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Green Politics in the Maldives:

A Possible Saviour?

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Bachelor Thesis: UTVK03, 15 hp

Spring Term 2014

Supervisor: Abdulhadi Khalaf

i. Abstract

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The Maldives currently suffers from climate change, and will be soon rendered inhabitable due to rising sea levels. A political past stained by dictatorship and corruption has also led to inconceivable amounts of environmental destruction. With the idea of ecology and green politics gaining ground throughout the world, it is viable to question the possibility of practicing these concepts in an environment that so needs it. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to qualitatively examine the possibility of green politics in not only saving the Maldivian environment, but also the actuality of it taking root in society. Within this paper, an extensive and in-depth research is conducted through interviews and secondary data, following a grounded theory approach. The data is then analysed using theories originating from Ulrich Beck and Habermas, resulting in a final conclusion that global green politics is the way forward, however, not without contextual difficulties.

Key Words: green politics, Maldives, environment, global, ecology, qualitative, grounded theory.

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iii. Abbreviations

BTM: Banyan Tree Resort Maldives

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

MTAP: Maldives Tourism Adaptation Platform

UN: United Nations

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Research Area

The Maldives is one of the lowest lying countries in the world, with the average height of the islands barely exceeding 1.5 meters above mean sea level (Ministry of Home Affairs, Housing and Environment, 2010, p. 8). Therefore, this makes the Maldives extremely vulnerable to the issue of climate change and its resultant sea level rise. Together with a tumultuous political past, the future of the Maldives' environmental agenda appears dim. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom held power for 30 years, "a man jokingly referred to as the CEO of the Maldives, because he r[a]n it like a giant tourist corporation," (Scheyvens, 2011, p. 158). To say the least, his tight control and disregard towards the environment (Scheyvens, 2011, p. 158) did not side with the Maldivian environmental agenda. In 2008, Mohamed Nasheed took over and the mitigation of climate change was made his primary priority (Tharoor, 2009, p. 46). He consequently imposed a variety of environmental laws, regulations, and enforcements (Tharoor, 2009, p. 46). His stance of an open democracy and politics was a breath of fresh air, as efforts were made towards the inclusion, cooperation and cohesion of all sectors of society.

However, with violence arising from the 2011/2012 coup and the sudden change of administration that yielded complete power to president Abdulla Yameen in November 2013, there is a hint of mystique and confusion about governmental actions (or rather, inactions) towards the environmental agenda. With the concept of ecology and green politics gradually gaining awareness globally, thinkers have begun championing the concepts as the most suitable environmental measures of our time (Wall, 2014, p. 88). It is interesting, therefore, to study the ability of green politics to salvage the Maldivian environment on a more local level, and if the Maldivian's political and social context can actually cater to the requirements of a green political environment.

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

My research question is:

Can green politics save the Maldives?

For the scope of this thesis, green politics refers to "a movement which now has an influential presence both in civil society and in the more formal political world of parliamentary politics," (Dobson, 2000, p. 1). In other words, there is a green political sphere that champions ecological ideas, as depicted in the quotation below:

> *"Political ecologists will stress two points with regard to the sustainable society: one, that* ***consumption of material goods by individuals in "advanced industrial countries" should be reduced****; and two, (linked to the first), that* ***human needs are not best satisfied by continual economic growth as we understand it today****," (Dobson, 1995, p. 16).*

Within this essay, green politics will also encompass the study of the government, due to their close relations (Guerin, 2006, p. 45). There are many facets to this research question that needs to be explored and understood before I can suggest a conclusion to this research:

a. Maldives' current political situation
b. Is the current government and political sphere green?
c. Is the Maldives' capable of green politics?
d. How could green politics save the Maldives?

I attempt to explore part a. in chapter 2 where I talk about the developmental context of the Maldives', and part b. and c. within chapter 5 where I consolidate qualitative and secondary data to evaluate this, and lastly I explore part d. in chapter 3 where I take lessons from green politics in different parts of the world.

In this thesis, I aim to conduct an in-depth study that focuses on unique individual perspectives and knowledge to shed light on the possible beneficial prospects of green politics. I aim to combine qualitative and secondary data to assist me in this

exploration by creating a platform of ideas, where I can then make a fairly justified conclusion to my research question.

1.3 Motivation

"The 'technological fix'- as dark-greens call it- amounts to an evasion of political responsibility in the sense that most of the environmental problems we confront are not technological but **political**," (Dobson & Lucardie, 1993, p. 190). Due to this omnipresence in all sectors of society, it is for this very reason that I have chosen green politics as a subject of discussion within this thesis. Furthermore, politics extends throughout the civil community, and upwards into the government, resulting in a network of influence that could possibly change the national environmental discourse in the Maldives as we know it. Hence, this study could possibly contribute knowledge for future environmental endeavours.

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 Type of Approach

First and foremost, the study uses a qualitative approach which, "provides an opportunity for the researcher to gain information and gather insights that may be overlooked with traditional data analysis techniques," (Lawrence & Tar, 2013, p. 29). Since the study is essentially an in-depth study to explore unique insights on the possible prospect of green politics within the Maldives, a qualitative approach is suitably chosen.

The chosen tool for qualitative data analysis in this thesis is the grounded theory approach, which has been defined as "theory that was defined from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process. In this method, data collection, analysis, and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another," (Bryman, 2008, p. 541). This usually involves the constant referral between data collection and analysis in order to build a theory. The grounded theory works in three key strategies: constant comparative analysis, theoretical sampling and theoretical coding.

The grounded theory is the most suitable for this study because, "[i]n organisational research methods, grounded theory can be useful in providing deep insights and understanding of social life that is consistent with interpretive case-based field studies dealing with social and organisational contexts," (Lawrence & Tar, 2013, p. 38). In order words, the grounded theory is the most appropriate approach due to this study being inductive and contextual. However, it is important to note that "the complexities of the organisational context have to be incorporated into an understanding of the phenomenon, rather than be simplified or ignored," (Lawrence & Tar, 2013, p. 35). For this precise reason, secondary data is supplemented with qualitative analysis in order to contextualise insightful qualitative information for the case of the Maldives.

Furthermore, analysis upon using this theory also allows for a certain flexibility as a researcher, where constant correspondence between data and analysis facilitates the emergence of a variation of theories.

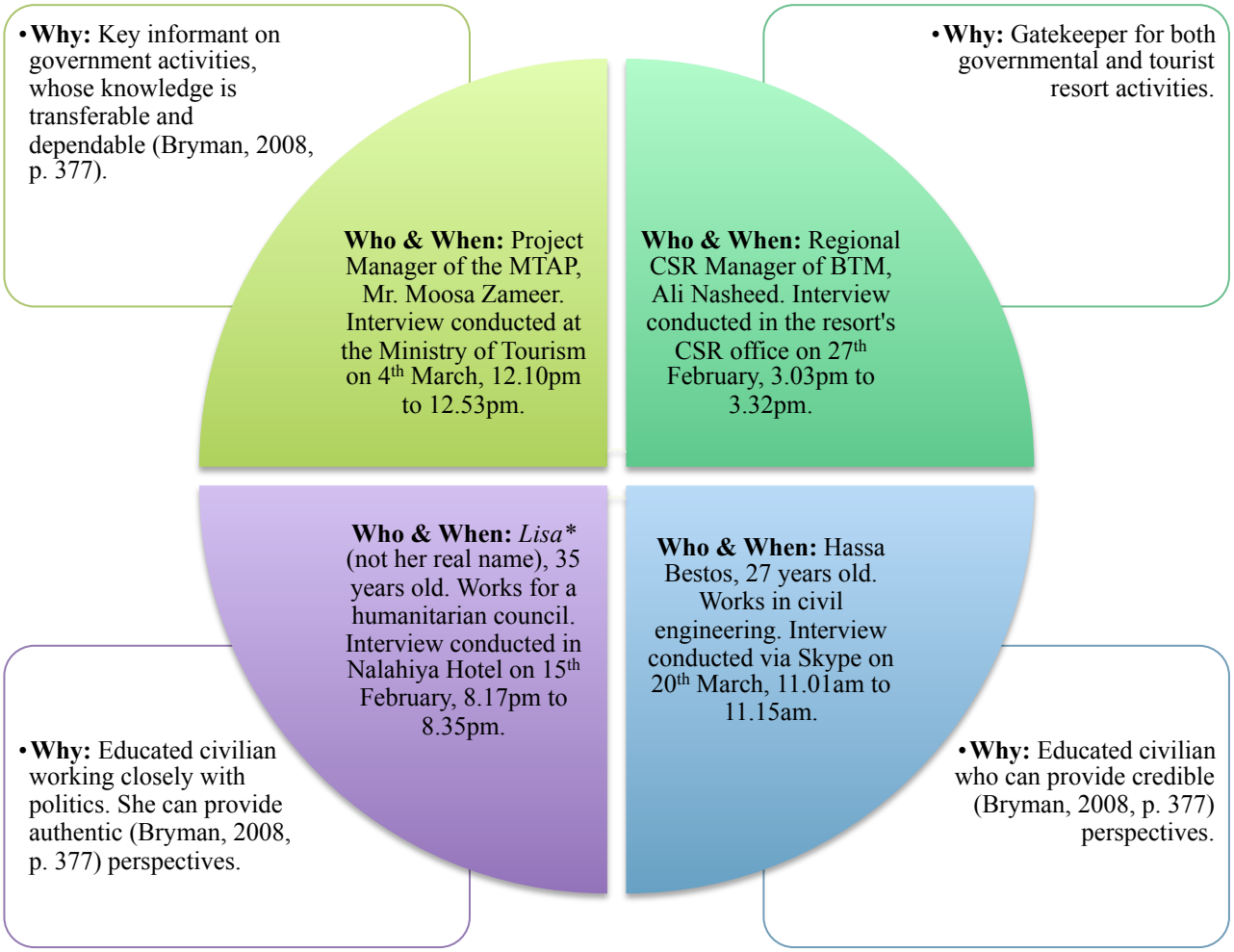
1.4.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Due to the focus of the interviews, semi-structured interviews, as opposed to open interviews, were conducted. I started off with a set of few specific questions from an interview guide (see appendix 1), however, "questions that are not included in the guide [were] asked as the interviewer picks up on things said by the interviewees," (Bryman, 2008, p. 438).

Through theoretical sampling, I conducted ten semi-structured interviews, with the demographic of interviewees ranging from educated and experienced key informants to common civilians. All interviews, except one, were conducted during a CSR internship in BTM Vabbinfaru in the month of February. Most interviews presented analogous information, and this is the reason that some interviews were used while others were not. Those that were used are documented accordingly (next page). Some chose anonymity, while others were comfortable with name disclosure. All interviews were conducted in English, either by Skype or face to face. A tape recorder was used to record the interviews to ensure information playback was accurate. Emotions and rhetoric were sufficiently conveyed through tape and as such, I did not find it

necessary to film the interviews.

Upon designing my samples, I used the guidance of Willig as stated, "[t]heoretical sampling means checking emerging theory against reality by sampling incidents that may challenge or elaborate its developing claims," (Willig, 2008, p. 71). Below is the resultant framework for sampling used in this thesis:



1.4.3 Secondary data

Qualitative secondary analysis refers to the usage of already produced data to create new social scientific and methodological understandings (Irwin, 2013, p. 295). Qualitative data (as from my interviews) in itself lacks generalisability as it produces

unique insights to certain contexts (Irwin, 2013, p. 296). Therefore, "[s]ome commentators ask whether the practice of secondary analysis could contribute to understanding the generalisability of findings from qualitative studies, potentially enhancing the scope for findings from qualitative research to be cumulative," (Irwin, 2013, p. 296). Therefore, there are many reasons why a researcher uses secondary data analysis, and my reason is "to relate [my] own primary research or data to existing data resources," (Irwin, 2013, p. 296).

In this thesis, secondary data includes internal ministry reports for the MTAP programme, official Banyan Tree CSR reports, publications from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Housing and the Environment, and academic articles from several authors concerning green politics and the issues related to it. Documents are mostly sourced on-site during the internship, however academic articles are sourced on-line, where Bryman questions their authenticity and credibility (Bryman, 2008, p. 554). However, the articles undergo through critical examination for biases or subjective ideas and the most credible articles are finally used.

1.5 Delimitations

This section outlines the scope of the thesis, which, due to the limits in time, effort and space, focuses on specific areas. The three main focuses are the environmental issue in the Maldives, certain boundaries of term green politics, and an in-depth, perspective study to prospect of green politics in the country.

Not only does the Maldives suffer from a degrading environment, it suffers from a wide array of other issues such as overcrowding (Ministry of Home Affairs, Housing and Environment, 2010, p. 5), economy instability and food *in*security (as opposed to food security) (Ministry of Home Affairs, Housing and Environment, 2001, p. 26 & 85). However, for the scope of this thesis, I focus on the environment of the Maldives and the issues associated to it simply due to both, the urgency of this matter, and my interest in it.

As mentioned in section (1.2), green politics refers to the ideal combination of a green civil society represented in a green parliament. Green politics therefore encapsulates a

large definition, and for the scope of this thesis, certain subjects will be focused upon. The issues of communication between the civil society and the government, political representation and green governmental efforts will be studied more than others, in accordance to the information available from interviews and secondary data sources.

Since this is a qualitative study, I seek not to generalise, but simply to understand, the individual perspectives on the prospect of green politics. The data in my interviews in no way represent institutions or different sectors of society, but rather, it is a collection of ideas from a variety of individuals that allows me and my audience to gain unique insights and knowledge into this matter, and assume a consequent emergent theory.

1.6 Challenges

During the course of my analysis I encountered two major challenges, them being the subjectivity of my interpretation, and the lack of variation within the sample group.

As I use the grounded theory as a tool for analysis, I automatically rely on my personal interpretation of events, which is commonly subjective. This is a well-known criticism of the grounded theory, where there is a development of "…non-grounded ideas occurring from personal biases, [and] personal experiences of an idiosyncratic nature," (Elliott & Lazenbatt, 2005, p. 52). However, I countered this by using respondent validation through secondary sources, as the "primary purpose of respondent validation is to counter the effects of researcher bias and subjective interpretation during analysis," (Elliott & Lazenbatt, 2005, p. 51).

The Maldives is a sprawling country with a total of 1,192 islands grouped into 26 natural atolls (Behera, 2006, p. 122) spanning an area of roughly 107,500 square kilometers (Ministry of Housing and Environment, 2010, p. 7). This makes some of the individual islands practically impossible to reach (as a researcher with limited research time), resulting in a sample group that consists of only Maldivians living in the capital Male' city. In a way, this is seen as an impediment to external ideas, however, it must also be noted that two out of the four interviewees documented grew up in other islands of Bandidhoo and Madgoohoo, and came to the capital city to find

work. Thus, the perspectives arising from the interviews remain varied and unique.

Chapter 2: The Developmental Context of the Maldives

2.1 Climate Change and Degrading Environment

"It is widely accepted that if the sea level rises one meter as predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), large part of the country will sink and vanish from the face of the earth," (Ministry of Home Affairs, Housing and Environment, 2010, p. 7). One can say this is a reflexive response by mother earth- a response to the unhealthy amounts of pollution and carbon emissions over the years.

Tourist resorts use up to 60% of the total electricity that is produced by the nation (Ministry of Home Affairs, Housing and Environment, 2010, p. 29), which more significantly indicates the tourism sector to be the most polluting. This is because the electricity that is produced on the islands originates from localised, diesel-fuelled generators that emit tons of carbon emissions that are eventually released into the atmosphere (Ministry of Home Affairs, Housing and Environment, 2001, p. 7). The emissions contribute to global warming, where the increase in temperatures damage large areas of coral reefs that cannot survive higher temperatures, thereby leading to the rising of water levels and further endangering the already drowning islands of Maldives (FAO, 1997).

As for the degrading environment, illegal dumping has become a common substitute for a functioning waste removal system in the Maldives. The rubbish undergoes open-incineration at Thilafushi (Scheyvens, 2011, p. 153) that spews toxic substances into the air and seas everyday, slowly poisoning the surrounding waters. Furthermore, up to 2008, solid waste generated from resorts and industries have been pumped unprocessed into the seas because the nation lacked "a fully functioning and proper integrated solid waste management system that include[d] fees collection and payments to service providers," (World Bank, 2011, p. 1). The waste damaged coral reefs and affected the livelihood and economy of Maldivians in a myriad of ways, be it through direct food sourcing from fisheries or indirectly through income from

luxury tourism.

Fortunately the congregation of these factors sooner than later caught the government's attention, and ex-president Mohamed Nasheed sought ways to address these issues. "Green growth, through renewable energy but also marine conservation and proper waste management, is a prerequisite to a healthy economy," (Brittlebank, 2012). Some policies included collaborations with supranational organisational bodies such as the UN, as with the National Solid Waste Management Policy for the Republic of Maldives funded by UNDP (Ministry of Home Affairs, Housing and Environment, 2004, p. 4). Others included the enforcement of existing national legislations that involved the conservation of marine protected areas and nature reserves, such as through The Environment Act (FAO, 1997). Moreover in 2009, Nasheed pitched a proposal to make Maldives the world's first carbon-neutral country. It seemed that the Maldives was becoming more aware of the detrimental consequences their wasteful practices brought, and that if environmental practices, either politically or socially, did not take root, they would soon become irrelevant; "a paradise with an expiration" being a popular label.

2.2 Political Setting

The Maldives has undergone a bumpy political past, with two coups staining its history. The country succumbed to dictatorship under the rule of former president Maumoon Abdul Gayoom for 30 years between the years 1978 to 2008 (Scheyvens, 2011, p. 152). He was seen by some "…as a dictator who would never relinquish power," (Scheyvens, 2011, p. 158). Under his rule, there was a great tendency towards economic profitability and corruption through collaboration between economic and political elites (Scheyvens, 2011, p. 159), which then influenced the development of tourism in the Maldives. Due to his dictatorship reign, public protests were often banned and the leader of the main opposition movement, Mohamed Nasheed, was jailed for being a threat (Scheyvens, 2011, p. 160). Mohamed Nasheed, famed world over for his strong environmental stance and efforts within the climate change arena, devoted much energy into moulding the Maldives into a green state (Tharoor, 2009, p. 46). He advocated for human rights and protested against Gayoom's government (Scheyvens, 2011, p. 160).

This did not stop Nasheed, as his popularity and support grew phenomenally over the years, resulting in Gayoom's government feeling "the weight of public concern" (Scheyvens, 2011, p. 160). This soon led to drastic changes in 2008, when a constitution was enacted and a presidential election was held. Mohamed Nasheed won the majority vote and became the Maldives' first democratically elected president in November 2008 (Scheyvens, 2011, p. 160).

However, "one of the things that we are now coming to understand is it is easy to beat a dictator, but it's not so much easy to get rid of a dictatorship," (Nasheed, 2012). Together with the lasting intricacies of Gayoom's dictatorship, islamic groups also started becoming unhappy with the president's laissez-faire approach to alcohol sales and massage parlors within the country (Friend, 2012). In January, Nasheed ordered the army to arrest a chief judge who was inactively persecuting the former government for their involvement with corrupt resort deals, which resulted in a backlash encouraging the plotters to force Nasheed out (Friend, 2012).

Nasheed's term in power came to an end in February 2012, and he was replaced with current president Abdulla Yameen in November 2013. According to independent Maldivian news site 'Minivan News', Abdulla Yameen is the younger half-brother of former dictator Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and was (and still is) an ardent supporter of Gayoom's rule (Minivan News, 2013). Therefore, it is speculated that history is to repeat itself- with another dictatorship, and to say the least, this might not be favourable to the enactment of green politics.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

In this section, I aim to further define green politics and its theoretical effectiveness as opposed to other concepts, and then go on to introducing its practical effectiveness, by bringing forth examples of within the continents of Africa and Latin America, and the Asia-Pacific region that have exemplified this.

"The environmental movement's principles are based on the promotion of a balanced approach to ecological and human rights," (Leonard & Barry, 2010, p. 5).

According to Derek Wall in his book 'The No Nonsense Guide to Green Politics', he makes some relation to the quote above by raising a few core features that define green politics. The three core features are, **ecology**, **social justice**, and **grassroots democracy**. Ecology, the central concept of the ecologism movement, holds that a "sustainable and fulfilling existence presupposes radical changes in our relationship with the non-human natural world, and in our mode of social and political life," (Dobson, 1995, p. 2). It drives green politics, which is inherently a distinct political ideology with a "set of political ideas rather than a single idea, even one as powerful as concern for the environment," (Wall, 2010, p. 12). The next feature, **social justice**, refers to the ideal that environmental protection should not lead to inequality, or attempted at the expense of the poor (Wall, 2010, p. 13). This is what characterises greens to be left-ists on the political spectrum. Last but not least, the third feature, **grassroots democracy**, is the act of championing a participatory democracy, as compared to many traditional socialists who promote centralised governance of societies (Wall, 2010, p. 13). The features of green politics are bolded, and will remain bolded throughout this entire section, for ease of identifying real-world examples of these textbook features.

Now that I have defined green politics, it is important to weigh its importance in contrast to other environmental 'solutions' (undoubtedly, it is important to know there is *no one size fits all* solution) according to previous research and literature. Extended literature has depicted green politics as a suitable solution to our modern-day environmental problems because in disguise, it seemingly "presents no sort of a challenge at all to the twenty-first century consensus over the desirability of affluent, technological, service societies," (Dobson, 1995, p. 9). This is due to the emergence of a corporate "greenwash" trend in response to recent environmental concerns that has reduced responsibility of the environmental movement to small, special interest, lobby groups (Leonard & Barry, 2010, p. 5). It must be understood however, that this is not green politics. The main contrast between green and conventional politics signals the need for a main change- where quantitative demand must be reduced and not expanded (Dobson, 1995, p. 16). This way, green politics is not simply the easy-way-out, but rather the most realistic way out. In his recent article 'Green Politics and the Republican Commons', Derek Wall writes about the faults and pitfalls of other

solutions by the government and market:

> *"…it is worth noting that commodification of society and the environment has destructive consequences resulting in market failure; however, top-down solutions from the state also often fail…marketisation can lead to an over-emphasis on short-term profit at the expense of sustainability. Central planning can fail to make use of local knowledge and produce inflexible approaches to environmental governance. Common pool property has, in many circumstances, a good record of maintaining sustainability," (Wall, 2014, p. 88).*

Derek Wall makes the relation between common pool property and green politics, thereby pushing forth both concepts as suitable solutions superior to that of other measures. It must be stressed that this is the theoretical and hypothetical implementation of green politics that is the most effective solution, however as we will see from the examples below, contextualising green politics is no easy feat. There may be implications of organisation or social unjust that might impede the real-world implementation of green politics.

I will now present examples of green politics in contexts and their effectiveness. For the sake of pedagogical simplicity, I will talk about the rise of green parties and their impacts around the world. However, it must be noted that "[g]reen politics has never been limited to green parties," (Wall, 2010, p. 26) only. In this following paragraphs, I will explain the cases of African green politics in mainly Kenya, and then a look into green politics in Latin America, and then into the Asia-Pacific region with a focus on Australia.

The most successful African Green Party is undoubtedly the Mazingira Green Party of Kenya (mazingira means 'environment' in Swahili) (Wall, 2010, p. 18). In 1997, Mazingira's selected presidential candidate, Wangari Maathai, founded the Green Belt Movement, and also she won a Nobel Prize for her efforts at promoting peace and environmental justice (Wall, 2010, p. 18). She, alike former left-wing president Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso- unfortunately assassinated- encouraged community tree planting as a conservation measure (Wall, 2010, p. 19). This early success has resulted in Kenya becoming the 'poster child' for Africa's new Green Revolution, where today its efforts continue by supporting several public-private partnerships hoping to build on a strong private seed sector, and by creating a well developed and wide network of small-scale agro-dealers in order to encourage the spread of new agricultural technologies (Scoones & Thompson, 2011, p. 11). Moreover, a key

question within Kenyan's green revolution is, "[w]ho are the losers from the new Green Revolution – what products, which people and what institutions are missed out, and lose support – or worse, are undermined by these processes?" (Scoones & Thompson, 2011, p. 9), indicating an intrinsic concern for **social justice**.

Looking at Latin America, green politics has also expanded its reach over some countries- the most successful being the Brazilian Green Party (PV) (Wall, 2010, p. 19). Many left-leaning governments within the region have become aware of environmental issues and many green NGOs have emerged (Wall, 2010, p. 19). **Grassroots democracy** in the form of contribution from indigenous groups to green politics is particularly important in Latin America (Wall, 2010, p. 19). However, due to the green parties having the most basic, and almost weak, organisation, their reach is minimal, and they represent "little more than small groups of individuals with access to websites," (Wall, 2010, p. 19). This issue of representativeness is a common, yet detrimental problem to green politics.

In the Asia- Pacific region, a network of green parties has been established in Kyoto, Japan, in 2005. Full membership includes parties from countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Pakistan, Korea, Taiwan and New Caledonia (Wall, 2010, p. 21). However I look to the Australian Green Party, as it has been particularly strong over the recent decades, having won seats both in the Senate and in state assemblies. It stemmed from the United Tasmania Group and the 1980s Nuclear Disarmament Party, and has increasingly overtaken the centre-left Democrats (Wall, 2010, p. 21). Jeff Angel once wrote in 2001, "at present, the depth of environmental commitment in the economic and political system is shallow- but it is digging deeper," (Angel, 2001, p. 43). True enough, this change has been documented slowly over the years with the Australian Greens achieving nine per cent of total votes in national elections in 2007, and then in 2009 winning the seat of Fremantle in Western Australia with 54 per cent of total votes (Wall, 2010, p. 21). They appear to be growing fast with increasing support over the years, indicating an increase awareness and dedication towards **ecology** within the country.

Looking at green politics' conceptual roots, there is some confusion "between modernity and modernisation… as to whether the contemporary green movement is a

modern movement, or a movement whose critique and aspirations take it outside modernity," (Dobson & Lucardie, 1993, p. 208). Obviously, green politics thus far has mainly questioned the modernising strategies of advanced industrial societies' than it has towards the central tenets of modernity itself (Dobson & Lucardie, 1993, p. 208). In respect of the latter, however, those who do call (for example) for moves involving the re-enchantment of the natural world, do so from within pre-modern parameters (Dobson & Lucardie, 1993, p. 208). Therefore, this philosophical debate is one that extends over the parameters of this study, however, the gist of the debate is worthwhile taking note of: the concept of green politics, among other environmental solutions, concerns, and movements, originate from a recent modernisation, which in itself, is a contradiction. This essentially begs to question the motivations, credibility and effectiveness of green politics as a concept (despite the numerous examples above and in literature elsewhere portraying success).

Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework

In this section, I explain one theory and two theses that play three different roles in the analysis of my research.

4.1 Ulrich Beck's Theses on Green Modernity

I chose Ulrich Beck's Theses on Green Modernity, in his work in the Theory, Culture & Society journal, as they depict a variety of traits a green modernity should have, or aspire to. A green modernity is a phase of modernity fundamental to green politics, and therefore the article provides a framework of eight theses to show how this can be reached. For the scope of this thesis, I will focus on his seventh and eighth theses.

4.1.1 Seventh Thesis

His seventh thesis discusses the creation of an alternative modernity that defines wealth not in gross domestic terms, but in overall "well-being" (Beck, 2010, p. 262). Quoting Goethe and his idea on the '*Gretchenfrage*', the key question which green politics faces is, '*Wie hältst du es mit der Moderne?'* (Beck, 2010, p. 262). What is

societies' position on modernity and economic growth? Does modernity advocate for sin against nature? Currently, the Western world's idea of wealth points to that of monetary value, when wealth should supposedly be "redefined as that which provides us with the freedom to become unique individuals, the freedom to live together with others being equal and different," (Beck, 2010, p. 262). This encourages the process of self-dissolution and self-transformation by turning the environmental movement's conditional support for economic development upside down: "developing economies will be sustainable precisely to the extent that the West invests in their development and adopts for itself a new definition of wealth and growth in encounter with the global other," (Beck, 2010, p. 262).

4.1.2 Eighth Thesis

"Paradoxically, it is the global ecological risks themselves which have triggered the death of 'environmental' politics," (Beck, 2010, p. 262).

Becks explains this notion by focusing on the main blocking point, that is, "green politics is presented as a question of learning our limits," (Beck, 2010, p. 263) which in a way, paralyses green politics. The optimal way forward is to 'break through' these limits, and create a cosmopolitan vision and global cooperation on climate change (Beck, 2010, p. 259). He relates this is to the *ius cosmopolitica* of the Enlightment by Kant (Beck, 2010, p. 259).

This mutual understanding of interconnectedness and the cosmopolitan vision of ecology will encourage people to see "themselves both as a part of an endangered world and as part of their local histories and survival situations," (Beck, 2010, p. 259). This reflects a hallmark of reflexive modernisation (Beck, 2010, p. 264), where there should exist a building of global dialogues and facing conflict about redefining modernity (relation to his seventh thesis).

4.2 Habermas' Critical Theory and its Green Critique

I chose the critical theory and its green critique to help me assess the role of human communication within green politics, and its associating trait of political representation.

Modern critical theory is broad, however this section revolves around the works of Jürgen Habermas and his critique of the theory's operation in the environmental field. The green critique is based on his analysis of language in the 'Theory of Communicative Action' and how communication creates and maintains social order (Brulle, 2010, p. 3), which fails to apply in the context of environmental preservation due to its anthropocentric tendencies.

"Critical theorists have argued that there are good reasons to believe that a democratic decision-making process would consider treatment of nature a significant ethical concern," (Brulle, 2010, p. 6). Commonly, nature is seen as an object for moral concern by humans, rather than a subject for moral concern (Brulle, 2010, p. 6). This is what leads humans to take ownership of the democratic process of environmental preservation. Which one of these resulting decisions that would be applied to a particular circumstance however, is a matter to be decided by the participants themselves (Brulle, 2010, p. 6). Since the theory only considers the development of norms between mutual participants in a discourse, it unknowingly omits consideration of the fate of other species that are not capable of representing themselves in this dialogue (Brulle, 2010, p. 7). Eckersley meets and agrees with this understanding by posing a question: *'If they could talk and reason, would they agree to the proposed norm?'* (Eckersley, 1999, p. 44). The core green critique of the Critical Theory therefore, is its inability to adequately represent concerns of non-human nature:

> *"Critical Theory is an anthropocentric belief system that separates and privileges human emancipation over the emancipation of non-human beings, and cannot serve as a basis for informing a cultural practice that would fully protect biodiversity," (Brulle, 2010, p. 7).*

Chapter 5: Findings

This section summarises and analyses the findings from the interviews and discusses them in relation to the sub-questions of the research question, namely:

b. Is the current government and political sphere green?
c. Is the Maldives' capable of green politics?

The perspectives presented contribute ideas and knowledge in relation to the questions, which encourages discussion. The interviewees' perspectives will in no way be taken for fact or truth, but will only be use as a platform for brainstorming. With this, I use this section as a stepping-stone to the next section, where the information here will be used to analyse my main research question.

5.1 Is the current government and political sphere green?

This section looks into secondary data and interviews to assess if current politics and the government are green. A green government is one that practices an "ecologically guided democracy" (Escrihuela, 2008, p. 125), and a green political sphere would refer to one that consists of civilians "tak[ing] part in environmental policy-making, … to be greens and to join environmental organisations," (Escrihuela, 2008, p. 116). These are definitions to which I will refer to as I assess the data.

The interviews have been helpful thus far in raising certain perspectives on this matter. Upon interviewing Moosa Zameer, he indicates that there is active administration of environmental laws and regulations by the government:

> *"…The law is not specific on regulatory aspects. But the law is specific on the terms of regulation, for example, environmental regulations… So, it is the ministry's role to regulate by having appropriate regulations from time to time," (Moosa Zameer, personal communication, March 4, 2014).*

This suggests that the **government makes certain provisions for environmental conservation**.

According to MTAP's Final Report, it composes of four main stakeholders, which are;

- "government departments (advising on articulation with the policy landscape),
- private sector (ensuring commercial logic and product value),
- third sector institutions (NGOs) (advising on wider social and environmental issues), and
- island councils (ensuring value added and benefits for communities)," (Ministry of Home Affairs, Housing and Environment, 2013).

The programme extends throughout different prongs of the society, indicating the wide reach this environmental provision has within the country. Furthermore, Moosa Zameer emphasises *"clear opportunities for commercial enterprise and inclusion of marginalised communities to ensure involvement," (Moosa Zameer, personal communication, March 4, 2014).* This report supplements the comments made by Moosa Zameer, which could possibly further suggest that the Maldivian government is green.

Apart from having governmental laws and regulations, I also look into other aspects that characterises a green political sphere, and that is political representation.

Hassa tells us his story on growing up in the Maldives:

> *"I would say I had access to good clean air, water and public space as I was growing up but unfortunately I cannot say as much nowadays. When I was very young I remember being able to drink and bathe using the well water (which taps into the fresh water lens underneath the islands), but not for long. The case of clean air is also similar- earlier it was good, but now, with the increasing number of vehicles and buildings there are no more trees..."(Hassa Bestos, personal communication, March 20, 2014).*

According to Hassa, the environment has been deteriorating for quite some time now, and this has interfered with his basic human right to clean water and clean air. He continues to explain that, "*my concern for the environment is the sea pollution. People need to be more aware of how important the coral reef and the marine life are to us," (Hassa Bestos, personal communication, March 20, 2014).* This indicates that

there could be some valid concerns within the public that requires attention by the government.

Unfortunately enough, when asked if his concerns are being addressed, Hassa replied,

> *"**I cannot say the government is doing enough to conserve the environment**. Because if they were, there should be government bodies doing research and development on finding better means to the pollution and waste management problems that we face and at least we will be able to witness some of the actions that they've under taken," (Hassa Bestos, personal communication, March 20, 2014).*

I noticed that what Hassa said is in direct opposition of what was noted during the interview with Moosa Zameer (above), where he explains that a) there exists this research and development that Hassa claims the lack thereof, and b) the impacts of which are positive (referring to MTAP report). This is a discrepancy of views between the two interviewees that interestingly originate from different sectors of society; Moosa Zameer from the ministry and Hassa Bestos from the civil society. This discrepancy of views could be alluded to several reasons; perhaps the biasness of the government to depict a successful environmental front to the public, or a certain level of ignorance on the side of Hassa. Either way, their views are supported by a report and an academic article (below) respectively, which suggest justified opinions on both ends. The potential factor of biasness, however, is an important understanding to take away from this discrepancy.

Hassa's story both hints on an issue of the lack of environmental concerns the government has, and the lack of political representation within the country. Without further justification however, I continue to look into an academic article by Regina Scheyvens to supplement these views, and she writes,

> *"the [recent] history of the country has been defined by the dictatorship of Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, … because he runs it like a giant tourist corporation. It's no joking matter though, as the police brutality and human rights abuses that have occurred under his rule are shocking," (Scheyvens, 2011, p. 158).*

Therefore, it could be considered that the **lack of environmental concerns** is possibly attributed to years of ingrained mentality on the environment being disposable. Furthermore, she continues to write, "[t]he economic development that occurred under Gayoom, while impressive in many ways, was based on tight social and

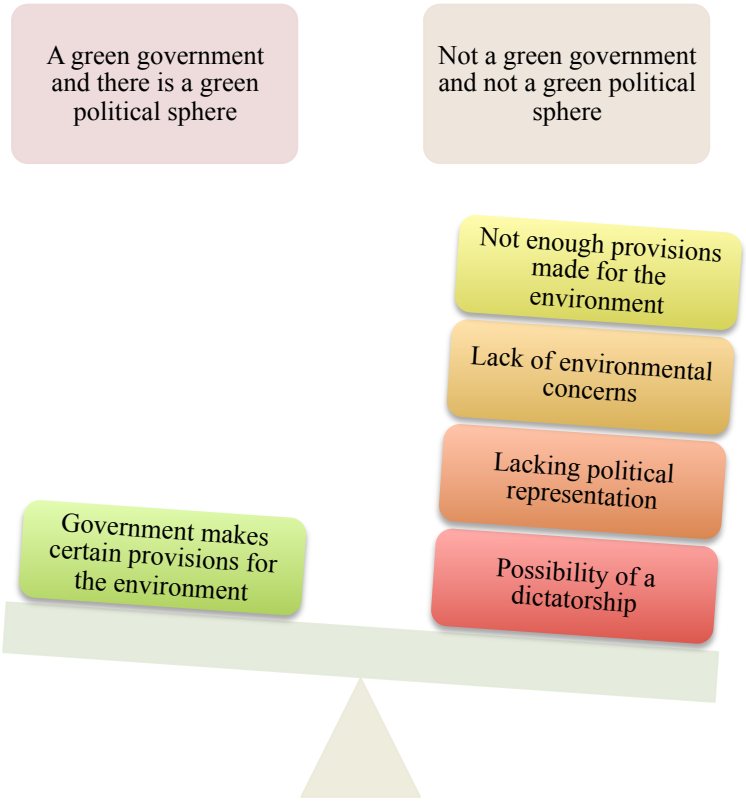
political control at the **expense of personal freedom**," (Scheyvens, 2011, p. 158). This might be able to explain the weakness of political representation nowadays- as since it was practically non-existent many decades before, it has had little time to develop. According to Niyaz & Storey's writing on the case of the Maldives, the lack of political representation could possibly be due to public participation being perceived by governments, the private sector and planners as costly, time consuming, difficult to manage and an interference to economic development (Niyaz & Storey, 2011, p. 70).

Although the Maldives' is currently under Abdulla Yameen's rule, it is uncertain if administration has improved, considering Yameen's potential in **reinstating a dictatorship** (refer to section 2.2). Hassa aptly implies that there is no success within the administration through his statement:

> *"since there has been some political turmoil in recent history in Maldives and since the government has not yet settled on common grounds regarding some geo-political and environmental matters, the current policies for the environment is not so sustainable, beneficial for the environment, and the people involved as a whole," (Hassa Bestos, personal communication, March 20, 2014).*

However, Niyaz & Storey, who are writing specifically on the case of the Maldives, contests to this and explains that, "[a]lthough legislation and administrative improvements have been enacted, these have developed very slowly and have only tentatively attempted to encourage and incorporate meaningful public participation," (Niyaz & Storey, 2011, p. 72). Moreover, they continue to explain that "even though public comments are accepted in the review phase, there is little evidence that they are considered in the decision-making process," (Niyaz & Storey, 2011, p. 73).

Therefore, Hassa and the articles imply a current lack of effective political representation and environmental concerns within the country. Considering the definitions of a green government and green political sphere above, the implied lack of political representation and concern oppose them. With this information at hand, it most simply indicates that there is neither a green government nor green political sphere within the Maldives currently. The main ideas in this section (bolded letters) can be summarised in the next page:



5.2 Is the Maldives capable of green politics?

In this section, I look into interview transcripts and secondary data for the existence of institutions, ideas and movements that could possibly build the foundations for a green political arena.

In the section above, I raised some perspectives from Moosa Zameer indicating that there is both administration and execution of the governmental laws currently, whether be it through the ministry or other regulatory bodies. However, *Lisa** seems to challenge this claim. Through her many years of work experience with the government, she feels that, "*...processes are too bureaucratic and nothing is getting done",* and that *"plans are made but there is no enforcement," (Lisa*, personal communication, February 15, 2014).* At this point, her description of **inefficiency** appears reasonable, what with the ministry's possible interest in portraying an effective system. This issue of inefficiency could possibly hinder the Maldives' attempt towards green politics.

Suitably, Ali Nasheed puts forth an interesting idea, in his own words, of the "*paradox of regulations"* that plagues the tourism industry. He attempts to explain this through a hypothetical story,

> *"Let's say a fisherman were to enter a resort's premise to fish. In his own right, he is allowed to do so to support his personal livelihood. Usually, some resort staff would sternly advise him to keep off the premise, however, there is only so much resort staff can do. Often enough, the resort closes one eye and the police are not called, and even if they are, the police will not find the matter pressing enough to pursue it, and will simply offer resort staff to call another department instead. Then that department will not know what to do, and they will just refer the staff to another department. Eventually, nothing happens," (Ali Nasheed, personal communication, February 27, 2014).*

This signals a **possible fault in the regulatory institutions** within the country, which could hinder the possibility of green politics within the country. I suggest this, because a green political sphere is tightly related to both the country's regulatory institutions and the governmental institution that facilitate its smooth running (Guerin, 2006, p. 45).

During my interview with Moosa Zameer, he seemed positive about the Maldives' collective determination and efforts in conserving the environment. He explained a recent movement within the market that revolutionised the way businesses worked, and how they are now centered around nature,

> *"... we started looking at the whole prospect of nature conservation as part of tourism and what we call today, "**eco-system based development**", where we understand the need to conserve nature first before having a business rather than to disrupt the natural base which the business is based," (Moosa Zameer, personal communication, March 4, 2014).*

From this, it appears that business motivations are slowly shifting, from a profit-driven approach to a more eco-friendly approach. For this question, I understood that a progress towards green politics would be in the growth and existence of green concerns within the society, which he seemingly depicted in this story. Furthermore, he continues to convince me of the beneficial impacts of the tourism industry:

> *"I think the one most important thing is that the tourism industry is not an extractive industry. We do not need to have tourism to catch so many fish, or take corals for example. It can be made as a very sustainable industry. It is a soft service industry. It*

> *is not a heavy industry that is extractive like many in the industralisation sectors. This is one of the best options we have for economic development," (Moosa Zameer, personal communication, March 4, 2014).*

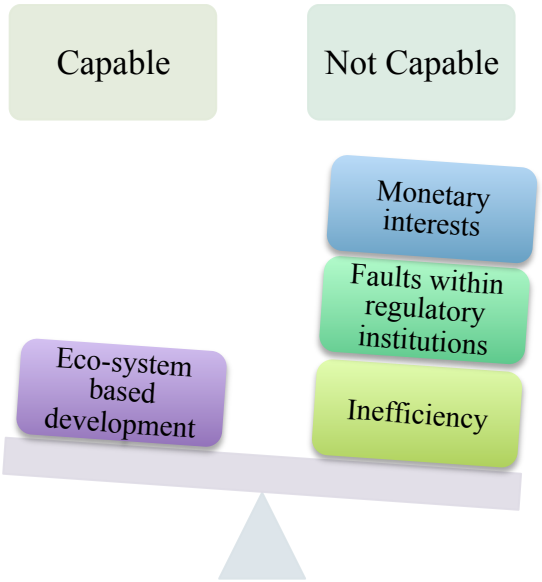
According to reports by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Housing and Environment, there are several projects in place concerning this "eco-system based development". This is seen in the development of a sewage treatment system that protects the "ecologically fragile eco-systems and marine life" (Ministry of Home Affairs, Housing and Environment, 2001, p. 120). This is similarly reflected in the National Solid Waste Management Policy (Ministry of Home Affairs, Housing and Environment, 2004, p. 33). Until now, I have understood that this eco-system based development that Moosa Zameer talks about could potentially pave the way for other environmental ideas within the government and political sphere through knowledge, research, and awareness. This would make the Maldives capable of green politics in the future.

However, I dig deeper into the matter and asked Ali Nasheed how far he thought resorts would go in saving the environment, Ali Nasheed frankly replies, *"[n]ot far. At the end of the day it is a business and most of the companies are public listed companies which have to answer to its stakeholders," (Ali Nasheed, personal communication, February 27, 2014).* This also aligns with *Lisa's** view, that *"resorts are hardly ecofriendly, only a selected few are really doing their job in protecting the environment," (Lisa*, personal communication, February 15, 2014).* These perspectives present a **persistency towards monetary pursuits**, aligning to that of *Lisa's** broad view of the masses- where she explains the changes in trends and priorities over the years:

> "*Everything changed after the 2004 tsunami, truckloads of money was pumped into the country and the citizens were not used to it. Suddenly we became so materialistic and vain. It did not use to be like this, people would welcome other people into their homes and feed them. It was a community with a culture. Now there is no culture," (Lisa*, personal communication, February 15, 2014).*

She expresses the role of money in changing the interests of the people, and that this taste of affluence could be the reason for the shift of concerns onto materialistic pursuits. This is also reflected in the academic article of Niyaz & Storey on the case of the Maldives, where, "to a significant degree this reflects reluctance (and a lack of

purpose) in identifying concerns where these will be unlikely to change decisions which have already been made," (Niyaz & Storey, 2011, p. 75). This so-called 'lack of purpose' could impede the country's progress towards a green political sphere, if these assumed interests continue to disregard the environment. As explained by Lambacher, equalising environmental values and economic development (Lambacher, 2004, p. 148) to achieve equal compensation in both sectors is an important trait for green politics to take root. All in all, there were several perspectives presented that contributed to this discussion, all summarised below:



Chapter 6: Analysis

In this section, I analyse my findings and make theoretical relations to them. My analysis, like that of my methodology, continues to follow a grounded theory approach.

6.1 Relation to Theories

6.1.1 Beck's Seventh Thesis on Green Modernity

In the section (5.2), I highlighted some ideas made on the capability of green politics within the Maldives. Some perspectives revolved around the interest of income and

revenue, which I understood as naturally important factor towards the economic development of the Maldives. These ideas on the pursuit of revenue, although few, raises an important discussion on the type of development occurring and if it is sustainable. This relates to my research question, as a green development is necessary for a green modernity, which in extension, is fundamental for green politics.

According to Beck, development needs to be revolutionised towards overall "well-being", that is, balancing the impacts on the environment with the impacts of the economy. Currently, the rate of destruction is often higher than that compensated by businesses (Barkley & Seckler, 1972, p. 18), and together with a long history of Gayoom running the Maldives like "a giant tourist corporation" (explained in section 5.1), there might be a need to look into the nation's developmental path and ideals.

Moosa Zameer talked a little on the recent trend of eco-system based development, which signals a positive endeavor for the Maldives on the path towards a green development. Through greater knowledge and influence, the government would hopefully be able to shift the discourse of development in the coming decades, and in extension, influence the interests and actions of the civil society. This would then create the basis of green politics, due to new-found environmental purpose (as opposed to the lack of purpose mentioned in section 5.2) and the opening up of a political representation portal.

6.1.2 Habermas' Critical Theory and its Green Critique

My thesis revolves around green politics, which undeniably depends on political representation as well. Hassa previously expressed his concerns about the government not addressing his personal concerns, which turned out to be a valid concern when Niyaz & Storey wrote about "public participation being understood by governments, the private sector and planners alike as costly, time consuming, difficult to manage and an impediment to economic development," (Niyaz & Storey, 2011, p. 70) concerning the case of the Maldives. Thus, this indicates a current issue of political representation that needs to be remedied if green politics would ever be able to flourish.

In addition to lacking political representation, I would like to further explain how political representation of environmental concerns in itself, undermines the environment. The act of political representation depicts the concept of "political trusteeship: persons and groups within the polity speaking on behalf of the interests of those living outside the polity, for future generation and for nonhuman species," (Eckersley, 2004, p. 114). In the critical theory, Habermas further explains that the theory only, "considers the development of norms between mutual participants in a discourse," (Brulle, 2010, p. 6) which according to its green critique, excludes the environment that has no possibility in partaking in discussions. The politically represented aspects of the environment are aspects that we, as people, choose. For example,

> *"aesthetic arguments are also inadequate in themselves to guarantee protection of nature. Aesthetic values are selective, based on the particulars of taste, and see the protection of nature as secondary to ensuring the protection of a particular human experience," (Brulle, 2010, p. 7).*

Therefore, it needs to be noted that political representation of the environment is anthropocentric, and while in this anthropocentric process, political representation in the Maldives appears to be weak- which possibly makes the idea of green politics within the country a little more far-fetched.

6.2 *Can green politics save the Maldives?*

In the sections above, I talk about the Maldives' current political situation and then I go on to present some views on two questions that could shed light on this topic, the two questions being; 'is the current government and political sphere green?' and 'is the Maldives' capable of green politics?'. I also explore the possibility of green politics in saving the environment by likening the situation in the Maldives to other countries and how green politics helped them.

Most opinions from the interviews tended towards the government and political sphere currently not being green, and also their future incapability of ever being green. Secondary data sources supported some of these ideas, which further strengthened the validity of these claims. However, the information I have at hand is not enough to generalise a conclusion, but it is enough to formulate a perspective (i.e.

emergent theory) on the matter (see below), as perfectly put forth by Yearley, "[t]he point I am highlighting is that values and value-laden assumptions enter into the formulation of the issue before the 'facts' are even established," (Yearley, 1996, p. 119).

Looking at theories and the hypothetical aspect of implementation (chapter 3 and 4), I do believe that green politics would save the Maldives, in such a way that it would build a more coherent dialogue between the civil society and the government, that would in turn lead to better transparency and social justice. The growing awareness of the green movement throughout the society would also lead to better efficiency as both sectors (civil society and government) are mutually understood and can work together to reach common ecological ideals. However, looking at the practical side of things and the local context, there appears to be some crucial faults within institutions (for example, lack of democracy or political representation, and lack of continuity between regulatory bodies) that need to be rectified before green politics can take root. Furthermore, green politics and a green modernity goes hand in hand, and until this stage, results of an operating green modernity within the Maldives is yet to be seen (according to the interviews and secondary data). If I consider this information- that the Maldives is still finding it difficult to balance economic pursuits and the environment- it is presumed that green politics is a long shot. Thus, theoretically speaking, green politics could save the Maldives, however in practical terms, this is not for certain.

6.3 A Future Challenge (Beck's Eighth Thesis on Green Modernity)

I have not made the relation to Beck's eighth thesis thus far, because I see this thesis as a suggestive framework for a future pursuit of the Maldives that could be worthwhile. Throughout the thesis, I discuss green politics and the possibility of it nationally, but not internationally. I focused on perspectives that could give rise to an understanding of an internal green politics, when Beck's eighth thesis enlightened me otherwise- I should have prioritised the possibility of a global green politics, which would probably be more effective. Aptly put by Beck, "[t]hose who think exclusively in national terms are the losers," (Beck, 2010, p. 264).

The Maldives' is a small nation, and when in comparison to the rest of the world, produces a miniscule ratio of carbon footprint (Yearley, 1996, p. 120). It is important to understand therefore that the Maldives' cannot solely be held responsible for overcoming its environmental challenges, when it is a part of a global community with environmental risks that know no boundaries.

Therefore, as Steven Yearley suggests, there is a need to inculcate the culture where people see "themselves not as citizens of some country, not as members of an ethnic group, not as comrades within a class, but as 'citizens of planet Earth'," (Yearley, 1996, p. 65). Similarly, Beck believes it is "at least one way in which realistic answers can be found," (Beck, 2010, p. 264) on global environmental problems.

However, as Yearley points out, it is utopian to believe that there will be a clear consensus on environmentally far-reaching reforms, even within the settings of an industrialised nation (Yearley, 1996, p. 79). He then poses another suitable question, that is, "[h]ow much more unrealistic then is the assumption that global problems will call forth a unified international response, across all the disparities of wealth, geography, religion and ethnicity of the globe?" (Yearley, 1996, p. 79). Clearly, this is a problem that engulfs the issue of global green politics that even the Maldives has experienced thus far: "Maldives still has the difficult task of sensitising the global community about the environmental problem surrounding it, and to alleviate its existential threat," (Karthikheyan, 2010, p. 351).

Nobody said approaching global green politics would be easy. However, as I mentioned earlier, it would be a meaningful and worthwhile pursuit in the Maldivian attempt to overcome its environmental challenges.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

"In the film, Nasheed was asked what his Plan B was if he couldn't persuade the world to restrict emissions. "None," he said. "We will all die."," (Friend, 2012, p. 26).

This is a rather bleak, but accurate, conclusion for my thesis. My thesis revolved around the research question *'can green politics save the Maldives?'* and consisted of four sub-questions, two of which were mainly answered through interviews. The perspectives in the interviews were put forth as inspiration for a formulation of ideas in answering the research question. This resulted in a conclusion that green politics could save the Maldives theoretically, however, I remain unsure as to how capable the Maldives is in executing this practically due to the variety of reasons I mentioned in section (6.2). I then go on further to explore global green politics and how it could be both a way forward and a future challenge for the Maldives.

Green politics, at the end of the day, is broad topic and this study is not able to summarise and generalise green politics in the Maldives in its entirety. This study, is however, able to shed light on the topic and the perspectives behind local Maldivians to create a more in-depth and localised study of the Maldives- hopefully providing a platform of ideas for future research. What is more, the future prospect of the Maldives is uncertain, and who knows if "the state can be both ecologically and politically legitimate in a time when environmental problems span the boundaries of species, generations, and political geography," (Lambacher, 2004, p. 148).

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v. Appendix 1: Interview Guide

1. What do you know of what the Ministry of Tourism and the government are doing nowadays to minimise environmental damage?

2. Would you say the government is doing enough to conserve the environment?

3. Would you say the government is effective in carrying out its tasks?

4. Do you think there is more that the government can do to protect environment?

5. Do you think a balance can be struck in between economy growth and conserving the environment?

6. How would you say the government has influenced the market?

7. Would you say the market enforces environmental regulations?

8. How would you, personally, describe and Maldivian environment?

9. What are your concerns for the environment? Is there a platform for you to raise these concerns?

10. Are these concerns met?

11. Tell me about the changes you have seen within the community over the years, would you say environmental awareness has grown?