GROWTH, MODERNIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF NEW VILLAGES AND THEIR COMMUNITY IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The existence of New Villages (NVs) in Malaysia since the end of the Second World War and the government's lack of clear guidelines as to their growth and development has resulted in many of the NVs to be in a state of limbo at present. The gravity of this dilemma has not been lost on both the policy makers at the centre and the NV communities themselves. In the past many decisions regarding the NVs has followed the elite theory where policies concerning the NVs are made based on class divisions within the NVs and the supra government. The elites comprising the government authorities and the village leaders are responsible for all matters and activities relating to the overall development of the NVs. As time progresses and with the influence of technology, coupled with better educated residents and effects of globalisation, these factors began to impact on the community in the NVs. The modernisation theory signalled the start of the new order in the NVs and there began a change in the political, social and economic fabrics of the NV community. Physically, the NVs changed from its origins as a temporary resettlement village in the outskirts to a permanent housing settlement in and within the periphery of an urban setting. This influenced the political and economic behavior of the NV community as evidenced in the voting trends in recent elections and types of economic development taking place in the NVs. These changes demonstrate a shift away from the elite system of only "leaders" who will decide for the NVs to a NV community that wants to speak out and be heard. The NVs of Malaysia is an example of how modern society wants to move away from a hierarchical social order typical of the past and challenges the notion that a typical elite or top-down bureaucratic structure to policy making is unquestionable. This paper aims to examine the modernisation theory in policy making and governance of communities in Malaysia.

Keywords: Community, growth, management, modernisation, New Villages, Settlements

1. INTRODUCTION

Policies to the government are like blood lines to human body. Policies are tools for the governance of the state. How a policy is produced depends on the dynamics of public policy making of a state. Malaysia has produced many good policies to direct the development and growth of the countries to reach national purposes. Indeed, this is true for economics and social sectors via national policies and programmes. However, there are some underrepresented areas which received less attention for existence of a sound policy. The existence of New Villages (NVs) in Malaysia since the end of the Second World War and the government's lack of clear guidelines as to their growth and development has resulted in many of the NVs to be in a state of limbo at present. The gravity of this dilemma has not been lost on both the policy makers at the centre and the NV communities themselves. This paper intends to challenge the notion that a typical elite or top-down bureaucratic structure to policy making is unquestionable and the application of the modernisation theory should be widely used in the context of economics and social sectors.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the main theories on community settlements also known as NVs. The elite theory explains how decision making in the NVs and the historical role of its leaders who make decisions for the NVs. The modernisation theory challenges the application of the elite theory in the context of NVs in Malaysia. The NVs are selected to explain how modern society wants to manage and develop their own community and to move away from a typical hierarchical social order. Prior to these two theories this paper will briefly discuss the status of NVs in Malaysia their growth and modernisation.

New Settlements and Malaysian New Villages

New settlement refers to a process of relocating the population to a new site either temporary or permanent; planned or randomly selected. Such new community settlements are identified to provide shelter and living space to people displaced because of events such as war, natural disasters, development projects and conflict. These events that create the need to start resettlement programmes and are found all over the world (see Muggah, 2008; Woube, 2005; and Fellbaum 1998). Deruyttere et al. (1998) describes the resettlement program as the process of finding temporary shelter and build permanent settlements on the original land or new areas.

New settlement or resettlement is a common practice and are either voluntary or forcibly carried out. War can forcibly cause the new settlement as De Wet (2012) found in Rhodesia and Zimbabwe after World War II and during the control of White Rhodesian after independence in 1980 where new settlements are created for those escaping the violence of guerrilla warfare and

from the Rhodesian army (Robins, 1994). According to Potts and Mutambirwa (1997) resettlement programmes in Zimbabwe were initiated because of inequality in land ownership among whites and blacks and in 1980 the government made a commitment to introduce a programme of land reform in Zimbabwe.

It was the same situation in Vietnam where in 1952, French General Francois Gonzales Linares led the construction of the protected villages later known as agrovilles to help people escape the hardships of life as well as providing some forms of social and economic facilities (Peoples, 2001). Gade and Escobar (1982) found that a new settlement also occurred in South Peru. Between the years 1570 until 1575, the Spanish viceroy, Francisco de Toledo ordered the residents to a village settlement known as reduccione. A million or more people were relocated from their homes and resettled in a group so that they can be easily controlled by the Spanish authorities.

According to a study conducted by Kaushal and Pantip (2013) a new settlement can come into existence due to disasters which can be a natural occurrence or man-made. It becomes a serious disruption to the community, tearing people apart and results in economic or environmental losses. Often, this leads to serious disruption and victims resettled in new settlements.

The 2004 tsunami that swept away existing villages and settlements in Sri Lanka and India meant that the survivors had to be resettled. According to Ahmed and McEvoy (2014), new settlements were constructed on vacant lands comprising of new homes and infrastructure facilities. Vaes and Goddeeris (2012) stated that most of the reconstruction after the tsunami in Sri Lanka and India were made possible through donation and infrastructure facilities provided by the state. It should be noted that government support is crucial in any resettlement programmes and history had shown that in the case of the South Australian government; it made possible the establishment of village settlements in South Australia through the passing of the legislation called the Crown Lands Amendment Act in 1893. Another example of government involvement is in Thailand where the central government established resettlement programmes to accommodate all the refugees of a landslide in the village of Ban Nam Ko (Kaushal & Pantip, 2013). The government of Ethiopia between 1984 and 1988, relocated about 600,000 people from areas affected by drought and excessive population into six main resettlement sites under a resettlement scheme known as Metekel (Gebre, 2003).

In Malaysia, the existence of newly formed villages or new villages (NVs) in Malaysia is one of the effects of colonialism which until now still exists and is inhabited by a majority of the Chinese population (Malaysian Chinese Association, 1999). The villages existed during the emergency (1948-1960) when the British transferred Chinese settlers who lived on the outskirts

of the jungle to a fortified enclosure called a new village to combat the communist threat in Malaya at that time (O'Ballence, 1966).

The development of NVs was slow mainly due to the government's lack of clear guidelines as to their growth and has resulted in many of the NVs to be in a state of limbo at present. The federal government's role in the development of the NVs was via its local government. Using the Local Council Ordinance 1952, the district councils were authorised to administer and develop the NVs. However, lack of financial funding and unclear policies regarding the development of NVs contributed to their general neglect as resettlement villages. By the early 1970s, social and economic problems in the NVs worsened as they became isolated from the mainstream of development and led to a feeling of dissatisfaction among the residents (Malaysian People's Movement Party, 1986). Therefore, to address these problems a special unit was set up in the Prime Minister's Office to administer the NVs and coordinate their development and growth (Malaysian Chinese Association, 2007).

The integration of the NVs into the national development plans started in the Second Malaysia Plan with some financial allocation from the Federal Government. (Lim and Fong, 2005). This lack of clear policies and uncertainty regarding the future growth of the NVs has resulted in many of the NVs to be in a state of uncertainty and insecurity. The community has been quietly disregarded and any decisions on the NVs are decided by the leaders and political elites of the community. The preference of the government administrators is to listen to the elites who often express their opinions without frequent consultation with the local community. Hence, policies that affect the people are actually decided by the elites and political leaders and carried out at the community level. Certainly, mass opinion is not the option for administering the NVs in Malaysia, but such a situation is not tenable in a nation that is forging ahead towards a developed status. This paper attempts to discuss the impact of modernisation upon a village community and the traditional values it holds in relation to its governing elites by conceptualising both the elite theory and the modernisation theory within the setting of a re-settlement village in Malaysia.

Elite Theory

Plato and Aristotle were claimed by scholars to be among the earliest to hold a discourse on the concept of elite group. Plato claims that in a democratic state, there is a small minority who make major decisions for the community while Aristotle affirms that elites are small groups of individuals who undertake almost all important social responsibility and decision makings for the masses. Vilfred Pareto claims that elite has the qualities needed in the social and political life where the people who are relatively weak entrusted the elites to decide for them. Marvick (1976) explains that elite group in the past, was needed as a special figure for historic mission, to meet

the urgent needs, for producing superior talents or to display a distinctive quality of its own. This elite group is seen as the creator of the command followed by all parties.

The elite group was able to reach the centre of power and capable of assuming high position. Mosca (1923) elaborates on the governing elite and non-governing elite. The governing elite, usually fewer, hold all political functions, monopolises power and enjoys the benefits he gets from power. Non-governing elite is greater, governed, regulated and controlled by the governing elite.

Elite theory is used by Mills (1956) to study new sociological perspectives on power systems and relationships in the United States. In the structure of American state power, Mills describes the relationship among three major elite groups - the military, the corporate and the political leaders. In the context of power in the government system, Lasswell (1952) describes that any decisions made by the elites will flow downwards and in terms of power flow, indicates that the higher position in the hierarchy of the elite will have the higher power. Putnam (1976) states that those in the upper layers of the society managed to play an important role in society due to a strong business heritage or advantages from an inherent social position, such as hereditary or caste. While Mills (1956) states that to have fame, fortune and power, the individual must enter into large institutions, because of the position it occupies and institutions determine most of the chances of a power elite.

Marvick (1976) explains that nowadays an elite group is the highest group in the government, holding authority in the various departments and organisations. The elite may also refer to the leaders, decision makers and influencers who often become the reference point. Marvick also explains that elites are often perceived as a unified group, but there are among its members those who often compete and have different interests. The competition and differences often occur in the struggle for power termed elite circulation.

From the perspective of public administration, Field and Higley (1980) explain that the elite are the ones who hold important positions in policy making wherein the will of the elite is more substantial than the will of the public. Similarly, Gilens and Page (2014) found that voters (public) do not have any influence on public policies but rather economic elites are more influential in determining national policies. Public policy appears not to be determined by the people, but by the elites.

Political elites were formed through the influence of political power where Hoffmann-Lange (2013) said that the privilege of an elite group cannot be separated with the power factor. Political elites comprise the power holders where leaders are typically accountable to both the upper and lower levels of people. When apathy and passive attitude of the people are higher, the

stronger is the monopoly and manipulation of the elites to the people. The elites must know how to control public emotions by meeting the needs of the people so as not to create dissatisfaction that will result in public anger that may then undermine and ultimately destabilize their elitist position.

In the context of NVs in Malaysia, how can the elite theory be used to describe a system of government administration? In the past until today many decisions regarding the NVs have followed the elite theory where policies concerning the NVs are made based on class divisions within the NVs and the supra government. The elites comprising the government authorities and the village leaders are responsible for all matters and activities relating to the overall development of the NVs.

Malaysia is a federation of 13 states and the government operates on the principles of parliamentary democracy. With three levels of government, federal, state and local government; there are different service actors that play distinguishing roles in the administration of the nation and consequently with the development of the NVs. However, according to Lim and Fong (2005) administrative powers over the NVs before 1988 were always changing from the state government to the district office and then to the local councils under the umbrage of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. Despite these frequent changes of administrative authority, the actors involved in NVs remain the same. Decisions are referred and made by adminstrators and local leaders rather than the local villagers. Public participation was virtually absent in the policy and decision-making process in these NVs.

Subsequently, at the NVs level in Malaysia, the representatives that are appointed are the local leaders within the villages, and as according to Marvicks' (1976) description, these village leaders can be categorised as the local elites due to their influence and position in the community. Their roles and duties as the village leaders are significant as they are responsible for all aspects of the villagers' welfare and well-being, including the physical, economic, social and cultural elements of the community.

Classically, political elites are a small group of powerful people who are in in a privileged position and thrust into governing the society. In the Malaysian NVs situation, the local political elites are influential and preferred by the central leaders to control the community. As the majority of the villagers are mainly ethnic Chinese, many of the local elites and leaders are drawn from the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) political party. The MCA is also a component party of the Barisan National (BN) Party which is ruling the government at present. The BN is a coalition of other various political parties, but the main parties are the dominant United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), and the Gerakan Party. Besides the local elites from the MCA, the other leaders that have considerable

influence in the administration of the NVs are the local councillors and officials from the state and federal agencies that have links with the NVs.

Thus far the concept of the elite theory has presented itself in a typical contemporary society such as the NVs in Malaysia and appears to function well as long as the status quo of the NVs is retained. Yet, when economic development and growth activities occur in a nation, this process will ultimately encroach into areas such as the NVs through creeping urbanisation. When this happens, certainly, there will be disruption to the structure and cultural values inherent in a traditional community. The progression to a developed state brings along elements of modernisation and changes to the society as a whole which challenges existing theories of powers. In other words, it is not possible for a community such as the NVs to remain unchanged as its sustainability depends on its ability to adapt to a changing environment. Thus, the argument of this paper continues by exploring the modernisation theory as furtherance to the elite theory in explaining the governance and development of the NVs in Malaysia.

Modernisation Theory

Modernisation is a transformation or change of community life. The concept of modernisation theory stems from the philosophy of evolutionary social change (Giddens, 1991; Smith, 2003) in which Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber has linked social change with the industrial revolution as characteristics in early modernisation. Previously modernisation is often associated with Westernisation but now the elements of science and technology have also influenced the meaning of modernisation (Syed Hussin, 1972; Shaharuddin, 1992). In the view of Syed Hussin (1972) modernisation theory provides a more neutral definition which is a process relating to knowledge of modern science that covers all aspects of human life introduced at different stages.

According to Bilton (1996) the theory of modernisation affects the lives of many modern societies caused by the advance in technology. In previous times 'pre-modern', work organisation and discipline were affected by natural factors such as weather and the changing seasons. However, the age of technology in modern times has allowed our lives to be determined by a fixed schedule. Parsons (1966) has argued that the modernisation theory has its concept on tradition and modernity. The inherent features of a traditional society comprising of religion, cultural norms and subsistence agriculture will change through a complex process of economic and industrial development to become a modern society.

Indeed, it is necessary to understand the process which produces a modern type of society from a traditional society. A description and definition of this concept is necessary in order to understand the development process. Bendix (1978) for example argues that it is easier to define modernisation as a breakdown of the ideal-typical traditional order; authority loses sanctity,

monarchy declines, hierarchical social order is disrupted. Secular authority rule in the name of the people and an egalitarian and equalitarian ethos are typical attributes of modern society.

Relying on Bendix's opinion, modern society or ideology of the modern state could become a trend for the future of Malaysian society as depicted in the development of the NVs where the hierarchical social structure is disrupted and replaced by a modern society that wants self-determination. This is exemplified in the NVs community and its voting trends in the recent general elections in Malaysia where the ruling elites and leaders are now challenged.

Development and modernisation are two things that are always intertwined and often debated. As described by Rostow (1960) in Figure 1, the modernisation theory and its five stages traces the development of a nation towards modernisation.
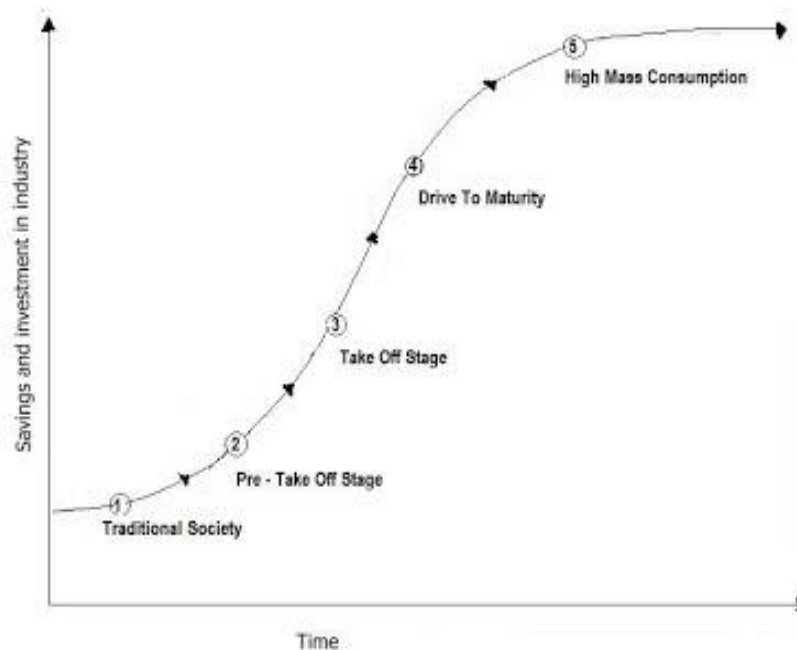
Source: Potter, Binns, Eliott and Smith, 1999

Figure 1: Rostow's five-stage model of development

Rostow's five-stage model of development discusses the parameters to acquire modernity status. Based on economic development and mass production, the nation diversifies into new areas and with high consumption, increasing productivity is inevitable. From this stage, the nation is on a trajectory of rapid development and technological advancement. In brief, the nation becomes highly modernised and its effects on the community are profound.

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Such elements as described by Rostow can be related to what is happening to the NVs in Malaysia. In these villages, there are evidence of high economic growth and increasing productivity. These activities have influenced the attitude and perception of the community. In some instances, there is also a change in the political ideology of the residents and resistance to mere acceptance of top-down decisions. This is also reinforced by residents who are better educated and equipped with the latest know-how in social media technology. In 2014, 90% of the Malaysian population has achieved education until the secondary level as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Enrolment Rate (%)

Level of Education	**2010**	**2014**
Primary	95.7	97.9
Secondary	88.1	90.0

Source: 11th Malaysia Plan, 2016-2020

The education transformation policy has also benefitted a large majority of the young population by raising their literacy achievement to the tertiary level as shown in Figure 2.
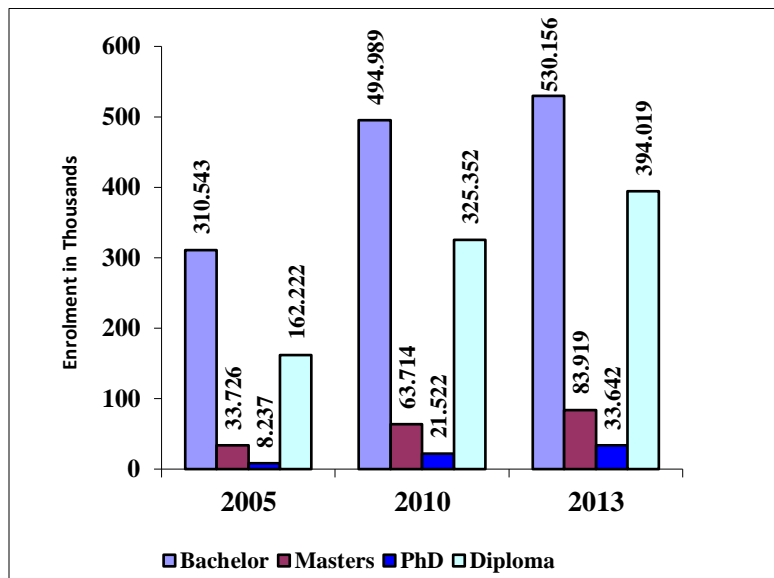
Source: 11th Malaysia Plan, 2016-2020

Figure 2: Public and Private Universities (Enrolment Numbers)

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As indicated by the figures in the table and diagram, many Malaysians are now educated up to tertiary levels and the figures are increasing annually.

Typically, it can be assumed that with better education there will be better awareness amongst the people especially the human workforce. In consequence an educated and enlightened community will be become conscious of its rights and needs that should be met when required. Ultimately, it means that the leaders and elites in such a community will have to perform to their expectations otherwise their role as leaders of the community will be questioned and challenged. Hence, the notion that "leaders know all" within the concept of the elite theory will be consistently challenged by the emergence of the modernisation theory that features evolution of an urban society, industrial development, high standard of living and all forms of community participation (Hill, 1996).

A recent study by Phang and Tan (2013) further reinforces the occurrence of modernisation within the NVs. The study indicates that the voting trend in the selected case study of some NVs show a decline in support for the elites in the ruling party. The general election results in the NVs of Selayang, Taman Templer, Kuang and Rawang show a withdrawal of support for the ruling government Barisan National (BN) coalition party. There was a marked weakening of support for the MCA; a coalition partner of the BN, which is always associated with the NVs and upon whom the MCA had consistently relied upon for votes (Phang and Tan, 2013). This association with the MCA is based upon the ethnic composition of the NVs which is mostly Chinese and who has never failed to support the MCA and BN during the general elections. But this traditional bedrock of support cannot be assured anymore as signaled by the recent election results in 2008 and 2013 in these NVs (Phang and Tan, 2013).

In the past, the management and administration of NVs were traditional top-down hierarchy with decisions made by influential elites and leaders especially in the MCA and BN political parties. These leaders are responsible for the interests and needs of the residents in the NVs. However, the continual absence of a specific policy for development and economic growth in these villages led to the failure of these leaders and political elites to understand the needs and aspirations of the villagers themselves. This has spawned a sense of dissatisfaction and frustration amongst the villagers and created negative sentiments towards these elites and leaders. Subsequently, this feeling of dissatisfaction has manifested itself in a change in political support for the MCA and the ruling government party. As shown in the studies undertaken, in the state constituencies of Taman Templer, Rawang, Kuang and Selayang, there was a substantial loss of votes for the ruling coalition parties especially the MCA in the 2008 and 2013 general elections (Phang and Tan, 2013). This shift in voting pattern indicates that the villagers are aware of their rights and position in the hierarchy of NVs where the political leadership cannot assume perpetual loyalty

from the villagers and take their votes for granted. Their needs for development and their voices to be heard should not be disregarded. The leaders at the NVs should take heed of these challenges to their traditional leadership. This reinforces the theory of modernity increasing community awareness and gives them a sense of confidence which changes the community's perception of the role of their leaders. There is a realisation that decisions need not always be 'top-down' but can also be from the 'bottom-up'. The emergence of a *new order* in the community appears to weaken the influence of the ruling elites and will further erode their strength if the ruling elites do not take heed of these changes within the NVs community.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

When viewed as a whole, modernisation theory is a term used to indicate the progress or change process. This situation also occurs in the NVs cited above where the traditional rural based agriculture system has through the years morphed into industrial and semi high-tech industrial zones, with commercial and small business enterprises. This process has changed the attitude and overall perception of the village community and with it transformed the various aspects of village life. Needless to say, there is still some elements of traditionalism but fundamentally, modernism has encroached into the village society to the extent that it has transformed the outlook and thinking of the villagers and influenced their behaviour towards the local leaders.

There are certainly observable changes that have occurred in the NVs in Malaysia as evidenced in the case study. The current elite system of only political leaders who can decide for the NVs seems to be irrelevant and out moded in the present scenario of the NVs where villagers are more perceptive to the elements of good governance in public administration. It should be considered a myth today that people are ill informed about policies and that mass opinion does not matter which is an argument of the elite theory. The NVs in Malaysia exemplifies how a modern society wants to move away from a hierarchical social order typical of the past and challenges the notion that a bureaucratic and top-down structure in policy making by the elites is unquestionable.

This feature may also be discernable in other developing nations whereby greater economic growth and better education will give rise to a community that will demand for more public participation and less tolerant of a government that continues to set policies without sufficiently engaging it. Governments will need to adhere to the principles of good governance in policy making whereby instilling public participation will ensure that the needs of the community are made known and considered. Public policy should reflect the needs and demands of the masses rather than the preference of the political leaders and elites. In other words, the future policy making process of a nation should embrace all levels of the society and its people; not just by elites and leaders that traditionally assume that they 'know best' for the rest.

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