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**From Eco-Degradation  
to Sustainability:  
The Debate Between  
Marxists and Greens**

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the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in  
Sociology at Massey University.*

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## **Abstract**

The advent of a global ecological crisis has made the issue of eco-sustainable politics a central issue in current social debates. Above all, it is the rise of the Green movement that registers the importance of this issue, such that Green theory is now an important paradigm of contemporary social thought. Greens emphasise the failure of pre-existing theories to address eco-degradation. Indeed, they typically argue that pre-existing theories are part of the problem rather than its solution. In this vein, many key ideas advanced by Green theorists are highly critical of Marxist sociology. This thesis examines and evaluates the debate between Marxists and Greens. I situate the debate across four key areas: philosophical issues dealing with humanity's place in nature; theoretical issues concerning the relationship between technology, society and nature; issues arising historically from attempted paths to socialism; and political issues relating to questions of agency. In response to the Green critique, this thesis defends socialist anthropocentrism, an analysis of technological development that emphasises the importance of social relations, and a political strategy that centers on the revolutionary potential of the working classes. Although I acknowledge the importance of the Green critiques, I maintain that a Marxist materialist analysis of society provides the best framework for advancing towards a sustainable future.

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