Report to the Secretary-General', it is mentioned

that communities and individuals must be able to create and practice their own culture and enjoy that of others free from fear (United Nations 2012). The concept of sustainable development is also argued as inter-subjective and intercultural (Witt 2014).

The participants' concern for their rights to retain their lands, religion and culture, indicated their value of rights. The participants insist that decision makers in development recognize and respect their rights on the above components. To the participants, losing their authority over their lands, religion and culture for the sake of development defeated the purpose of well-being pursued by the development. The importance of rights in sustainable development was mentioned in Principle 29 of Earth Charter (2000), through emphasizing the right to participate, individually or collectively, in relevant decision making processes.

"...the issue of lands is not just about land but it is also about our dignity. By taking our land in the name of development, we seem to lose our dignity as well... what is the point of development?" (P3TV)

The next category of value in this theme is participation. The value of participation is frequently addressed in sustainable development of the land. It was mentioned in two established documents of sustainable development which are the Earth Charter (2000) and the United Nations (1986) declaration. The Principle 9 of Earth Charter (2000) highlighted that all persons, without being required to prove an interest, have the right to seek, receive and disseminate information on activities or measures that are likely to have environmental impact and the right to participate, individually and collectively, in relevant decision-making processes (Earth Charter 2000). The Preamble of the United Nations (1986) declaration on the other hand, recognizes that development is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in fair distribution of benefits resulting there from. Every participant agrees that active participation of every stakeholder is very important in development process, and this is consistent with the particular sustainable development values described above.

“...it is very important for every party to participate in development...the government, private sectors, communities...without everyone participation, even great development plans won't work...” (P5TV)

The Goal 17 SDGs emphasises on partnership which built upon principles and values, a shared vision, and shared goals that place people and the planet at the center. This goal represents the value of participatory of the participants well. The Goal 16 also insists on responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels which also resembles the values of participatory of the participants (United Nations 2015).

Two categories of values under the theme of freedom are not directly enunciated in sustainable development, unlike the other value categories. These values are integrity and privileges. The value of integrity in this study arose from the issues of power abuse and discrimination.

“...an authority should have integrity. The integrity is not only for towards other people but also to the environment, the culture, the nation and the most important is to himself...” (P12TV)

The importance of ‘good governance’ was highlighted in multiple documents of sustainable development including the Millennium Declaration which highlighted the importance of good governance in meeting the objectives of each country (United Nations 2000). The Earth Charter (2000) recognizes transparent and accountable governance and the democratic participation of all concerned persons in decision-making processes as the prerequisites for achievement of environmental protection and sustainable development (Earth Charter 2000). The good governance proposal in both documents is consistent with the aim of alleviating power abuse by governments. Discrimination was also addressed in sustainable development under the principle of equality and justice in the Millennium Declaration (Part 1), which says that no individual and no nation must be denied the opportunity to benefit from development (United Nations 2000). The Goal 16 SDGs specifically address integrity by targeting substantial reduction of corruption and bribery in all forms and developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels (United Nations 2015). Both targets are significantly in line with the value of integrity of the participants.

The value of privileges also was not directly addressed in sustainable development. However, the issues brought up by the participants including the privileges in decision making, and to benefit economically from development, were addressed in the Principle 27 Earth Charter (Earth Charter 2000), which highlighted the right of indigenous peoples to control their lands, territories and natural resources.

“...the point of developing is to benefit from the process. What is the point to develop if local people does not benefit from it at all? They don't even consult us whether or not we agree of such development activities...” (P23TV)

This principle also insists that the indigenous peoples should be provided opportunities to participate in decision-making processes that are likely to affect their interests in area of environment and development. The issue of economic benefit raised by the participants was also addressed in the Earth Charter (2000) through the principle of equitable economy. In term of privileges in decision making, the Goal 16 SDGs addresses this value as well through participatory decision making (United Nations 2015).

#### SECURITY

The theme value of security did not have any other distinct categories besides the value of security itself. The value of security arose from the rising safety issues related to foreign workers. According to the participants, incidents of burglary committed by the foreigners in their area are increasing.

“...incidents of burglary have increased in parallel with the increase in the population of foreigners ...some have been caught while the rest are still at large...” (P7NV)

The concern on security was mentioned in Copenhagen Declaration (United Nations 1995) by emphasizing the mechanisms to achieve and to maintain the peace and security within and among every nation in the world. The Earth Charter also shared similar concern on security as highlighted in Chapter 21, stipulating that peace and security, environmental protection, sustainable development, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and indivisible (Earth Charter 2000). The Goal 16

SDGs is dedicated to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels (United Nations 2015). Specifically, it targets to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime, is in common with the value of security of the participants.

#### ENVIRONMENT

The theme value of environment consists of two distinct value categories which are environmental pollution and environmental disaster. Environment is an established sustainable development value by itself while issues regarding to environmental pollution and disasters were frequently highlighted in sustainable development related documents. Multiple initiatives have shown the importance of a pollution-free environment by declaring freedom from pollution to be a human right. Principle 17 of the Earth Charter (2000) emphasizes the state's responsibility to take all measures necessary to prevent, reduce and control pollution, while its principle on the Earth's carrying capacity displays concern for the ecosystem's resilience whereby the absence of environmental disasters is required. One of the targets of Goal 11 SDGs is to reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management. In addition, the Goal 8 SDGs promotes an endeavor to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation (United Nations 2015). The participants' concern about the negative impact of development on the environment is consistent with both goals and other abovementioned principles of sustainable development.

"...what is the point of development if we have to live in damaged environment? Exposed to air pollution, flood, landslides? We have to safeguard our environment in order to develop holistically...damaged building can be repaired but damaged environment is irreparable..." (P4NV)

#### DEVELOPMENT

The theme value of development is derived from three categories of value which are human development, economic development and governance. The value of human development arose from the issues of empowerment, productivity,

and equity. According to Haq (1999), the pillars of the human development concept are equity, sustainability, productivity and empowerment. Equity in human development refers to the existence of political and economic opportunities based on the theory that political justice will ensure an equitable economy. The sustainability component in this concept focuses on the elimination of suppression to ensure the continuity of a meaningful life. The productivity component, on the other hand, refers to the contribution of the community in economic development. This concept also asserts that society should not be seen as an input but as a goal to economic development. The component of empowerment refers to active participation of society in the policymaking and practices that affect their lives.

The pillars of empowerment and productivity in human development concept were also the concern of the participants. The participants strongly believe that the quality of human resources is very important in development. This concern is highly relevant to empowerment because empowerment can only be realized when people acquire certain qualities including knowledge and awareness. With adequate knowledge, people would become productive as well. Hence the participants feel that educational aspects should be strengthened in order to increase the quality of people. The participants believed that intellectual capacity is vital in developing the nation.

"...the most vital in development is human quality. Education is very important to develop human quality, physically and intellectually. Well educated person would be able to maneuver the development process with integrity and accountability..." (P31TV)

The importance of education in achieving sustainable development was expressed in Agenda 21 (1992). It says that education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues. Both formal and non-formal education are indispensable to change people's attitudes so that they have the capacity to assess and address their sustainable development concerns. The quality of the human in the context of knowledge and potential is also highlighted in the Great Transition which refers to them as satisfaction of non-material values. According to the Great Transition, the pursuit of the well-lived life has turn to the quality of existence which is

creativity, ideas, culture, human relationships and a harmonious relationship with nature. Apart from that, one of Goal 8 SDGs targets is to substantially increase the proportion of youths in employment, education or training while Goal 4 specifically focuses on the quality education and lifelong learning (United Nations 2015). The need of creativity in the matrix of needs by Max-Neef, Elizalde and Hopenhayn (1991) also touched on the quality of the human in terms of the level of abilities, skills, and other techniques.

The pillar of equity in human development concept is also the concern of participants through the self-development issues. These issues are consistent with the component of equity for their concerns are with social, political and economic justice in the development process. The value of social and economic justice in the Earth Charter also addresses the concept of equity (Earth Charter 2000). The main issue raised by the participants is the welfare of the communities including loss of income, a lack of public welfare and lack of public amenities.

“...the rate of unemployment has been increased especially among the population which previously worked in rubber plantation that was developed to something else. This consequence should be anticipated before any plan initiated...” (P4NV)

“...the population has increased but the facilities are not...the school that was built for 10,000 of population capacity now has to cater 20,000 of population capacity...” (P6CC)

These issues are highly relevant to the survival of any community and thus relevant to the component of sustainability in human development concept. Agenda 21 has explained the importance of the human welfare concern for sustainability in Paragraph 3.1. Issues regarding public welfare are also listed by Max-Neef, Elizalde and Hopenhayn (1991) through the need of livelihood which include the availability of food, shelter, job and other basic needs. Human development issues highlighted by the participants therefore are consistent with the instruments of social opportunities in Sen's (1999) development concept.

The value category of economic development is derived from the concern of participants towards economic opportunities and the environmental and social impact of economic development. In regards to economic opportunities, the participants

believed that Sepang has great potential to develop economically due to its strategic location and highway networks to Port Klang, the major trading port in Malaysia. The importance of wealth, productive sectors and consumerism to ensure sustainability is also addressed in *Our Common Journey* through its development theme (National Research Council 1999). The participants' concern for economic opportunities which lead to economic development is therefore consistent with the economic vision of *Our Common Journey*. One of the targets of Goal 8 SDGs which is to achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labor-intensive sectors (United Nations 2015) is also consistent with the value of economic development of the participants.

The other concern of participants in economic development is its environmental and social impact. The participants argued there was excessive concern by the Malaysian government for economic development in comparison to other dimensions of development. According to the participants, this excessive concern resulted in an imbalance of development compared to the environment and social dimensions.

“...economic development is important but environmental quality is important as well. The over priority on economic development will eventually affect the environment...” (P3TV).

Robert F. Kennedy once said that a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which is one of the main economic indicators, measures “everything except that which makes life worthwhile” since GDP measures mainly market transactions and ignores social costs, environmental impacts and income inequality (Costanza et al. 2014). The participants' concern about the imbalance of development and its implications for the environment and society is consistent with the principle of respecting the environment in the Millennium Declaration, with the value of ecological integrity of the Earth Charter (2000) and with the value of shared responsibility and the adequacy of material of the Great Transition, and also with the Goal 8 SDGs. The principle of respecting the environment in the Chapter 1 of Millennium Declaration (United Nations 2000) highlighted the importance of changing unsustainable patterns of production and

consumption in the interest of future welfare and descendants while the value of ecological integrity of the Earth Charter (2000) addressed the duty of humanity to integrate environmental conservation with all stages of development activity through Principle 12. The Great Transition through the value of shared responsibility and the adequacy of material, insisted on the transition of economy towards a system of production, distribution and decision making that are harmonized with equity, sustainability and human fulfillment. One of the targets of SDGs 8 which is to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation (United Nations 2015) obviously also inspired by the participants through their concern on the impact of economic development towards environment.

The third value category under the theme of development value is governance. Two major issues have been raised by the participants which are the requirement of impact assessment and cost-benefit analysis prior to the project, and the link between the governance and the communities.

“...it is very important to conduct impact assessment and cost-benefit analysis to reduce the negative consequences in term of environment, economy and social aspects...” (P7TV)

The participants’ concern about prior impact assessment and cost-benefit analysis is consistent with the value of ecological integrity of the Earth Charter (2000) which emphasizes a cautious approach to development. Principle 14 of the Earth Charter (2000) insists that activities which are likely to cause potential or actual harm to the environment are preceded by a thorough environmental impact assessment. In addition, the draft of the International Agreement on Environment and Development (United Nations 1995) also emphasized the

importance of environmental assessment by mentioning that environmental impact assessment procedures should be established or strengthened to ensure that all activities which are likely to have a significant adverse effect on the environment are evaluated before approval.

The other issue related to governance is the link between government and the community. The participants perceived that the required link was absent, which resulted in disconnection between the community and the government in terms of vision and mission in development.

“...the government should disseminate the vision and mission of development to the public so that we are informed and prepared...” (P28TV)

Similar concerns are expressed in the value of freedom in the Millennium Declaration on human rights, democracy and good governance (United Nations 2000). This issue of disconnection is very relevant with Goal 17 SDGs which promotes partnership between every sector in development (United Nations 2015).

Based on the systematic comparison between the participants’ values on development with the established sustainable development values, it is evident that each value held by the participants display sustainability characteristics (Table 1). It is remarkable since none of the participants have any knowledge of the concept of sustainable development. This finding shows that local development values do have the required qualities to drive local sustainable development. Moreover, these values are compatible with the sustainable development framework. Therefore, in principle, it can be concluded that the persistence of unsustainability issues in Malaysia does not result from disaffection from local development values.

TABLE 1. Established Sustainable Development Values Compatible to Public Development Values

Theme values	Values categories	Established sustainable development values
Freedom	Identity	Identity (MN) Conservation (MN) Sustainable cities and communities (SDGs)
	Culture and tradition	Cultural heritage (UNESCO Convention 1972) Respect for tradition (GT) Sustainable cities and communities (SDGs)
	Rights	Rights (EC)
	Participation	Participation (EC) Participation (UN) Peace, justice and strong institution (SDGs) Partnership for the goals (SDGs)

	Integrity	Good governance (MD) Accountable governance (EC) Peace, justice and strong institution (SDGs)
	Privileges	Indigenous peoples' right (EC) Equitable economy (EC) Peace, justice and strong institution (SDGs)
Security	Security	Peace and security (CD) Security (EC) Peace, justice and strong institution (SDGs)
Environment	Environmental pollution	Pollution control (EC) Decent work and economic growth (SDGs) Sustainable cities and communities (SDGs)
	Environmental disaster	Earth's carrying capacity (EC) Decent work and economic growth (SDGs) Sustainable cities and communities (SDGs)
Development	Human development	Education (A21) Non-material values (GT) Creativity (MN) Quality education (SDGs) Decent work and economic growth (SDGs)
	Economic development	Wealth, productive sectors and consumerism (OCJ) Respecting the environment (MD) Ecological integrity (EC) Shared responsibility and the adequacy of material (GT) Decent work and economic growth (SDGs)
	Governance	Ecological integrity (EC) Freedom (DM) Partnership for the goals (SDGs)

Indicator: MD-Millennium Declaration; GT-Great Transition; EC-Earth Charter; UN-United Nation; CD-Copenhagen Declaration; A21-Agenda 21; MN- Max-Neef et al Matrix of Needs; OCJ-Our Common Journey; SDGs-Sustainable Development Goals

In this study it was also found that there were two distinct themes related to public appeared in the local authorities' transcripts namely attitude and participation. According to the decision makers, the public attitude and participation towards the development process are not quite satisfactory. Among the bad attitudes displayed by public in this area is violating the safety measures of development at the hill slopes which resulted in landslides and mud flood.

"...the incidents of landslides and mud flood in this area mostly resulted from the development of individual lots...they simply built their house on their lot without any safety measures..." (P1MC)

Another example of unfavorable public attitude is the misuse of the government subsidies including renting out the subsidized stalls to the foreigners rather than running their own small scale business.

"...development in Sepang has attracted outsiders to stay in Sepang...the population increases and businesses are doing well...they did not take these advantages...prefer to rent out their stalls instead of running them themselves..." (P2LD)

These two examples are among many inappropriate attitudes displayed by the public which would intrude the development process.

Another distinct theme that arose from the analysis was participation. Although the participants value active participation in development process, according to the decision makers, the degree of their actual participation is very low.

"...one of the main problem with the public is they are reluctant to participate in the process. We need their feedback on proposed idea before it was started but they only come forward after the project is completed...what is the point?" (P1MC)

The public as the largest stakeholder in land development is required to participate in the whole process of development. Unfortunately, it is very unlikely for the public to contribute ideas or feedback prior to any development plan or project. Without such participation, the development process will never be as holistic.

There are at least three major constructs of people contributing to the unsustainability around the world which are individualism (Robinson 2004), consumerism (Carr et al. 2012) and

resource exploitation (Zimmerer & Basset 2003). The most justifiable construct underlying the unfavorable attitudes of public in this research area is individualism. Individualism would certainly alleviate the concern towards others and the ecosystem. Even though individualism could not be empirically measured, its impact towards the sustainability is evident (Robinson 2004). "Not In My Backyard" or NIMBY is a clear manifestation of individualism which has become an epidemic in the societies since the last three decades. NIMBY is a scenario of public ignorant towards the negative impact of development which does not affected them directly (Burningham 2000). On the contrary, they will become very responsive and attentive if the development affected their wellbeing. Similar scenario is evident in participation in the activities related to sustainability. The public normally will participate in activities which would benefited them immediately for example activity like recycling and expenditure reduction whereas activities with intangible benefit such as river cleansing, would not be as much anticipated. It is believed that capitalism has induced the individualism in the societies. Such system which recognized only the rich and the powerful would leave people with no choice but to become individualistic and greedy. This would eventually disintegrate the society and the ecosystem and also would disrupt the development agenda including sustainable development.

The discrepancy between the statement of the participants and the decision makers reflected the disconnection of values and its realization. However, the disconnection could be the result of various factors including the absence of engagement between the decision makers and the public. It is observed that the link between the decision makers and public in this area does not truly exist resulting in the lack of public understanding towards the development agenda. Without sufficient understanding, the public might not realize their roles in the development process hence unable to play their roles. It is therefore prime important for the decision makers to establish a meaningful engagement with the public which eventually will empower the public to actively participate in the development process. To include values in sustainable development framework requires a

careful definition of values, broad enough to cover the range of circumstances, but strict enough to be considered appropriate for practice (Appleton 2014). A value-oriented approach can provide a more in-depth insight into what people appreciate, feel responsible for and are willing to commit to in the context of their place (Horlings 2015).

## CONCLUSION

It is evident that in principle, the participants' values in regards to development are in harmony with the established values of sustainable development. Even though public's attitude and participation are inappropriate in term of development, their values do display significant sustainable characteristics. Therefore, it is very unlikely that an absence of sustainable characteristics of public development values contributes to the persistence of unsustainability in Malaysia. This study suggests that local development values are compatible with local sustainable development agendas. This finding however is yet to resolve the relationship between public development values and the persistent unsustainability in this country except for the values of attitude and participation. Value is a very abstract concept which complicates the comprehension towards their realisation into practice. The relationship between the advocacy of values and the surrounding is also unclear. The implication of this finding is that local public development values are already in harmony with the concept of sustainable development and therefore could be embedded into the development framework. Further research is required, however, to learn the factors by which public and their development values can be effectively realised and absorbed into local sustainable development agendas.

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