

# Harmonious Living: Sustainability, Ecology, and Eco-Islam in Wales

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of Doctor of Philosophy



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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an in-depth examination of Eco-Islam in Wales. Eco-Islam refers to the conceptual intersection of Islamic principles with environmental and ecological concerns. It is not necessarily a formalised movement with a centralised structure but rather a broader concept that explores the compatibility between Islamic teachings and environmental stewardship. It emphasises the idea that Islamic values and ethics can be applied to address contemporary environmental challenges. This dissertation addresses the question of the normative influence of Islamic environmental principles and their implementation within Welsh Muslim communities and Welsh society. More generally, this thesis is embedded in the academic discourse on the normative role and agency of religions in motivating their members to engage in pro-environmental behaviour. Given the urgency of the environmental crisis facing humanity, which requires a concerted effort from all sectors of society, the research question of this thesis is particularly relevant.

Furthermore, despite the growing body of literature on ecology and Islam, there has been little research on the practical implementation of Islamic teachings on nature. Therefore, whilst giving a comprehensive overview of Islamic environmental ethics based on a literature review, the thesis also provides research data on the Eco-Islam movement based on fieldwork conducted in Wales. Particular attention is paid to the social and power structures that contribute to or hinder the development of a Muslim environmental movement.

The study provides practical recommendations for better cooperation between faith communities and the (still) predominantly secular environmental movement, with particular attention to the challenges faced by minority communities such as the Muslim communities in Wales.

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## GLOSSARY OF ISLAMIC TERMS

**Adiqah:** faith, creed

**Akhirah:** Hereafter, second life in heaven after the resurrection

**Akhlāq:** ethics, moral conduct

**Al- Musawwir:** God as the Fashioner

**Al- Rabb:** God as the sustainer of all the worlds

**Al-Bari:** God as the Maker

**Al-Batin:** God as the Inward

**Al-Fātihah:** opening Sura of the Qur'ān

**Al-Kitab:** Holy Book; refers to the Qur'ān and the other religious scriptures

**Al-Masalih al- Mursalah:** public welfare

**Al-wāriṭh:** the Inheritor

**Al-Zahir:** God as the Outward

**Aya:** sign which directs one to something important; the phenomena of the created universe; a verse in the Qur'ān

**Barzakh:** liminal place between two dimensions, partition or barrier. In Islam, it refers to life in the grave, which is believed to be the interspace between life on earth and heaven

**Dar:** house, abode, place, home

**Din:** religion, faith, belief

**Dunya:** material world, worldly existence

**Farad kifaya:** communal duties of a mosque

**Farad:** compulsory tasks of a mosque

**Fasād:** corruption, in the Qur'ān, it refers to creating disorder and corruption on earth by following a path other than commanded by God

**Fiqh:** study and understanding of Qur'ān and Sunnah and the Muslim law; Islamic jurisprudence

**Fitrah:** primordial nature of humans

**Gharar:** sale of what is not present at hand

**Ghusl:** ritual bath

**Hadīth (pl. ahadīth):** literally, saying, communication, or narration; collected maxims and documented sunna. Traditions of the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad by his relatives and close companions that guide the behaviour of Muslims

**Halal:** lawful, religiously permissible by Islamic law; in Islam, everything is considered halal unless specifically forbidden by the Qurʾān.

**Harām, Harīm:** sacred enclave for the purpose of pilgrimage

**Haram:** sanctuary, sacred place

**Himā:** area set aside for conservation of natural resources

**Himmah:** spiritual will

**Ibadah:** worship

**Ijma:** legal consent of an action

**Ikhwan:** brotherhood

**Imam:** religious leader of the prayers in a mosque

**Israf/Tabzeer:** avoidance of overconsumption

**Jamal:** beauty

**Khalq:** creation

**Khilafah:** successorship, system of Islamic government

**Kitab:** book, inscription, scripture, a written command

**Masjid:** mosque; place of prostration; nondenominational place of worship

**Mīthāq:** pretemporal covenant between God and human souls

**Mizan:** balance, justice

**Muamalat:** commerce

**Muhasaba:** practice of self-accountability

**Muhkam:** firmly sealed; refers to verses in the Qur'ān which are embodied in clear language

**Neyamat:** blessings from God to humans

**Ni'maat:** natural resources

**Qadr:** maintenance of equilibrium

**Qiyas:** juristic analogy

**Qur'ān:** literally, “the recitation”; the sacred book of Islam

**Ribā:** usury, a distasteful act prohibited by Islam

**Saad al-dharai:** closing the gate to evil

**Sadaqat:** voluntary alms

**Sahāba:** companions of the Prophet Muhammad

**Sahih Bukhari:** book of hadith compiled by Imam Bukhari

**Shahadah:** profession of faith

**Shari'ah:** the path to be followed in Muslim life

**Sheikh:** trained Muslim religious leader

**Shi'ite:** followers of Ali; sect attached to the fourth caliph Imam Ali ibn Abi Taled, the Prophet's cousin and husband of Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter.

**Sujud:** act of low bowing or prostration to Allah facing the qiblah

**Sunnah:** custom, habits, prophetic examples, sayings, practices and deeds of Prophet Muhammad, which were documented after his death by his companions

**Sunni:** a Muslim who belongs to the largest and most orthodox sect of Islam

**Surah:** chapter or portion of the Qur'ān

**Tahara:** cleanliness

**Tanzil:** sending down

**Tarkah:** inheritance law according to the Qur'ān

**Tasawwuf:** Sufism

**Tawadu:** modesty and servitude

**Tawhid:** Divine Unity; the absolute oneness of God; the conviction that there is no deity but God

**Ubudiyyah:** servanthood

**Ukhuwwah:** brotherhood, fraternity

**Umma:** community, nation, people

**Wahy:** revelation

**Waqf:** endowment made by a Muslim to a religious, educational or charitable cause

**Wasatiyyah:** centrism, balance, moderation, middle-ground, justice

**Wudu':** ablution, the ritual cleansing of the body before prayers, cleanliness required of Muslims before the performance of religious duties

**Zakat:** purification; almsgiving; the third pillar of Islam

**Zam Zam:** an Islamic holy well in Mecca; a spring believed God had struck to rescue Hagar and her son Ishmael from dying of thirst in the desert

**Zuhur:** Self-manifestation of God



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## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Description of the research problem and its significance

In his book *Signs on the Earth. Islam, Modernity and the Climate Crisis*, Fazlun Khalid, the founder of the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES), tells the following story as an analogy for human behaviour towards the environment<sup>1</sup>:

Rapa Nui, the native name for Easter Island, was settled for the first time by Polynesians between 500 and 1200 CE. This island, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, was until then a wholly inhabited environment, mainly wooded, with an estimated twenty-one species of trees, a wide variety of plants, and sea birds, but no mammals. By the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the human population on the island grew to an estimated peak of 7,000 people. However, because of systematic deforestation, mainly to create agricultural spaces and for building houses, and excessive use of natural resources, by the time Dutch sailors first arrived at the island in 1722, the Rapa Nui population was decimated to 3,000 people. Ulterior ecosystem collapse and the introduction of new diseases through the Dutch settlers led to the almost complete disappearance of the Rapa Nui population on an ecologically completely impoverished island.<sup>2</sup>

According to Khalid, the story of Easter Island is an example of human short-sightedness towards the environment and the potential consequences of such behaviour, namely self-destruction through systematic, thoughtless exploitation of natural resources with no regard for the ecosystem or the future. To describe this situation, religious traditions often use the image of a ship. Following Imam Bukhari, the Prophet Muhammad tells the story of a ship with upper and lower decks. To be independent of the upper deck, the people below drilled a hole in the

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<sup>1</sup> Khalid, Fazlun (2019): *Signs on the Earth. Islam, Modernity and the Climate Crisis*. Markfield: Kube Publishing

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 87

ship's hull to get water. This behaviour ultimately led to the ship sinking. Drilling into the hull stands for humanity disregarding God's law: even a tiny hole can create havoc.<sup>3</sup> In Judaism, such minor but consequential wrongdoings are called *chamas*. When such deeds are committed continuously, they can cause great harm. According to Jewish tradition, it was because of the accumulation of *chamas* that God unleashed the flood. Humans were warned 120 years before the flood to alter their behaviour. They never did. We are in the same situation today. In 1896, the Swedish Nobel prize-winning chemist Svante Arrhenius warned about the possibility of climate change. One hundred and twenty years later, little has been done to change the course of our ship.<sup>4</sup>

Nowadays, climate change and environmental degradation have been widely recognised by the scientific community and by large segments of society as the utmost compelling and crucial challenges of our time. The ecological crisis affects not only ecosystems, natural resources, and biodiversity. It directly impacts economies, social and racial justice, food production, and human health. According to the United Nations, events such as floods, droughts, desertification, rising sea levels, and storms, all made more likely to happen due to climate change, could render some regions of the planet inhabitable, leading by 2050 to the displacement of over 200 million so-called climate refugees, a phenomenon called environmental migration.<sup>5</sup> At present, numerous governments worldwide have agreed on taking actions to curb the effects of climate change, and the UN has declared the decade running from 2021 to 2030 as the “UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration” as a global call for the revival and protection of ecosystems around the globe.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sahih al- Bukhārī, Volume 3, Book 47, Hadith 2493. In: [www.alim.org/hadith/sahih-bukhari/3/47/2493/](http://www.alim.org/hadith/sahih-bukhari/3/47/2493/) (accessed on 08.12.2022)

<sup>4</sup> Neril Yonatan, Dee Leo (2020): *Eco Bible: An Ecological Commentary on Genesis and Exodus*. Jerusalem: The Interfaith Centre for Sustainable Development.

<sup>5</sup> Pinto-Dobering, Ilse (Ed.) (2008): *Migration and Climate Change*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration

<sup>6</sup> *About the UN Decade*. In: <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/about-un-decade> (accessed on 14.05.2021)

Since the late 1960s, the role of religion within the green movement and the influence of religious values on pro-environmental behaviour has been widely discussed.<sup>7</sup> The present dissertation aims to give a comprehensive description of Islamic environmental principles based on the Qur'ān, the Prophetic tradition<sup>8</sup>, and literature by modern scholars of Islam and to provide an in-depth explanation of Eco-Islam in Wales: It also focuses on the normative influence of faith-based principles on the environmental movement with a further focus on the implementation of such values. The objective is to assess how much pro-environmental behaviour is affected by religion, in this case, Islamic principles, and evaluate obstacles, challenges, and problems of faith-based environmentalism. I additionally provide some guidelines for political and social interventions in favour of minorities and marginalised communities, such as the Muslim community, that can support them to fully express and implement their ideas and potential toward the sustainable development of society in Wales.

Climate change, environmental degradation, and the challenge of creating sustainable societies have long been regarded as problems relating primarily to technology, politics, and the economy. However, academic studies have revealed the importance of religion in environmental discourse<sup>9</sup>, and during the last decade, a surge of religious movements in environmental governance on different levels, from religious leaders and religious institutions to faith-based grassroots movements, has been observed. Environmental issues are also becoming an area of interfaith cooperation with the potential to help preserve the planet and foster dialogue, peace, and social justice. However, as noted by Haluza DeLay<sup>10</sup>, the role of religion in environmental governance

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<sup>7</sup> Environmental psychology and the relevance of religions in environmentalism will be discussed later in more detail.

<sup>8</sup> Prophetic tradition refers here to the sunna, or the way in which the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions lived, said and acted. The sunna is reported in the Hadīth or the written accounts of the words, deeds or silent approval of the Prophet Muhammad during his preaching period and after the revelation of the Qur'ān. (Source: Bowker John (Ed.) (1997): *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

<sup>9</sup> Saniotis, Arthur (2011): *Muslim and Ecology: fostering Islamic environmental ethics*. In: *Contemporary Islam* 6(2), 155-171

<sup>10</sup> Haluza-DeLay, Randolph (2015): *Religious movements in Environmental Governance*. In: *Elgar Encyclopaedia of Global Environmental Politics and Governance*. London: The King's University (DRAFT)

can be complicated and, at times, contradictory,<sup>11</sup> as it will be discussed in more depth in the last chapter.

Belief systems exert relevant normative influence on the behaviour of the faith members, including influence on the relationship with nature and the understanding of human's role towards the environment. In fact, according to scholars in this field such as Fazlun Khalid, the pursuit of sustainability and restoration of ecosystems must be accompanied by a sense of purpose, and "religion can provide that sense of purpose of the whys behind environmental ethics."<sup>12</sup> A positive example of such a normative influence of religion on the behaviour of a community is the marine conservation project in Zanzibar led by the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES) in collaboration with CARE International (USA), World Wide Fund for Nature International (WWF) and the Alliance of Religions & Conservation (UK) in 1999<sup>13</sup>. Fishing in Zanzibar, a predominantly Muslim country, supports the livelihood of approximately 11,400 people. Most relied on fishing using dynamite, destroying the local coral reefs, the natural habitat, and sawing grounds for the fish they depend on. With the support of the local government, the IFEES delivered a series of workshops on conservation using the Qur'ān as a teaching resource. The goal was to sensitize stakeholders to conservation. This approach proved more effective than government regulations, leading many fishermen to use more sustainable fishing methods and eventually save the coral reefs. One local fisherman

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<sup>11</sup> An example of religious opposition to climate action is political–conservative and evangelical Christian movements, which have received widespread media attention for ignoring environmental issues and opposing climate science. According to a Pew Research poll conducted in 2015, approximately one-quarter of the American population in the United States identifies as evangelical or born-again Christian, which generally tends to interpret the bible literally and rather socially conservative. Such groups supported US- President Donald Trump, who withdrew the US from the Paris Climate Agreement during his presidency. Source: Taback H., Ramanan R. (2013): *Environmental Ethics and Sustainability. A casebook for environmental professionals*. Boca Raton: CRC Press

<sup>12</sup> Taback H., Ramanan R. (2013): *Environmental Ethics and Sustainability: A casebook for environmental professionals*. Boca Raton: CRC Press

<sup>13</sup> Khalid, Fazlun: *The Application of Islamic Environmental Ethics to promote Marine Conservation in Zanzibar*. In: <https://www.ifees.org.uk/projects/islam-biodiversity/zanzibar/> (accessed on 24. 05.2021)

explained the success of the IFEES approach with the following words: "it is easy to ignore the government, but no one can break God's law."<sup>14</sup>

However, faith-based environmentalism has also its limitations and religious traditions can have a negative impact on environmental efforts as well. According to Zahleha and Szasz<sup>15</sup>, some sections of Christianity are sceptical towards climate change or even welcome it as a fulfilment of an end-time prophecy, and some Muslim groups, so Yildirim,<sup>16</sup> regard climate change as a Western conspiracy to weaken Muslim-majority countries. In other words, faith-based environmentalism does not necessarily move unison in one direction, but is rather “an embattled terrain that involves actors with diverging interests, backgrounds, and understandings of their traditions.”<sup>17</sup> When analysing religious environmental movements such as Eco-Islam, it is important to keep in mind that the relationship between religion and environment can be complex and multi-layered. One aim of this dissertation is to show this complexity.

Despite the complexity and limitations, many researchers tend to stress the positive influence of religions in environmental issues which has become an emerging social movement. Bron Taylor – one of the leading scholars in the field of nature and religion- describes this emerging faith-based environmentalism as "the greening of religions."<sup>18</sup> Even if institutionalised religions in some parts of the world are on the decline, spiritual sentiments remain, for many environmental activists, the root of their engagement with nature.<sup>19</sup> In contrast to the influence of religious thoughts, secular philosophies and positivistic thinking have even been regarded as the root

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<sup>14</sup> Dickinson, Daniel (2005): *Eco-Islam hits Zanzibar Fishermen*. In: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4271519.stm> (accessed on the 25. 05.2021)

<sup>15</sup> Zahleha Bernard Daley, Szasz Andrew (2015): *Why conservative Christians don't believe in climate change*. In: *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 71(5): 19-30

<sup>16</sup> Yildirim, Kadir (2016): *Between anti-Westernism and development. Political Islam and Environmentalism*. In: *Middle Eastern Studies* 52(2): 215-232

<sup>17</sup> Koehrsen J., Blanc J., Huber F. (2022): 44

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 48

<sup>19</sup> Haluza-DeLay, Randolph (2015): *Religious movements in Environmental Governance*. In: *Elgar Encyclopaedia of Global Environmental Politics and Governance*. London: The King's University (DRAFT), 1



cause for the deliberate exploitation of natural resources which leads to environmental degradation.

According to Haluza-DeLay, “it is organized religion that probably has the most effect on environmental governance,”<sup>20</sup> as they consist of recognized religious institutions, religious leaders, and authorities, who can be involved in the governance processes.

Following a demographic study in 2012 by the Pew Research Centre, eight in ten people worldwide identify with a religious group.<sup>21</sup> This was then 84% of the world population. After Christianity, followed by an estimated 33% of the world population, Islam is the second biggest religion, with 24% practicing Muslims worldwide.<sup>22</sup> Islam represents, therefore, a relevant social force, even if the geographical distribution of faith members according to countries varies considerably. Following the UK Annual Population Survey from April 2017 to March 2018, in Britain there are approximately 3.3 million Muslims<sup>23</sup> forming 4.8% of the population in England and Wales.<sup>24</sup>

Interestingly, it was not until 2001 that the question on religious affiliation was included in the UK census. The inclusion of this category was largely lobbied for by religious minorities, such as Islam, which have recently become more politically and socially visible, indicating a growing recognition of the importance of religion in society.

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<sup>20</sup> Haluza-DeLay, Randolph (2015): *Religious movements in Environmental Governance*. In: Elgar Encyclopaedia of Global Environmental Politics and Governance. London: The King's University (DRAFT), 1

<sup>21</sup> *The Global Religious landscape*. In: <https://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/> (accessed on 18.05.2021)

<sup>22</sup> *Religion by Country 2023*. In: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/religion-by-country> (accessed on 31.05.2021)

<sup>23</sup> *Annual Population Survey April 2017 to March 2018, weighted Person Weight APS 2017*. In: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/transparencyandgovernance/freedomofinformationfoi/muslimpopulationintheuk/> (accessed on 31.05.2021)

<sup>24</sup> *British Muslims in Numbers. MCBC Census Report 2015*. In: [https://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MCBCensusReport\\_2015.pdf](https://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MCBCensusReport_2015.pdf) (accessed on 31.05.2021)

## 1.2 Thesis structure

This dissertation explores how Islamic environmental principles are implemented within the Muslim communities in Wales. The relevance of the research question can be seen in the broader context of research on faith-based environmentalism. As noted above, despite growing optimism about the role of religion within the green movement, the extent to which religious values lead to pro-environmental behaviour at individual and institutional levels remains a matter of debate. The analysis of the green movement within the Welsh Muslim communities will ultimately contribute relevant information to the clarification of this question. Furthermore, the research aims to shed additional light on the specific situation of Welsh Muslims and the challenges they face in terms of sustainability and pro-environmental behaviour.

The introductory chapter begins by describing the research question and its significance. To emphasise the importance of the research question, I provide background information on the global environmental crisis, the specific environmental situation in Wales, and the potential consequences of the ecological crisis for humanity and the future of the planet. I will argue that the seriousness of the current environmental situation requires the mobilisation of all individuals, institutions and social sectors, and that in order to mobilise people we need to understand what deeply motivates change, but also what barriers play a role in the implementation of religious and ethical values in relation to sustainability and environmental protection.

To position Islamic environmental ethics, I introduce an overview of the main strands of ecological philosophy. This overview aims to illustrate the complexity of environmental ethics and how different perspectives have been discussed historically and to the present day. I argue that there is no universally accepted ecological ethic and that the positioning of Islamic environmental principles is complex and open to interpretation. From there, a description of the phenomenon and the origins of the “greening of religions” follows. The concept of Eco-Islam can be seen as a result of such “greening” and is a modern expression of Islam. At the end of the

dissertation, I discuss to what extent “Islam” has become "green" or whether this greening hypothesis is an optimistic thinking that has taken hold of many significant religions but has little application. The theoretical framework for the research question draws widely from environmental psychology theories and is also closely linked to the greening of religion hypothesis. The first chapter introduces such ideas and the theoretical framework, which will be discussed in depth in the methodology chapter.

As shown in various sections of the thesis, one of the pillars of sustainable development in Wales, as described in the *Welsh Well-being of Future Generations Act*, is Welsh culture. Culture itself is a problematic term to define. However, the authors of the Act failed to define the specifics of Welsh culture. Culture plays an essential role in the identification process of an individual, and identification largely influences a person's behaviour in society. After such considerations, it seems necessary to ask whether or to what extent Islam is recognised as part of Welsh culture and what influence this recognition or lack of it has on pro-environmental behaviour on the part of Muslims living in Wales. The historical sketch of Muslims in Wales in the first chapter is intended to show that Islamic culture is indeed historically rooted in Wales and, thus, part of Welsh culture.

The understanding of the concept of sustainability is an essential basis for environmental activism, including Muslim activism. There is a parallel between secular and Islamic environmentalism, with sustainability being the core of Islamic ecological ethics. Chapter two is a comprehensive examination of the concept of sustainability, its history, application, and dimensions, but also weaknesses and criticisms. The idea of sustainability is based on three pillars, the social, environmental and economic dimensions. These three aspects are deeply interconnected, one determining and affecting all others and vice versa. Therefore, when analysing the Eco-Islam movement in Wales, it is essential to focus on the environmental aspect and the social and economic reality of Muslims living in this region. Social sustainability includes equity of access to critical services, like health and transport, valuing cultural diversity, and a

sense of community ownership. Such positive indicators of social sustainability are widely lacking within Welsh Muslim communities. This has a direct effect on Muslim green efforts. The chapter further discusses sustainability from the Shari'ah perspective and introduces the term "Eco-Islam". To put the Welsh Eco-Islam movement into context, the chapter concludes with an overview of Wales's environmental situation and sustainable development.

The third chapter is devoted to a comprehensive description of Islamic environmental ethics. There are two "problems" inherent in the concept of Islamic environmental ethics. First, the concept of Islam itself. Like all other religions, Islam is not a monolithic phenomenon, but a tradition that branches out into different schools with different theological understandings. The second "problem" is the novelty of bringing together faith and environmentalism. The intersection of religion and the environment is indeed a relatively new field and presents two challenging issues: the problem of theological generalisation and the problem of recognition of religious authorities.

The most known denominations in Islam are Sunnī Islam, which comprises around 85% of the Muslim population worldwide, and Shi'a Islam<sup>25</sup>. There are numerous other denominations and branches with different degrees of variations in their understanding of Islam, its theology and jurisprudence. However, the Qur'ān is the authoritative source and common denominator of all Muslim branches. Despite possible differences in interpretation, Islamic environmental principles for this research are extracted from the ecological themes proposed in the Qur'ān. In addition, Islamic environmental principles are discussed on the basis of the Ahadīth, or prophetic tradition, which is a source of clarification for many ideas presented in the Qur'ān. Modern Islamic scholars in the field of Eco-Islam are also quoted and given a voice.

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<sup>25</sup> *Mapping the Global Muslim Population: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Muslim Population* In: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2009/10/07/mapping-the-global-muslim-population/> Published in 2009, retrieved in 2019 (Accessed on 02.03.2023)

Besides core principles such as *tawhid*, *ākbira* and *khilafah*, the chapter introduces Islamic thoughts on water, animals, and other fundamental concepts such as cleanliness and balance. I will also present the ahādīth and Sufi beliefs concerning nature, resources, and behaviour towards creation. A thorough discussion of Islamic environmental principles is relevant to the research question because it enables us to assess more precisely the extent to which religious ecological ideas are implemented within Welsh Muslim communities. While the three core principles of *tawhid*, *ākbira* and *khilafah* are of a more philosophical nature, statements about water, animals, cleanliness, and balance deal with practical aspects that need to be implemented in order for the believer to fulfil religious obligations. Such applicable principles and mandates are particularly helpful in assessing the level of Muslim environmental commitment.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the methodology chosen for this research. In addition to a detailed description of the research design, philosophy and strategy, the limitations and advantages of the methods used are discussed. The description of the methods is an integral part of the dissertation as it allows the reader to evaluate the reliability, rigour and validity of the research. For this dissertation, I have chosen a pragmatic research philosophy mainly because of the problem-oriented nature of the research question. For the research strategy, deductive logic is the most appropriate research approach, which uses pre-existing theories to validate or dismiss a hypothesis. Here, I am applying two theoretical frameworks to be validated by my research findings. One theoretical framework is the Value-Belief-Norm Theory used to explain pro-environmental behaviour. Further, I examine the social identity model of collective action (SIMCA), which includes the aspects of identity and morals.

I used semi-structured interviews to collect data. This qualitative method allowed me to select the respondents best suited to my research question and to obtain a variety of views on the topic. The advantages, disadvantages and limitations of this method are discussed in detail in chapter four. An essential part of qualitative research is reflectivity, critically reflecting on my role in

generating and interpreting information. Although not explicitly stated, reflectivity remained a standard method throughout the research process.

The fifth chapter presents the results of the interviews. The interviews are grouped into three categories: Muslim respondents from Wales, including religious leaders and experts in the field of environmentalism; non-British green activists who identify as Muslim or who are involved in Eco-Islam; and the final category of Welsh experts in sustainability and researchers in the field of faith-based environmentalism. The results of the interviews, summarised and abstracted using a coding system, form the basis of the discussion and findings presented in the final chapter.

The sixth and final chapter is devoted to discussion and conclusion. All the different aspects considered in the previous chapters are systematically discussed in terms of Welsh Eco-Islam, using the data from the qualitative research. Firstly, I assess the extent to which Islamic environmental principles are being implemented. Particular attention is given to mosques as the most relevant platform for Muslim environmentalism. Based on the findings, I discuss the nature of the barriers and obstacles faced by Muslim communities that affect their environmental activism. They include the socio-economic status of Welsh Muslims, islamophobia, effects of the Covid-19 pandemics on the Muslim community, and the effect of colonialism and postcolonialism on the environmental movement. I further discuss how faith-based groups are positioned within the global ecology movement, the role of interfaith dialogue in promoting faith – based ecological values and how Muslim communities are positioned within the interfaith dialogue platform in the West, and finally, how secularism might influence religious green activism. I critically discuss the theoretical framework chosen for this research and the validity of the definition of sustainability as a working tool. The chapter concludes with a summary of the most relevant findings and a list of recommendations for both the Welsh civil society and its political bodies, and for the Muslim communities in Wales. The recommendations are intended to help create better conditions for a thriving Eco-Islam movement.

### 1.3 Background

The following section provides relevant background information for a better understanding of the relevance of the research question.

#### 1.3.1 Climate Change: the emergence of the environmental crisis and sustainability

In distinction to the changing weather, climate refers to long-term variations and characteristics of local or global atmospheric conditions. In other words, the climate is the average weather for a particular region and period of time.<sup>26</sup> Climate change is a long-lasting shift of climate patterns mainly due to the increased levels of anthropogenic carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Accumulated greenhouse gases prevent excessive heat from leaving the earth, leading to the warming of the atmosphere, oceans, and land surfaces. All this disrupts the delicate balance of planetary temperatures and significantly impacts ecological systems.

The ability of greenhouse gases to absorb and radiate heat has been known since the 1850s, thanks to experiments conducted by John Tyndall and Eunice Foote. Foote was the first scientist to experiment with the warming effects of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Her results were presented in 1856 at the American Association for the Advancement of Science.<sup>27</sup> However, because of her gender, her results were not taken seriously. During the same period, Tyndall speculated that "small changes in gasses that absorbed the sun's heat would produce great effects on the terrestrial rays and produce corresponding changes of climate."<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, the scientific community responded to the threat of increasing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere only in the past decades. In 1896, Svante Arrhenius created a greenhouse law for carbon dioxide

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<sup>26</sup> Armstrong Anne, Krasny Marianne, Schuldt Jonathan (2018): *Communicating Climate Change. A Guide for Educators*. New York: Cornell University Press, 7

<sup>27</sup> Foote, Eunice (1856): *Circumstances Affecting the Heat of the Sun's Rays*. In: American Journal of Science and Arts, 22:383

<sup>28</sup> Tyndall, John (1861): *On the Absorption and Radiation of Heat by Gases and Vapours, and on the Physical Connexion of Radiation, Absorption, and Conduction*. In: Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, 151 (1): 28

that is still used today. His law shows the correlation between atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration and global warming. However, his ideas also found little resonance in the scientific community. Only during the 1950s, through the research by Charles Keeling, the increased atmospheric greenhouse gas concentration was proven and taken seriously.<sup>29</sup> Today there is a strong consensus among climate scientists that global temperature is increasing due to the activities of humans since the onset of the industrial revolution. Between 1970 and 2000, anthropogenic greenhouse emissions increased by an average of 1.3 percent each year and between 2000 and 2010 by an average of 2.2 percent per year.<sup>30</sup> This caused the average temperature of the surface of the planet to increase by about 1.1 Celsius degrees since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>31</sup> causing severe damage to the environment.

Besides the recognition of climate change through the scientific community, two other major works – which nowadays can be considered classics- pointed out other severe environmental threats and jumpstarted a broad environmental movement. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, showed the adverse effects of the use of pesticides, in particular DDT, on the environment. Her book has been called one of the most influential writings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>32</sup> and became a classic literary work not only because of the content but also because it was “eminently readable and understandable by a general public not steeped in science.”<sup>33</sup> Another pioneer of the environmental movement was Stewart Udall, who, just one year after the release of *Silent Spring*, published in 1963 a book titled *The Quiet Crisis*. Udall warned about the dangers of pollution and chemical contamination, representing severe threats to the natural environment

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<sup>29</sup> Luber George, Jeremy Jay (2015): *Global Climate Change and Human Health: From Science to Practice*. San Francisco: John Wiley&Sons

<sup>30</sup> Armstrong Anne, Krasny Marianne, Schuldt Jonathan (2018): *Communicating Climate Change. A Guide for Educators*. New York: Cornell University Press, 11

<sup>31</sup> *Global Temperature Record Broken for Third Consecutive Year*. In: NASA Earth Observatory, <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/89469/global-temperature-record-broken-for-third-consecutive-year> (accessed on 03.05.2021)

<sup>32</sup> Shea, Kevin P. (1973): *A Celebration of Silent Spring*. In: Environment 15: 4-5

<sup>33</sup> Beyl, Caula A. (1992): *Rachel Carson, Silent Spring, and the Environmental Movement*. In: Proceedings of the Workshop on the History of the Organic Movement, Hort Technology Publisher 2(2): 272



and humans. According to Muhammad Jalil Arif, both authors "urged for the awareness of land conscience to protect the natural environment and species."<sup>34</sup> A later paragraph in this chapter will be dedicated to the development and differences of the various environmental ethics that have developed since.

### 1.3.2 Consequences of Climate Change

The global rising of temperatures has severe repercussions for different ecosystems, which are all interconnected. A small change in one ecosystem can bring significant changes in other areas. Most affected by the warming up of the atmosphere are oceans.<sup>35</sup> Since the beginning of the industrial revolution around 200 years ago, oceans have absorbed around one-fourth of the anthropogenically emitted carbon dioxide. Due to this absorption, oceans have become 30 percent more acidic than in pre-industrial times.<sup>36</sup> This acidification leads to the dissolution of carbon carbonate, which becomes less available to marine organisms, such as corals, crabs, oysters, and others, to build their shells. This disrupts the oceans' food chain and, consequently, food availability for humans.

Another effect of rising temperatures on the oceans is the rising sea levels due to melting glaciers and water volume expansion under higher temperatures. If the greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase, scientists have predicted that by 2100 the sea levels will be 2.4 meters above the average level of 2014.<sup>37</sup> This will eventually lead to regular coastal flooding, the disappearance of coastal land, and the dislocation of populations. Certain regions on the planet will be affected

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<sup>34</sup> Arif, Muhammad Jalil (2021): *The Development of Ecological Thought: Contemporary Approaches and the Way Forward*. In: Academia Letters, 1008

<sup>35</sup> Armstrong Anne, Krasny Marianne, Schuldt Jonathan (2018): *Communicating Climate Change. A Guide for Educators*. New York: Cornell University Press, 13

<sup>36</sup> *Oceans as Carbon Stores*. In: <https://www.awi.de/en/focus/ocean-acidification/facts-on-ocean-acidification.html> (07.06.2021)

<sup>37</sup> Armstrong Anne, Krasny Marianne, Schuldt Jonathan (2018): *Communicating Climate Change. A Guide for Educators*. New York: Cornell University Press, 14

by floods due to increased heavy rainfalls. In contrast, simultaneously, other regions will face droughts and desertification as a consequence of global warming. All these climatic phenomena have an impact on agriculture, crop, and livestock viability. Rising temperatures, extensive use of pesticides, increased pollution and other stressors are causing insect populations to decline. The increased bee mortality has received much public attention. Being the primary pollinator of crops, bees play a crucial role in agriculture, and their decline has already had devastating effects on food production.<sup>38</sup>

In the context of agriculture and climate change, industrialised livestock farming should be mentioned. The modern food industry creates approximately 13,7 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide yearly, equivalent to 26% of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. "These emissions," so Poore and Nemeek,<sup>39</sup> "can fundamentally alter the species composition of natural ecosystems, reducing biodiversity and ecological resilience." Between 35% and 40% of greenhouse gas emissions derive from animal farming<sup>40</sup>, which is a significant part of the food industry and, thus, responsible for a major share of air and water pollution, water shortage, and loss of biodiversity, mainly through deforestation. Aside from the environmental impact of animal farming, from a moral point of view, it is questionable whether there is any ethical way to slaughter a sentient animal that does not want to die. According to several scientists, most animals killed for food, including fish, experience emotions like pain and fear.<sup>41</sup> Before being slaughtered, over ninety percent of land-based farmed animals are kept in industrial animal farms, where they face confinement in small cages, mutilations, forced artificial breeding, and

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<sup>38</sup> Turner, Sophie (2019): *Impact of Climate Change on Bees and Food Production*. In: <http://www.acclimatise.uk.com/2019/08/26/impact-of-climate-change-on-bees-and-food-production/> (accessed on 07.06.2021)

<sup>39</sup> Poore J., Nemeck T. (2018): *Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers*. In: Science, 360 (6392), 987-992

<sup>40</sup> Gerber, P.J., Steinfeld, H., Henderson, B., Mottet, A., Opio, C., Dijkman, J., Falcucci, A. & Tempio, G. (2013): *Tackling climate change through livestock – A global assessment of emissions and mitigation opportunities*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). In: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3437e.pdf> (accessed on 08.05.2020)

<sup>41</sup> Chandroo K., Duncan I., Moccia R. (2004): *Can fish suffer? Perspectives on sentience, pain, fear, and stress*. In: Applied Animal Behaviour Science, 86(3), 225-250

chemical treatments with related health issues.<sup>42</sup> All of these are forms of abuse with questionable ethical and moral standing.

The environmental impact of animal farming has far-reaching consequences that go beyond the sole welfare of animals. Deforestation, monocultures, climate change, illicit poaching, and trafficking in wildlife are responsible for a significant loss of biodiversity and irreversible extinctions of animal species. Anthropogenic extinction concerns 5-20% of species in different groups of organisms, with the present extinction rate being 100-1,000 times faster than in pre-human epochs. These extinctions are likely to disrupt the sensitive ecosystems around the planet, their resilience, their resistance to ecological changes, and the environmental balance on earth.<sup>43</sup> One consequence of the loss of biodiversity which is particularly pertinent today is the increased likelihood of spreading new and old diseases.<sup>44</sup> Ecosystems have a buffering function for infectious diseases to humans, and the decline of biodiversity is likely to lead to a faster rate of emergence and re-emergence of such diseases.<sup>45</sup>

An often-ignored aspect of industrial animal farming is its connection to social justice, one of the three pillars of sustainability. The increasing number of so-called climate change refugees is partly a consequence of industrialised animal farming and its contribution to environmental catastrophes such as droughts and floods, which force people from poorer countries to leave their homes. Meat production can be linked to injustice to smaller-scale farms due to the increasing need for land and other agricultural resources or their exclusion from the industrial food distribution chains. Studies show that factory farms and slaughterhouses tend to employ many workers from marginalised communities and vulnerable groups like migrants who are

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<sup>42</sup> Reese, Jacy (2018): *The end of animal farming. How scientists, entrepreneurs, and activists are building an animal-free food system.* Boston: Beacon Press

<sup>43</sup> Madhu Rao, Trond Larsen (2010): *Ecological Consequences of Extinction.* In: *Lessons in Conservation*, 3, 25-53

<sup>44</sup> Terborgh, J., L. Lopez, P. Nunez, M. Rao, G. Shahabuddin, G. Orihuela, M. Riveros, R. Ascanio, G.H. Adler, T.D. Lambert, and L. Balbas (2001): *Ecological meltdown in predator-free forest fragments.* In: *Science* 294(5548): 1923-1926

<sup>45</sup> Matt Florian, Gebser Ronny (2011): *Biodiversity decline can increase the spread of infectious diseases like Hantavirus.* In: TEEBcase, <https://www.cbd.int/financial/values/g-valuehealth.pdf> (accessed on 05.10.2022)

particularly vulnerable to exploitation.<sup>46</sup> A recent scientific study conducted in the United States shows that workers at a US industrial slaughterhouse experienced a higher prevalence of severe psychological distress (SPD) than the general population. It is presumed that this result can be extrapolated to other industrialised countries.

Climate change threatens the ecosystem and the safety, health, and mental well-being of humans. Epidemiological research reveals a correlation between mortality and rising temperatures.<sup>47</sup> This correlation increases even further, with poverty being an independent risk factor related to heat. This is because poverty is associated with lower accessibility to medical health care and other protective measures.<sup>48</sup>

As this brief overview shows, other aspects of environmental degradation besides climate change make environmental action a pressing issue. Amongst such issues are the pollution of air, water, soil, and partly of food, over-consumerism, resulting waste problems, extinction of species and biodiversity through the loss of natural habitats, deforestation, and armed conflicts due to climate change. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore all these issues in depth. However, it can be concluded that environmental action is fundamental to the survival of humanity and life on the planet, and that all sectors of society, including faith communities, are called to respond to this challenge.

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<sup>46</sup> *For Social Justice. Our Diet is another Way We can speak up for Human Rights.* In: <https://eatingveg.org/why/social-justice/> (accessed on 19/05/2020)

<sup>47</sup> Luber George, Leremy Jay (2015): *Global Climate Change and Human Health: From Science to Practice.* San Francisco: John Wiley&Sons

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

### 1.3.3 Current environmental situation in Wales and sustainable Wales

The Natural Resources of Wales (NRW), a governmental sponsored body, is the principal adviser to the Welsh government on sustainability and climate change.<sup>49</sup> By law, the NRW has to provide every five years an assessment of the environmental state of Wales, focusing primarily on natural resources such as air, water, soil, rocks, minerals, and wildlife habitats. The latest report, released in January 2021, makes for a "bleak reading," according to Future Generations Commissioner Sophie Howe.<sup>50</sup> The report shows that most wildlife habitats are in critical conditions that threatens an increasing biodiversity loss. Rivers are still affected by high levels of phosphate pollution derived from farmed areas and abandoned metal mines. Fly-tipping and hazardous waste are seriously affecting the Welsh landscapes. Further, the NRW estimates that air pollution in Wales causes up to 2,000 deaths annually, around 6% of the total fatalities. As a result of increasing temperatures and, consequently, the rising sea levels, around 245,000 properties are at risk of flooding. At the same time, drought is also an issue that reduces water availability in certain areas. Due to poor infrastructure, Wales has a high rate of car use for commuting, adding to the emission of carbon dioxide.<sup>51</sup>

Another area of concern addressed by a Welsh government report in 2020 is the Welsh lamb production, which is the backbone of Welsh agriculture, providing an annual national income of approximately 124 million GBP in Wales only and producing 34,000 farm jobs and 111, 415 jobs in related sectors. Lamb and sheep farming supports rural communities and is an aspect of cultural heritage with traditional ways of life preserved for the future of Britain and Wales. On the other side, such farming is the cause of several environmental problems, such as green gas

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<sup>49</sup> *Natural Resources in Wales*. In: <https://naturalresourceswales.gov.uk/about-us/what-we-do/our-roles-and-responsibilities/?lang=en> (accessed on 09.06.2021)

<sup>50</sup> Messenger, Steffan (2021): *Wales' natural resources are used at unsustainable rate*. In: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-55814191> (accessed on 09.06.2021)

<sup>51</sup> *Natural Resources Wales*. In: <https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/strategies-and-plans/wellbeing-objectives/reduce-the-risk-to-people-and-communities-from-environmental-hazards-such-as-flooding-and-pollution/?lang=en> (accessed on the 09.06.2021)

emissions, soil erosion, water and air pollution, and loss of biodiversity through extensive land use.<sup>52</sup> This brief example of the impact of lamb and sheep farming on the environment and social life in Wales illustrates the close links between environmental, social and economic issues. This interrelationship often makes decisions about sustainable development difficult. This is discussed in more detail in the second chapter.

### 1.3.4 Environmental Ethics and its different approaches

Environmental ethics is a philosophical discipline that studies the moral status of the environment and its non-human contents, and investigates the moral relationship between the natural environment and humans.<sup>53</sup> John Muir is often regarded as one of the precursors of environmental ethics. Born in 1838 in Scotland, Muir was the co-founder and first president of the Sierra Club, a North American non-profit environmental organisation, and is considered to be the "father of National Parks" in the United States. His approach to the environment is preservationist, based on the recognition of the intrinsic value of nature. According to Muir, "nature deserved to exist for its own sake regardless of its usefulness to the human being."<sup>54</sup> This approach stands in ideological dichotomy to conservationism, as represented by Gifford Pinchot (1865-1946). The conservation approach sees the value of nature and its resources as purely instrumental for the benefit of humans. The goal is to use natural resources for human progress. While nature for Muir has both an aesthetic and a spiritual value, for Gifford, the environment has to be preserved only to ensure economic benefits.<sup>55</sup> According to Arif<sup>56</sup>, various

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<sup>52</sup> Riddell, Hollie (2020): *Lamb Production and Wales: A Holistic Environmental Footprint*. <https://businesswales.gov.wales/farmingconnect/news-and-events/technical-articles/lamb-production-and-wales-holistic-environmental-footprint> (accessed on 05.10.2022)

<sup>53</sup> *Environmental Ethics* (2015). In: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-environmental/> (accessed on 17.06.2121)

<sup>54</sup> Muir, John (2015): *Wilderness Essays*. Layton: Gibbs Smith

<sup>55</sup> Arif, Muhammad Jalil (2021): *The Development of Ecological Thought: Contemporary Approaches and the Way Forward*. In: Academia Letters, 1008

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*: 1008

environmental ethics developed as offshoots of Muir's preservation idea. In 1949 Aldo Leopold published *A Sand County Almanac*, a central work in which he advocated the adoption of a *land ethic*. In this approach, the land as a biotic community is seen as the "basic concept of ecology," which needs to be loved and respected to preserve its integrity, stability, and beauty.<sup>57</sup> According to Leopold's *land ethic*, actions are right as long as they strive to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of biotic communities. This view posed a significant challenge to the dominant Western view based on anthropocentrism, human-centred ethics that recognises moral values only for humans.

According to Alan Marshall, a major scholar in the field of environmental ethics, the discourse on the moral value of nature has given rise to three strands of environmental ethics: the *libertarian extension*, the *ecological extension*, and the *conservative extension*. The libertarian extension "involves the widening of rights to previously unconsidered members of the living and non-living community."<sup>58</sup> The best-known representatives of this line of thought are Arne Naess (1912-2009), the father of *deep ecology*, and Peter Singer (\*1946), mostly known for his book *Animal Liberation*, which is widely considered to contain the basic philosophical statements of the animal liberation movement.<sup>59</sup>

The term deep ecology was coined to contrast with what Arne Naess saw as the 'shallow ecology' movement, which was concerned only with fighting pollution and resource depletion in order to secure a healthy and prosperous standard of living for people living in Western societies. In opposition to shallow ecology, *deep ecology* endorses *biospheric egalitarianism*, which regards all living things to have an intrinsic value independent of their utility for humans. It also stresses the interdependent character of life, meaning that the "identity of a living thing is essentially constituted by its relations to other things in the world, especially its ecological relations to other

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<sup>57</sup> Leopold, Aldo (1949): *A Sand County Almanac*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

<sup>58</sup> Marshall, Alan (1993): *Ethics and the Extraterrestrial Environment*. In: *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 10(2): 227

<sup>59</sup> Newman, Julie (Ed.) (2011): *Green Ethics and Philosophy: An A to Z Guide*. Yale: SAGE Publication

living things.”<sup>60</sup> The logic of deep ecology is that if people internalised and felt their interdependence with nature and the surrounding world as a whole, they would naturally take better care of the environment, which would then be seen as part of themselves. According to Naess, this is especially true when people start identifying with nature and thus develop an *Ecological Self*, an expanded self-identification that includes nature and the wider environment. The solution to the environmental crisis caused by human greed and selfishness therefore lies in the process of self-realisation or realisation of the ecological self, an inherently spiritual solution to climate change and related ecological problems.

*Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals* by Peter Singer, was first published in 1975 and sparked a new environmental movement called *animal liberation* or *animal rights movement*. Peter Singer, an influential philosopher and ethicist, aligns himself with utilitarianism, a moral theory that asserts that actions are morally right to the extent that they maximise overall happiness or well-being. Singer's utilitarian perspective is evident in his ethical framework, particularly in his emphasis on the principle of equal consideration of interests. One of Singer's notable contributions to ethical discourse is his critique of speciesism, the discrimination against individuals based on their species. Drawing parallels to racism and sexism, Singer argues that speciesism is an unjustifiable bias that denies equal moral consideration to non-human animals. Much like how racism and sexism involve unjust discrimination based on irrelevant characteristics such as race or gender, speciesism involves disregarding the interests of beings solely because they belong to a different species. Singer's advocacy for the recognition of the moral interests of all sentient beings challenges traditional ethical boundaries and prompts a re-evaluation of our treatment of animals in the context of a utilitarian ethical framework<sup>61</sup>.

Originally, Singer compared the debate on animal rights to the case for women's rights in the

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<sup>60</sup> *Environmental Ethics* (2015). In: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-environmental/> (accessed on 17.06.2121)

<sup>61</sup> Singer, Peter (1975): *Animal Liberation. The Definitive Classic of the Animal Movement*. New York: Harper Perennial



18th century. Equal rights for women and men are based on the fact that both sexes have similar, if not equal, capacities. This argument raises the question of whether animals can be given rights despite the fact that non-human animals have different capacities from humans. According to Singer, such differences do not stand in the way of "extending the basic principle of equality to nonhuman animals"<sup>62</sup>. Differences between groups may give rise to different rights and different treatment of their respective members, but it does not follow that the basic principle of equality cannot be extended to all of them. Peter Singer's "principle of equality" is rooted in his utilitarian philosophy and is central to his ethical framework. The fundamental principle of equality, as articulated by Singer, is the idea that the interests of all individuals, regardless of species, should be given equal consideration. This principle asserts that it is the capacity to suffer or to enjoy that is morally important, rather than specific characteristics such as species, race or gender.

Singer argues that the interests of all sentient beings should be considered and given equal weight in determining what is morally right or wrong. Sentience, or the capacity to experience pleasure or pain, becomes the criterion for moral consideration. Singer claims that speciesism, which discriminates against non-human animals solely on the basis of their species, is as morally indefensible as racism and sexism. This is a logic of argumentation that is very relevant to intersectionality, a concept that is gaining more and more importance in the discourse on sustainability, also in relation to Eco-Islam.<sup>63</sup>

One criticism expressed by some scholars towards *ethical extension* is its focus on the importance of individuals. "If one carries libertarian extension," so Marshall, "beyond just the narrow scope of animal rights, it must find application to all organismal entities."<sup>64</sup> This would eventually lead

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 2

<sup>63</sup> Intersectionality and Eco-Islam are discussed in Chapter 6.

<sup>64</sup> Marshall, Alan (1993): *Ethics and the Extraterrestrial Environment*. In: *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 10(2): 228

to plant rights, microbe rights, and abiotic rights, making the application of such ethics unfeasible.

An offshoot of libertarian extension is *biocentrism*. *Biocentrism* extends the status of moral object from humans to all other components of nature, emphasising the rights and intrinsic value of living, organic individuals. According to this approach, “moral priority should be given to the survival of individual living beings.”<sup>65</sup> Paul Taylor, in his essay *The Ethics of Respect for Nature* speaks of *biocentric egalitarianism*. He argues that the equal worth of all living beings derives from the fact that all living things are “teleological centres of life”<sup>66</sup>, meaning they all pursue their own biological interests and ends, or *telos*.

According to Alan Marshall, the second strand of environmental ethics is the *ecological extension*. The emphasis of this ethic lies in the principle of the interconnectedness of all biological and non-biological beings, meaning that all components of a living ecological system, including abiotic components, are interrelated, and their well-being is dependent on the well-being of all other components.<sup>67</sup> The intrinsic values and resulting rights are less on the level of individuals but rather on the level of ecosystems. With his Gaia Hypothesis, James Lovelock (1919-2022) is a prominent representative of this line of thought. According to this hypothesis, the earth itself is a living being, or a system capable of self-regulation through a holistic feedback system played out in the biosphere “with life forms regulating temperature and proportion of gases in the atmosphere to life's advantage.”<sup>68</sup> In other words, life evolves as a response to changes in the environment. At the same time, the environment changes through life in response to biological phenomena. Thus, “the evolution of the species and the evolution of their environment are

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<sup>65</sup> Mouchang, Yu, Yi Lei (2009): *Biocentric Ethical Theories*. In: Environment and Development. Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems, Vol. 2. Oxford: EOLSS

<sup>66</sup> Taylor, Paul (1981): *The Ethics of Respect for Nature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

<sup>67</sup> Marshall, Alan (1993): *Ethics and the Extraterrestrial Environment*. In: Journal of Applied Philosophy, 10(2): 228

<sup>68</sup> Radford, Tim (2019): *Lames Lovelock at 100: The Gaia Saga Continues*. In: Nature  
<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-01969-y> (accessed on 21. 06.2021)

tightly coupled together as a single and inseparable process.”<sup>69</sup> The Gaia Hypothesis shows that life on the planet and the environment evolve as a single, coevolutionary process and that the earth is a living organism, self-regulating and autopoietic.<sup>70</sup>

In contrast to libertarian extension, ecological extension emphasises the value of species, communities, ecosystems, and the Earth's biosphere, with individual organisms playing a secondary role.<sup>71</sup> Environmental ethics, which focus on the protection of holistic natural entities such as ecosystems or landscapes, are often referred to as *ecocentric* or *dark green ecological ethics*.<sup>72</sup>

Finally, *conservative extension* or conservation ethics takes a purely utilitarian stand. It does not recognize the intrinsic value and, therefore, any form of rights of the various components of the natural environment but sees their value only in regard to their potential use for humanity in the form of resources. Conservation ethics is anthropocentric, a human centred approach which seeks to conserve and manage the environment with the primary goal of ensuring a continued high standard of living.

An often-overlooked theory on the cause of environmental destruction that deserves mentioning is the work of the neo-Marxist Frankfurt School founded by Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno, which dialectically investigated a range of social theories. Horkheimer and Adorno were critical of positivist thinking, which sees rationality as the sole instrument that can achieve progress, power, and technological control, with scientific and quantitative approaches as the only problem-solving methods. According to them, positivist thinking is the root cause of the alienation between humans and nature because it reduces the environment and its natural processes to predictable and manipulable processes for the benefit of humans. Positivist reasoning leads to a disenchantment of nature that encourages an attitude towards the

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<sup>69</sup> Fiedler, David (2014): *Restoring the Soul of the World. Our Living Bond with Nature's Intelligence*. Rochester: Inner Traditions

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Marshall, Alan (1993): *Ethics and the Extraterrestrial Environment*. In: *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 10(2): 228

<sup>72</sup> Dark green, as opposed to light green ecology, focuses on new technologies to achieve sustainable societies.

environment as something to be probed, consumed, or dominated.<sup>73</sup> This tendency, which nowadays is reflected in techno-centrism, digitalisation, and transhumanism, can be counteracted by a more humanistic approach that also considers life's aesthetic, moral, sensuous, and expressive aspects.<sup>74</sup> Abram David, a contemporary cultural ecologist and philosopher argues in a similar line:

“Caught up in a mass of abstractions, our attention hypnotized by a host of human-made technologies that only reflect us back to ourselves, it is all too easy for us to forget our carnal inherence in a more-than-human matrix of sensations and sensibilities. Our bodies have formed themselves in delicate reciprocity with the various textures, sounds, and shapes of an animate earth — our eyes have evolved in subtle interaction with other eyes, as our ears are attuned by their very structure to the howling of wolves and the honking of geese. To shut ourselves off from these other voices, to continue by our lifestyles to condemn these other sensibilities to the oblivion of extinction, is to rob our own senses of their integrity and to rob our minds of their coherence. We are human only in contact, and conviviality, with what is not human.”<sup>75</sup>

Adorno, like Abram, advocates an aesthetic attitude of sensual immediacy towards nature as a means of recognising the "more than material" value of the natural world.<sup>76</sup>

A contemporary counterpart to such an approach is the technocentric view. Technocentrism emphasises technology and science as the main - if not the only - means of repairing environmental damage. Technology is here seen as the central solution for environmental degradation, while a change of ethical perspective on the environment is not seen as necessary.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Gunderson, Ryan (2015): *Environmental sociology and the Frankfurt School 1: reason and capital*. In: *Environmental Sociology*, 1(3), 224-235

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Abram, David (1997): *The Spell of the Sensuous. Perception and language in a more-than Human World*. New York: Vintage book.

<sup>76</sup> Horkheimer Max, Adorno Theodor (1944): *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York: Herder and Herder

<sup>77</sup> Emetumah, Faisal C. (2017): *Modern Perspective on Environmentalism: Ecocentrism and Technocentrism in the Nigerian Context*. In: *Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences*. 1-9

One extreme aspect of technocentrism is transhumanism, a "techno-progressive, socio-political and intellectual movement" that advocates using technology to improve and radically transform the human organism. The ultimate goal of transhumanism is to achieve posthumanism, a future in which technological enhancement of humans will help overcome fundamental human limitations by creating a "posthuman" being.<sup>78</sup> This human transformation happens mainly through the fusion of technology and human bodies through genetic bioengineering and synthetic biology, a field of science that involves engineering new designed organisms with new abilities.<sup>79</sup> Synthetic biology is mainly used in agriculture and has significant environmental implications. Transhumanism is gaining steam as a cultural and intellectual movement, amongst others, within the World Economic Forum,<sup>80</sup> and poses serious bioethical questions concerning the limits of manipulation of the natural world and humanity's role in creation.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, it is crucially important to give appropriately scholarly attention to transhumanism now.<sup>82</sup> A related field to transhumanism is biocolonialism, which will be discussed in the last chapter in connection with the discourse on Eco-Islam.

In a study, Salman and Nagy<sup>83</sup> compared the two ethical approaches of ecocentrism and technocentrism by juxtaposing the environmental achievements of Finland and Bhutan. Finland is considered one of the most technologically advanced countries and has employed science and

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<sup>78</sup> Porter, Allen (2017): *Bioethics and Transhumanism*. In: Journal of Medicine and Philosophy, 42:237-260

<sup>79</sup> *Synthetic Biology*. In: National Human Genome Research Institute, <https://www.genome.gov/about-genomics/policy-issues/Synthetic-Biology> (accessed on 30.06.2021)

<sup>80</sup> *What is Transhumanism, And How Does It Affect You?* In: World Economic Forum, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/04/transhumanism-advances-in-technology-could-already-put-evolution-into-hyperdrive-but-should-they> (accessed on the 30.06.2021)

<sup>81</sup> *Coronavirus and the Transhuman Future*. In: European Academy on Religion and Society, <https://europeanacademyofreligionandsociety.com/news/coronavirus-and-the-transhuman-future/> (accessed on 30.06.2021)

<sup>82</sup> Porter, Allen (2017): *Bioethics and Transhumanism*. In: Journal of Medicine and Philosophy, 42: 239

<sup>83</sup> Salman Doaa M., Nagy Merna (2019): *Favouring technocentrism over ecocentrism evidence from Finland and Bhutan*. In: Bussecon Review of Social Science 1(1): 13-23

technology to tackle the environmental crisis. On the other hand, Bhutan has a worldwide unique approach to climate change. A marker of sustainability and environmental protection in Bhutan is achieved through the well-known Gross National Happiness (GNH) index. This index takes into consideration the cultural, social, and economic aspects of the environment. The emphasis lies on preserving Bhutan's traditional culture and heritage, predominantly Buddhist, and on the correct behaviour of the citizens, who are seen as the trustees of the country's natural resources for the present and future generations. According to Salman and Nagy<sup>84</sup>, Bhutan is more successful in protecting the environment and maintaining a sustainable society than Finland. Although one study is not representative and does not allow conclusions, this result could indicate that to tackle the environmental emergency the technological approach alone is not sufficient and needs the implementation of ethical principles. It is interesting to note that the Welsh Government emphasises the preservation of traditional Welsh culture and heritage as one of the sustainability objectives for the well-being of future generations. This will be discussed further in the following chapters.

The above overview of environmental ethics proposed by Alan Marshall and the short introduction to other approaches to the environmental crisis are just a few examples of the wide varieties of environmental ethics and perspectives. This short outline offers an overview of the most important philosophical ideas within environmental ethics while admittedly not being comprehensive. However, already this short overview shows how complex the issue of environmental ethics can be and how difficult, if not impossible, it is to establish a universal environmental ethic. Furthermore, it is not possible to unequivocally position Islamic Environmental Ethics within one specific strand of environmental ethics. This is due to overlaps

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<sup>84</sup> Salman Doaa M., Nagy Merna (2019): *Favouring technocentrism over ecocentrism evidence from Finland and Bhutan*. In: *Bussecon Review of Social Science* 1(1): 13-23

between different ethical approaches and also possible divergent theological interpretations of Islamic environmental principles.

### 1.3.5 Faith-based environmental ethics and the "greening of religions."

In 1967, the scientific journal *Science* published an article by the historian Lynn White Jr. titled *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*.<sup>85</sup> This article became one of the most cited ones on the topic of religion and ecology. At the time, it was an attempt to answer the need for an understanding of the root causes of the increasingly apparent environmental predicaments the world was beginning to consciously face.<sup>86</sup> The core argument of White's hypothesis was that the scientific revolution in late medieval times and during the Renaissance, together with religious ideas, was primarily responsible for initiating the beginning of our present ecological crisis. Religions generally shape our understanding of nature and human's role in creation. More so, according to White, Christianity promoted a strong anthropocentric view of the world and favoured an increasing disenchantment with and sense of separation from nature. Lynn White sees anthropocentrism as embedded in Judaism and later in Christianity, mainly because in Genesis, humans are portrayed as the ruler of nature. In particular, during the early Middle Ages, Christianity vehemently opposed paganism making it "possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects."<sup>87</sup> Although the Western industrialized countries, mainly responsible for the environmental crisis, are predominantly secular, the Judeo-Christian tradition set the fundamental values and moral standing towards the environment and is thus a continuing force in modern society, so White's final argument. Using the Judeo-Christian tradition as a starting point, White expands his argument to religions in general, which in his

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<sup>85</sup> White, Lynn Townsed Jr. (1967): *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*. In: *Science* 155: 1203-7

<sup>86</sup> Taylor, Bron (2016): *The Greening of Religion Hypothesis (Part One): From Lynn White Jr. and Claims That Religions Can Promote Environmentally Destructive Attitudes and Behaviors to Assertions They Are Becoming Environmentally Friendly*. In: *Journal for the Study of Religions, Nature and Culture*, 10(3): 268-305

<sup>87</sup> White, Lynn Townsed Jr. (1967): *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*. In: *Science* 155: 1205

view, remain simultaneously the cause and solution of the problem: "Since the root of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not."<sup>88</sup> In his view, Saint Francis of Assisi and his legacy are an excellent antidote to Christian anthropocentrism, as the saint "deeply sensed the universal works of the Creator and filled it with a certain divine spirit."<sup>89</sup> Saint Francis regarded all aspects of nature as being brothers and sisters of humans in front of God. Not accidentally, in 1979, Pope John-Paul II proclaimed Francis of Assisi "Patron before God of those who promote ecology."<sup>90</sup>

It is probably not a coincidence that Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, who as pope released the environmental encyclical "Laudato si" in 2015, chose as his papal name "Francis" to stress, amongst other things, his pro-environmental sentiments and concern for nature.<sup>91</sup> However, despite such encyclicals and the recognition of Saint Francis as patron of ecology, the catholic church basically maintains an anthropocentric view of creation. The Second Vatican Council's constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, states that man is "the only creature on earth that God has willed for his own sake."<sup>92</sup> Despite this anthropocentric stand, the Catholic church stresses the duty of care humans have towards nature by asserting the intrinsic value of non-human life.

Anthropocentrism, not only in Christianity but also in other religions as well, is seen as one of the main obstacles to the sustainable development of society.<sup>93</sup> Grønvold argues that religions need to shift from an anthropocentric theology towards a biocentric theology "where all of

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<sup>88</sup> White, Lynn Townsed Jr. (1967): *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*. In: Science 155: 1205

<sup>89</sup> Bula, Inter Sanctos: *Papal Declaration of Francis as Patron of Ecology*. In: <https://francis35.org/english/papal-declaration-francis-patron-ecology/> (accessed on 02.07.2021)

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Taylor, Bron (2016): *The Greening of Religion Hypothesis (Part One): From Lynn White Jr. and Claims That Religions Can Promote Environmentally Destructive Attitudes and Behaviors to Assertions They Are Becoming Environmentally Friendly*. In: Journal for the Study of Religions, Nature and Culture, 10(3): 272

<sup>92</sup> Grey, Cardomy T.S. (2020): *The Only Creature God Willed For Its Own Sake': Anthropocentrism in Laudato Si' and Gaudium et Spes*. In: Modern Theology 36:4

<sup>93</sup> El Jurdi Hounaida A., Batat Wided, Jafari Alikbar (2016): *Harnessing the Power of Religion: Broadening Sustainability Research and Practice in the Advancement of Ecology*. In: Journal of Macromarketing, 11



God's creations are regarded as equally important, and man and nature are viewed as interdependent."<sup>94</sup>

Lynn White was not the first scholar to point to the responsibility of the Judeo-Christian tradition in relation to the environmental crisis. Before him, Ludwig Feuerbach argued in his work *The Essence of Christianity*<sup>95</sup> that the teaching of God's sacrifice for his love for humanity is a primary cause for the separation of human beings from their natural history and supports an anthropocentric view of creation. In the mid-nineteenth century, US-American thinkers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and John Muir distanced themselves from Christianity which they considered a hindrance to environmental concern and an underpinning for anthropocentrism.<sup>96</sup> This critical attitude towards religions was picked up again by two already mentioned most influential thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson, who asserted that "Western religions were deeply complicit in the environmentally destructive trends they had identified."<sup>97</sup>

However, not everyone shared this critical approach to Christianity's view of nature. In 1966, the theologian Richard Baer pointed out that each creation act described in Genesis was always followed by God's pronouncement of it being good. In this, Baer saw the innate goodness of all creation and supported what could be called a "Christian intrinsic value" theory.<sup>98</sup>

On the Islamic side, a critical contemporary philosopher and scholar, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who is considered the father of Eco-Islam thinking, proposed a different view of the relationship between religions, especially Islam, and the environmental crisis. In his classical writing published

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<sup>94</sup> Grønvold, Jens (2013): *Theology and Sustainability in Oil-producing Norway*. In: *Nature & Culture*, 8(3), 265-81

<sup>95</sup> Feuerbach, Ludwig (1841): *Das Wesen des Christentums*. Leipzig: Otto Wigand

<sup>96</sup> Taylor, Bron (2016): *The Greening of Religion Hypothesis (Part One): From Lynn White Jr. and Claims That Religions Can Promote Environmentally Destructive Attitudes and Behaviors to Assertions They Are Becoming Environmentally Friendly*. In: *Journal for the Study of Religions, Nature and Culture*, 10(3): 278

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.: 281

<sup>98</sup> Baer, Richard A. (1966): *Conservation: An Arena for the Church's Action*. In: *Christian Century* 86(8): 40-43

in 1967, *Man and Nature*<sup>99</sup>, Nasr argues that the real cause of the environmental crisis lies not in religion but rather in a spiritual crisis that contemporary humanity is facing. Due to the artificial environment man has created for himself to live in, humanity, especially in modern western societies, lost touch with nature and, more importantly, even lost "the sense of the spiritual significance of nature."<sup>100</sup>

According to Bron Taylor, such debates on the connection between religions and nature led to what he calls "the greening of religion hypothesis."<sup>101</sup> For Nasr, religions have the vital role to play in reversing the secularisation of nature and, thus reviving our sense of the sacredness of nature. He sees such transition as the key solution to preventing the exploitation of the environment and, ultimately, the destruction of nature. Since about the early 1980s, Taylor argues, many religions have become more ecologically aware and environmentally friendly, based on new analyses of scripture and theological traditions. This is reflected in an increasing number of interventions by religious institutions and spiritual leaders, and in the growth of faith-based environmental activism. One example among many is the establishment of the Alliance for Religion and Conservation (ARC), which promotes environmental protection through collaboration between religious actors and conservationists. Meanwhile, the number of religious organisations concerned with the environment continues to grow. More examples of the eco-Islam movement are given in Chapter 2.

There is now a widespread belief that religious worldviews shape environmental behaviour, that religions provide moral and ethical guidance for environmentally sound behaviour, and that green religions are crucial to efforts to build sustainable societies.. This cluster of assumptions is

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<sup>99</sup> Nasr, Sayyed Hossein Nasr (1967): *Man and Nature. The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man*. Chicago: ABC International Group.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.: 17

<sup>101</sup> Taylor, Bron (2016): *The Greening of Religion Hypothesis (Part One): From Lynn White Jr. and Claims That Religions Can Promote Environmentally Destructive Attitudes and Behaviors to Assertions They Are Becoming Environmentally Friendly*. In: *Journal for the Study of Religions, Nature and Culture*, 10(3): 287

what Taylor calls the “greening of religions hypothesis.”<sup>102</sup> Although this “greening” is observable and religions find more and more their voice toward environmentalism, the phenomenon is still relatively new, and it remains a daunting task to assess the real influence of religions on the green movement. Indeed, recent research on the relationship between religions and ecology has led to controversial conclusions, with some findings suggesting a negative and others a positive correlation between the two.<sup>103</sup> This is undoubtedly because religious beliefs are diverse and complex, and religious teachings can be used and interpreted in many different ways. This also shows the need for further research in this area.

However, the extensive literature that exists on the topic of religions and ecology strongly suggests that religions have a potential to play a relevant role in the sustainability and environmental discourse. In particular, the “social power of religions is a key reason for the inclusion of religious perspectives in the ecological sustainability project.”<sup>104</sup> According to Bertram Raven, in addition to their potential to mobilise the masses, religions have six bases of power that enable them to change the behaviour of their respective adherents. Such powers are: referent, coercive, reward, informational, expert, and legitimate powers.<sup>105</sup> There are many examples of how faith-based environmental movements have managed to be positive agents of change (examples of these are reported in the following chapter). In summary, despite the many obstacles and difficulties, many authors regard the growing religious environmentalism as a source of optimism in a time of grim environmental outlook.<sup>106</sup> At the same time, more research

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<sup>102</sup> Taylor, Bron (2011): *Toward a Robust Scientific Investigation of the “Religion” Variable in the Quest of Sustainability*. In: *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 5(3): 253-62

<sup>103</sup> Sherkat Darren, Ellison Christopher (2007): *Structuring the Religion- Environment Connection: Identifying Religious Influences on Environmental Concern and Activism*. In: *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religions*, 46(1):71-85

<sup>104</sup> El Jurdi Hounaida A., Batat Wided, Jafari Alikbar (2016): *Harnessing the Power of Religion: Broadening Sustainability Research and Practice in the Advancement of Ecology*. In: *Journal of Macromarketing*, 10

<sup>105</sup> Raven, Bertram (1999): *Kurt Lewin Addresses: Influence, Power, Religion, and the Mechanism of Social Control*. In: *Journal of Social Issues*, 55(1), 161-86

<sup>106</sup> El Jurdi Hounaida A., Batat Wided, Jafari Alikbar (2016): *Harnessing the Power of Religion: Broadening Sustainability Research and Practice in the Advancement of Ecology*. In: *Journal of Macromarketing*, 11

is needed to understand the complexity of the relationship between nature and religions and to shed further light on the actual influence that religions assert on environmentalism.

#### 1.4 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this dissertation draws from the relatively new field of environmental psychology. Recognised as an independent discipline since the late 1960s, environmental psychology initially focused on the understanding of the interplay between individuals and their environment, specifically on how the environment influences human experiences. This changed in the early 21st century as climate change and environmental degradation became increasingly pressing issues, and as it became widely recognised that human behaviour was a major cause of environmental degradation. It was at this point that environmental psychology began to look at the impact of individuals on the environment, the factors that influence pro-environmental behaviour, and the ways in which such behaviour could be encouraged.<sup>107</sup> This research aims to evaluate the normative influence of Islam on the pro-environmental behaviours of faith members. Therefore, the theoretical framework will focus on theories describing such interactions, the interplay between values, particularly, religious values, and the implementation of these values in pro-environmental actions.

Over time, environmental psychology has gradually evolved into a "psychology of sustainability."<sup>108</sup> In other words, it seeks the application of sustainability goals, "which are aimed at substituting the consumerist, non-equitable, egoistic, and anti-ecological lifestyles that have characterized human behaviour since the dawn of civilization."<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Steg Linda, Van Berg Agnes, De Groot Judith (eds.) (2013): *Environmental Psychology. An Introduction*. West Sussex: BPS Blackwell

<sup>108</sup> Gifford, R. (2007): *Environmental Psychology: Principles and practice*. Colville, WA: Optimal Books

<sup>109</sup> Corral-Verdugo, Victor (2010): *The Psychological Dimensions of Sustainability*. In: Valentin J., Gamez L. (eds.): *Environmental Psychology: New developments*, Nova Science Publishers, *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <https://ebookcentral-1proquest-1com-1008395xb0386.emedia1.bsb-muenchen.de/lib/bsb/detail.action?docID=3017856>

To find ways of positively changing human behaviour towards nature, the concept of sustainability, as defined in chapter 2, has become “a central guiding and unifying principle for research in environmental psychology.”<sup>110</sup>

## 1.5 Pro-Environmental Behaviour

Kollmuss and Agyeman<sup>111</sup> define pro-environmental behaviour as a conscious effort to minimise the negative impact of personal actions on the environment and to conserve nature.

Jonsson and Nilsson<sup>112</sup> extend this perspective by emphasising the link between pro-environmental behaviour and individuals' values, in particular their locus of control.<sup>113</sup> The internal locus of control, where individuals feel in control of events in their lives, is positively associated with pro-environmental behaviour.

Looking more closely at theories explaining pro-environmental behaviour, Ajzen's<sup>114</sup> theory of planned behaviour emphasises the role of intention, which is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. However, this theory overlooks personal norms, which are central to the norm-activation model and the value-belief-norm theory.

The norm activation model, as developed by S. H. Schwarz,<sup>115</sup> identifies four key variables that initiate norm activation: problem awareness, attributions of responsibility, outcome efficacy, and self-efficacy. While problem awareness may not be directly influenced by religion, a sense of

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<sup>110</sup> Giuliani M.V., Scopelli M. (2009): *Empirical research in environmental psychology: Past, present, and future*. In: Journal of Environmental Psychology, 29(3), 375-386

<sup>111</sup> Kollmuss A., Agyeman J. (2002): *Mind the gap: Why do people act environmentally, and what are the barriers to pro-environmental behaviour?* In: Environmental Education Research 8(3):239-260

<sup>112</sup> Jonsson Engqvist Anna Katrin, Nilsson Andreas (2014): *Exploring the Relationship Between Values and Pro-Environmental Behaviour: The Influence of Locus of Control*. In: Environmental Values, 23(3): 297-314

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 298

<sup>114</sup> Ajzen, Icek (1991): *The Theory of Planned Behaviour*. In: Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50(2): 179-211

<sup>115</sup> Schwartz, S. H. (1977): *Normative influences on altruism*. In: Berkowitz L. (ed.): Advances in experimental social psychology. New York: Academic Press

responsibility for the environment and the identification of actions to address environmental problems may be influenced by religious beliefs.

The value-belief-norm theory (VBN theory) extends the norm activation model by suggesting that problem awareness depends on personal values and beliefs about the relationship between humans and the environment, known as ecological worldviews.<sup>116</sup> Values, whether altruistic or egoistic, are stable over time and can be influenced by dominant group values, including religious values. Values can be altruistic or egoistic. Another way to say this is they are positively or negatively correlated to pro-environmental behaviour. In general, values are pretty stable over time. They are acquired both through the assimilation of dominant group values, like religious values, and through individual learning experiences.<sup>117</sup>

Numerous studies show that religion plays a “critical role in teaching (and build in) individuals the set of good values, beliefs, norms and behaviours and environmental stewardship action.”<sup>118</sup>

According to M. Azizan and N. Wahid, this is particularly true for Islam, who see in caring for the environment "only a part of the many good values, beliefs and ethical conduct of Muslims, since the foundation of Islamic environmental practice is already set within the Holy Quran and Sunnah." <sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> According to Itzik and Nola (Itzik & Nola 2009), "worldviews are the framework used by people to make sense of life and the world in its most significant aspects and dimension." Worldviews about sustainability and ecology are relevant, as they provide a set of principles and values and also determine how such principles are implemented and expressed in social practices. According to Victor Corral-Verdugo (Corral-Verdugo 2010), the most important ecological worldviews are *naturocentric*, *anthropocentric*, *ecocentric*, and the *New Human Interdependence Paradigm* NHIP. Naturocentric refers to an ancient worldview based on fear and reverence towards natural forces. This ecological worldview is not relevant to our modern discourse. The anthropocentric worldview, on the other hand, conceives nature as subordinated to humans and, therefore, stresses human needs over the "needs of nature." Human needs are fulfilled mainly through technologies and advancements in science, which are limitless according to this worldview. Ecocentrism, on the other hand, emphasizes the need for natural balance and for limits of human growth (Dunlap et al. 2000) A recent addition to ecological worldviews is the New Human Interdependence Paradigm, NHIP, which recognizes the interdependence between human progress and nature conservation and “conceives it as a dynamic process of integration and incorporation of human needs into natural processes.” (Corral- Verdugo et al. 2008).

<sup>117</sup> Jonsson Engqvist Anna Katrin, Nilsson Andreas (2014): *Exploring the Relationship Between Values and Pro-Environmental Behaviour: The Influence of Locus of Control*. In: *Environmental Values*, 23(3): 298

<sup>118</sup> Azizan Muhammad Hafiz, Wahid Abdul Nabsiah (2012): *A Proposed Model on Environmental Stewardship*. In: *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences* 65: 587-592

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 589

## 1.6 Muslims in Wales

To better assess the impact of Islamic environmental ethics on the actual behaviours within the Muslim community in Wales, it is essential to be familiar with the history of Muslims in Britain and Wales in order to have an “understanding of Islam in relation to Britain”<sup>120</sup> and Wales.

Beliefs, engagement, and activities do not exist in a vacuum. They result from multi-layered influences, interactions, and images within a society. Eco-Islam in Wales is, therefore, not only dictated by the teachings of the Qur'ān. It is also determined by Muslims' position and role in Welsh /British society. Further, it has to be considered that those who call themselves Muslims do not necessarily share the same understanding of Islam and might identify with different attributes of their religion. As Farid Panjwani points out, "such people go by many appellations, including secular Muslims, cultural Muslims, etc....."<sup>121</sup>. The social environment always plays a crucial role in the understanding and practice of one's religion.

Also, the word "community" in relation to Muslims living in Wales, suggests a homogeneity that does not match with reality but is rather a construct of artificially prioritizing religious identity over others, such as gender, education, ethnicity, generation, or political views.<sup>122</sup>

## 1.7 Historical perspective

The first records of contact between Welsh Christians and the Muslim world date from the Crusades, which began in the late 11th century, some four centuries after the birth of Islam.<sup>123</sup>

Knowledge about Islam dates even further back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Osmaar, R. (2006): *Only Half of Me: Being a Muslim in Britain*. London: Viking

<sup>121</sup> Panjwani Farid (2017): *No Muslim is just Muslim: An Implication for Education*. In: Oxford Review of Education, 43: 596-611

<sup>122</sup> Samad, Y. (1996): *Media and Muslim Identity: Intersections of generation and gender*. In: Innovation: The European Journal of Social Sciences, 11(4): 425-438

<sup>123</sup> Davis, Grahame (2011): *The Dragon and the Crescent. Nine Century of Welsh Contact with Islam*. Bridgend: Seren

<sup>124</sup> During the 8<sup>th</sup> century, there was a degree of contact, either direct or mediated, between Islam and the neighbouring Saxon kingdom of Mercia, whose king, Offa (796 AD), commissioned the earthwork barrier between Wales and England. The barrier still broadly defines the borders of the two countries today. Between 757 and 769,

The image of Islam and Muslims in Wales was strongly influenced by the writings of the English monk, scholar, and writer Bede (673-735) and before him by the works of St. Jerome (342-420), an earlier Church father. In other words, Christian dogma and biblical exegesis strongly affected the image created around Muslims.<sup>125</sup> Based on such scriptural authority, "Saracens" was used as a pejorative term associated with darkness and sin.<sup>126</sup> Particularly in the centuries after the Crusades, Islam was portrayed negatively in Welsh literature.

Later, important scholarly works on Islam were written in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Sir William Jones (1746-1794), who is considered the "father" of comparative religions. He drew scholarly attention to the Muslim tradition. At that time, Muslims were already living on the British island. The first documented Muslims who landed on England's shores were mainly from Turkey and North Africa. They were freed by English pirates from galley slavery on Spanish ships in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. For diplomatic reasons, most of them obtained permission to return to their home countries, whereas an estimated number of one hundred remained in England and became permanent residents.<sup>127</sup> During this time, the first coffee houses opened in London, with mixed reactions. On one side, they became important institutions and focal points of London's urban life. On the other side, coffee was discredited as "Mohametan gruel," accompanied by the fear that it was only a tiny step from drinking coffee to converting to Islam.<sup>128</sup>

The establishment of the East India Company in the 17<sup>th</sup> century opened the doors for increased recruitment of men and became "an important conduit for the immigration of Muslims to the

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King Offa commissioned a coin bearing his name and image in imitation of an 'Abbāsīd dinar of al-Manssūr from 774 AD. The reasons for the production of such coins are unknown. Some other coins, also commissioned by the Anglo-Saxon king, bear an inscription featuring the Islamic declaration of faith, the *shahādah*, as well as the Latin formula "Offa Rex" or "King Offa" (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). Such coins bearing early Arabic script are named *Kufic coins* and appear to have reached mainly England along two routes, through the continent due to the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman trade with Mediterranean countries and through Scandinavia, where such coins were hoarded in large quantities (Scarfe Beckett, 2003). Although we do not know the degree of contact between the two cultures, the existence of such coins shows that there was a specific knowledge of the Islamic world in Anglo-Saxon society, which also affected the economy and politics (Gilliat-Ray, 2010).

<sup>125</sup> Gilliat-Ray, Sophie (2010): *Muslims in Britain. An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 7

<sup>126</sup> Scarfe, Beckett (2003): *Anglo-Saxon Perceptions of the Islamic World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1

<sup>127</sup> Gilliat-Ray, Sophie (2010): *Muslims in Britain. An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 13

<sup>128</sup> Matar, Nabil (1997): *Muslims in seventeenth-century England*. In: *Journal of Islamic Studies* 8(1): 63-82



British Isles."<sup>129</sup> In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the military and economic power of the Empire kept growing and expanding into the Islamic world. This meant that whenever there was a need for cheap labour, Muslims formed a large proportion of that workforce. In particular these were Indian sailors, some of them Muslims, and a smaller number of Arabs, Turks, Somalis, and Malays were engaged.<sup>130</sup>

During the late Victorian period, more significant numbers of Muslims came to Britain as traders, teachers, and university students, and a small number of high-profile British public figures converted to Islam. Between 1860 and 1945, the Muslim community in Britain kept growing, particularly in Cardiff, one of the major trading ports for commercial shipping. During the 1920s and 1930s, Butetown in Cardiff, also known as the "Tiger Bay," became a centre for Muslim seafarers. Muslims there were effectively isolated from the rest of the city in a cosmopolitan international ghetto comprising seafarers from over 30 different countries.<sup>131</sup>

Welsh office records suggest a population of 5,000 Arab seamen in Cardiff around the turn of the century. Such development has long been seen with worries: *The South Wales Daily News*, for example, published an article in 1916 expressing concern about the increasing number of Muslims arriving in Cardiff. Especially during the interwar period, resentments towards Muslims, which we would call Islamophobia nowadays, were on the rise, leading to a high rate of unemployment amongst Muslims and even to the repatriation of 500 men in 1921 to their countries of origin. Despite such efforts to reduce the Muslim population in Wales, in 1930, the number of recorded "Alien Coloured Seamen" included 1,241 Arabs (mostly Yemenis), 227 Somalis, 148 Indians, 121 Malays, and 49 Egyptians.<sup>132</sup> Due to the demands of the war, during the first World War, the number of Muslims in Cardiff and other ports in Britain increased

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<sup>129</sup> Gilliat-Ray, Sophie (2010): *Muslims in Britain. An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 23

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.: 23

<sup>131</sup> Evans, N. (1985): *Regulating the reserve army: Arabs, blacks and the local state in Cardiff. 1919-1945*. In: *Immigrants and Minorities* 4(2): 68-115

<sup>132</sup> Evans, N. (1985): *Regulating the reserve army: Arabs, blacks and the local state in Cardiff. 1919-1945*. In: *Immigrants and Minorities* 4(2): 68-115

significantly. However, World War I and the return of Welsh soldiers to Cardiff, together with the decline of the coal trade, led to a renewed increase of Islamophobia, racism, and hatred towards the Muslim population. The tensions led to violent race riots and attacks on boarding houses inhabited by Muslim seafarers in 1919. For decades after World War I, Muslims from the Tiger Bay lived in almost complete segregation from the rest of Cardiff society. "They were forced to live in deprived areas and then were blamed for creating miserable conditions."<sup>133</sup> Despite many difficulties, in 1938, Cardiff alone counted six mosques associated with boarding schools, showing that Muslim communities had become an integral part of Welsh society.

During the interwar period, there was a geographical redistribution of Muslims in Britain due to new industrial sectors emerging in different regions, such as chemical, electrical goods, and car manufacturing, which relied on unskilled or semi-skilled workers. This led many Muslims to move to cities in England like Birmingham and Liverpool and to leave the docks of Cardiff and other harbour cities.<sup>134</sup> Finally, another big wave of Muslim immigrants to Britain occurred after the Second World War. They mainly included migrants from the Indian subcontinent, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. The Muslim community has always been characterized by a considerable variety of languages, ethnicity, distinctive identities, and interpretations of Islam. According to the 2021 Census, there are currently around 64,000 Muslims living in Wales. Half are in Cardiff. They make up the second-largest religious group after Christianity (43%). Since 2011 the proportion of people in Wales reporting their religion as "Christians" has dropped by 14% by 2021 and the percentage of "No Religion" has increased by 14,5 %. In the same time laps, the Muslim population has increased from 46,000 to 67,000.<sup>135</sup> This is an increase of 1,5%

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<sup>133</sup> Ansari, H. (2004): *The "Infidel" within: Muslims in Britain, 1800 to the Present*. London: Hurst, 107

<sup>134</sup> Gilliat-Ray, Sophie (2010): *Muslims in Britain. An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 43

<sup>135</sup> *Religion, England, and Wales: Census 2021*. In:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021> (accessed on 12.12.2022)

in 2011.<sup>136</sup> The present-day Muslim community in Wales and UK is characterized by rich ethnic diversity. The term "ethnicity" refers to a social group bound by more or less shared historical and geographical origins, which are based on culture, language, and religion, to name a few factors.<sup>137</sup> The ethnic landscape of Muslims in Wales compromised in 2011 around 24% Pakistani, 21% Bangladeshi, and 17% Arab, followed by Black, White and other ethnic groups.<sup>138</sup>

The average age of Muslims in Britain is twenty-eight, thirteen years below the national average,<sup>139</sup> and nearly half are born in Britain. In 2011, 66% of Muslim residents in Wales lived in the most deprived half of Wales, with 19.6% Muslims counting as the 10% most deprived people in society. The socio-economic classification of Muslims showed the greatest variety compared to Wales, with the highest percentage of people in the "never worked and long-time unemployed" (four times the Welsh average) category.<sup>140</sup> Regarding the general health by religions, Muslims showed the most positive picture, with 86.3% stating to be in good health, compared to 74.5% of Christians confirming good health. However, when the health of the Muslim population was analysed by age group, the older age groups showed the lowest proportions of good health and the highest proportion of long-term limiting illness.<sup>141</sup> Regarding higher education levels (level 4 or above qualification on degree level), Muslims, together with other minorities, show the highest percentage compared with the Christian majority.<sup>142</sup> Another aspect that needs to be considered when studying Muslim communities in Wales and Britain is that of Islamophobia. According to the Muslim Council of Britain, racism that targets

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<sup>136</sup> *Ethnic group, national identity, language and religion in Wales (Census 2021)*. In: <https://gov.wales/ethnic-group-national-identity-language-and-religion-wales-census-2021-html> (accessed on 12.12.2022)

<sup>137</sup> Gilliat-Ray, Sophie (2010): *Muslims in Britain. An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 43

<sup>138</sup> *Ethnic group, national identity, language and religion in Wales (Census 2021)*. In: <https://gov.wales/ethnic-group-national-identity-language-and-religion-wales-census-2021-html> (accessed on 12.12.2022)

<sup>139</sup> Open Society Institute (2002): *Monitoring Minority Protection in the EU: The Situation of Muslims in the UK*. Budapest: Open Society Institute, EU Accession Monitoring Program.

<sup>140</sup> *A Statistical Focus on Religion in Wales, 2011 Census: Executive summary*. In: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2018-12/151027-statistical-focus-religion-2011-census-executive-summary-en.pdf> (accessed on 14.07.2021)

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 9

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 11

Muslimness or perceived Muslimness is on the rise in the UK, as suggested by the following statistical figures: 22% of Britons have negative feelings towards Muslims, 18% believe "Muslim immigration to this country is part of a bigger plan to make Muslims a majority of this country's population," 33% believe that equal opportunities went too far regarding Muslims, and 47% would not be willing to accept a Muslim as a family member.<sup>143</sup> The final chapter discusses in more detail how the history, psychology, identity and socio-economic status of Muslims and Islamophobia interact to determine how Islamic environmental ethics are implemented within Welsh Muslim communities.

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<sup>143</sup> *What is Islamophobia?* In: <https://mcb.org.uk/resources/islamophobia/> (accessed on 14.07.2021)

## CHAPTER 2 - SUSTAINABILITY

### 2.1 Definition of Sustainability, different concepts, and criticism

The word sustainability derives from the term *Nachhaltigkeit*, literally "lasting-ness," a German expression first used by Hanns Carl von Carlowitz in a forestry tractate "Sylvicultura oeconomica"<sup>144</sup> in 1713. Von Carlowitz describes the importance of never harvesting more trees than the forest can regrow in a set time.<sup>145</sup> Early political economists such as Smith, Mill, and Malthus, were crucial in establishing the idea of sustainability. They questioned the limits of economic and demographic growth in the shadow of the Industrial Revolution and recognised the inherent trade-offs between wealth generation and social justice.<sup>146</sup>

However, it was only centuries later, as man-made environmental degradation and pollution become a serious threat to humanity and the planet, that the scientific community "rediscovered" the concept of *Nachhaltigkeit* and introduced the modern concept of sustainability in a global sense. The need for sustainability arises from the fact that the global ecosystem provides resources, assimilates waste products, and performs "environmental services" such as biodiversity, all aspects the human economy cannot achieve.<sup>147</sup>

The term sustainability re-emerged as a broader concept during the 1970s and covered social, environmental, and economic dimensions.<sup>148</sup> In this early stage, the term sustainability was mainly used to describe the scarcity of global resources and its consequences such as famines, poverty, and social injustice. Soon after, other aspects of ecology were considered, such as the functioning of ecosystems and global warming.

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<sup>144</sup> Werde, Paul (2011): *The Invention of Sustainability*. In Modern Intellectual History 8(1), 153-170

<sup>145</sup> Kuhlman Tom, Farrington John (2010): *What is Sustainability*. In: Sustainability, 2: 3436-3448

<sup>146</sup> Purvis Ben, Mao Yong, Robinson Darren (2018): *Three pillars of sustainability: in search of conceptual origins*. In: Sustainability Science, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-018-0627-5>

<sup>147</sup> Woods, Kerri (2010): *Human Rights and Environmental Sustainability*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 83

<sup>148</sup> Stoycheva, Stela (2016): *The History of Sustainability: A Critical Assessment of Metrics and their Changes*. Proceedings of the European Conference on Management, Leadership & Governance, 475-481

In 1972 the Club of Rome published a report, *The Limits to Growth*<sup>149</sup>, in which the problem of unlimited economic growth and sustainability was probably openly addressed for the first time. The Club of Rome concluded that, if current trends in world population growth, industrialisation, pollution, food production and resource depletion continue unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next hundred years. The most likely outcome will be a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline in population and industrial capacity. However, it is possible to reverse these growth trends and create a state of environmental and economic stability that is sustainable well into the future. The state of global equilibrium could be such that the basic material needs of every person on earth are met and everyone has an equal opportunity to realise their human potential.<sup>150</sup>

These two scenarios proposed by the Club of Rome laid the foundation for the definition of *sustainability* proposed a decade later. In 1983 the former Premier Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland, was commissioned by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, to create an UN- independent organization – the World Commission for Environment and Development (WCED) - to analyse and to find solutions to environmental and developmental issues.

Four years later, in 1987, the WCED published a report "Our Common Future"<sup>151</sup> giving what can be considered the contemporary and generally accepted definition of sustainability, described as the “development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

This definition, so further the Brundtland report, "contains within it two key concepts: the notion of "needs," in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding

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<sup>149</sup> Meadows D. H., Meadows D. L., Randers J., et al. (Eds.): *The Limits to Growth. A report of the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind*. London: Pan Books

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*. In: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf> (accessed on 18.01.2023)

poverty should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet the present and future needs."<sup>152</sup>

The distinctive mark of this definition is welfare and inter-generational equity. Environmental concerns are only so far relevant, as they might compromise the level of resource preservation for future generations. Here, the environment is not seen as having intrinsic value.<sup>153</sup>

As defined in the Brundtland report, sustainability demands limits in the unbounded consumption of natural resources. These limits are imposed by the present state of technology, environmental resources, and the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. What is defined and perceived as "needs" varies enormously between industrialised and developing countries, and it is socially, economically, and culturally determined. Sustainability requires, therefore, the development and promotion of values and ethics "that encourage consumption standards that are within the bounds of the ecological possible."<sup>154</sup>

Despite criticisms, the Brundtland definition has been "a milestone in the contemporary understanding of sustainability"<sup>155</sup> and a wide range of governmental and non-profit organisations have embraced it as the new paradigm of development.<sup>156</sup> At the same time, this definition has been criticised for being too vague and difficult to operationalise.<sup>157</sup> How are the limits defined? How to impose needed limitations on governments? How can this definition be used to evaluate policy choices or business decisions?<sup>158</sup> How to assess the capacity of the biosphere to buffer the destructive activities of human societies? Also, finding a consensus on

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<sup>152</sup> *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*. In: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf> (accessed on 7.11.2019)

<sup>153</sup> Kuhlman Tom, Farrington John (2010): 3438

<sup>154</sup> *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*. In: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf> (accessed on the 7/11/2019)

<sup>155</sup> Stoycheva, Stela (2016): *The History of Sustainability: A Critical Assessment of Metrics and their Changes*. Proceedings of the European Conference on Management, Leadership & Governance, 475

<sup>156</sup> Lélé, S. (1991): *Sustainable Development: A critical review*. In: *World Development*, 19(6): 607-621

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> Marshall J., Toffel M. W. (2005): *Framing the elusive concept of Sustainability: A sustainability hierarchy*. *Environmental Science & Technology*, 39(3): 673-682

what the actual and future needs of a population are is virtually impossible. According to critics, the, so far, successful application of technology to increase the growth process against the natural limitation that the environment poses has worldwide led to the wrong strategy of fighting the limits rather than learning to live with them. In line with Marshall and Toffel, "the relationship between the earth's limits and man's activities is changing"<sup>159</sup> and so also the need for a clear definition of sustainability.

Up to today, the field of sustainability assessment is fragmented as it touches a variety of disciplines with growing scientific interest since the 1980s. What seems to be a disadvantage has also created a general awareness of the interdependence of the different sectors of life, displaying that nothing stands isolated for itself. Instead, everything is linked to everything else.

Compartmentalised thinking within nations and their national sectors of economics, energy, agriculture, and trade has not only proven to be unreasonable but also to be harmful to human societies. "The compartments have dissolved" so the WCED report, and "this applies particularly to the various global 'crises' that have seized public concern, particularly over the past decade. These are not separate crises: an environmental crisis, a development crisis, or an energy crisis. They are all one."<sup>160</sup>

The first question that arises around sustainability is, what is it that needs to be sustained?

According to Graendel and Klee (2009)<sup>161</sup> sustainability aims at the preservation of:

1) a Holocene climate, 2) a functional planetary ecological system, 3) stocks of resources, 4) biodiversity, and 5) political and economic stability with tolerable variations.

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<sup>159</sup> Meadows D. H., Meadows D. L., Randers J. et.al (Eds.): *The Limits to Growth. A report of the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind*. London: Pan Books

<sup>160</sup> *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*. In: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf> (accessed on the 7/11/2019), 13

<sup>161</sup> Graendel Thomas, Klee Robert (2002): *Getting Serious about Sustainability*. In: *Environmental Science and Technology*, 36: 523-529



In their article *Framing the Elusive Concept of Sustainability: A Sustainability Hierarchy*<sup>162</sup> Marshall et al. describe four existing sustainability frameworks: the triple bottom line, the natural step, the ecological footprint, and the four basic steps approach. They do not define the concept of sustainability. However, they describe the necessary conditions for its existence:

The *triple bottom line* approach, which was developed by the environmentalist and economist John Elkington in 1997<sup>163</sup>, advocates the idea, that businesses and companies should base their decisions not only on economic profit but also on social justice and environmental protection. Therefore, the three bottom lines are economy, ecology, and social justice. According to Elkington, sustainability can be achieved only if at least a basic level of all three forms of sustainability is accomplished simultaneously.<sup>164</sup> A well-known application of this approach is fair trade agreements, which are now used by many companies around the world.

A different framework for sustainability is given by *the natural step* approach, according to which, in a sustainable society, nature is not subject to increasing concentrations of substances from the earth's crust (such as fossil carbon dioxide, heavy metals, and minerals), and it is also not subject to increasing concentration of substances produced by societies and degradation of physical means, such as deforestation and draining of groundwater. According to this model, in a sustainable society, there are no structural obstacles to people's health, influence, competence, impartiality, and meaning.<sup>165</sup>

The *Ecological Footprint* approach attempts to put the environmental impact of different human actions in relation to the natural resources of ecosystems by calculating a ratio of “how many earths” would be required to provide enough biologically productive land area to maintain the

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<sup>162</sup> Marshall J., Toffel M. W. (2005): *Framing the elusive concept of Sustainability: A sustainability hierarchy*. Environmental Science & Technology, 39(3): 673-682

<sup>163</sup> McKanzie, Stephen (2004): *Social Sustainability: Towards some definitions*. South Australia: Hawkw Research Insitute University of South Australia Magill

<sup>164</sup> Sutton, Philip (2000): *Sustainability: what does it mean*. In: [www.green-innovations.asn.au/sustblty.hmt](http://www.green-innovations.asn.au/sustblty.hmt) (accessed on 12.02.2020)

<sup>165</sup> *The Natural Step*. In: <https://thenaturalstep.org/approach/> (accessed on 11.11.2019)

flows of resources and wastes if everyone lived like a specific person or group of people.<sup>166</sup> The ecological footprint focuses on global inequality in the consumption of natural resources.

Further development of the ecological footprint is the Earth Overshoot Day, which "marks the date when humanity's demand for ecological resources and services in a given year exceeds what the earth can give in that year."<sup>167</sup> According to the Earth Overshoot Day calculation, the overshoot day for the United Kingdom in 2022 would be the 15<sup>th</sup> of May; in other words, if the world's population were to consume at the same rate as the population in the United Kingdom, the earth resources for 2022 would be exhausted by the 15<sup>th</sup> of May.

Graedel and Klee propose a *four basic steps approach* to assess the sustainability of industrial societies: 1) establish the available supply of the chosen resource, 2) allocate the annual permissible supply, 3) establish the recapturable resource base, and 4) derive the sustainable limiting consumption rate to the current rate. These four steps are employed within a 50 years scale, considered the time span of two human generations and the only realistic time scale. This approach aims to provide numeral goals and targets, without which sustainability would remain a mere concept rather than a program capable of implementation.<sup>168</sup>

However, the implementation of all four frameworks has proven to be very problematic due to the complexity of ecosystems and the very different consumption patterns, especially between industrialised and so-called developing countries.

Marshall et al.<sup>169</sup> further, propose a sustainability hierarchy to encompass and prospect the different issues associated with sustainability. Here as well, rather than providing a definition,

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<sup>166</sup> Wackernagel, M., Schulz, N. B., Deumling, D., Linares, A. et al. (2002): *Tracking the ecological overshoot of the human economy*. In: Proceedings of the National Academy of Science 99, 9266-9271.

<sup>167</sup> *Two of the EU's largest economies reach their country overshoot day*. In: [https://www.overshootday.org/?\\_\\_hstc=104736159.6cde3caadba2ea15e609dc133d58d025.1652359278394.1652359278394.1652359278394.1&\\_\\_hssc=104736159.6.1652359278395&\\_\\_hsfp=3550601630](https://www.overshootday.org/?__hstc=104736159.6cde3caadba2ea15e609dc133d58d025.1652359278394.1652359278394.1652359278394.1&__hssc=104736159.6.1652359278395&__hsfp=3550601630) (accessed on the 12.05.2022)

<sup>168</sup> Graedel Thomas, Klee Robert (2002): *Getting Serious about Sustainability*. In: Environmental Science and Technology, 36: 523-529

<sup>169</sup> Marshall J., Toffel M. W. (2005): *Framing the elusive concept of Sustainability: A sustainability hierarchy*. Environmental Science & Technology, 39(3): 673-682

Marshall et al. developed a four-level hierarchy of four categories of "unsustainable" behaviours that should be avoided:

Level 1: Actions that, if continued at current or projected rates, will threaten human survival.

This level provides a baseline for sustainability definitions, but is still too narrow and insufficient in itself, as it only considers human survival.

Level 2: Actions that significantly reduce life expectancy or other essential health indicators.

Level 3: Actions that may lead to the extinction of species or that violate fundamental human rights as set out in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Level 4: Actions that reduce the quality of life or are inconsistent with other values, beliefs, or aesthetic preferences. This level is mainly based on values and beliefs and is, therefore, more likely to incur disagreement. "Global diversity in cultures and beliefs suggests that one can neither satisfy, nor try to satisfy, all people's values simultaneously."<sup>170</sup>

While levels one and two are concerned with basic needs such as survival and essential health of people, and level three addresses species extinction and human rights, the fourth level refers to values like preservation of the ecosystem for aesthetic and recreational needs, social justice, and equity, a dimension of sustainability which will be discussed later.

According to Marshall et al. (2005), the fourth level should not be considered within the rubric of sustainability as it does not address the most urgent issues of the sustainability threat. They assume that by widening the definition of sustainability to too many dimensions, it would lose meaning and, most of all, utility. This is a very contested view, as a critical aspect of level four is social justice, one of the three pillars of sustainability, together with the environment and economy. Most respondents in my research would, indeed, not agree with ignoring level four of

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<sup>170</sup> Marshall J., Toffel M. W. (2005): *Framing the elusive concept of Sustainability: A sustainability hierarchy*. Environmental Science & Technology, 39(3): 673-682

sustainability. Climate change and environmental degradation are complex problems that require a holistic, intersectional approach, including social justice and equity. The social dimension can only be addressed under the right economic conditions, as discussed in detail in the concluding chapter.

In summary, this brief introduction aims to show how difficult it is to reach consensus on a generally accepted definition of sustainability. It is still an ongoing debate to determine what can be described as sustainable and what is meant by sustainability and sustainable development (SD).<sup>171</sup> If the definition remains too narrow, it will exclude essential issues. On the other hand, a too-comprehensive definition would make it difficult to prioritize needed interventions. The Brundtland definition remains the primary definition which can be understood as a pre-deliberative agreement. Pre-deliberative agreements have their value, as they provide a shared notion upon which further discourse is built. Lieske Voget-Kleschin and Simon Meisch<sup>172</sup> therefore argue that the Brundtland definition, despite its vagueness, should be used as a joint base when discussing sustainability and its goals. To a certain extent, the value of the Brundtland definition lies in its lack of distinctness, allowing people with irreconcilable positions in the environment-development debate to search for common ground without appearing to compromise their positions.<sup>173</sup>

For the purposes of this thesis, sustainability will be defined according to Brundtland's interpretation, and the terms 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development' will be used synonymously and interchangeably. The main focus will be on "environmental sustainability", although the social and economic dimensions will also be considered.

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<sup>171</sup> Voget-Kleschin Lieske, Meisch Simon (1999): *Concepts and Conceptions of Sustainable Development – A Comparative Perspective*. In: Dobson Andrew (ed.): *Fairness and Futurity essays: Essays on Environmental Sustainability and Social Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Sharacchandra, M. L. (1991): *Sustainable Development. A Critical Review*. In *World Development* 19(6), 607-621

## 2.2 Harmonious living: social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainability

The above considerations have been widely recognised by the United Nations Agenda for Development, which takes the definition of sustainability one step further by demanding the harmonious coexistence and integration of the three dimensions of human life, namely of the social, economic, and environmental realms. Development is defined here as a multidimensional endeavour to achieve a better quality of life for all. Economic development, social development and environmental protection are seen as interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development.<sup>174</sup>

The recognition of this interdependency is reflected in the 27 Principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, which clearly states, that “environmental protection must be an integral part of the development process, rather than being treated as a separate component.”<sup>175</sup> The eradication of poverty is declared as an essential requirement for sustainable development (social dimension), and governments are taken into responsibility for eliminating unsustainable patterns of production and consumption (economic dimension) and for promoting appropriate demographic policies (social/economic dimension). In particular, developed countries should take the lead in promoting sustainable consumption and production by focusing on the management, conservation, and sustainable development of resources such as water, forests, and land and secondly by focusing on sustainable energy production and use (environmental dimension).

Here it becomes clear that the concept of sustainability always implies these three pillars, the environmental, economic, and social dimensions. This three-pillar concept emerged rather gradually than single pointed from various discourses in early academic literature dealing with the

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<sup>174</sup> *Agenda of Development* (1997), United Nations: New York In: [https://www.un.org/esa/devagenda/UNDA\\_BW5\\_Final.pdf](https://www.un.org/esa/devagenda/UNDA_BW5_Final.pdf) (accessed on the 26th November 2019)

<sup>175</sup> *The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* (1992). In: [http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/RIO\\_E.PDF](http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/RIO_E.PDF) (accessed on the 26th of November 2019)

economic status quo from both social and ecological perspectives, including the discourse on how economic growth can be reconciled with social and ecological problems as demanded by the United Nations.<sup>176</sup>

One weakness of the "three-pillar" approach seems to be the absence of an original urtext from which it derives. Its origins have been variously attributed to the Brundtland report, Agenda 21, and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable development.<sup>177</sup> Yet none of these documents seems to be a clear framework or theoretical background. This, again, makes the approach appear to be vague and susceptible to momentary national agendas.

Despite the vagueness of the three-pillar concept, we will look at these three different dimensions separately below to gain a broad understanding of what sustainability means and how this is relevant to the research question. This may also help to understand and organise the actions needed to approach global sustainability in real life.<sup>178</sup>

### **2.2.1 Environmental Sustainability**

Environment can be defined as the complex of physical, chemical, and biotic factors that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival.<sup>179</sup>

In his publication "The Concept of Environmental Sustainability"<sup>180</sup>, Robert Goodland – the first ecologist hired by the World Bank to improve the environmental and human rights practices

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<sup>176</sup> Purvis Ben, Mao Yong, Robinson Darren (2018): *Three pillars of sustainability: in search of conceptual origins*. In: Sustainability Science, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-018-0627-5>

<sup>177</sup> Moldan B., Janoušková S., Hák T. (2012): *How to understand and measure environmental sustainability: indicators and targets*. In Ecological Indicators 17, 4-13, <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolind.2011.04.033>

<sup>178</sup> Goodland, Robert (1995): *The Concept of Environmental Sustainability*. In Annual Review of Ecological Systematic, 26, 1-24

<sup>179</sup> Muinul, Islam M. (2004): *Towards a Green Earth*. In Asian Affairs, 26(4), 44-89

<sup>180</sup> Goodland, Robert (1995): *The Concept of Environmental Sustainability*. In Annual Review of Ecological Systematic, 26, 1-24

of the institution<sup>181</sup> - defined *environmental sustainability* as the maintenance of natural capital and as a concept separated, but at the same time deeply connected to both social and economic sustainability. In other words, environmental sustainability is concerned with the meeting of human needs without compromising the health and existence of ecosystems or, to word it with Robert Goodland, natural capital. From an economic point of view, this means that environmental preservation is a function of overall financial analysis, with environmental assets being just a part of the capital value.<sup>182</sup>

John Morelli<sup>183</sup> gives a more in-depth definition of environmental sustainability, arguing that preserving natural resources for the benefit of humans alone is an insufficient and too anthropocentric definition. Morelli understands environmental sustainability as a “condition of balance, resilience, and interconnectedness that allows human society to satisfy its needs while neither exceeding the capacity of its supporting ecosystems to continue to regenerate the services necessary to meet those needs, nor by our actions diminishing biological diversity.”

According to Goodland, humanity must learn to live within the limitations of the biophysical environment. Environmental sustainability means, natural capital must be maintained, both as a provider of sources and as a "sink" for wastes, whereas "sink" means holding the waste emissions within the assimilative capacity of the environment without compromising it. Natural capital is the stock of environmentally provided assets such as soil, water, forests, air, and wetlands, which provide the flow of useful goods and services.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Daly, Herman (2014): *Remembering Robert Goodland*. In:

<https://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/article/remembering-robert-goodland/> (accessed on 09.12.2019)

<sup>182</sup> Foy, George (1990): *Economic Sustainability and the Preservation of Environmental Assets*. In *Journal of Environmental Management* 14(8): 771-778

<sup>183</sup> Morelli, John (2011): *Environmental Sustainability: A Definition for Environmental Professionals*. In: *Journal of Environmental Sustainability*, 1(1)

<sup>184</sup> Goodland, Robert (1995): *The Concept of Environmental Sustainability*. In *Annual Review of Ecological Systematic*, 26, 1-24

This approach has been criticised by a number of ecologists, as it makes the environment a utilitarian agent instead of a limiting factor for economic exploitation. "Economic sustainability," says John Morelli, "should involve analysis to minimize the social costs of meeting standards for protecting environmental assets but not for determining what those standards should be."<sup>185</sup>

### **2.2.2 Economic Sustainability and Economic Development**

Back in the 19th century, Thomas Robert Malthus and John Stuart Mill emphasised the need to protect nature from unbridled economic growth if we are to preserve human welfare before diminishing returns set in. However, it was only after World War Second that the notion of “economic development” emerged, as there was a broad consensus about the urgent need to aid the development of economically weak and "less developed" countries. The exploitation of natural resources in a colonial context was increasingly recognised as the root cause of poverty in the third world.<sup>186</sup> To counteract this economic damage, during the 1950s, "economic development" in emerging countries was the main objective for most Western nations and became synonymous with "economic growth."<sup>187</sup>

A turning point occurred during the 1960s and 1970s when publications such as “Silent Spring” by Rachel Carson and “The Population Bomb” by Ehrlich & Ehrlich displayed the magnitude of environmental destruction caused by humans and their new paradigm of “economic growth” as a panacea for all significant social problems. The increased awareness through the rise of the environmental movement leads to the questioning of the western model of economic growth as a global solution for social problems and as a guarantor for prosperity. The Club of Rome, in its

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<sup>185</sup> Morelli, John (2011): *Environmental Sustainability: A Definition for Environmental Professionals*. In: Journal of Environmental Sustainability, 1(1)

<sup>186</sup> In chapter 6, it will be argued that colonial power structures are still in play today and are responsible for the social and economic disadvantage not only of the so-called third world but also of minorities in Western countries, such as the Muslim minority in Britain.

<sup>187</sup> Purvis Ben, Mao Yong, Robinson Darren (2018): *Three pillars of sustainability: in search of conceptual origins*. In: Sustainability Science, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-018-0627-5>



already mentioned report "The Limits of Growth," and the well-known economist E.F. Schumacher in his classical work "Small is Beautiful," argued against the modern growth-based economy and pointed out its unsustainable character on a planet with limited resources. "This early debate" so Purvis et al.<sup>188</sup> "was radical and argued that the capitalistic economic growth of the Western world was fundamentally incompatible with ecological and social sustainability and called for structural reform".

The first global summit that addressed the human impact on the environment and the role of economic development was the UN conference held in 1972 in Stockholm. Emergent from the conference was the concept of sound development or "eco-development."<sup>189</sup> Eco-Development was defined by Ignacy Sachs in 1978 as "an approach to development aimed at harmonizing social and economic objectives with ecologically sound management, in a spirit of solidarity with the future generations."<sup>190</sup> The core element of eco-development is the pursuit of reconciliation between the fulfilment of essential economic human needs and environmental considerations, the same principle found later in the Brundtland report. However, by the 1980s, the environmental movement lost momentum, leaving space for economic concerns to dominate the platform of discussions. The new term which replaced "eco-development" is "sustainable development," which, as stated in the Brundtland report, "calls for a new era of economic growth – growth that is forceful and at the same time socially and environmentally sustainable."<sup>191</sup> These statements put economic concerns on an equal level with environmental interests. "Co-opting the eco-development argument of a different quality of economic growth"

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Clinton, R. L. (1977): *Ecodevelopment*. In *World Affairs*, 140: 111-126

<sup>190</sup> Glaeser, B. (1984): *Ecodevelopment: concepts, projects, strategies*. New York: Pergamon Press

<sup>191</sup> *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*. In: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf> (accessed on the 7/11/2019)

so Purvis, “a new win-win scenario emerged by recasting the same old economic growth in socially and environmentally sustainable colours.”<sup>192</sup>

This 'new old' approach to sustainability has been criticised as reactionary because it assumes that poverty causes environmental degradation, which can be reduced by reducing poverty.

Moreover, the only way to reduce poverty is to promote economic growth and the free markets that it requires.

Sustainability is also linked to peace. Countries that are truly self-sustainable, rather than a drain on their resources, will be more peaceful than countries with unsustainable economies.<sup>193</sup>

“Countries with unsustainable economic- those liquidating their own natural capital or those importing liquidated capital from other countries (e.g., Middle East oil or tropical timber mining)- “so Robert Goodland further, “are more likely to wage war than those with sustainable economies.”<sup>194</sup> Peace and sustainability are deeply interlinked.

### 2.2.3 Social Sustainability and social justice

In his encyclical *Laudati si*<sup>195</sup>, Pope Francis points out that “a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”<sup>196</sup> That the quest for sustainability must include so-called social sustainability has become widely accepted.

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<sup>192</sup> Purvis Ben, Mao Yong, Robinson Darren (2018): *Three pillars of sustainability: in search of conceptual origins*. In: Sustainability Science, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-018-0627-5>

<sup>193</sup> Goodland, Robert (1994): *Environmental sustainability: imperative for peace*. In: Graeger N., Smith D. (eds.): Environment, Poverty, Conflict. Oslo: International Peace Research Institute.

<sup>194</sup> Goodland, Robert (1995): *The Concept of Environmental Sustainability*. In Annual Review of Ecological Systematic, 26, 1-24

<sup>195</sup> *Encyclical Letter Laudato si of our Holy Father Francis on Care of our Common Home*. In: <https://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/encyclical-letter-laudato-si-holy-father-francis-care-our-common-home> (accessed on the 13.02.2020)

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

In *Social Sustainability: towards some definitions*, McKenzie defines social sustainability as "a life-enhancing condition within communities, and a process within communities that can achieve that condition."<sup>197</sup> There are different positive indicators for such conditions such as the equity of access to essential services such as health, education, transport, housing, and recreation. The community has to provide equitable opportunities to all its members, in particular to the poorest and minorities.<sup>198</sup> It has to be ensured, that future generations will not be disadvantaged by the activities of the present generation. Diversity should be seen as a positive value and not as a threat.<sup>199</sup> This can be achieved through a system of relations valuing disparate cultures and ethnic and cultural integration. Other parameters of social sustainability are: gender equality; political participation of citizens, especially at the local level and not only in voting but also in other areas of political activity; a sense of community ownership that allows identification with the local community; a system for transmitting awareness of social sustainability, especially between generations; mechanisms for a community to meet its own needs where possible and to maintain a sustainable system; and political advocacy to meet needs that cannot be met by community action.<sup>200</sup> In other words, social sustainability focuses on developing and maintaining healthy and liveable communities.

Two models are commonly used to illustrate the interdependence of environmental, economic and social sustainability. In the first model, well-functioning 'economic' and 'social' spheres depend on a healthy environment. Here, environmental sustainability is seen as the most important variable affecting the other two. A second model depicts the three spheres of

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<sup>197</sup> McKenzie, Stephen (2004): *Social Sustainability: Towards Some Definitions*. In Hawke Research Institute Working Paper Series 27

<sup>198</sup> As the research results show, this equity of access is not ensured for Muslim minorities in Wales.

<sup>199</sup> Later this research I present studies on Islamophobia that shows a relevant portion of the population perceives Islam as a threat to British culture and way of living.

<sup>200</sup> McKenzie, Stephen (2004): *Social Sustainability: Towards Some Definitions*. In Hawke Research Institute Working Paper Series

influence - economic, environmental and social - as equally important and mutually influential.<sup>201</sup>

The second model is represented by three circles of equal size that intersect each other.

Both models recognise that there can be no social sustainability without environmental sustainability. Environmental sustainability, as the maintenance of life-support systems, supplies the necessary conditions for social sustainability to be approached.<sup>202</sup> Environmental degradation is a potential cause of violent conflicts; it often hinders access to clean air, water, and food. “The social dimension of global change” so again Pope Francis, “includes effects of technological innovations on employment, social exclusion, an inequitable distribution and consumption of energy and other services, social breakdown, increased violence and a rise in new forms of social aggression, drug trafficking, growing drug use by young people, and the loss of identity.”

This is also true in Western countries, where environmental degradation, such as air and water pollution, may affect minorities living in economically poorer areas more than the rest of the population, who may have better access to health services and more economic resources. There is also a strong link between human rights and environmental sustainability. In some parts of the world, environmental degradation has led to an erosion of human rights and “has the potential to do so globally if unsustainable practices remain unchecked.”<sup>203</sup> Moreover, this is likely to be the case in particular, as economic globalisation is overtaking the global markets. According to some scholars, economic globalisation weakens state sovereignty and, thus, the capacity of even the most powerful states to regulate economic and social affairs within their territorial boundaries.<sup>204</sup> Such a weakened governmental executive power through economic globalisation

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<sup>201</sup> McKenzie, Stephen (2004): *Social Sustainability: Towards some definitions*. South Australia: Hawkw Research Insitute University of South Australia Magill

<sup>202</sup> Goodland, Robert (1995): *The Concept of Environmental Sustainability*. In Annual Review of Ecological Systematic, 26, 1-24

<sup>203</sup> Woods, Kerri (2010): *Human Rights and Environmental Sustainability*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar

<sup>204</sup> Stammers, Neil (1999): *Social Movements and the Social Construction of Human Rights*. In: Human Rights Quarterly 21(4)

has implications for the environment and human rights. Both environmental standards and human rights are threatened as the singular states are guarantors of the citizens' human rights.

Out of the three aspects of sustainability, social sustainability is the most difficult to quantify, and often it has been consequently neglected within sustainability reports and debates. As already mentioned early in the introduction, there is a close link between environmentalism and religions, between faith communities and their values with the values of sustainable development. Often this link is overseen. The theoretical intersections between the values and beliefs of religions and the principle of environmental sustainability are:

- Non-materialistic values and ethics
- Interconnectedness and interdependence
- Reverence for all life and stewardship
- Bearing witness and personal responsibility
- Social justice and an ethic of "fair shares."<sup>205</sup>

Such overlaps are particularly relevant when considering eco-Islam and the intersection of environmentalism and faith. According to the UK's World Wildlife Fund, at a practical level, faith communities have an essential role to play in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals by educating, informing and raising awareness about sustainable development, encouraging members of their faith to act responsibly, building sustainable places of worship, motivating parishioners to consume sustainably, and promoting social justice and people's well-being and health.<sup>206</sup>

Numerous academic studies revealed the normative influence of religions on how humans relate to nature and act toward the natural environment. According to Taback and Ramanan (2013),

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<sup>205</sup> *Sustainable Development and UK Faith Groups: two sides of the same coin? A Survey of UK faith communities' sustainable development activities and next steps for the future.* In: [http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/data/files/publications/SDandUKFaithGroupsv2\\_1.pdf](http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/data/files/publications/SDandUKFaithGroupsv2_1.pdf) (accessed on 24.02.2020)

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

the pursuit of sustainability must be accompanied by a sense of purpose, and "religion can provide that sense of purpose of the whys behind environmental ethics."<sup>207</sup> This stand is supported by contemporary Islamic scholars, such as K.H. Sheikh, for whom "religious education has a tremendous contribution to make in promoting the protection of the environment through inculcating moral and spiritual values which support environmental concern."<sup>208</sup> At the local level, faith communities are often the most influential group with a clear sense of shared identity and purpose. "As respected and trusted members of the community, they can exert an important influence on the behaviour of others by leading by example, and their continued presence over generations provides local stability and continuity."<sup>209</sup>

The influence of religions can be significant in terms of the faith community's acceptance of new, environmentally friendlier technologies, slowing down or speeding up the transition to a greener society, or, more generally, on the acceptance of lifestyle changes. According to Foltz, "among the major universal religious traditions, Islam possesses perhaps the greatest sensitivity to the value of the natural resources and the need to preserve them."<sup>210</sup>

More so, according to a survey by the Pew Research Center conducted between 2008 and 2012 in 39 countries, for the vast majority of Muslims, religion is a vital aspect of their lives.<sup>211</sup> This leads to the assumption that Islamic values are taken by most Muslims seriously.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Taback H., Ramanan R. (2013): *Environmental Ethics and Sustainability: A Casebook for Environmental Professionals*. Boca Raton: CRC Press

<sup>208</sup> Sheikh, K.H. (1993): *The Role of Education in the Protection of the Environment*. In: Fachruddin Daghestani, Saleh Al-Athel (eds): *Environment and Development in the Islamic World*. Jordan: Islamic Academy of Sciences, 492.

<sup>209</sup> *Sustainable Development and UK Faith Groups: two sides of the same coin? A Survey of UK faith communities' sustainable development activities and next steps for the future*. In: [http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/data/files/publications/SDandUKFaithGroupsv2\\_1.pdf](http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/data/files/publications/SDandUKFaithGroupsv2_1.pdf) (accessed on 24.02.2020)

<sup>210</sup> Foltz, Richard (2006): *Animals in Islamic Traditions and Muslim Cultures*. Oxford: One World Publication, 101

<sup>211</sup> *What do Muslims around the world believe*. In:

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=wm#inbox/FMfcgxwGDWnGjWrgJhKzGpPMKNPTftDx> (accessed on 24.02.2020)

<sup>212</sup> The limitations of faith-based environmentalism will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6

### 2.3 Sustainability in Islam and the Shari'ah

The Arabic word Shari'ah etymologically means "the path worn by camels to the water."<sup>213</sup> More literally, it can be translated as "the path to water, the source of life."<sup>214</sup> Technically it is understood to be the corpus of Islamic Laws to be followed by Muslims. The Shari'ah sets the standards for the ethical and moral course of action in a given situation, intending to please God and achieve eternal spiritual bliss.<sup>215</sup> This is achieved by "promoting what will benefit beings and protecting against that which will harm them."<sup>216</sup> Islamic law encompasses all sectors of life, specifically faith (*adiqah*), ethics (*akhlāq*), worship (*ibadah*), and commerce (*muamalat*), with environmental laws being one aspect of it.<sup>217</sup> The Shari'ah is both prohibitive and prescriptive and is considered the eternal norm for Muslim believers even without an Islamic court.<sup>218</sup>

Historically, the development of "Islamic sustainability" stemmed from the environment in Arabia, where the first Muslims lived, an environment characterised by a scarcity of resources, mainly water, vegetation, and fertile land. From these starting conditions, Islam developed its peculiar perspective on sustainability as resource management, which simultaneously includes the "vision of a moral economy and society"<sup>219</sup> where values and ethical norms- and not profit and gain- are the guiding principles. Altogether, the "Islamic" sustainability concept according to Azila Ahmad Sarkawi et al.<sup>220</sup> perceives the natural environment as a wide dimension encompassing social and economic sustainability rather than just an intersecting sphere with the economic and social domains. Islamic ethics stresses humankind's responsibility in the utilisation and preservation, distribution, and preservation of natural resources as gifts of God to the whole

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<sup>213</sup> Boker, John (Ed.) (1997): *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 88

<sup>214</sup> Llewellyn, Othman Abd-ar-Rahman (2003): *The Basis for a Discipline of Islamic Environmental Law*. In: Foltz R., Denny F., Baharuddin A. (eds.): *Islam and Ecology*. A Bestowed Trust. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 187

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 187

<sup>216</sup> Ginena Karim, Hamid Azhar (2015): *Foundations of Shari'ah Governance of Islamic Banks*. New Jersey: Wiley, 3-4

<sup>217</sup> Llewellyn, Othman Abd-ar-Rahman (2003): *The Basis for a Discipline of Islamic Environmental Law*. In: Foltz R., Denny F., Baharuddin A. (eds.): *Islam and Ecology*. A Bestowed Trust. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 187

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 187

<sup>219</sup> Kamali, Hashim Mohammed (2016): *Islam and Sustainable Development*. In: *ICR Journal* 7(1): 8-26

<sup>220</sup> Sarkawi, Azila Ahmad, Abdullah Alia, Dali Norimaj (2016): *The Concept of Sustainability from the Islamic Perspectives*. In *International Journal of Business, Economics, and Law*, 9(5), 112-116

of humanity. Above all, the human being is the determinant factor because he is assigned as the Khalifah on earth.

According to Azila Ahmed Sarkawi, Associate Professor of Architecture and Environmental Design at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Islamic environmental sustainability is based on three concepts: Firstly, the religious responsibility of Muslims to manage and prosper the earth under the covenant of viceregency; secondly, Islam's understanding of nature in a broader context that encompasses theology; and thirdly, the inclusion and integration of all aspects of human life - social, economic, political, etc..<sup>221</sup>

According to Fazlun Khalid, Islamic Sustainability is composed of three categories: the Islamic worldview on the nature of reality, Islamic environmental ethics, Shari'ah laws, legal principles, and institutions, and finally, the living tradition of Islamic inner path or Sufism (tasawwuf), which aids one to directly experience the metaphysical verities of the worldview Islam proclaims.<sup>222</sup>

Muslim jurists usually divide the fundamental aims of the Shari'ah into five categories: religion, life, prosperity, reasons, and property. As we have seen in the section dedicated to the definition of sustainability, all these categories are interlinked, and if adequately interconnected, they lead to a sustainable society. This is why the most pervasive view is that since the natural environment is composed of all five dimensions with which the Shari'ah is concerned, "saving the environment in effect means protecting the essential objectives of the Shari'ah and thus is an obligatory duty to be fulfilled by Muslims- a policy that God strongly urges Muslims to pursue and adopt."<sup>223</sup>

If the Qur'an and the Ahadith provide the ethical framework for Islamic environmentalism, the Shari'ah, the Islamic Law, further actualises the limits and conditions of human trusteeship as it

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<sup>221</sup> Sarkawi, Azila Ahmad (2016)

<sup>222</sup> Quadir, Tarik Masud (2018): *Islam and Sustainability. The norms and the hindrances*. In: Caradonna, Jeremy (Ed.): Routledge Handbook of the History of Sustainability. London: Routledge, 120

<sup>223</sup> Shah Haneef, Sayed Sikandar (2002): *Principles of Environmental Law in Islam*. In: Arab Law Quarterly 17(3): 241-254



pertains to the earth of the way humankind should look after the environment. Thus, the Shari'ah is essential in defining and maintaining "Islamic sustainability".

The ultimate goal of the Shari'ah is to maximise the welfare of all creation by conserving the natural world, what we would call environmental sustainability. This is achieved by implementing the legal principles based on the Qur'an and the Ahadith. Two of the most central of these principles are the interests of society as a whole, which take priority over the interests of any individual or group, and avoidance of harm, which takes precedence over the acquisition of benefits.<sup>224</sup>

From an Islamic perspective, sustainability as "development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" is given, when balance (*mizān*) and moderation (*wasatiyyah*) are observed, for example, in the use of resources, and when decisions are taken under consideration of social equity. The violation of *mizān* and *wasatiyyah* leads to *fasād*, or corruption and decay. Natural resources (*ni'maat*), such as land, water, air, fire, forests, oceans, fish, and wildlife, are God-given and belong equally to all people. Every community has the responsibility to use these resources responsibly, in moderation, and in a balanced way so that future generations can benefit from them as well. Social justice, as an essential dimension of sustainability, is maintained through the obligatory and supererogatory Shari'ah's rule of *zakaat* (compulsory alms), *sadaqat* (voluntary alms), and through the creation of *waqf*, the endowment made by a Muslim to a religious, educational or charitable cause.<sup>225</sup>

Three other mechanisms that ensure economic and social sustainability in Muslim societies are the prohibition of *ribā*, *gharar*, and *tarkab*. *Gharar* is the sale of what is not present at hand, like an

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<sup>224</sup> Quadir, Tarik Masud (2018): *Islam and Sustainability. The norms and the hindrances*. In: Caradonna, Jeremy (Ed.): Routledge Handbook of the History of Sustainability. London: Routledge, 124

<sup>225</sup> Ansari Abdul Haseeb, Parveen Jamal, Umar Oseni (2012): *Sustainable Development: Islamic Dimension with Special Reference to Conservation of the Environment*. In: Advances in Natural and Applied Sciences, 6(5): 607-619

unborn animal or crops which still need to be harvested. *Tarkab* is the inheritance law accurately regulated in the Qur'ān.

*Ribā* is generally translated as usury, but as referred to in the Qur'ān (2:275), it means "increase," "gain," or "growth." Islam strictly forbids usury, as revealed in different verses in the Qur'ān, such as verse 2:275:

*“Those who devour usury shall not rise except as one rises who is felled by the touch of Satan.”*

*(2:275)<sup>226</sup>*

According to the Qur'ān and the Ahadith, there are two types of *ribā*: “growth through deferment” and “growth through surplus”. Together they constitute the most complex and multifaceted concept of Islamic law<sup>227</sup>, and they are prohibited to prevent harmful effects on society and the economy. "For a sustainable economy," so Ansari<sup>228</sup>, “all forms of unjust enrichment must be proscribed to allow for equal opportunities for all.” According to Fazlun Khalid, in Islamic law, there is “no space ...for the accumulation of wealth within which oligarchs can breed.”<sup>229</sup> Khalid further states that if we do not deal with the problem of usury and the reserve bank system, which contributed to the environmental debacle of our present time, we will not be able to recover the planet and its ecosystems from the damages we have caused.<sup>230</sup> Similarly, Yasin Dutton, senior research fellow at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, sees contemporary economic activity as the real culprit in environmental degradation, with *ribā* a central issue in Islamic environmentalism.<sup>231</sup> Furthermore, the prohibition of *ribā*, *gharar*, and

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<sup>226</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Ansari Abdul Haseeb, Parveen Jamal, Umar Oseni (2012): *Sustainable Development: Islamic Dimension with Special Reference to Conservation of the Environment*. In: *Advances in Natural and Applied Sciences*, 6(5): 611

<sup>229</sup> Khalid, M. Fazlun (2019): *Signs on the Earth. Islam, Modernity and the Climate Change*. Leicestershire: Kube Publishing Ltd., 158

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.: 158

<sup>231</sup> Dutton, Yasin (2003): *The Environmental Crisis of Our Time: A Muslim Response*. In: Foltz Richard, Denny Frederick, Baharuddin Azizan. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 331

*tarkab* aims to alleviate poverty in Muslim societies and to guarantee a sustainable society through Islamic economic principles.<sup>232</sup>

Besides the expounded critical concepts in the Shari'ah, Islamic law operates according to five methods of jurisprudence, which determine human actions not directly addressed in the Qur'an. These methods of jurisprudence are instrumental in the assurance of sustainability. They are:

1) *qiyas*, or juristic analogy, is the judgment of a present situation by comparing it with an analogous situation from the past covered in the Qur'an and Ahadith. "Given the precedent of the Prophet Muhammad's prohibition against waste and impairment of water," so Tarik Masud Quadir, "the juristic tool of *qiyas* enables us to regard all kinds of water, air and land pollution as prohibited practices in Islam."<sup>233</sup> Under the application of *qiyas*, animal cruelty, genetic engineering, animal vivisection, and industrial system of meat production and its consumption are prohibited practices.

2) *ijma* or consensus is the acceptance of an action based on unanimous approval by Muslim legal experts.

3) *al-masalih al mursalab*, or public welfare, is the method for assessing the benefit of a particular action on the whole of society. This principle is relevant in particular for social sustainability.

4) *al-urf al salih* or customary wholesome practices is the recognition of customary practices of a society by the Shari'ah.

5) *saad al-dharai* or closing the gate to evil is a way to prevent a usually legitimate practice if used as a cover for unwholesome ends. According to Quadir, many projects in the Muslim world

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<sup>232</sup> Ansari Abdul Haseeb, Parveen Jamal, Umar Oseni (2012): *Sustainable Development: Islamic Dimension with Special Reference to Conservation of the Environment*. In: *Advances in Natural and Applied Sciences*, 6(5): 607-619

<sup>233</sup> Quadir, Tarik Masud (2018): *Islam and Sustainability. The norms and the hindrances*. In: Caradonna, Jeremy (Ed.): *Routledge Handbook of the History of Sustainability*. London: Routledge, 124

should be halted on the ground of *saad al-dharai*, as they contribute to the destruction of the environment and the degradation of natural resources.<sup>234</sup>

According to Johnston,<sup>235</sup> there is a growing number of Muslim scholars who aim to promote environmentally friendly practices and lobby for sustainable government regulations using the principles of the Shari'ah. Amongst the most influential Muslim environmental thinkers are to name Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who promoted mainly through writings and lectures the idea of Islamic environmental ethics, Mawil Izzi Dien, lecturer on Islamic Law at the University of Wales, Fazlun Khalid, founder of the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES) in Birmingham, UK, and Othman Llewellyn, who worked for many years for the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development in Saudi Arabia. In particular, Llewellyn is a proponent of using the Shari'ah principles within the environmental debate and activism. In his words, "most traditional conservation practices in Muslim countries are grounded in the Shari'ah, the Law and ethic of Islam. For Muslim communities, there is a huge difference between protecting something because the government tells us to and protecting it because it is our duty to the Lord of all beings."<sup>236</sup> His vision is the development of environmental *fiqh*, applied Islamic Law, as a recognised environmental discipline.<sup>237</sup> Richard Foltz, another distinguished scholar on Islamic environmental ethics, is less optimistic in this regard. He sees three major obstacles in the implementation of the Shari'ah for the protection of nature: a weak economy tends to outclass ecological concerns, Muslim writings on ethics focus much more on social justice than on human harm to the environment, and environmental activism is perceived as a Western-led initiative to which many Muslims would remain

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<sup>234</sup> Quadir, Tarik Masud (2018): *Islam and Sustainability. The norms and the hindrances*. In: Caradonna, Jeremy (Ed.): Routledge Handbook of the History of Sustainability. London: Routledge, 125

<sup>235</sup> Johnston, David (2012): *Intra-Muslim Debates on Ecology: Is Shari'a Still Relevant?* In: Worldviews 16, 218-238

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 234

<sup>237</sup> Ibid. 234

sceptical.<sup>238</sup> One of the aims of this research is to shed some light on this very complex question of the role of Islamic environmental ethics in practical life.

### 2.3.1 Islamic Declarations on Sustainable Development and Eco-Islam

In 1983 the Saudi Meteorological and Environmental Protection Administration (MEPA) published together with the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) a document titled *Islamic Principles for the Conservation of the Natural Environment*. The document endorses a Shari'ah-based ecological legislation, governance, and practices and was the first of its kind to retrieve Islamic ecological values as a matter of national and international policy.<sup>239</sup>

In 1986 the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) called an international meeting in Assisi, the birthplace of Saint Francis, the Catholic Patron-saint of ecology, attended by five religious' leaders of the world religions, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The aim of the conference was to discuss each religion's contribution to the preservation of the natural world. The then secretary general of the Muslim World League, Dr. Abdullah Omar Nasseef, signed the "Muslim Declaration on Nature" that, amongst other things, stressed the importance of the implementation of Islamic principles such as *Tawhid* (unity), *Khalifah* (trusteeship), and *Taklif* (accountability) to guide all aspects of life. In the same line, the declaration states, that the "Shari'ah should not be relegated to just issues of crime and punishment, it must also become the vanguard for environmental legislation."<sup>240</sup> According to Nasseef, the Islamic juridical system, the Shari'ah, provides the fundamental building stones to implement Islamic environmental principles. "The ambition to translate principles into practice through the use of

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid. 236

<sup>239</sup> Abou, Bakr Ahmed Ba Kader (1983): *Islamic Principles for the Conservation of the Natural Environment (IPCNE)*. Gland: IUCN

<sup>240</sup> *The Assisi Declarations. Messages on Humanity and Nature from Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam & Judaism*. Basilica di San Francesco, Italy. WWF 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 29 September 1986. In: <http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/THE%20ASSISI%20DECLARATIONS.pdf> (accessed on 07.08.2020)

Islamic Shari'ah" so Schwencke, "might be one of the distinguishing features of Islamic environmentalism, as compared to Christian environmentalism."<sup>241</sup>

This first meeting in Assisi prepared the ground for the issuing of more detailed declarations. In 1995 the president of the WWF, Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh, launched a new international non-profit organisation, the Alliance for Religions and Conservation (ARC)<sup>242</sup>. Nowadays, ARC works with 12 faiths worldwide, which embrace an estimated 5 billion humans (85% of the world population).<sup>243</sup> Under the umbrella of the ARC, representatives of the world religions issued new environmental statements, which have been collected in the book *Faith in Conservation*, published by the World Bank in 2003. The Muslim World League appointed Hyder Ishaq Mahashen, a biologist and Islamic scholar, to contribute with a new Islamic statement, the *Islamic Faith Statement*, which recapitulated the Islamic environmental principles. Mahashen sees in the industrial revolution that took place in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and in the pursuit of a new God, namely Mammon, the main culprits of the environmental degradation we face today. However, he is also optimistic regarding the ability of humans to redirect the course of climate change. He concludes, in fact, the Islamic Faith statement with the following reasoning:

“If biologists believe that humans are the greatest agents of ecological change on the surface of the earth, is it not humans that, drawn from the brink, will- for their good- abandon Mammon and listen to the prescriptions of God on the conservation of their environment and the environment of all creatures on earth? The Islamic answer to this question is decisively in the affirmative.”<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Schwencke, A. M. (2012): *Globalized Eco-Islam. A Survey of Global Islamic Environmentalism*. Leiden Institute of Religious Studies (report)

<sup>242</sup> Palmer Martin, Finlay Victoria (2013): *Faith in Conservation. New Approaches to Religions and Environment*. In: <http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/Faith-in-Conservation-part-1.pdf> (accessed on 10.08.2020)

<sup>243</sup> *ARC and the Faiths*. In: [http://www.arcworld.org/arc\\_and\\_the\\_faiths.asp](http://www.arcworld.org/arc_and_the_faiths.asp) (accessed on 07.08.2020)

<sup>244</sup> Mahanesh, Hyder Ihsan (2013): *Islamic Faith Statement*. In: <http://environment-ecology.com/religion-and-ecology/737-islamic-faith-statement.html> (accessed on 10.08.2020)

In 2000, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), together with the Organisation of Islamic Conferences (OIC) and the Saudi Meteorology and Environmental Protection Agency (MEPA), coordinated and launched the *Global Environmental Forum from an Islamic Perspective*, which took place in Saudi Arabia. The conference aimed to discuss the environment from an Islamic perspective and to explain to non-Muslims the Islamic viewpoints on the environment.<sup>245</sup> As a result of the conference, the forum issued the *Jeddah Environment Declaration from an Islamic Perspective*.<sup>246</sup> This declaration sets five main goals for sustainable development:

- 1- The distribution of resources and revenues of development in a just way, the limitation and eradication of unsustainable means of production and consumption following Islamic law.
- 2- The recognition of environmental protection as an indispensable component of development. In this line, religious obligations should not be in any way harmful to the people, but instead, they should be a source of goodness as opposed to evil or corruption.
- 3- The acknowledgment that sustainable development requires social justice and the fight against poverty is based on the fact that "wealth is originally possessed by Allah and the rich are only the heirs of it." If the rich do not bear their social responsibility towards the poor, the latter will be obliged to deplete the natural resources and degrade them to obtain their livelihood.
- 4- The establishment of a global strategy for the development of poor regions in the world parallel to the plans being implemented in the civilised world. In addition, rich countries and international and regional organisations should support developing countries by making strenuous efforts to combat poverty, using natural resources, and protecting and improving environmental conditions.

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<sup>245</sup> Schwencke, A. M. (2012): *Globalized Eco-Islam. A Survey of Global Islamic Environmentalism*. Leiden Institute of Religious Studies (report), 28

<sup>246</sup> *Jeddah Environment Declaration from Islamic Perspective* (2000). In: [http://www.issacharfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/jeddah\\_declaration.pdf](http://www.issacharfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/jeddah_declaration.pdf) (accessed on 11.08.2020)

5- The rich countries should not execute their projects at the expense of the poorer countries, thereby depleting their natural resources or spoiling the environment. Furthermore, all environmental considerations should be taken into account when making any decision or implementing any project at the national, regional, or international level.<sup>247</sup>

The Jeddah declaration was the theoretical framework for the presentation of a working programme, the *Islamic Declaration on Sustainable Development*, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002. This declaration represents the Arabic Islamic perception of sustainability inspired by the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.

In 2009, 50 Muslim scholars from across the world, under the lead of Dr. Youssef Al Qaradawi,<sup>248</sup> president of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, endorsed the so-called *Istanbul Declaration of the Muslim 7-Year -Action Plan on Climate Change 2010-2017*.<sup>249</sup> This action addressed the global Islamic community and was meant to run from 2010 to 2017. It advocated the building of an institutional framework for the implementation of environmental activities, plans, and declarations. It also champions the development of major Muslim cities as a green city model, “which can act as a guidance for greening other Islamic cities.”<sup>250</sup> Olav Kjørven, Assistant General Secretary of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), described the Istanbul Declaration as “the biggest civil society movement on climate change in history.” According to him, “the role of Islam could be one of the decisive factors tipping the planet

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<sup>247</sup> *Jeddah Environment Declaration from Islamic Perspective* (2000). In: [http://www.issacharfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/jeddah\\_declaration.pdf](http://www.issacharfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/jeddah_declaration.pdf) (accessed on 11.08.2020)

<sup>248</sup> Yusuf Al Qaradawi (1926-2022) was a graduated from Al-Azhar University in Cairo and is considered as one of the most influential Islamist with an affiliation to the Muslims Brotherhood Jamiyat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin. Amongst other positions, he was the founder and chairman of the International Union of Muslim Scholars. He authored over one hundred books and became a popular media personality. (Source: Halverson Jeffrey R. (2018): *Yusuf al-Qaradawi*. In: Oxford Bibliographies <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780195390155/obo-9780195390155-0098.xml>)

<sup>249</sup> Istanbul Declaration of The Muslim 7- Year-Action Plan on Climate Change 2010-2017. In: <http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/m7yap%20dec%20july%2009.pdf> (accessed on 10.08.2020)

<sup>250</sup> Istanbul Declaration of The Muslim 7- Year-Action Plan on Climate Change 2010-2017. In: <http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/m7yap%20dec%20july%2009.pdf> (accessed on 10.08.2020)



towards a sustainable future. This commitment in Istanbul to a low carbon future can be of historical significance in the path to resolving climate change and other pressing environmental issues."<sup>251</sup> The Istanbul Declaration ends with a global call on all Muslims "to tackle the root causes of climate change, environmental degradation, and the loss of biodiversity, following the example of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), who was, in the words of the Qur'ān, 'a mercy on all beings."<sup>252</sup> In the following years, several Islamic declarations on sustainability were issued at different summits and conferences (most important were the United Nations Climate Change Conferences in Bali in 2007, Istanbul in 2009, and Bogor in 2010), all reinforcing the commitment to sustainable development and implementation of previous agreements. A strong focus has been put on "water resource management, population, health, environment, desertification, food security, disaster risk management, vulnerability to climate change, biodiversity, finance, and funding."<sup>253</sup>

Islamic principles remained the basis for all declarations and their argumentations. Another declaration was issued in 2015 as the *Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change* during the International Climate Change Symposium in Istanbul. It was presented during the Paris Climate Summit (COP-21) as a collective statement about the new role the Islamic world is willing to play in curbing the effects of global climate change.<sup>254</sup> During the UN climate talks in Glasgow – COP 26 - in 2021, the latest Muslim declaration was released as a joint statement of Muslims across the UK and Ireland. One of the signing organisations is the Muslim Council of Wales, under the direction of Dr. Abdul Azim Ahmed, one of the respondents in this research. As in previous declarations, also the last statement demanded climate justice, a just transition to a

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<sup>251</sup> Istanbul Declaration of The Muslim 7- Year-Action Plan on Climate Change 2010-2017. In: <http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/m7yap%20dec%20july%2009.pdf> (accessed on 10.08.2020)

<sup>252</sup> Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change (2009). In: [file:///C:/Users/tanja/Pictures/islamic\\_declaration\\_v4.pdf](file:///C:/Users/tanja/Pictures/islamic_declaration_v4.pdf) (accessed on 10.08.2020)

<sup>253</sup> Schwencke, A. M. (2012): *Globalized Eco-Islam. A Survey of Global Islamic Environmentalism*. Leiden Institute of Religious Studies (report), 31

<sup>254</sup> Vincenti, Donatella (2016): *"Green" Islam and social movements for sustainability. Socio-ecological transitions in the Muslim world*. Ph.D. dissertation at the Department of Political Science, LUISS University Guido Carli, Rome, Italy. In: <https://eprints.luiss.it/1476/1/20170712-vincenti.pdf> (accessed on 15.10.2020)

green economy, and more support for the most vulnerable. This should be achieved through the reinvigoration of the relevant teachings in the Qur'ān and Ahadith, the "greening" of mosques and community centres, and by encouraging member organisations and individuals to include environmental sustainability in all their actions.<sup>255</sup>

The issuance of religious statements on climate change and environmental degradation has, over the years, stimulated academic discourse on the subject. In 1992 the WWF sponsored a series of five books dedicated to understanding how each of the five world religions, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, "has treated ecology in the past, what the teachings of each have to say on the subject, and how that is applied today."<sup>256</sup> Within this series, Fazul Khalid and Joanne O'Brien edited a volume, the first in its kind, named *Islam and Ecology*<sup>257</sup>, a collection of essays dedicated to elucidating the Islamic perspective on the environment. In the nineties and early 2000, more essay collections on Islam and ecology were published. Examples are *Islam and Environment*<sup>258</sup>, edited by Harfiya Adbedl Haleem, *Islam, and Ecology. A bestowed Trust*<sup>259</sup>, edited by Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny, and Azizan Baharuddin, and the monograph *Muslim Environmentalism, Religious and Social Foundations*<sup>260</sup>, by Anna M. Gade.

Another relevant voice that emphasised the importance of religion for the environmental crisis, with a focus on Islam, is Massoumeh Ekbetar, who contributed with the essay *Peace and Sustainability Depend on the Spiritual and the Feminine* in the book *Moral Ground*<sup>261</sup>, an anthology by theologians, religious leaders, scientists, activists, business leaders, and writers to provide ethical

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<sup>255</sup> *Muslims in the UK and Ireland Unite in Call for COP26 Climate Action. Joint Statement by National Muslims Organisations in the UK and Ireland.* In: <https://www.ifees.org.uk/cop26statement/> (accessed on 10.10.2022)

<sup>256</sup> Khalid F., O'Brien J. (1992): *Islam and Ecology*. New York: Cassell Publishers Limited

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Haleem Harfiya Adbedl (ed.) (1999): *Islam and Environment*. Abridged: Paperback

<sup>259</sup> Foltz C.R., Frederick, M.D., Baharuddin A. (eds.) (2003): *Islam and Ecology. A Bestowed Trust*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

<sup>260</sup> Gade, Anna M. (2019): *Muslim Environmentalism. Religious and Social Foundations*. New York: Columbia University Press

<sup>261</sup> Dean Moore Kathleen, Nelson P. Michael (eds.) (2010): *Moral Ground. Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril*. San Antonio: Trinity University Press

and principled guidance in the face of environmental degradation. Massoumeh Ekbetar is a politician, environmental activist, and associate professor for immunology at Tarbiat Modares University in Tehran. She was also the first female vice president of Iran between 1997-2006 and later head of the Department of the Environment.<sup>262</sup> Her ecological engagement was recognised by UNEP which announced her as one of the seven 2006 Champions of the Earth and The Guardian named her as one of the 50 environmental leaders.<sup>263</sup> Inspired by Persian mysticism, and in particular, by the Iranian Twelver Shi'a and Sufi Islamic philosopher Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi (Mulla Sadra), Ekbetar stands in her essay for a "path of inner development that enhances peace of mind and heart."<sup>264</sup> Only by achieving inner peace and ethical equilibrium are political leaders able to promote an harmonious living with nature and other human beings. According to Mulla Sadra, this stage is acquired through four "voyages" or stages of cognition, beginning from an individual self to the merging of the self with creation, where the intrinsic ties between the spiritual and material world become visible. According to Ebtetar, this is "an essential message for the leaders and politicians who claim to be searching for solutions to the quagmires of global warming and the deterioration of conditions in the ecosystem."<sup>265</sup> Therefore, recognising the interrelationship between spirituality, peace and the environment, which ultimately leads to a state of inner peace and the overcoming of selfish and egoistic drives, is the essential element of the solution to the current environmental crisis.<sup>266</sup> Such considerations are significant regarding the role of religions and spirituality in environmental discourse.

This growing body of literature addressing the link between Islam and ecology and a contemporary global movement concerned with the resurgence of Islamic environmental

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 178

<sup>263</sup> Schwencke, A. M. (2012): *Globalized Eco-Islam. A Survey of Global Islamic Environmentalism*. Leiden Institute of Religious Studies (report), 35

<sup>264</sup> Dean Moore Kathleen, Nelson P. Michael (eds.) (2010): *Moral Ground. Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril*. San Antonio: Trinity University Press

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 181

<sup>266</sup> Schwencke, A. M. (2012): *Globalized Eco-Islam. A Survey of Global Islamic Environmentalism*. Leiden Institute of Religious Studies (report), 36

principles is described as "Eco-Islam."<sup>267</sup> While not a formalised movement, the concept of Eco-Islam provides a framework for Muslims to engage with environmental issues and integrate their faith into their actions. According to Schwencke<sup>268</sup>, Eco-Islam covers a range of fields from ethics and theology to science, ecology, and economy, and includes respectively different actors, such as religious and academic scholars, but also activists, civil society organisations, governmental bodies, financial institutions, and communities.

In general, several key elements contribute to the understanding of Eco-Islam: Eco-Islam draws on the Qur'ān and its teachings on human responsibility as stewards (khalifah) of the earth. The sayings of the Prophet (ahadīth) provide guidance on ethical treatment of the environment and further exemplify Qur'anic principles. The concept of halāl (permissible) extends beyond food to include environmental considerations. Eco-Islam encourages followers to choose products and practices that are environmentally friendly and ethically sourced. Another important aspect of eco-Islam is justice and equity, which is applied to environmental issues and addresses concerns related to social and environmental justice. Eco-Islam recognises the interconnectedness of all living beings and ecosystems. Actions that harm the environment are seen as interrelated with social and economic issues, emphasising the need for a holistic approach to problem solving. Therefore, Eco-Islam includes principles such as moderation (wasatiyyah), balance (mizan) and the prohibition of waste (israf). These principles are aimed to guide believers to adopt sustainable lifestyles and practices.

The starting point of the Eco-Islam movement, as stated by Zbidi<sup>269</sup>, was a response to an “eco-theology” discourse triggered by theories put forward by the already mentioned historian Lynn

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<sup>267</sup> Abdelzaher Dina M., Kotb Amr, Helfaya Akrum (2017): *Eco-Islam: Beyond the Principles of Why and What, and into the Principles of How*. In: Journal of Business Ethics

<sup>268</sup> Schwencke, A. M. (2012): *Globalized Eco-Islam. A Survey of Global Islamic Environmentalism*. Leiden Institute of Religious Studies (report), 7

<sup>269</sup> Zbidi, Monika (2013): *The call to Eco-Jihad*. In: <https://en.qantara.de/content/islamic-environmentalism-the-call-to-eco-jihad> (accessed on 12.08.2020)

White (1967) in his article *The Historical roots of our Ecological Crisis*<sup>270</sup> and by Arnold Toynbee, who in 1973 published the article *Genesis of Pollution*<sup>271</sup>. Both articles emphasised the adverse effects of religions on the environment. Their argumentations led to a counter-response by leading scholars, such as John B. Cobb for Christianity and Seyyed Hossein Nasr for Islam.<sup>272</sup> According to different authors<sup>273</sup> Abdelzaher D., 2017, Zbidi M., 2013, Schwencke A., 2012), the Iranian American philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr can be considered the founder of Islamic eco-theology. Almost contemporary to Lynn White, in 1967, Nasr published a book titled *Man and nature. The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man*<sup>274</sup>, where he addresses the spiritual dimensions of the environmental crisis from an Islamic and Sufi perspective. Nasr sees the root cause of environmental degradation not in a particular religious view, but in the greed and desire for economic growth that legitimised human dominion of nature. “It is precisely the dominion of nature,” so Nasr, “that has caused the problem of over-population, the lack of breathing space, the coagulation, and congestion of city life, the exhaustion of natural resources of all kinds, the destruction of natural beauty, the marring of the living environment employing the machine and its products, the abnormal rise of mental illnesses and a thousand more difficulties.”<sup>275</sup> However, behind economic interests and the disenchantment with nature resides a spiritual crisis. Nasr compares the human spiritual aspiration with the climbing of a spiritual mountain or a flight to heaven, as found in the Christian tradition in Dante's *Divine Comedy* or in the *al-mi'râj*, the nocturnal Ascension of the Prophet Muhammad. Due to a loss of spiritual orientation and the destruction of the harmony between humanity and God, modern humans have exchanged “spiritual flights” with the conquering of nature.<sup>276</sup> In response to this problem, Nasr advocated

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<sup>270</sup> White, Lynn (1967): *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*. In: Science 155:3767, p1203-1207

<sup>271</sup> Toynbee, Arnold (1973): *Genesis of Pollution*. In: The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/1973/09/16/archives/the-genesis-of-pollution.html> (accessed on 12.08.2020)

<sup>272</sup> Ibid. 2

<sup>273</sup> See: Abdelzaher D., 2017, Zbidi M., 2013, Schwencke A., 2012

<sup>274</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (1967): *Man and Nature. The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man*. Chicago: KAZI Publications

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.: 18

<sup>276</sup> Ibid. 19

the rediscovery of religious heritage and the restoration of a theology that could be expanded to include a theology of nature.<sup>277</sup> Based on the Qur'ān and the prophetic tradition, Nasr sees the conservation of nature as one of the essential obligations of a Muslim. According to him, an Islamic environmental ethic is deeply rooted in the traditional Islamic sources (Qur'ān and Ahadīth) and Islamic Law. Two scholars who, contemporaneously to Nasr, became interested in Islam-ecology are Ziauddin Sardar and Parvez Manzoor. Both analyse the impact of modern technologies on contemporary societies and their destructive repercussions on the ecosystem. Particularly Manzoor stresses how Western-style capitalism and the “mad rush for modernisation” have provided the ideological legitimation for the exploitation of nature and the subsequent ecological devastation.<sup>278</sup>

Nasr and other Muslim scholars, who can be regarded as the first generation of Eco-Islam thinkers between the 1970s- and the early 2000s,<sup>279</sup> focused on a more theoretical, metaphysical, and cosmological approach, in other words, to the *whys* of environmental ethics. However, since the early 2000s a second generation of scholars focuses on the performative aspects of Eco-Islam. The second wave of the Eco-Islam movement is, in other words, not only concerned with the theoretical principles of Islam for the preservation and protection of nature but also with the question of the *how* Qur'ānic values can guide humans to concrete actions and environmental policies.<sup>280</sup> In a paper published in 2017, Dina Abdelzaher et al.<sup>281</sup> elaborated four principles that would help to implement Eco-Islam concepts into concrete actions and behaviours:

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid. 114

<sup>278</sup> Manzoor Parvez, Sardar Ziauddin (2008): *Environment and Nature*. In: Helaine Seline (Ed.): *Encyclopaedia of the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures*. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-4425-0\\_9565](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-4425-0_9565) (accessed on 14.10.2020)

<sup>279</sup> Schwencke, A. M. (2012): *Globalized Eco-Islam. A Survey of Global Islamic Environmentalism*. Leiden Institute of Religious Studies, 10

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 4

<sup>281</sup> Abdelzaher Dina M., Kotb Amr, Helfaya Akrum (2017): *Eco-Islam: Beyond the Principles of Why and What, and into the Principles of How*. In: *Journal of Business Ethics*

- 1) Maintenance of Equilibrium (*Qadr*), i.e., the preservation of the natural balance between all creations of an ecosystem, including humans, water, air, land, plants, animals, and other natural resources;
- 2) Avoidance of Overconsumption (*Israf/Tabzēer*) and application of moderation (*wasatiyyah*) towards the use of natural resources;
- 3) Practice of Self- Accountability (*Mubasaba*), in particular for all actions affecting the environment which very often pass unobserved and unpunished;
- 4) Acknowledgement of the Interdependence of all life forms and its resulting sense of modesty (*Tawadu*) and servitude.

An excellent example of an Eco-Islam initiative is the UK-based *Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences* (IFEES), established as a charity in 1994 by Fazlun Khalid. The IFEES networks worldwide with international organisations, NGOs, grassroots organisations, and academic bodies to promote and facilitate environmental projects and to sensibilities the Muslim community to the topic of climate change. An elucidatory example of the activities of the IFEES is the 1999 launched *Misali Island Islamic Environmental Project*, where around 1600 Muslim local fishermen of Misali Island were educated by local sheiks and religious authorities, leading them to abandon destructive fishing techniques which were damaging the local corals and endangering fish specimens.<sup>282</sup> The employed material for the fishermen's training included the IFEES booklets *Qur'ān, Creation, and Conservation* and *First Islamic Conservation Guide*, both containing fundamental ecological guidelines based on Islamic environmental ethics.

Another example of an Eco-Islam movement based in the UK is *Wisdom in Nature* founded by Dr. Muzzamal Hussain. After a few initial meetings in 2004, the newly founded group was first

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<sup>282</sup> Dickinson, Daniel (2005): *Eco-Islam hits Zanzibar fishermen*. In: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4271519.stm> (accessed on 16.10.2020)

named *London Islamic Network for the Environment*, or LINE and in 2009 renamed WiN, or *Wisdom in Nature*. According to their website, the group “held open monthly forums in central London with an inclusive circle format, reflecting on a range of themes; from Qur' ānic reflections to 'Green Economics'; from peace activism to biofuels; from forum theatre to modern social movements; from Palestine to food and farming.”<sup>283</sup> A peculiarity of the group is their “five strand activism model,” a holistic framework that integrates environmental concerns with concepts and ideas about the economy, consumerism, democracy, and a so-called “engaged surrender,” which is described as a form of non-violent activism, based on the contemplation of the Islamic principle of *tawhid* or Divine Unity, a principle which will be explained in depth in the next chapter.

In April 2019, the first European Eco- Mosque was inaugurated in Cambridge, the so-called Cambridge Central Mosque. According to their website, “environmental concerns have been paramount in the design of the new Cambridge Mosque.”<sup>284</sup> The building is constructed in such a way as to allow near-zero carbon emissions using regenerative energy sources like solar panels. At a theological level, the mosque's imams have committed to making climate change and Islamic environmental ethics a recurring theme in their sermons to raise awareness of pressing climate issues and Islam's position on them.

As these few examples show, the Eco-Islam movement advanced the development of numberless initiatives, groups, organisations, institutions, and policies in the UK and worldwide based on Islamic environmental principles. Such endeavours are highly compatible with the sustainability goals set by the Welsh assembly and discussed in the next paragraph.

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<sup>283</sup> Hussain Muzzamal: *History of Wisdom in Nature and Islamic “Environmentalism” in the UK*. In: <https://www.wisdominnature.org/about/history> (accessed on 19.10.2020)

<sup>284</sup> *Europe's First Eco-Mosque*. In: <https://cambridgecentralmosque.org/the-mosque/> (accessed on 19.10.2020)



## 2.4 Sustainability in Wales- the Seven Well-being goals

In 2015 the Welsh Assembly released the so-called *Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015*<sup>285</sup> which came into force in April 2016. This act places specific duties upon several operation bodies in Wales, such as Welsh ministers, local authorities, or health boards. These duties consist of each public body supporting sustainable development within the respective responsibility branches. This is done in two stages: first, by setting and publishing objectives ("wellbeing objectives") designed to maximise its contribution to the achievement of each of the wellbeing objectives; and second, by taking all reasonable steps (in the exercise of its functions) to achieve those objectives.

The overall aim is to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales following the sustainable development principles, aiming at achieving the wellbeing goals.<sup>286</sup> The act lists seven specific well-being goals:

- 1.) A prosperous Wales is an innovative, productive, and low-carbon society that recognises the limits of the global environment and uses resources efficiently and proportionately.
- 2.) A resilient Wales, this is a nation that maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic, and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example, climate change).
- 3.) A healthier Wales, promoting physical and mental well-being with an emphasis on proper choices for the benefit of future generations.
- 4.) A more equal Wales, where people can fulfil their potential regardless of their cultural, social, and economic background.

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<sup>285</sup> *The wellbeing of future generations (Wales) act 2015*. In: <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/150623-guide-to-the-fg-act-en.pdf> (accessed on 10.08.2020)

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

- 5.) A Wales of cohesive communities that are safe and well-connected.
- 6.) A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving the Welsh language where language, culture, and heritage are fostered.
- 7.) A globally responsible Wales, this is a nation that, by pursuing economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being goals, takes into account the repercussions on global well-being, aiming to make a positive contribution.<sup>287</sup>

In order to assess the actual progress towards the seven well-being goals, the Welsh National assembly also issued 46 national well-being indicators which are listed in the appendix.<sup>288</sup>

In 2019 the Welsh Government declared a climate change emergency in Wales following a meeting with UK environmental ministers in Cardiff. The declaration aimed to “trigger a wave of action at home and internationally, from our own communities, businesses and organisations to parliaments and governments around the world.”<sup>289</sup>

To monitor whether sustainable development in Wales has improved every year the Welsh government releases a statistical overview and research based on the Welsh well-being goals. The latest report, issued in 2019,<sup>290</sup> shows areas of improvement as well as areas of concern. On the positive side, studies have shown a significant fall in green gas emissions by 25 percent since the 1990s and an improvement in water quality over the last 25 years. The capacity of renewable energy generation installation has significantly risen in the last decades, and almost half of the electricity consumed in Wales comes from renewable resources. Additionally, Wales is the world leader in household recycling. Despite these positive trends, the environmental situation in Wales

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> *How to measure a nation's progress? National Indicators of Wales*. In: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/national-indicators-for-wales.pdf> (accessed on 12.08.2020)

<sup>289</sup> *Written Statement: Welsh Government declares Climate Emergency*. <https://gov.wales/written-statement-welsh-government-declares-climate-emergency> (accessed on 13.08.2020)

<sup>290</sup> *The wellbeing of Wales 2018-2019*. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-11/well-being-of-wales-2019.pdf> (accessed on 13.08.2020)

is still source of concern. According to 2015 estimates, if everyone on the planet consumed the same as the Welsh average, there would be a need for 2.5 planets to provide the necessary resources and absorb the waste. Biodiversity is significantly declining. It has been found that no ecosystem in Wales has all features needed for resilience. Despite some positive trends, agricultural land has become more acidic, and air pollution is a significant health issue. Public Health Wales estimated around 2.700 deaths each year due to air pollution. Also, on the side of social sustainability and justice, there are concerns. The percentage of low-paid work has increased. Concurrently, employees from ethnic minority groups earn around 7.5 percent less per hour than white British employees, and there has been a rise in the number of recorded race hate crime incidents. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath, such negative trends are likely to continue to rise.

Meanwhile, the Welsh Wellbeing of Future Generations Act received much criticism. According to John Larks<sup>291</sup>, the bill does not provide any plausible theory of change as to how its goals will be advanced. For example, under the bill, the Secretary of State must regularly publish a forecasting report assessing risks, including environmental, global risks, and risks that may emerge in the next 25 years. However, the risk assessment published by the Cabinet Office proved inadequate when dealing with the COVID-19 emergency.

Also, the act's language has been described as "quite vague and imprecisely worded."<sup>292</sup> In the last chapter, I will refer to this problem in regard to the sixth well-being goal which addresses the preservation of Welsh culture. I will argue that the term culture has not been defined and that this lack of definition can potentially create uncertainty when cultural minorities identify less with the majority society and may be less engaged, for example, in environmental issues.

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<sup>291</sup> Larks, John Myers (2022): *Concerns with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill*. In: Effective Altruism Forum, <https://forum.effectivealtruism.org/posts/TSZHvG7eGdmXCGhgS/concerns-with-the-wellbeing-of-future-generations-bill-1> (accessed on 16.12.2022)

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

Another area of concern is the 46 indicators,<sup>293</sup> which also include the sustainable development goals of the United Nations, by which sustainable progress in Wales is intended to be measured. The 46 indicators are not mandatory, consequently, critics charge that most public bodies in Wales ignore them.<sup>294</sup> Another issue with the indicators is that they do not cover all areas of concern such as reducing the use of plastics.

Despite the criticism, the Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill attracted international attention, positioning Wales as an agent of global change.<sup>295</sup> The well-being goals consider all the different aspects of sustainable development, the environmental, economic, and social dimension, and their interconnectedness. They provide a suitable framework with which to establish a Welsh Eco-Islam movement and the implementation of its principles.

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<sup>293</sup> See appendix

<sup>294</sup> Thorpe, David (2020): *Four things wrong with the Well-being of Future Generations Act* (2020). In: <https://theoneplanetlife.com/four-things-wrong-with-the-well-being-of-future-generations-act/> (Accessed on 16.12.2022)

## CHAPTER 3 – ISLAMIC ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter was devoted to the definition of sustainability and its various aspects, including how Islamic law, Sharī'ah, aims to ensure sustainability in society through its various principles. While the Sharī'ah corroborates the application of Qur'ānic principles through certain rules and laws, the Qur'ān is the fundamental theological source for Islamic ethics and, therefore, for Islamic environmental ethics as well. Of all texts pertaining to Islam, the Qur'ān is of central importance while discussing environmental principles as it shapes “how Muslims interact within human and nonhuman, and also secular and religious worlds.”<sup>296</sup> In other words the Qur'ān shapes the way Muslims interact with their environment. Moreover, the importance of the Qur'ān lies in the fact that it is the authoritative reference for the global Islamic system, which, like all religious systems, is not monolithic but characterised by a wide variety of branches and traditions. According to Ali Ahmad, the resilience of Islam lies “in its capacity to integrate and absorb into its perspective a variety of cultures and to coexist with plurality of viewpoints.”<sup>297</sup> However, to be "Islamic", views and thoughts must be consistent with their primary source, the Qur'ān. Indeed, the Qur'ān has remained the basic common factor for all the different branches and traditions of Islam throughout history to the present day. For this particular reason, according to Anne Gade, a basic overview of the Qur'ān's environmental themes is a good starting point for elaborating Muslim environmental principles.<sup>298</sup> From this

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<sup>296</sup> Gade, Anna M. (2019): *Muslim Environmentalism. Religious and Social Foundations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 78

<sup>297</sup> Ahmad, Ali (2001): *Cosmopolitan Orientation of the Process of International Environmental Law-making. An Islamic Lay Genre*. Boston: University Press of America, 48

<sup>298</sup> Gade, Anna M. (2019): *Muslim Environmentalism. Religious and Social Foundations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 78

starting point, specific cases of Muslim environmentalism, such as Welsh Eco- Islam, can be explored.

Following this logic, the aim of this chapter is to discuss environmental principles on the basis of the Qur'ān. A second section is devoted to the Ahadīth, which are a source of guidance and clarification for the many principles revealed in the Qur'ān.

### 3.2 Environmental Principles in the Qur'ān

The term “environment” in connection with ecology and modern science was hardly used before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Within the Qur'ān, no such terminology could be literally translated as “environment” as understood by modern science. However, there are “important Qur'ānic expressions which correlate closely to the literal meaning of this term.”<sup>299</sup> The Qur'ān speaks of *khalq* or creation. It contains two hundred and sixty-one verses using the root form *k b l q* and its grammatical variations.<sup>300</sup> “These verses” so Rianne ten Veen, “contain references to the human world; to the natural world of the planet from trees to turtles, from fish to fowl; and to the sun, stars and skies.”<sup>301</sup>

Another expression related to the environment is *ihatab* and its derivate *al-mubit*, which means “to surround” or “to encompass.”<sup>302</sup> It appears in different verses in the Qur'ān, often with reference to hell, or to describe the omnipresence of God:

“Unto God belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth, and God encompasses all things.” (4:126)<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> Chittick, William (1986): “*God Surrounds All Things*”: *An Islamic Perspective on the Environment*. In: *The World & I*, Vol.6, 671-678

<sup>300</sup> Ten Veen, Rianne C. (2009): *199 Ways to Please God*. Self-published, ISBN: 978-184426-629-6

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 9

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.,9

<sup>303</sup> All quoted Qur'ān verses are from: Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper Collins

“Behold! They are in doubt regarding the meeting with their Lord. Behold! Truly He encompasses all things.” (41:54)

Different Islamic scholars give different meanings to the word “encompass”. According to Ibn ‘Arabi, God’s encompassing refers to the idea that all creations come from God and eventually return to Him.<sup>304</sup> Chishti Saadia Khawar Khan describes al-Muhi as the “Divine Environment” which on the physical level manifests as “an underlying sacredness of all creation” demanding from the believer respect of the physical environment.<sup>305</sup> According to another modern Islamic scholar, William Chittick, the concept that God surrounds all things is “an appropriate starting point for any attempt to understand the Islamic point of view on the environment.”<sup>306</sup> According to him, God in Islam is the ultimate environment. The immediate environment is called *al-dunya*, meaning that which is near and in direct opposition to *al-akhirah*, the hereafter. This important concept of *al-akhirah* in Islamic environmental ethics will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. Other words from the Qur’ān related to the idea of environment are *al-ard*, or earth, and *al-alam* or cosmos. Both refer to that which is other than God.

The Qur’ānic concept of the environment is inseparable from the concept of God and has numerous philosophical, ethical and theological overlaps with modern environmentalism, leading Whitford and Wong to hypothesise that among faith communities, Muslims will be associated with the highest concern for environmental issues.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper Collins, 1171

<sup>305</sup> Chishti, Saadia Khawar Khan (2003): *Fitra: An Islamic model for humans and the environment*. In R. C. Foltz, F. M. Denny, & A. Baharuddin (Eds.), *Islam and ecology* (pp. 67–84). Cambridge: Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School.

<sup>306</sup> Chittick, William (1986): “*God Surrounds All Things*”: *An Islamic Perspective on the Environment*. In: *The World & I*, Vol.6, 672

<sup>307</sup> Whitford A., Wong K. (2009): *Political and Social Foundations for Environmental Sustainability*. In: *Political Research Quarterly* 1(62): 190-204

Out of 6,236 verses in the Qurʾān, some 750 verses exhort Muslim believers to reflect upon nature,<sup>308</sup> its interdependent character and on how humans are dependent on God’s creation. “Qurʾānic verses describing nature and natural phenomena outnumber verses dealing with commandments and sacraments” showing the outstanding importance given in the Qurʾān to the natural world.<sup>309</sup> For Muslims, the Qurʾān, which literally means “the Recitation”, is the verbatim word of God revealed through the agency of Archangel Gabriel (Jibrīl or Jibraʾīl) to the Prophet Muhammad during a period of twenty-three years. Every single word and letter from the Qurʾān is considered sacred and unchangeable.<sup>310</sup> The Qurʾān not only is the constant companion of Muslims during life, from the new-born child to the dying, it is also the ultimate source of law because “it contains the word of the First, that no one proceeds, and Last, that is not succeeded.”<sup>311</sup> Despite the unchangeable character of the text, the Qurʾān contains two kinds of verses which require a different legal rule: the *muhkam*, or clear verses which don’t need any interpretations, and the *mutashabih*, or unclear and ambiguous verses:

“He is Who has sent down the Book upon thee; therein are signs determined; they are the Mother of the Book, and others symbolic. As for those whose hearts are given to swerving, they follow that of it which is symbolic, seeking temptation and seeking its interpretation. And none know its interpretation save God and those firmly rooted in Knowledge.” (3:7)

One can understand the Qurʾān as being either completely *muhkam*, according to sura 11:1, *a Book whose signs have been determined*, or as being wholly *mutashābih*, as stated in sura 39:23, *God has sent down the most beautiful discourse, a Book consimilar*. Some Ahadīth seem to support the stand of multiple and intrinsic levels of Qurʾānic meaning. One of the clearest hadīth supporting this says:

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<sup>308</sup> Hasan, Zillur Rahim (2005): *Ecology in Islam: Protection of the Web of Life a Duty for Muslims*. In: [http://www.theamericanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/ecology\\_in\\_islam\\_protection\\_of\\_the\\_web\\_of\\_life\\_a\\_duty\\_for\\_muslims/](http://www.theamericanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/ecology_in_islam_protection_of_the_web_of_life_a_duty_for_muslims/) (accessed on the 01.08.2020)

<sup>309</sup> Rizk, Riham R. (2104): *Islamic Environmental Ethics*. In: *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research*, 5(2), 201

<sup>310</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One

<sup>311</sup> Dien, Mawil Izzi (2000): *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam*. Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 101



“No verse of the Quran has been revealed without it having a back (zahr) and a belly (batn). Every letter has a bound and a point of ascent.”<sup>312</sup> This saying “has traditionally been taken to establish the scripture’s multivalence and the gradation of readings as relatively outward, inward, lower, and higher.”<sup>313</sup> “Muslim scholars agree” so Izzi Dien, “that some parts of the Qur’ān might never be understood, in particular verses dealing with obscure subjects such as time, the human spirit, and the details of some of the historical events mentioned in the Qur’ān.”<sup>314</sup> Muslims also disagree about which passages are symbolic and open to interpretation, and who is entitled to interpret them.<sup>315</sup> These considerations are important when examining the Qur’ān in relation to environmental ethics. Some verses clearly demand certain behaviours and actions to protect nature; other verses are subject to interpretation and multiple levels of meaning, making them less imperative regarding the treatment of the environment.

In summary, the Qur’ān emphasises the need for human ethics and provides the basis for it. As will be shown in the following paragraphs, Islamic ethics is not and cannot be separated from concern for nature as a manifest part of divine creation. This concern is referred to as Islamic environmental ethics, the basic principles of which will now be outlined.

### **3.2.1 Tawhid or the Oneness of God**

The foremost meaning of *Tawhid* is Unity or Oneness of Allah, the universe as a connected whole, with God standing as a unifying principle outside of Creation. “Implicit herein is the equality of all creation in the worship of their Creator and the respectful recognition of the interdependency and interconnectedness between all.”<sup>316</sup> In this worldview, social and ecological

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<sup>312</sup> Mayer, Toby (2017): *Traditions of Esoteric and Sapiential Quranic Commentary*. In: Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One

<sup>313</sup> Ibid, 1661

<sup>314</sup> Dien, M. Izzi (2000): *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam*. Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 102

<sup>315</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 130

<sup>316</sup> Rizk, Riham R. (2014): *Islamic Environmental Ethics*. In: *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research*, 5(2)

systems are interwoven as a unit and moral considerations are extended toward nature as part of a truly universal ethic.<sup>317</sup> The philosophical derivation of the interconnectedness of ecological and social systems from the concept of *Tawhid* is similar to the concept of sustainability based on the three pillars of environment, economy and social justice presented in the previous chapter.

Nature as part of creation is a visible icon that points to the higher reality of God, who transcends it all. This is elucidated in a story in the Qurʾān about Abraham. In sura 6, “The Cattle”, is described how Abraham after seeing first a star, then the moon, and finally the sun mistakenly took them for God. Eventually he repudiated this misperception by saying “I love not things that set.” (6:76). This narrative can be understood as a demonstration of the Quranic principle of “God’s Oneness and Transcendence in relation to created reality.”<sup>318</sup> The Oneness of God here becomes evident to anyone who contemplates nature, its signs and their transitory character:

“We shall show them Our signs upon the horizons and within themselves till it becomes clear to them that it is the truth.” (41:53)

God displays his various signs to guide humans. However, the ultimate goal of reflecting upon nature is to realise that there is only One Reality, One Truth.<sup>319</sup> In Sufism this verse is often understood as a reference to the Self-Manifestation, *ẓybur* of God in all phenomena of creation. The 10<sup>th</sup> century mystic, Abū Bakr al- Wāsitī commented this verse by saying, “He is manifest in everything through that of it which He makes manifest ... So, if one scrutinises them, one does not find anything other than God.”<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> Haque Nadeem, Al -Hafiz Basheer Ahmad Masri (2011): *The Principles of Animal Advocacy in Islam: Four Integrated Ecognitions*. In: *Society and Animals* 19, 279-290

<sup>318</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 367

<sup>319</sup> Ahmad, Ali (2001): *Cosmopolitan Orientation of the Process of International Environmental Law-making. An Islamic Lay Genre*. Boston: University Press of America, 49

<sup>320</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 1170

As mentioned earlier, in the Qurʾān, there are 750 references to natural phenomena. Of these 328 are called *āyāt*, or “signs.” The phenomena of nature are considered in the Qurʾān to reveal Divine wisdom. Both the Qurʾān and nature are called *kitāb*, or book.<sup>321</sup> “Nature is the created book and the Qurʾān is a written one,”<sup>322</sup> correspondingly, as all parts of nature are called *āyāt*, all verses of the Qurʾān are also named *āyāt*.<sup>323</sup> Thus, the *āyāt*, the natural phenomena, are not merely “indicators” of a higher, hidden reality behind creation. They are receptacles of God and of his all-encompassing compassion and mercy.

Both Divine attributes, compassion, *al-Rahman*, and mercy, *al-Rahim*, are contained in the opening Surah of the Qurʾān, the *al-Fātihah*, which according to the Prophetic tradition, holds the whole essence of the Qurʾān:<sup>324</sup>

“In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful” (1:1)

The *al-Fātihah* constitute an essential part of Islamic faith and practice because it is recited at the beginning of every prayer and as a blessing to mark the commencement of any licit activity. The divine attribute *al-Rahim* is closely linked to *Tawhid*. According to Nomanul Haq, indeed, within Qurʾānic teachings, “God’s mercy and his omnipresence are inseparable” and creation itself is an expression of God’s mercy.<sup>325</sup> *Al-Rahim* therefore, “indicates the blessings of nourishment by which God sustains each particular existent thing”<sup>326</sup> as stated in this verse:

“My mercy encompasses all things.” (7:156)

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<sup>321</sup> The Qurʾān is referred as *al-Qurʾān al-tadwīnī*, a book that is scripture in letters, whereas nature is referred as *al-Qurʾān al-takwīnī*, or the cosmic Qurʾān. In: Ahmad Ali (2001): *Cosmopolitan Orientation of the Process of International Environmental Law-making. An Islamic Lay Genre*. Boston: University Press of America, 53

<sup>322</sup> Akhlaq, Sayed Hassan (2020): *Introducing a Comparative Ecotheology: Islamic Concept of Basmalah and Luther’s Commentary on the Ten Commandments*. In: Consensus, 41(1)

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 3

<sup>325</sup> Haq, Nomanul (2001): *Islam*. In: Jamieson Dale (ed.): *A companion to environmental philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers

<sup>326</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One

In other words, every single aspect of nature contains the blessings of God and is therefore sacred. The creation and its creator cannot be separated and every creation is in essence the Breath of Divine Compassion.<sup>327</sup>

In the second verse of *al-Fātihah*, God is described as “the sustainer (*al-Rabb*) of all the worlds (*alamin*).” The Arabic word *rabb* embraces a wide range of meanings, such as “Lord”, “Caretaker”, “Sustainer” or “Master” and the definitive article *al* before *rabb* indicates that God is the only and foremost fosterer, possessor, and sustainer of all creations.<sup>328</sup> The word *al-amin*, the worlds, indicates different levels of cosmic existence and their corresponding communities of beings, for some commentators it refers to all existing things other than God.<sup>329</sup> The undivided sovereignty of God over all of his creation implies that to care for the earth is equal to glorify God and God’s creative power. Thus, according to Akhlaq, “harming the environment and the earth violates divine glory and assaults His hymnal choir, mother nature.”<sup>330</sup> Every aspect of nature is consciously created by God, who is *Musanmir*, the Fashioner, one who gives physical form:

“He is God, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner; unto Him belong the Most Beautiful Names.

Whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise.”

(59:24)

With three of the Most Beautiful Names of God<sup>331</sup>, the Creator (*Khaliq*), the Maker (*Bari*), and the Fashioner (*Musanmir*), the verse describes three stages of creation: as *Khaliq* God measures things previous to their coming into existence, as *Bari* He brings things in a specific manner into

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> Akhlaq, Sayed Hassan (2020): *Introducing a Comparative Ecotheology: Islamic Concept of Basmalah and Luther’s Commentary on the Ten Commandments*. In: *Consensus*, 41(1)

<sup>329</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 6

<sup>330</sup> Akhlaq, Sayed Hassan (2020): *Introducing a Comparative Ecotheology: Islamic Concept of Basmalah and Luther’s Commentary on the Ten Commandments*. In: *Consensus*, 41(1)

<sup>331</sup> The Most Beautiful Names of God refers to the ninety-nine names of Allāh in Islam, most of which are taken or derived from the Qur’ān. In: Bowker John (Ed.) (1997): *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

being, and as *Musawwir* He is the giver of form.<sup>332</sup> According to Yunus Negus, “Allah gives to the created thing every detail of its complicated spiritual and physical existence, and ensures that it fits perfectly into the rest of creation.”<sup>333</sup> Everything in creation plays a role and is related to everything else. As such it has intrinsic value independent of the benefit humans might derive from them. The Oneness of God is stated in many other verses of the Qur’ān:<sup>334</sup>

“Indeed, when it was said unto them, there is no God but God, they waxed arrogant”

(37:35)

The *shahadah* (or profession of faith) “*la ilaha illa ‘laha*”, there is no God but God, contained in verses 37:35 and 47:19 of the Qur’ān, signifies that metaphysically there is no other reality than God. “There is no beauty but divine beauty, there is no goodness but divine goodness, no power but divine power.”<sup>335</sup>

“He is the First, and the Last, and the Outward, and the Inward; and He is the Knower of all things” (57:3)

In verse 57:3, God is the “Outward” or *al-Zahir*, meaning that wherever we turn our glance, we see God (“Wherever you turn is the face of God” 2:115). Nature is accordingly the face of God. From a Sufi perspective *al-Zahir* points to the manner in which everything that exists can be understood as “Self-Disclosure” of God. The Inward, *al-Batin*, means that with our eyes alone we are not able to comprehend God. Allah is outwardly manifest and inwardly hidden at every moment, with nature being a Self-Disclosure of the Divine.

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<sup>332</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 1357

<sup>333</sup> Khalid F., O’Brien J. (1992): *Islam and Ecology*. London: WWF, 40

<sup>334</sup> All Quran verses are taken from: Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One

<sup>335</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One

Ozedim Ibrahim<sup>336</sup> points out that some thinkers emphasise the notion that the whole of nature is “Muslim”, as all of nature follows the natural laws which are created by God. Correspondingly, nature, ecosystems, and individual creatures are submitting to God:

“And unto God prostrates whoever is in the heavens and on the earth, willingly or unwillingly, as do their shadows in the morning and the evening” (13:15)

Not only the earthly but also the celestial entities prostrate before God:

“And the stars and the tree prostrate” (55:6)

Everything is existentially submitted to God, only humans, according to the scripture, are born with conflicting elements in their souls, which may lead them to stray from the righteous path. Hence the need for ethics and moral codes of conduct entailed in the Qur’ān.<sup>337</sup>

Inherent in the concept of *Tawhid* is the idea of the omnipotence and omniscience of God:

“He it is Who made the sun radiance, and the moon a light, and determined for its stations, that you might know the number of the years and the reckoning of time. God did not create these, save in truth. He expounds the signs for a people who know.

Surely in the variation of the night and the day and whatsoever God has created in the heavens and on the earth are signs for a people who are reverent”

(10:5-6)

Everything conceived in nature has, according to this verse, its place in creation. Nothing exists in vain. God puts signs in nature, *āyāt*, for humans to learn, (“The earth We spread out, and cast therein, as a source of insight and a reminder for every patient servant.” 50:7-8), but not everybody is capable of reading nature. The ebb and flow of the night, for example, teach

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<sup>336</sup> Ozedim, Ibrahim (2008): *Toward an Understanding of Environmental Ethics from the Qur’anic Perspective.* In: Foltz, Denny, Baharuddin (eds.): *Islam and Ecology.* New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>337</sup> Dien, M. Izzi (2000): *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam.* Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press

humans about the impermanent and transient nature of life, and like everything else in nature is characterised by finitude. By becoming aware of the signs and their fleeting existence, the believer becomes aware of the eternal, unique, and everlasting source of creation, which is only Allah. The impermanent nature of creation is also reflected in verses 28:88 and 10:24:

“All things perish, save His face” (28:88)

“The parable of the life of this world is that of water which We send down from the sky; the earth’s vegetation, from which men and cattle eat, mingles with it till, when the earth takes on its luster and is adorned, and its inhabitants think they have gained mastery over it, Our Command comes upon it by night or by day, whereupon We make it a mown field, as if it had not flourished the day before! Thus, do We expound the signs for a people to reflect.”

(10:24)

Not only do these verses teach that humans should not get attached to an impermanent world, they also indicate that humans are not the masters of creation. The principle of *Tawhid* implies that God is the sole sustainer of the cosmic order and of natural harmony. Contemplation of nature, therefore, is conceived, specially by Sufis, as being one path leading to God-realization, thus, the tremendous importance of the natural world and its preservation.

The recognition of the Oneness of God is the essence, the primordial nature or *fitrah* of human beings, who were created for religion:

“I did not create jinn and mankind, save to worship me.” (51:56)

The state of *fitrah* goes back to the pre-temporal covenant, the *mithaq*, a pact God made with all human souls before the creation of time and before their existence on earth, in which humans acknowledge God as their Lord. Once on earth, human beings do not remember the primordial

covenant. However, their pact with God, which has left an indelible imprint upon their souls,<sup>338</sup> can be fulfilled through religion and the submission to divine will. This will regain their state of primordial nature and moral purity. Hence the importance of submission: “human beings cannot arrogate to themselves absolute power and capricious control over nature- they must submit to the commands of their Lord.”<sup>339</sup> The Qur’ān indeed ends with sūrah *al-Nas* or Mankind (114:1-6) which urges humans to seek refuge from the illusion of self-sufficiency and to recognise their dependence from God. From an ecological perspective these last verses are a reminder of the interdependence of life and of the destructive character of the illusion of self-reliance which potentially leads to a false belief in technology alone and to alienation from nature.

### 3.2.2 Khilafah or Trusteeship

The second notion of Islamic environmental ethics is that of trusteeship, or *khilafah*. Humans are responsible as *khalifah* for the care of the earth as viceregents of God:

“And when thy Lord said to the angels, “I am placing a viceregent upon earth” they (the angels) said, “Wilt Thou place therein one who will work corruption therein, and shed blood, while we hymn Thy praise and call Thee Holy?” He said, “Truly I know what you know not.” (2:30)

Allah originally offered the trusteeship to other natural agents like the heavens and mountains:

“Truly We offered the Trust unto the heavens and the earth and the mountains but they refused to bear it, and were wary of it- yet man bore it; truly he was ignorant, a wrongdoer.” (33:72)

Each refused this responsibility, not out of defiance, but because they shrank from what they knew would be too heavy a burden. The only beings willing to assume *khilafah* were humans whose intellectual capacities made them fit to observe religious obligations. But in the above

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<sup>338</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 467

<sup>339</sup> Haq, Nomanul (2001): *Islam*. In: Jamieson Dale (ed.): *A companion to environmental philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 114



verse humans are described as ignorant and wrongdoer insofar as they failed the full weight of the trust<sup>340</sup> which included protecting the sea, air, forests, animals, and, not least of all, the world order.<sup>341</sup> The trust put on humans by God, in fact, does not imply human superiority towards creation. The Qur'ān even states that the rest of creation is by far greater than the creation of humans:

“Surely the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of humankind. But most of mankind know not.” (40:57)

In Islamic thought, it is believed that Adam, the first human, was also the first *khalifah* or guardian of the planet earth. By extension, every man and woman inherit the power and responsibility towards the planet and its life forms. “Man accepted the *amana* or trust by choice and relative free will and gained thereby the capacity to live for good or evil.”<sup>342</sup> Here, it is worth emphasising that the designation of humans as viceregent is “part of the divine plan throughout.”<sup>343</sup> Other than in Genesis, where Adam and Eve were cast from paradise as a punishment, according to Islamic understanding humans are fulfilling Divine Will by taking this particular role on earth. Salvation in Islam is therefore not bound to the subjugation and overcoming of a lower order of reality, i.e., nature, but on the contrary to the care and tending of the environment.<sup>344</sup>

According to another level of interpretation, the word *khalifah* derives from *khalafa*, meaning “to come after”. Human beings, thus, come after all creatures and all grades of being culminate in

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<sup>340</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One

<sup>341</sup> Ömer, Faruk Gürlesin (2009): *An Islamic Understanding of the Environment, Theory and Practice. A Survey on Turkish University Students*. University of Leiden, in:

[https://www.academia.edu/4238682/An\\_Islamic\\_Understanding\\_Of\\_The\\_Environment\\_-\\_Theory\\_and\\_Practice\\_-\\_A\\_Survey\\_on\\_Turkish\\_University\\_Students?email\\_work\\_card=view-paper](https://www.academia.edu/4238682/An_Islamic_Understanding_Of_The_Environment_-_Theory_and_Practice_-_A_Survey_on_Turkish_University_Students?email_work_card=view-paper) (accessed on the 03.03.2020)

<sup>342</sup> Rizk, Riham R. (2014): *Islamic Environmental Ethics*. In: *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research*, 5(2)

<sup>343</sup> Haq, Nomanul (2001): *Islam*. In: Jamieson Dale (ed.): *A companion to environmental philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 112

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

the human state.<sup>345</sup> However, stewardship of the natural world is given to humanity not only to meet its needs, but also as a test.:

“Then We made you viceregent upon the earth after them, that We might observe how you behave” (10:14)

This makes humans accountable for any abuses of the earth’s life forms and its resources<sup>346</sup>:

“He it is Who appointed you viceregents upon the earth and raised some of you by degrees above others, that He may try you in that which He has given you. Truly thy Lord is Swift in retribution, and truly He is Forgiving, Merciful” (6:165)

Humans violating their God given trust has devastating consequences, as attested in the Qur’ān through the stories of the people ‘Ad and Thamud. Both were powerful tribes who in their respective lands and times, abused the stewardship of the earth given to them by Allāh. As consequence, they were both destroyed by environmental catastrophes.<sup>347</sup>

As Lynn White and other scholars have argued, the concept of human stewardship over the earth, also found in Genesis, has often been misinterpreted or understood as dominion over nature. In the Qur’ān (2:29, 16:5-8, 10:16), the natural world is made subservient, *taskhir*, to humans in order to help them fulfil various needs. Subservience to human beings means that nature and natural phenomena have been designed or constrained by God to serve human demands:

“God it is Who created the heavens and the earth, and sent down water from the sky, then brought forth fruits thereby for your provision, He has made the ship subservient unto you, so that they sail upon the sea by His Command, and has made the rivers subservient to you. And

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<sup>345</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One

<sup>346</sup> Haque Nadeem, Al -Hafiz Basheer Ahmad Masri (2011): *The Principles of Animal Advocacy in Islam: Four Integrated Ecognitions*. In: *Society & Animals*, 279-290

<sup>347</sup> Rizk, Riham R. (2014): *Islamic Environmental ethics*. In: *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research* 5(2), 194-204

He has made the sun and the moon subservient unto you, constant, and He made the night and the day subservient unto you.” (14:32-33)

To describe something as subservient implies the existence of a conscious will<sup>348</sup> that is constrained to obey the will of God. Some scholars suggest, that the Divine Command by which stars, and the moon, and the sea and ship and the rest of creation are made subservient is a prescriptive command, which nature must obey as a matter of religious responsibility. This has two consequences: first, nature is seen as sentient and therefore eligible to be respected; and second, all phenomena of the natural world have a religious consciousness that makes them subservient to the will of God. The fact that, according to the Qur’ān, nature is constantly praising God makes it particularly worthy of protection:

“Whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth glorifies God, And He is the Mighty, the Wise” (59:1)

This verse and understanding are consistent with the literal reading of other verses indicating that there are stones that crash down from their fear of God (2:47), stars and trees that prostrate to God (55:6), and thunder that hymns His praise (13:13). That such natural phenomena are signs of God’s Power and Benevolence for people who understand is also mentioned in 2:164, 13:4, 16:67; 30:24; 45:5.<sup>349</sup>

Another aspect of nature prostrating to God and submitting naturally to his will is that human beings and jinn<sup>350</sup> are the only creatures capable of rebelling against God and against their own nature, which is submission to God. Only humans can intentionally not worship God.<sup>351</sup> This

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<sup>348</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> From the Arabic term *jinn* meaning, be mad, furious, Jinns are fiery spirits in Islam. In: Bowker John (Ed.) (1997): *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

<sup>351</sup> Chittick, W. (1986): *God surrounds all things: An Islamic perspective on the environment*. In: *The World and Environment*. 671-678

ability or freedom makes man all the more accountable and responsible for his actions. In fact, according to Chittick, it makes humans the only being capable of destroying the environment.<sup>352</sup>

Viceregency requires that a person remain a servant of God and recognise all the benefits that come from God:

“Have thy not considered that among that which Our Hands have wrought We created cattle for them, and that they are their masters, and that We have subdued these for them, such that some are a mount for them and of some they eat?” (36:71-73)

In Arabic, the principle of servanthood is called *ubudiyyah*, “the attribute which allows a human being to reach the fullness of his humanity and thereby become God’s viceregent.”<sup>353</sup>

The relation of all humans to God is often described in the Qur’ān with the term *‘abd* or servant. One of the most common names of Muhammad is *‘abd Allāh*, servant of God. In the daily canonical Muslim prayers, Muhammad is described as “*‘abdubu wa resuluhu*”, or “God’s servant and His messenger.”<sup>354</sup> To be a servant of God and following the example of the Prophet equals the highest spiritual stage in a person, as it represents complete surrender to God.<sup>355</sup> The idea of servanthood encapsulates the whole essence of Islam, since it means “surrender to God”:

“I did not create jinn and mankind, save to serve Me.” (51:56)

Submission to God is the ontological reason for human existence. According to Chittick, to be a trustee of God, humans need to follow God’s will by transcending individual and selfish motivations. In the same way as the Prophet is first a servant and then a messenger, similarly humans need to become first God’s servants before they can be entitled to be viceregents. If

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<sup>352</sup>Ibid.: 676

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.: 677

<sup>354</sup> Ibid.: 677

<sup>355</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 1431

humanity is not able to submit to God, instead of functioning as a vicegerent, it will eventually generate corruption instead of peace and harmony.<sup>356</sup>

Being a servant of God has a major relevance not only for the earthly life as *kebilafah*, but is also of paramount importance for the hereafter or *akhirah*, another central Qur'ānic theme, denoting that human beings are not created for this world alone, but foremost for an existence after earthly life in union with God. This idea of *akhirah* or hereafter is discussed in the next paragraph.

### 3.2.3 Ākhirah or Hereafter

According to most Muslim scholars, the first sura revealed by Archangel Gabriel to the Prophet was sura al-'Alaq. In these first verses of al-'Alaq, humanity is reminded that:

“Nay, truly man is rebellious in that he considers himself beyond need. Truly unto thy Lord is the return.” (96:6-8)

This idea that everything and every human eventually returns to God in the Hereafter, or *ākhirah*, is a central theme in the Qur'ān and common through Islamic scripture. The Qur'ān, indeed, declares the duality of the world, meaning that all things in creation have been made in pairs. Death and life are one of the many dualities which make up creation. Coupled with life and death, another essential pair is our earthly world (*dunya*) and the afterlife (*ākhirah*). Furthermore, since this world is temporal, its dual opposite is, by logic, eternal.

All that exists on the earthly plane will in fact eventually die and go back to its eternal, divine source. A series of verses are a reminder of this fact. One of the Divine Names of God is *al-*

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<sup>356</sup> Chittick, W. (1986): *God surrounds all things: An Islamic perspective on the environment*. In: *The World and Environment*, 678

*wārith*, the Inheritor.<sup>357</sup> This name is an admonition that God is the one who remains after all of creation has perished. He is the only reality to which eventually everything will return:

“Surely We shall inherit the earth and whatsoever is upon it, and unto Us shall they be returned.”

(19:40)

Further in sura al-Baqarah is stated:

“And unto God all matters are returned” (2:210)

“And be mindful of a day when you shall be returned to God. Then every soul will be paid in full for what it earned, and they shall not be wringed.” (2:281)

In particular, the above verse means that humanity not only has a duty as God's steward on earth, but also that humanity is accountable to God for all its actions on earth.<sup>358</sup> Zaidi<sup>359</sup> suggests that humans undergo a test of their stewardship of creation as well, and are therefore accountable for their actions towards the environment. Every generation is obliged and accountable for leaving behind an intact earth, one without pollution or depleted natural resources. This accountability will manifest on the eschatological event of the end of the world leading to the Day of Reckoning or the Day of Judgment:

“Oh my people! Follow me; I shall guide you unto the way of rectitude. O my people! The life of this world is but fleeting enjoyment, whereas the Hereafter is truly the Abode of Permanence. Whosoever commits an evil deed will not be requited, save with the life thereof; but whosoever, whether male or female, performs a righteous deed and it is a believer shall enter the Garden wherein they will be provided for without reckoning.” (40:38-40)

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<sup>357</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 774

<sup>358</sup> Saniotis, Arthur (2012): *Muslims and ecology: fostering Islamic environmental ethics*. In: *Contemporary Islam* &:155-171

<sup>359</sup> Zaidi, Iqtidar (1981): *On the ethics of man's interaction with the environment: an Islamic approach*. In: *Environmental Ethics*, 3(1), 35-47

Every single deed – including how we treat the earth- will have a positive or negative repercussion in the hereafter and humans will be accountable for all of them in front of God. In other words, “the level of environmental maintenance is open to Divine judgment at the Day of Reckoning.”<sup>360</sup> This idea is made very clear in sura al-Zalzalah:

“When the earth is shaken with her shaking, and the earth yields up her burdens, and man says, “What ails her?” That Day she shall convey her chronicles; for thy Lord inspired her. That Day mankind shall issue forth upon diverse paths to witness their deeds. So, whosoever does a mote’s weight of good shall see it. And whosoever does a more’s weight of evil shall see it.”

(99:1-8)

Relevant in this context is verse 4 of the above sura, where the Qur’ān declares earth’s testimony about its inhabitants. Chronicles mean that the earth will report to God all deeds of every male and female human, and about what they did upon her surface.<sup>361</sup>

Along with the concept of the hereafter, the impermanence of the world is a recurring theme in the Qur’ān, and so, following the example of the Prophet, Muslims have made the remembrance of death a spiritual practise:

“Every soul shall taste death, and you will indeed be paid your reward in full on the Day of Resurrection. And whosoever is distanced from the Fire and made enter the Garden has certainly triumphed. And the life of this world is naught but the enjoyment of delusion.” (3:185)

This verse, like many others in the Qur’ān, stresses that the next life is a real life, even more real than the earthly one. Actions in this life should be chosen based on this knowledge.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> Saniotis, Arthur (2012): *Muslims and ecology: fostering Islamic environmental ethics*. In: Contemporary Islam &:155-171

<sup>361</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 1546

<sup>362</sup> Within the ahādīth the connection between respect of the environment and proper stewardship of the earth and the hereafter are exposed vividly. A prophetic account, told by Ibn ‘Umar a companion of the Prophet, describes how Prophet Muhammad said: “A woman who tied a cat will go to hellfire; she neither fed it, nor allowed it to find food on its own.”<sup>362</sup> Another hadīth reports the Prophet telling: “If you kill a sparrow wantonly, it will hasten to God on the Day of Judgement saying: O Lord! So, and so killed me for play and not for use! Later in this chapter

While the three principles of *tawhid*, *ākhirah* and *khalafah* form the theological foundation of Islamic environmental ethics, they are rather theoretical. The following sections deal with principles that are more practical, such as the treatment of water or animals. These can be more easily quantified and therefore provide a good reference for assessing the implementation Islamic environmental principle within Welsh communities.

### 3.2.4 Water

As seen in the previous section, not only humans will be accountable for their deeds on earth on the Day of Judgment, but all of creation is called to speak of what its inhabitants did while upon it:

“The Day she shall convey her chronicles” (99:4)

The Prophet explains the meaning of the Earth’s chronicle as a testimony against every male and female servant, about what they did upon her surface: “She will say that he did such and such on such and such day, so this is her chronicles.”<sup>363</sup> This statement shows that nature and its elements are alive, conscious and capable of witnessing. In the words of the Sufi mystic Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Balkhī Rumi, “air, earth, water and fire are God’s servants. To us they seem lifeless but to God living.”<sup>364</sup> If nature’s elements are considered to be God’s servant then it logically follows that they are to be considered as sacred.

One of the elements most mentioned in the Qur’ān is water. From an ecological point of view water and water-management are critical for sustainable development. Water, as a natural

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the Ahadīth will be discussed in more details. Source: Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 157-158

<sup>363</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 1546

<sup>364</sup> Khan, Pir Zia Inayat (2008): *The Holy Mysteries of the Five Elements. An Eco-Sufi Vade Mecum*. London: Sufi Order International Publications



resource is the core of socio-economic development, of functioning eco-systems, of life itself. It is therefore crucial, how humans treat and conserve this resource.

Some authors see the importance Islam gives to water as a direct consequence of the dry environment in which Islam originated, namely the Arabian Peninsula, an area characterised by arid or semi-arid territories.<sup>365</sup> According to Gill, “scarcity has always influenced the perception of water by Muslims and it has, accordingly, shaped their behaviours and customs.”<sup>366</sup> In fact, as will be discussed later, the ahadīth contain numerous sayings and roles about the proper use and management of water. In the Qur’ān itself, the word “water” *mā* occurs over 60 times, “rivers” over 50 and “sea” over 40.<sup>367</sup> Water is considered of such importance for life that the believers are constantly reminded that they neither make it nor possess it. Water is uniquely sent down to earth by God in form of rain and stored in the sky in form of clouds:

“Naught is there, but that its treasures lie with Us, and We do not send it down, save in a known measure. And We sent forth the winds, fertilizing. And We sent down water from the sky, providing you with sufficient drink thereby, and you are not the keepers of its stores.” (15:21-22)

In fact, the verbs employed in the Qur’ān in connection with water, such as “sent down”, “revived”, “brought forth”, “gave a drink” and “purify” are causative, implying that water is not just an available resource but also an agent capable of giving life, or at least, of being a channel for life. It is a prerogative of God to use water as a life-giving medium.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Gilli, Francesca (2000): *Islam, Water Conservation and Public Awareness Campaigns*. The Israeli-Palestinian. International Academic Conference on Water for Life. Antalya, Turkey. In: <https://www.scribd.com/document/41536113/francesca> (accessed on the 30/04/2020)

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> Haleem, Muhammad Abdel (1989): *Water in the Quran*. In *Islamic Quarterly*, 33(1)

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

Water has a spiritual dimension as well. Water “represents different aspects of epiphany of the divine qualities, *al-asmā was-sifāt*, in successive state of existence.”<sup>369</sup> Water is a source of life, the element through which God creates all living beings on earth:

“And We made every living thing from water” (21:30)<sup>370</sup>

The Qurʾān sees water as the reproductive fluid from which every living being, including humans, is created. The origination from “base water” (“Did We not create you from a base fluid” 77:20), the semen, is an invitation to human beings to realise their humble origins, and their need for spiritual realisation and purification. It is also a testimony to God’s creative power which includes the resurrection of humans in the Hereafter. Water is seen as indispensable for the sustainability of plants, animals, and human beings and for the diversity and multiplicity of life, all from the singularity of water, the sign which proofs Divine Power and Oneness:

“And He it is who sends down water from the sky. Thereby We bring forth the shoot of every plant, and from it we bring forth vegetation, from which We bring forth grain in closely packed rows; and from the date palm and from its sheaths, We bring forth clusters of dates hanging low, and gardens of grapes, olives, and pomegranates, like unto one another and yet not alike. Look upon the fruits, as they grow and ripen! Truly in that are signs for a people who believe.” (6:99)

The “one Water” as the unifying source of creation’s multiple manifestations is a reminder of tawhid, the unity of God, the single principle from which the multitude of life emerges:

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<sup>369</sup> Dinani, Gholamhossein Ibrahimi (2018): *Sophia Perennis*. In: The Semiannual Journal of Sapiential Wisdom and Philosophy. 15(2), Nr. 34

<sup>370</sup> Similar verses are: “Hast thou not considered that God sends down water from heaven, and then the earth becomes green?” (22:63) and “And God created every beast from water: among them are those that go upon their bellies, and among them are those that go upon two legs, and among them are those that go upon four.” (24:45)

“Upon the earth are neighbouring tracts, vineyards, sown fields, and date palms of a shared root and not of a shared root, watered by one water” (13:4)

However, due to people’s ungratefulness toward God, or failure to obey the Prophet, God can reverse the blessing of water by causing draughts:

“Have you considered? Were your water to vanish into the ground, then who would bring you flowing water? (67:30)

This verse can be understood literally in terms of dryness caused by the withdrawal of water, or symbolically as God’s removal of His blessings or the gift of life.<sup>371</sup>

Maybe even more relevant than for creation, water stands in the Qur’ān for knowledge, purity, and revelation. Out of 293 instances in the Qur’ān, in which the descending of Divine power and revelation is described, thirty-eight instances refer to water “drawing a connotative parallel between rain and revelation.”<sup>372</sup>

This symbolic meaning of water can be found in the story of Moses and his meeting with the *Green One* or *al-Khidr* as told in sura 18 “The Cave”. Al-Khidr is not mentioned by name in the Qur’ān, but has been identified as the “Green One” by the ahadīth of the Prophet and by a number of commentators. The ahadīth state that he was given the name Khidr, the Green One, because wherever he was standing or praying everything would turn green and renewed with life.

The mystical figure of al-Khidr is associated with water as a symbol of life and is believed to have lived beyond the span of an ordinary human life. In Sufism, he is considered “the prophet of Initiation into Devine mysteries as well as a special spiritual guide.”<sup>373</sup> He is the one who

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<sup>371</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 1399

<sup>372</sup> Zargar, Cyrus Ali (2014): *Water*. In: Morrow John Andrew (Ed.): *Islamic images and ideas: essays on sacred symbolism*. North Carolina: McFarland&Company

<sup>373</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 748

brings real knowledge, delivering the individual from the false notions of the self to the true nature of the soul.

In the story told in the Qurʾān, Moses wishes to meet al-Khidr in order to learn from him Divine Knowledge. Symbolically, Moses stands for the Divine exoteric law which he brings down to humanity in form of the commandments. Al-Khidr, on the other hand, symbolises esoteric knowledge:

“There they found a servant from among Our servants whom We had granted a mercy from Us and whom we had thought knowledge from Our Presence.” (18:65)

Khidr and Moses meet at the junction of two seas, the point where figuratively esoteric and exoteric knowledge meet. On a more literal level, the two waters are understood to be the fresh water of a river and the saltwater of the seas. Symbolically, the sweet water is understood by some commentators to be a reference to the Shariʿah because it is easy to obtain, while the salty water of the ocean is *haqiqah*, the ultimate, infinite truth, which is difficult to obtain without courage and disciplined spiritual effort.<sup>374</sup>

“And He it is Who mixed the two seas, one sweet, satisfying, the other salty, and set between them a divide and a barrier, forbidden” (25:53)

According to this understanding, water can be inferred as symbol for knowledge which distinguishes between truth and falsehood:

“He sends down water from the sky, so that the riverbeds flow according to their measure and the torrent carries a swelling forth; and from that which they kindle in the fire, seeking ornament or pleasure, is a fourth like unto it. Thus, does God set forth truth and falsehood.” (13:17)

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<sup>374</sup> Ibid. 899

Some Qur'ān commentators see the water of this verse as the purifying knowledge and the riverbeds as the human hearts.<sup>375</sup> Also important in this verse is the similitude concerning truth and falsehood and the symbolic meaning of water. Here, the water sent down by God churns up dirt and impurities, or false knowledge. Once the riverbeds subside “water returns to its pure state and is then useful to people in numerous ways.”<sup>376</sup> This connection between water and knowledge is a recurring theme not only in the Qur'ān but also in other Islamic texts and commentaries.

Once Moses reached the junction of the two waters, a dead fish, which was kept as provision, mysteriously became alive and swam away. “The fact that the fish was revived in that place is an indicator of al-Khidr’s presence there.”<sup>377</sup> Al-Khidr, in fact, represents life that transcends the limits of the material and temporal world “both in his greening effect upon his surroundings and his apparent agelessness.”<sup>378</sup> At first, Moses did not recognise the meaning of this junction which represents a *barzakh*, a liminal place between two dimensions or realms. The reviving of the fish at this junction, the spring of life, is a sign that it is a *barzakh*. This journey of Moses in search of al-Khidr can be understood as an allegory for the journey of the soul in search of God. Here water, as a medium for life and a provider of truth, is of central importance. Moses is cited twice more in Qur'ān, always in association with water and gushing springs out of the rocks:

“And when Moses sought water for his people, We said, “Stride the rock with thy staff.” Then twelve springs gushed forth from it; each people knew their drinking place, “Eat and drink of God’s provision, and behave not wickedly upon the earth, working corruption.” (2:60)

The second related verse is 17:60 which describes the same incident.

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<sup>375</sup> Dinani, Gholamhossein Ibrahim (2018): *Sophia Perennis*. In: The Semiannual Journal of Sapiental Wisdom and Philosophy. 15(2), Nr. 34

<sup>376</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 620

<sup>377</sup> Ibid.: 749

<sup>378</sup> Ibid. 749

According to the 18<sup>th</sup> century Sufi Saint Ahmad Ibn Ajibah, the stone from which the water flows is the symbolical heart of spiritual life, and the staff used by Moses is the spiritual will (*bimmah*). This sura shows once more the importance of water as a mean for spiritual purification.<sup>379</sup>

However, water is not only linked to knowledge. It can also be used as a symbol to expose a “lack of pious knowledge for those who reject the divine message”<sup>380</sup>:

“As for those who disbelieve, their deeds are like a mirage upon a desert plain which a thirsty man supposes is water, till when he comes upon it, he does not find it to be anything, but finds God there.” (24:39)

This verse refers to the unbelievers, whose deeds, like a mirage, may give the impression of being good but ultimately remain void of any reward, as they exclude God.<sup>381</sup> Such deeds of the unbelievers are described in verse 24:30:

“like the darkness of a fathomless sea, covered by waves with waves above them and clouds above them- darkness, one above the other.” (24:30)

The waves, the ocean and the clouds symbolise three layers of darkness. These are often interpreted as being the darkness of one’s heart, one’s sight, and one’s hearing.

Although only indirectly mentioned in the Qur’ān, another story associated with the sacredness of water and its importance for the existence of human beings is that of Hajar and her son Ismail. Genesis 21 describes how Abraham left his second wife Hajar and his son Ismail in the desert, following God’s command. In order to find water for her son, Hajar ran frantically seven times between two hills known as Safā and Marwah until she found a source of water

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<sup>379</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 30

<sup>380</sup> Zargar, Cyrus Ali (2014): *Water*. In: Morrow John Andrew (Ed.): *Islamic images and ideas: essays on sacred symbolism*. North Carolina: McFarland&Company, 114

<sup>381</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 881

constructed by an angel. This story is recorded in the ahadīth, where Ibn Abbas<sup>382</sup> narrates the Prophet saying:

“When she reached the Marwah for the last time, she heard a voice and she asked herself to be quite and listened attentively...She saw an angel at the place of the Zam-Zam, digging the earth with his wing, till water flowed from that place.”<sup>383</sup>

This action, as commanded in the Qur’ān, is remembered every year by the pilgrims performing the Hajj by walking between the two hills:

“Truly Safā and Marwah are among the rituals of God; so, whosoever performs the hajj to the House, or makes the `umrah, there is no blame on him in going to and from between them.”

(2:158)

To this day it is customary for the pilgrims to drink the water from this well and to take the *Zam Zam* water back home for blessings, for the treatment of illnesses and for ritual purification. The ritual purification of believers through water is essential for the Muslim’s act of worship. Two central purification rites including the use of water are *wudu’* and *ghusl*. *Wudu’* is the ritual ablution of certain parts of the body before prayers.<sup>384</sup> In case of major ritual impurity caused by such occurrences as recent sexual intercourse, seminal discharge or menstruation, the practice of *ghusl* is performed. This includes the ablution of the entire body. The ablution with water symbolises and even actualises the purification of the soul. The water used for this purification despite of being material, it is the water from the sky, therefore the water of the spirit:

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<sup>382</sup> Bukhari Sahih: Volume 044, Book 055, Hadith 583. In: [www.alim.org/hadith/sahih-bukhari/3/47/2493/](http://www.alim.org/hadith/sahih-bukhari/3/47/2493/) (accessed on 08.12.2022)

<sup>383</sup> Husna Ahmad (2011): *Islam and Water. The Hajjar Story and Guide*. London: Global One 2015

<sup>384</sup> “Oh, you who believe! When you rise to perform the prayer, wash your faces, and your hands up to the elbows and wipe your heads and your feet up to the ankles.” (5:6)

“Behold, He covered you with sleepiness, security from Him, and sent down upon you water from the sky to purify you thereby, to remove the defilement of Satan from you, to fortify your hearts, and to make firm your steps thereby.” (8:11)

Some commentators see the “defilement of Satan” as the state of ritual impurity. This can be erased only through water, if water is available.<sup>385</sup> Today, many mosques, including those in Wales are implementing measures to conserve water during the ritual ablutions before prayer as one of their major sustainability interventions.

The importance of water in Islam is also reflected in the word *Sharīʿah* which originally meant “the place from which one descends to water.”<sup>386</sup> Before the advent of Islam, the *shirʿat al- maa* were the permits that gave the right to drink water in Arabia and the *Sharīʿah* was, in fact, a series of rules about water usage and conservation. Still today, references in the *Qurʿān* to water are the framework for the legal thought formulated in Islamic law. The *Sharīʿah* prohibits the monopoly and hoarding of water, its pollution and wasteful use. As a consequence, to take a simple example, Islamic law forbids urinating into stagnant water<sup>387</sup> and evacuating one’s bowels near water sources.<sup>388</sup>

According to Muhammad Abdel Haleem,<sup>389</sup> water in the *Qurʿān* is mentioned in relation to three themes: God’s guidance and power, God’s care for humanity, and resurrection. These are three fundamental topics in Islam and “employing water to prove them gives it deeper significance and explains the frequent reference to it in the *Qurʿān*... Thus in Islam refraining from monopolising water, wasting or polluting it is not merely a matter of being wise, civilised or showing good conduct as a citizen- it is, above that, an act of worship.”<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 485

<sup>386</sup> Dien, M. Izzi (2000): *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam*. Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press

<sup>387</sup> Haleem, Muhammad Abdel (1989): *Water in the Quran*. In *Islamic Quarterly*, 33(1)

<sup>388</sup> Faruqui, Naser (2001): *Islam and water management: Overview and principles*. In Faruqui Naser, Biswas Asit (eds.): *Water Management in Islam*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press

<sup>389</sup> Haleem, Muhammad Abdel (1989): *Water in the Quran*. In *Islamic Quarterly*, 33(1)

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*



### 3.2.5 Animals

When it comes to living sustainably, curbing the effect of climate change and reducing the carbon dioxide footprint, animal welfare and animal rights play a relevant role. Modern food industry creates approximately 13,7 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide every year, the equivalent amount of 26% of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. “These emissions”, so Poore and Nemeek,<sup>391</sup> “can fundamentally alter the species composition of natural ecosystems, reducing biodiversity and ecological resilience.” Between 35% and 40% of greenhouse gas emissions derive from animal farming,<sup>392</sup> which is a significant part of the food industry and, thus, responsible for a major share of air and water pollution, water shortage and loss of biodiversity, mainly through deforestation. Along with the environmental impact of animal farming, one has to question whether there exists an ethical way of slaughtering a sentient animal that does not want to die. According to a number of scientists, the majority of animals killed for food, including fish, experience types of emotions like pain and fear.<sup>393</sup> Before being slaughtered, over ninety percent of land-based farmed animals are kept in industrial animal farms where they face confinement in small cages, mutilations, forced artificial breeding, and chemical treatments with related health issues.<sup>394</sup> These are all forms of abuse of questionable ethical and moral standing.

Animal farming is not the only environmental problem related to animals. Deforestation, monocultures, climate change, illicit poaching and trafficking in wildlife are responsible for a

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<sup>391</sup> Poore J., Nemeck T. (2018): *Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers*. In: Science, 360 (6392), 987-992

<sup>392</sup> Gerber, P.J., Steinfeld, H., Henderson, B., Mottet, A., Opio, C., Dijkman, J., Falcucci, A. & Tempio, G. (2013): *Tackling climate change through livestock – A global assessment of emissions and mitigation opportunities*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). In: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3437e.pdf> (accessed on the 08.05.2020)

<sup>393</sup> Chandroo K., Duncan I., Moccia R. (2004): *Can fish suffer? Perspectives on sentience, pain, fear and stress*. In: Applied Animal Behaviour Science, 86(3), 225-250

<sup>394</sup> Reese, Jacy (2018): *The end of animal farming. How scientists, entrepreneurs, and activists are building an animal-free food system*. Boston: Beacon Press

significant loss of biodiversity and irreversible extinctions of animal species. Anthropogenic extinction concerns between 5-20% of species in different groups of organisms, with present rate of extinction being 100-1000 times faster than in pre – human epochs. These extinctions are likely to disrupt the sensitive ecosystems around the planet, their resilience and resistance to ecological changes, as well the environmental balance on earth.<sup>395</sup> One consequence of the loss of biodiversity which is particularly pertinent today, is the increased likelihood for the spreading of new diseases.<sup>396</sup>

An often-ignored aspect of industrial animal farming is its connection to social justice, one of the three pillars of sustainability. The increasing number of so-called climate change refugees is partly a consequence of industrialised animal farming and its contribution to environmental catastrophes such as droughts and floods which force people mainly from poorer countries to leave their homes. The production of meat can be linked to injustice to smaller -scale farms due to the increasing need of land and other agricultural resources or due to their exclusion from the industrial food distribution chains. Studies show that factory farms and slaughterhouses tend to employ a large number of workers from marginalised communities and vulnerable groups like migrants who are particularly vulnerable to exploitation.<sup>397</sup> A recent scientific study<sup>398</sup> conducted in the United States shows that workers at an US industrial slaughterhouse experienced a higher prevalence of serious psychological distress (SPD) compared to the general population. It is assumed that this result can be extrapolated to other industrialised countries. It quickly becomes clear that animal rights issues are very relevant to sustainability from both an environmental and an ethical perspective.

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<sup>395</sup> Madhu Rao, Trond Larsen (2010): *Ecological Consequences of Extinction*. In: *Lessons in Conservation*, 3, 25-53

<sup>396</sup> Terborgh, J., L. Lopez, P. Nunez, M. Rao, G. Shahabuddin, G. Orihuela, M. Riveros, R. Ascanio, G.H. Adler, T.D. Lambert, and L. Balbas (2001): *Ecological meltdown in predator-free forest fragments*. In: *Science* 294(5548): 1923-1926

<sup>397</sup> *For Social Justice. Our Diet is another Way We can speak up for Human Rights*. In: <https://eatingveg.org/why/social-justice/> (accessed on the 19/05/2020)

<sup>398</sup> Leibler JH, Janulewicz PA, Perry MJ (2017): *Prevalence of serious psychological distress among slaughterhouse workers at a United States beef packing plant*. In: *Work* 57(1):105-109. doi:10.3233/WOR-172543 (Accessed on the 19/05/2020)

The Qurʾān includes two hundred verses dealing with animals and six surahs are named after an animal: The Cow, the Cattle, the Bee, the Ant, the Spider, and the Elephant. The relationship between humans and animals is, indeed, an important topic in the Qurʾān. Additionally, the ahadīth give clear guidance on how humans should treat animals. According to Saidul Islam, who developed the concept of the Islamic Ecological Paradigm (IEP), an environmental paradigm rooted in the classical Islamic traditions from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, Islamic traditions significantly focused on animal welfare and animal moral standing based on Qurʾānic teachings.<sup>399</sup> Human beings are, according to the IEP, an equal part of the web of life and not above nature.<sup>400</sup>

### 3.2.6 View of animals in the Qurʾān and the human-animal relationship

According to the Qurʾān, God created the universe and every single element in it, from the atoms to complex life forms such as animals and human beings. God also created the natural order with its specific harmonies, balance, and proportions:

“He unto Whom belongs sovereignty over heavens and the earth..., and Who created everything, then measured it out with due measure.” (25:2)

Both anatomical form and etiological function are God’s work and function of divine grace:

“He said, “Our Lord is He Who gives everything its creation, then guides it.” (20:50)

From a Qurʾānic perspective, every aspect of creation has its own place and position, and nothing is created in vain. Accordingly, everything in the universe, including animals, is an *āyāt*, a sign of God from which humans can learn:

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<sup>399</sup> Islam Nazrul, Islam Saidul (2015): *Human-Animal Relationship: Understanding Animal Rights in the Islamic Ecological Paradigm*. In: Forthcoming in Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies.

<sup>400</sup> Md, Saidul Islam (2012): *Old Philosophy, New Movement: The Rise of the Islamic Ecological Paradigm in the Discourse of Environmentalism*. In: Nature and Culture, 7(1)

“And in your creation and in what He has scattered of animals are signs for a people who are certain.” (45:1)

The Qur'an repeatedly urges people to learn from animals as divine signs in order to deepen their faith. In fact, animals appear as teachers or mediums through which God teaches human beings. Sura al-Mā'idah tells the story of Cain and Abel and how God sent a crow to show Cain how to properly bury his brother's body (5:31). This story conveys that burial rites are thought by God using an animal. Also, “seeing the crow able to dispose of the other's crow's body causes Cain to realise his terrible moral state as well as his ignorance.”<sup>401</sup> This shows that animals can mirror psychological and moral states of humans, and thus facilitate a process of self-reflection and recognition. Animals and, thus nature, are the channels through which God communicates to humanity. They serve as a means of God's *tanẓīl* (sending down) of guidance to humanity. They are “the means through which...God made an entry into the flow of time.”<sup>402</sup>

Animals, as creations of God, have an inherent and intrinsic value of their own. God “*creates whatsoever He will*”, as stated in sūrah *al-Nūr* (24:45). This signifies that there is intentionality in the creation of everything.

Animals furthermore have their own relationship with the Creator in ways analogous to human beings:

“There is no creature that crawls upon the earth, not bird that flies upon its wings, but that they are communities like yourself. We have neglected nothing in the Book. And they shall be gathered unto their Lord in the end.” (6:38)

As stated in the above verse, animals build their own communities which, in Qur'ānic usage, denotes a specific religious community, the *ummah*. In other words, animals form their own

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<sup>401</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 291

<sup>402</sup> Haq, Nomanul (2001): *Islam*. In: Jamieson Dale (ed.): *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 112

*ummah*, a spiritual coherent community, and they will eventually return to God, as humans endeavour to do so through Islam.<sup>403</sup> This verse implies that animals have a religious awareness through revelations from God and that they are aware of His Oneness, compelling them to a perpetual praise and glorification. This is reinforced by verse 10:47 where the Qurʾān states that for every community on earth there is a messenger. Together with verse 6:38, it can be assumed that every animal *ummah* has received a message sent by God, just as all human communities.<sup>404</sup> Richard Foltz concludes from this verse that animals might even become prophets among themselves, challenging the anthropocentric notion across Abrahamic traditions.<sup>405</sup>

Verse 16:68-69 describes how God directly inspired the bees and placed a certain kind of knowledge into their hearts:

“And thy Lord revealed unto the bee, "Take up dwellings among the mountains and the trees and among that which they build. Then eat of every kind of fruits, and follow the ways of your Lord made easy. ”” (16:68-69)

Although some scholars interpret the word “revelation” regarding bees as an inborn instinct rather than as direct communication with God, other scholars such as the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century philosopher al-Rāzī, suggest the possibility that animals like the bees possess a form of intelligence, “including the ability to know God’s commands and prohibitions.”<sup>406</sup>

The Qurʾān thus strongly indicates that animals, or at least certain animals, have an intelligence and spiritual awareness together with the ability to feel pain and fear. Not only do these capacities provide the basis for a certain moral status of animals, they also provide an important

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<sup>403</sup> Robinson-Bertoni, Sarah: *All God’s Creatures Are Communities Like You (Quran 6:38). Precedents for Eco-balal Meat in Muslim Traditions*. In: <https://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780190456023.001.0001/oso-9780190456023-chapter-6> (accessed on the 14.05.2020)

<sup>404</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 352

<sup>405</sup> Foltz, C. Richard (2006): *This she-camel of God is a sign to you. Dimensions of Animal sin Islamic Tradition and Muslim Culture*. In: Waldau P., Patton W. (eds.): *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religions, Science, and Ethics*. New York: Columbia University Press

<sup>406</sup> Ibid. 675

argument for sustainability, animal welfare advocacy and the scope of human moral obligations. If animals are sentient and have a relationship with God, then they have the right to ethical treatment.

Several verses in the Qurʾān indicate that God is worshipped by all creatures on earth, including non-human animals, and in heaven by angels:

“The seven heavens, and the earth, and whoever is in them glorify Him. And there is no thing, save that it hymns His praise.” (17:44)<sup>407</sup>

A fundamental difference between human beings and animals, is that humans have free will and can decide not to worship God, whereas the rest of creation (except for the jinn) lives in utter submission to God’s will. In this sense, animals and all living creatures can be defined as Muslim, referring to beings who completely surrenders their will to the will of God.<sup>408</sup>

“And unto God prostrates whoever is in the heavens and on the earth, willingly or unwillingly”  
(13:15)

While animals do not have a choice but to surrender to divine will, humans, although created in the “most beautiful stature” meaning the physical posture but also the inner attitude, are at the same time in the position of being enticed by the call of evil and to disobey God’s will, falling even lower than any other creature on earth:

“Truly we created man in the most beautiful stature, then We cast him to the lowest of the low”  
(95:4-5)<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> See also: “Hast thou not considered that unto God prostrates whosoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, and the beasts, and many among mankind.” (22:18)

<sup>408</sup> Islam Nazrul, Islam Saidul (2015): *Human-Animal Relationship: Understanding Animal Rights in the Islamic Ecological Paradigm*. In: Forthcoming in Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies.

<sup>409</sup> See also: “We have indeed created for Hell many among jinn and men: they have hearts with which they understand not; they have eyes with which they see not; and they have ears with which they hear not. Such as there are like cattle. Nay, they are even further astray.” (7:179)

The prostration of all creation before God is mentioned in several verses (16:49-50; 34:10; 55:6) and refers not only to the physical act but primarily to the inner attitude of worship. Humans are not in the position of grasping the worship and language of creation as each entity has its own way to glorify:

“Though you don’t understand their praise” (17:44)

According to some commentators, the beating of the wings, as an example, is the bird’s prayer and their songs is their exaltation:<sup>410</sup>

“Hast thou not considered that God is glorified by whosoever is in the heavens and on the earth, and by the birds spreading their wings? Each indeed knows its prayer and its glorification”

(24:41)

Only a few people, like Solomon, were given the ability to understand the language of animals:

“Solomon inherited from David and said: O mankind, we have been thought the language of birds” (27:16)

The Arabic term *Mantiq al-Tair*, which literally means the birds’ language, was borrowed by the Persian sufi and poet Attar as the title for his well-known piece “The Conference of the Birds.” In Sufi thought, the language of the birds became an important symbol for a higher state of consciousness and for knowledge of the esoteric meaning of religion beyond its outward appearance.

Sura al-Naml, “the ants”, tells how Solomon gathered a host of jinn, men, and birds in the valley of the ants. One ant said: “O ants! Enter your dwellings, lest Solomon and his hosts crush you while they are unaware.” (27:18) Ants are *tayr*, or winged animals, pertaining thus to the “birds”. Therefore, some commentators believe that Solomon was able to communicate with them.

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<sup>410</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 882

Solomon, so in the next verse, laughed and smiled “because he marvelled at the ant’s anxiety and care and felt grateful to God for the privilege of being able to understand the ant’s concern.”<sup>411</sup>

In connection with this verse, another hadith is often mentioned:

“An ant bit a prophet, and he ordered the anthill burned. God revealed upon him, “Did you, because of a single ant bit you, destroy a community (ummah) from among the communities that hymn praises of Me? Why not a single ant?”<sup>412</sup>

Similarly, in a later verse the hoopoe talked to Salomon:

“But the Hoopoe tarried not long, and said: “I have comprehended that which thou hast not comprehended, and I bring you a sire report from Sheba” (27:22)

God gives animals the power to see what humans do not see, to hear what humans cannot hear and therefore to gain hidden knowledge unknown even to a prophet such as Solomon.

The use of language and the use of intelligence have often been viewed as interrelated. The absence of a recognisable verbal communication has led humans to believe that animals lack intelligence and feelings, and therefore do not deserve the same treatment given to other human beings.<sup>413</sup> The Qur’ān clearly recognises the ability of communication amongst animals and thus acknowledges their intellectual and emotional abilities. On a more philosophical note, it is interesting to note that the Qur’ān adopts the Arabic word *‘aql* to mean intelligence. The root word of *‘aql* is *‘aqala* from *‘iqāl*, a word that describes a cord used to tie a camel to the leg of another animal so they do not run away. *‘Aql* therefore signifies “to bind” or “to secure something.” Intelligence, in this sense, is understood as the ability to interconnect information, a quality inherent both in humans and non-human animals. According to Haque and Masri<sup>414</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 931

<sup>412</sup> Ibid.: 931

<sup>413</sup> Haque Nadeem, Al-Hafiz Basheer Ahmad Masri (2011): *The Principles of Animal Advocacy in Islam: Four Integrated Ecognitions*. In: *Society and Animals* 19, 279-290

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.



human intellect is characterised to a great extent by the cognitive flexibility and ability to connect and disconnect information and to recombine it in new ways. However, this implies also the capability “to disconnect what ought to be connected and to connect what ought not to be connected in nature.”<sup>415</sup> This ability enables humans to manipulate the environment for their own benefit, potentially harming and disrupting the inherent harmony of nature and obscuring the realisation of the interconnectedness of life, the core principle of ecology. As mentioned earlier, animals naturally submit to God’s will whereas humans have the freedom to disobey and disturb the balance in nature. The consequence of such behaviour is the fall of human beings below their true nature and below the nature of any non-human animal:

“Truly, We created man in the most beautiful stature, then We cast him to the lowest of the low” (95:4-5)<sup>416</sup>

Additionally, the Qur’ān acknowledges the existence of a spirit in non-human animals. In Islamic thought the human soul is composed of two parts, the *nafs*, or ego, which is able of self-reflection, and *ruh*, the breath of God or spirit:

“They ask thee about the Spirit. Say: The Spirit is from the Command of my Lord, and you have not been given knowledge, save a little.” (17:85)

Amongst Islamic scholars there is no general consensus on the exact nature of the “animal soul”, but based on the Qur’ān (6: 98;17:85; 2:164) it can be deduced that animal possess at least *ruh*, Spirit, through which God sustains creation.

In summary, the glorification of God by animals, their wisdom and their ability to communicate and to create communities, not only elevates animals to the same level as humans, but forms the basis of their moral standing and is often used as an argument for never disrespecting any

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<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

<sup>416</sup> See also: “Such as these are like cattle. Nay, they are even further astray” (7:179)

creature.<sup>417</sup> The Qurʾān recognises a conditional hierarchy, that elevates humans above animals as trustees of God, but only as long as humans do not alienate themselves from God and nature.<sup>418</sup>

### 3.2.7 Cattle

Animals are *neyamat* or blessings from God to humans as they provide food, such as milk, meat and eggs, clothing items and other benefits like transportation. This is particularly true for cattle, which are repeatedly mentioned in the Qurʾān and after which a whole sura, al-Anʾām, is named. In the Qurʾān, the word “cattle” is used for four types of grazing animals: sheep, goats, camels, and oxen. Thus, the variety of benefits humans derive from them, reaching from transportation, provision of milk and meat to the usage of their skin and other body parts for clothing and dwellings.

The Qurʾān mentions cattle and other animals not only in relation to their material value for humans, but also as spiritual teachers. In other words, God created animals so they would teach humans certain lessons:

“And truly in cattle there is a lesson for you: We give you to drink from that which is in their bellies, and in them you have many uses, and some of them you eat.” (23:21)

According to the founder of the Qadiri Sufi Order, Abduʿl Qadir Jilani (1077-1166), the deep contemplation of animals and their qualities could lead to the understanding of God’s qualities, of his power and wisdom. The Qurʾānic exegete, Ismail Haqqi (1652-1725), holds that “animals offer lessons that take the learner from ignorance to understanding and wisdom.”<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 707

<sup>418</sup> Haque Nadeem, Al-Hafiz Basheer Ahmad Masri (2011): *The Principles of Animal Advocacy in Islam: Four Integrated Ecognitions*. In: *Society and Animals* 19, 279-290

<sup>419</sup> Salih, Yucel (2018): *An Islamic Perspective of the Natural Environment and Animals: Said Nursi and his Renewalist Philosophy*. In: *International Journal of Islamic and Civilizational Studies* (01) 55-69

According to the Qur'ān, another important quality embodied in animals, and in cattle in particular, is *jamal* or beauty:

“And the cattle has He created for you, in which there is warmth and (other) uses, and whereof you eat. And in them there is beauty for you, when you bring them home, and when you take them out to pasture. And they bear your burdens to a land you would never reach, save with great hardship to yourselves. Truly your Lord is Kind, Merciful.” (16:5-7)

This verse indicates that animals and the natural world should be seen as a source of beauty and wonder from which humans benefit beyond their material needs.

### 3.2.8 Halāl meat

In Islamic tradition, halāl food is any nutrient which is lawful according to the Qur'ān, and should be the only food consumed by a believer.<sup>420</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the Qur'ān clearly states that the entire creation belongs to God and God alone, and humans have only a temporary stewardship of the natural world including animals. Humans are, therefore, accountable for any abuse or mistreatment towards animals. However, this premise does not lead to a prohibition of meat as food. As a matter of fact, vegetarianism in Islam is not compulsory, nor is the consumption of non-vegetarian food discouraged. Meat-eating is, in fact, mentioned in the Qur'ān as one of the heavenly pleasures:

“And We shall bestow upon them fruits and meat as they desire” (52:22)

However, the Qur'ān allows the consumption of meat only under certain conditions and prohibits the utilisation of certain animals:

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<sup>420</sup> “O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth that is lawful and good and do not follow the footsteps of Satan.” (2:168)

“Forbidden unto you are carrion and blood, the flesh of swine and that which has been offered to other than God, that which has been strangled or beaten to death, that which has been killed by falling or has been gored to death, that which has been mangled by beasts of prey...and that which is scarified on stone altars, and that which you allot with divining arrows; that is iniquity”

(5:3)

The prohibition posed on food in this verse is found in several other passages of the Qurʾān (2:173; 6:118-19,145; 16:115), but verse 5:3, being likely the last one on food prohibitions, is the most detailed one about the modes of death that make it unlawful to consume an animal.<sup>421</sup> This verse also mentions the ritual slaughtering of animals (“save that which you might purify”). Ritual slaughtering, according to Islamic laws, consists in slitting the animal’s throat, preferably the jugular vein, with a sharp knife in order to kill it quickly and with the least amount of pain. The blood must be completely drained out from the animals to be considered halāl. After slaughtering, one has to mention the name of God over the animal and face it in the direction of Mecca. The animal should be treated with kindness, the killing should not be preceded by violent struggle, the transportation to the slaughtering place must be done mercifully, and the animal should be well rested and well fed with their natural food. Additionally, “one should turn the face away from the animal when slaughtering it and remain aware that it is only with God’s permission that one may kill and eat the animal.”<sup>422</sup> All these practices aim to maintain a feeling of humbleness in the butcher, who has no power over the animal but is in the duty to maintain the animal’s comfort and dignity to the maximal possible extent.

In response to the ethical, environmental, social, and nutritional problems associated with industrial animal farming, some Muslims have forged an “eco-halāl movement” which is deeply rooted in the Islamic tradition, and it also exposes the ethical and social problems related to the

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<sup>421</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 274

<sup>422</sup> Ibid. 275

modern industrialised practice of slaughtering.<sup>423</sup> One example is the Harmony Farm founded by Muhsen Hassanin, one of my respondents, in Wales.<sup>424</sup> Choosing halāl meat is an important marker of religious identification in particular for Muslim minorities and has, thus, significant implications for sustainable living.

However, certain aspects of halāl slaughter remain problematic. One of these is stunning. Under current UK law, animals must be stunned before slaughter to reduce physical pain and psychological distress. Animals that have not been stunned feel pain during the process of cutting their necks and until they lose consciousness through blood loss. They experience a delay in the onset of unconsciousness (e.g. up to two minutes in cattle); and are subjected to unnecessary pain, suffering and distress. However, there is no exact legal requirement for the UK government to ensure that all animals are stunned before they are slaughtered. Muslim and Jewish communities are not required to stun their animals.<sup>425</sup> Under such legislation, 35% of animals slaughtered in the UK for halāl meat are not stunned beforehand. Together with animals under shechita rules for kosher food, the number of animals slaughtered without stunning will reach 24.5 million by 2022 in the UK alone.<sup>426</sup> This figure shows the immense suffering that millions of animals are forced to endure in order for certain religious communities to comply with their rules. This raises the question of the extent to which the Islamic requirements for humane treatment of animals can be applied within the modern slaughter system, where animals are slaughtered in front of each other under stressful conditions, regardless of whether they are slaughtered under halāl rules or non-halāl. This is an issue which will be the subject of further discussion in the final chapter.

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<sup>423</sup> Robinson-Bertoni, Sarah: *All God's Creatures Are Communities Like You (Quran 6:38). Precedents for Eco-halal Meat in Muslim Traditions*. In: <https://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780190456023.001.0001/oso-9780190456023-chapter-6> (accessed on the 14.05.2020)

<sup>424</sup> See Chapter 5

<sup>425</sup> *Religious Slaughter*. In: <https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/farm/slaughter/religiouslaughter#:~:text=Current%20UK%20law%20requires%20animals,throat%20without%20stunning%20them%20first.> (Accessed on 03.01.2024)

<sup>426</sup> Ibid.

### 3.2.9 Bees

About eighty percent of the pollination worldwide is performed by bees. This means that around seventy percent of the human food crops are bee pollinated.<sup>427</sup> From an anthropocentric perspective this data alone shows the importance of bees for human agriculture, for dietary stability and diversity, and for environmental sustainability in general.

In the last few decades bees have been subject to decline and extinction for a variety of partly unknown reasons. It is very likely, though, that pesticides used in agriculture, droughts, and habitat destruction – all environmental problems caused by humans- play an important role in bees' extinction.

Chapter 16 in the Qur'ān is called *al-Nahl*, meaning “the honey bee.” According to the Qur'ān commentary of Seyyed Nasr,<sup>428</sup> this sūrah is one of the most important regarding the spiritual significance of nature: “substantial parts of this sūrah are devoted to the wonders of the natural world and to rehearsing the specific blessings that God has bestowed on human beings through natural phenomena.”<sup>429</sup> Verses 68-69 of Sūrah Nahl describe how God directly inspired the bees with specific knowledge:

“And Thy Lord revealed unto the bee, “Take up dwellings among the mountains and the trees and among that which they build (and the trellises that people put up). Then eat every kind of fruit, and follow the ways of your Lord made easy.” A drink of diverse hue comes forth from their bellies wherein there is healing for mankind. Truly in that is a sign for people who reflect.”

(16:68-69)

This verse is consistent with other passages in the Qur'ān that describe the ability of animals to receive direct instruction from God and, thus, to have a conscious relationship with their creator.

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<sup>427</sup> *Save the bee. Be the solution to help to protect the bee in crisis.* In: <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/sustainable-agriculture/save-the-bees/> (accessed on the 22.05.2020)

<sup>428</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 655

<sup>429</sup> Ibid. 655

The Arabic word used for revelation in this verse is *wahy*, which is derived from a root verb often used in the Qurʾān to describe Divine Revelation, Divine communication or sacred inspiration, such as the revelation to Moses or the communication of Jesus to his apostles.<sup>430</sup> “Follow the ways your Lord made easy” probably is an ammunition to the bees to surrender to God’s wisdom and to follow the process God had taught them for making honey. Honey in Islam is considered to have healing properties and is recommended as a medicine in numerous ahādīth.<sup>431</sup> In Sufi symbolical language, a seeker of God should behave like the bee<sup>432</sup> in following God’s ways and become a source of spiritual healings for others the same way as honey is a medical remedy.<sup>433</sup> The Prophet Mohamed, indeed, brings the Qurʾān and honey allegorically together, with the Qurʾān being the source of spiritual healing for humanity (10:57) and the honey a healing source for the body, both brought into being through *wahy* or revelation: “Honey is a cure for every ailment, and the Qurʾān is the cure for that which lies within the breasts, so I commend you to have two cures: the Qurʾān and honey!”<sup>434</sup> Additionally, the importance of bees in Islam is reflected in the prohibition by the Prophet to kill bees and other animals that are mentioned favourably in the Qurʾān such as ants.<sup>435</sup>

According to Nabeel Musharraf,<sup>436</sup> another important aspect of the relationship between man and nature is revealed in the divine revelation to the bees: whatever in creation is available for human use has that status because God has given explicit permission for such use. In case of the bees, humans are permitted to harvest their honey and bees are commanded by God to produce

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<sup>430</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 675

<sup>431</sup> Kamarulzaidi Mohd Amiruddin, Yusoff M.Y. Zulkifli Mohd (2014): *Quranic Advocacy of Honey Consumption and its Application towards Memory Enhancement*. In: QURANICA, International Journal of Quranic Research, 6(19), 17-32

<sup>432</sup> From the hadīth Ahmad: “By the One in whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, the believer is like a bee which eats that which is pure and wholesome and lays that which is pure and wholesome. When it lands on something it does not break or ruin it.”

<sup>433</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 675

<sup>434</sup> Bukhari Sahih, Book 76, Hadīth 1. In: <https://sunnah.com/bukhari> (Accessed on 09.01.2024)

<sup>435</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 676

<sup>436</sup> Nabeek Musharraf, Muhammad: *Bee like the Bee*, In: [www.australianislamiclibrary.org](http://www.australianislamiclibrary.org) (accessed on the 26.05.2020)

the honey also for the benefit of people. In other words, the use of nature is a concession given by God to humans and not an intrinsic right.

### 3.2.10 Muslim Animal-Rights Movements and Modern Thinkers

After discussing the theoretical framework of animals' legacy in the Qur'ān, it is important to emphasise that there is no unified Muslim view on animals.<sup>437</sup> This is mainly due to the fact that Muslims identities and religious understandings are based on a combination of text hermeneutic and a multitude of cultural backgrounds. The vast majority of Muslims, in line with the Qur'ān, is in fact non-vegetarian and, according to some authors, not particularly aware of the cruelty routinely inflicted to animals in the food industry which is not compatible with the Islamic teachings on animal treatment.<sup>438</sup>

Yet, the awareness about industrialised animal farming and its consequences for the welfare of animals, have made it difficult for many Muslims to be sure that their meat is halāl, “especially now that even pig remains are often mixed with livestock feed.”<sup>439</sup> This is particularly true in the UK, where, with no defined production criteria in place, it can be challenging for Muslim consumers to assess whether the meat is halāl or not. In response to this situation, organisations such as the Halal Food Authority (HFA) or the Halal Monitoring Committee (HMC) have been established in the UK to supervise, inspect and certify halāl food production.<sup>440</sup>

The problem of halāl certification together with environmental concerns led in recent years to an increasing interest for the animal cause and animal rights giving birth to a number of Muslim

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<sup>437</sup> Foltz, C. Richard (2006): *This she-camel of God is a sign to you. Dimensions of Animal sin Islamic Tradition and Muslim Culture*. In: Waldau P., Patton W. (eds.): *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religions, Science, and Ethics*. New York: Columbia University Press

<sup>438</sup> Sira, Abdul Rahman (2017): *Religion and Animal Welfare- An Islamic Perspective*. In: *Animals* 7(11)

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.* 157

<sup>440</sup> Harvey, Ramon (2010): *Certification of Halal Meat in the UK. A project of the Azhar-Cambridge Programme 2010*. In: [https://www.academia.edu/1029422/Certification\\_of\\_Halal\\_Meat\\_in\\_the\\_UK\\_Report\\_published\\_by\\_Cambridge\\_Centre\\_of\\_Islamic\\_Studies](https://www.academia.edu/1029422/Certification_of_Halal_Meat_in_the_UK_Report_published_by_Cambridge_Centre_of_Islamic_Studies) (Accessed on 24.12.2022)



vegetarian or vegan animal rights movements. Richard Foltz, nonetheless, points out that most “Muslim vegetarians and animal rights activists appear in most cases first to have been converted to the cause, then sought support and justification for it within their Islamic tradition.”<sup>441</sup>

Two prominent contemporary voices for non-human animal rights are Basheer Ahmad Masri and Said Nursi.

Basheer Ahmad Masri (1914- 1984) was an Indian born Muslim scholar and activist whose concern for animals “evolved over decades from concern primarily for the rights of human beings, to embrace the wider spectrum of sentience in this planet.”<sup>442</sup> He authored the classic book “Animal Welfare in Islam”<sup>443</sup> and is widely known for his advocacy against animal experimentation based on Islamic beliefs. Concerning the use of animals in science, for Masri it is important to understand that “the same moral, ethical and legal codes should be applied to the treatment of animals as they are applied to humans.”<sup>444</sup> He based his statements on what the Qur’ān and the ahādīth say about animals and attempted to show that “Islam is replete with injunctions on animal welfare and kind treatment”<sup>445</sup> towards them.

Said Nursi was a contemporary Muslim scholar (1877-1960) whose view of animals was highly spiritual.<sup>446</sup> During his time of political exile, Nursi wrote extensively about animals, which he regarded as a manifestation of God’s names and as forms of Divine art. Considering animals this way was for Nursi a formula for realising Tawhid, or the Unity of God, manifested in the cooperation and interconnectedness of all living beings and their environments. Although not

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<sup>441</sup> Ibid. 155

<sup>442</sup> Haque, Nadeem (2017): *A Critical Analysis of Al-Hafiz B.A. Masri’s Perspective n Islam and Animal Experimentation*. In: *Quranicmos*, 1(1)

<sup>443</sup> Masri, Basheer Ahmed (2008): *Animal Welfare in Islam*. Markfield: Islamic Foundation

<sup>444</sup> Ibid.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid.

<sup>446</sup> Yucel, Salih (2018): *An Islamic Perspective of the Natural Environment and Animals: Said Nursi and his Renewalist Philosophy*. In: *International Journal of Islamic and Civilizational Studies* 1, 55-69

vegetarian himself, in many of his writings he advocated animal rights and the proper treatment of animals based on his Muslim beliefs.

In summary, Islam has a wide-ranging animal ethic, with precise instructions on how humans should treat animals. However, theory and practice often diverge. The extent to which these principles are followed in practice, particularly in Wales, is another matter, which will be discussed in more detail in the final chapter based on the findings.

### 3.2.11 Cleanliness and Prohibition of Wastefulness

Cleanliness is one of the basic aspects of Islam,<sup>447</sup> and the Qur'ān emphasises its importance in many verses in regard to personal hygiene, the living environment, and spiritual purity. Physical hygiene, as already mentioned in the section on water, is a requirement of ritual purity before prayer and is part of the daily observances of all practicing Muslims. The most used term for cleanliness, *tabara*, is mainly used in reference to ritual cleanliness. Other words are *nazafat* which expresses a higher degree of cleanliness, *tazkiya*, the abstention from carnal sins, *zarafat* or the delights and delicacy in purity, and *zakat* which describes the purification of one's possessions after giving alms.

According to a saying of the Prophet as rendered by Imam al-Bukhari: "cleanliness is half of faith." And the Qur'ān asserts in different verses that "God loves those who purify themselves." (2:222, 9:108). The original importance of cleanliness, says Remzi Kuşcular,<sup>448</sup> is to be found in nature: "cleansing is a task performed by a number of mechanisms, ranging from black holes to microorganisms that groom or clean. This shows that cleanliness is one of the foremost

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<sup>447</sup> Kuşcular, Remzi (2007): *Cleanliness in Islam. A comprehensive guide to Tabara*. New Jersey: The Light

<sup>448</sup> Ibid.

principles of nature.”<sup>449</sup> The Qur’ān also states that cleanliness is not a burden, but a means to receive God’s grace:

“God desires not to place a burden upon you, but He desires to purify you, and to complete His Blessing upon you.” (5:6)

The duty to observe cleanliness is not only restricted to the body and soul of the believer, but extends also to the place of worship:

“And We made a covenant with Abraham and Ishmael, 'Purify My House for those who circumambulate, those who make retreat, and those who bow and prostrate. ’” (2:125)

According to Nasr<sup>450</sup>, “purify” here refers to cleaning a place from idolatry and doubt, in other words, from false beliefs, whereas according to Kuşcular<sup>451</sup> it includes the cleanliness of the place of worship and, in a broader sense, of the entire environment. The prophet, in fact, was reported to have said: “the whole earth has been made for me as a mosque and as a means of purification.”<sup>452</sup> To declare the entire earth as a place of worship and as essentially pure and clean is to give “a very high and symbolic status” to the planet and, thus, to the environment. “It would be legitimate to say that if this declaration is allowed freely to generate an attitude toward the earth, this attitude cannot possibly be that of arrogance.”<sup>453</sup> Therefore *tabara* in Muslim tradition includes cleanliness of the environment, particularly of public spaces, places where people sit and rest, roads, shady spots and especially of water. The ahadīth contain detailed references to the importance of cleanliness in the environment which could be summarised with a saying reported by Imam Muslim: “There are some seventy branches of faith. The highest is to bear witness that *There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah*, the lowest is the

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<sup>449</sup> Ibid.

<sup>450</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 58

<sup>451</sup> Kuşcular, Remzi (2007): *Cleanliness in Islam. A comprehensive guide to Tabara*. New Jersey: The Light

<sup>452</sup> Al- Bukhārī Hadīth 810-70 in: Gürselin Ömer Furuk (2009): *An Islamic Understanding of the Environment. A Survey on Turkish University*. Masterthesis at University of Leiden

<sup>453</sup> Haq, Nomanul (2001): *Islam*. In: Jamieson Dale (ed.): *A companion to environmental philosophy*. Malden: Blackwell Publishers.

removal of harm or waste material from the road.” Closely linked to the concept of cleanliness within Islam is the prohibition of wasteful behaviour towards nature:

“O Children of Adam! Put on your adornment at every place of worship, and eat and drink, but be not prodigal. Truly He loves not the prodigal.” (7:31)

Sura 17 of the Qur’ān admonishes to avoid wastefulness even in charity and equates prodigality with evil.<sup>454</sup>

By elevating the condemnation of wastefulness to a Qur’ānic principle, Islam addresses one of the most crucial environmental problems, namely overconsumption and depletion of natural resources. One first step towards sustainability is, in fact, the reduction of generated waste. In the Qur’ān, the term for waste of resources, *israf*, is mentioned 23 times.<sup>455</sup> Etymologically *israf*, which can be translated as excessive behaviour, derives from the Arabic root of *sarafa* that means to be immoderate and exceed all limits.<sup>456</sup> The Qur’ān allows the consumption of all things within specific boundaries, which are *halāl* (lawful) and avoid *israf* (excess) and *tabdzīr* (wastefulness):

“Eat of that which God has provided you that is lawful and good, and reverence God, in Whom you are believers.” (5:88)

Furqani<sup>457</sup> recognises four Islamic moral principles which regulates consumption:

1) principle of permissibility, 2) principle of responsibility, 3) principle of balance, 4) principle of priority. Out of those principles, the principle of balance, which will be discussed later, is specifically relevant to avoid *israf*.

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<sup>454</sup> “Give unto the kinsman his right, and unto the indigent and the traveller, but do not squander wastefully. Truly the wasteful are the brethren of satans, and Satan is ungrateful to his Lord.” (17:26-27)

<sup>455</sup> Muttaqin, Zein (2018): *The Nature of Excessive Behaviours (Israf) in the Islamic Economic Framework*. Conference paper in: [www.gcbss.org](http://www.gcbss.org) (accessed on the 16.06.2020)

<sup>456</sup> Ibid.

<sup>457</sup> Furqani, H. (2014): *Consumption and morality: Principles and behavioural framework in Islamic economics*. In: Journal of King Abdulaziz University, Islamic Economics. 30. 173-183

Inherent in the idea of avoiding waste is the obligation of sharing one own's resources with our neighbours. According to one hadīth in al-Bukhari, the Prophet stated: "A believer is not the one who eats his fill when his neighbour is hungry."<sup>458</sup> Waste management, as this saying shows, is based on the principle of Islamic brotherhood of all humanity (*ukhūmwalh*) and reflects the idea of social justice, one of the pillars of sustainable living.

### 3.2.12 Balance (mīzān), Moderation (wasatiyyah) and Corruption (fasād)

One of the principal attitudes and values described in the Qur'ān that is fundamental to sustainability is *mīzān* or balance. All living systems exist in a state of ecological balance, which can be easily disrupted or changed through human intervention in the environment. *Mīzān* directly stems from the principle of oneness or *tawhīd* and describes the equilibrium of nature which has been created by Allah in a measured way.<sup>459</sup>

*Mīzān* literally means a device or scale to measure and weigh something. In other words, *mīzān* is the principle of balance upon which all creation operates and maintains itself in a stable state.<sup>460</sup>

In theological terms, it is a spiritual scale that weighs all individual deeds on the day of judgement:

"And the weighing on that Day is true. So those whose balance is heavy, it is they who shall prosper. And as for those whose balance is light; it is they who have ruined their souls by having treated Our signs wrongfully." (7:8-9)

The balance is heavy for those who have accumulated good deeds and will be respectively judged. The scale is here used as a metaphor, as God does not need an external source of

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<sup>458</sup> Ansari Abdul Haseeb, Parveen Jamal, Umar Oseni (2012): *Sustainable Development: Islamic Dimension with Special Reference to Conservation of the Environment*. In: *Advances in Natural and Applied Sciences*, 6(5): 607-619

<sup>459</sup> Rizk, Rihman R. (2014): *Islamic Environmental Ethics*. In: *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research*, 5(2)

<sup>460</sup> Khalid Fazlu, Thani Alikh (2007): *Teachers Guide Book for Islamic Environmental Education*. Birmingham: Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences.

information to judge a soul. But the use of this theme suggests, so Nasr, the existence of a “universal balance that is in the nature of all things in the cosmos, forming the basis of just and equitable human transactions in this world and according to which all human actions will be measured and recompensated in the next.”<sup>461</sup> The idea of a universal balance being the foundation of creation is based on surah Ar-Rahman, the Compassionate.<sup>462</sup> Allah's creation is described here as being in perfect balance:

“The Compassionate taught the Quran; created man; taught him speech. The sun and the moon are upon a reckoning. And the stars and the trees prostrate. Heaven He has raised and the Balance He has set, that you transgress not in the balance. So set right the weight and fall not short in the balance.” (55: 1-9)

This verse refers specifically to the balance of justice in human behaviour and reminds at the same time the believers, that humans have the innate ability to discern right from wrong, good from bad, conservation from destruction, moderation from greed, purity from pollution and to act accordingly.<sup>463</sup>

The balance in creation is maintained through justice and the prostration, or *sujud*, of the universe to God, which equivaes submission to the Will of the Creator. Only humans and jinns can disrupt the balance through their free will and reasoning:

“Have they not considered that whatsoever God has created casts its shadows to the right and to the left, prostrating to God while in a state of abject humility? And unto God prostrates whatever crawling creatures or angels are in the heavens or on the earth, and they do not wax arrogant.” (16:48-49)

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<sup>461</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 409

<sup>462</sup> *Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth*. In: <https://www.unep.org/al-mizan-covenant-earth> (Accessed on 16.01.2024)

<sup>463</sup> Khalid F., Thani A. (2007): *Teachers Guide Book for Islamic Environmental Education*. Birmingham: IFEES

Humans are extorted to walk humbly upon the earth, following the moral guidelines given by the Qur'ān:

“And walk not exultantly upon the earth; surely thou shalt not penetrate the earth, not reach the mountains in height” (17:37)

This verse reminds human beings of their weakness and their dependence on nature. Therefore, no one should “penetrate the earth, nor reach the mountains heights” but rather maintain an attitude of humbleness towards creation.

It is the duty of the believers to preserve the natural balance and harmony through social justice and submission to the commandments of God, as the Prophet Shu ‘ayb admonishes his people in al-A‘rāf:

“So, observe fully the measure and the balance and diminish not people’s goods, not work corruption upon the earth after it has been set aright. That is better for you, if you are believers.”

(7: 85)

The above verse addresses another important aspect widely thematised in the Qur'ān, namely *fasād* or corruption. From a Qur'ānic perspective, corruption on earth is not confined to only political crimes such as frauds, theft or illegal banking. According to Adane Mokrani, “there is a close relationship between human violence against one’s fellow human being and violence against nature in the widest sense.”<sup>464</sup> Therefore, the idea of corruption can be applied also to the devastation of the environment through deforestation, toxic waste, pesticides, and cutting trees.

All such practices are *fasād* and as such they involve a violation of Islamic universal values.<sup>465</sup>

Also, according to Siegel, environmental sustainability and corruption are antipodes: “corruption

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<sup>464</sup> Mokrani, Adnane (2017): *Islamic Ecological Reflections in Dialogue with Laudato si*” In: Islamochristiana 43, 115-122

<sup>465</sup> Dehlvi, Ghulam Rasool (2020): *What’s Eco -Jihad?* In: <https://clicktv.in/whats-eco-jihad-ghulam-rasool-dehlvi/?fbclid=IwAR3n7BC2ynrortT2dMnL9QWoaM6QvztnW970LNI-tFsJrRZCx5NWfiK18jw> (accessed on the 26.06.2020)

undermines...integrity, diverting valuable resources into the narrow coffers of greedy few. It also breaks the chain of responsiveness to market, evolutionary, environmental, or compassionate signals and replaces them with a rigid reordering that has only resource diversion as its sole purpose.”<sup>466</sup>

The Qur’ān affirms that, due to the selfish and corrupt behaviour of humans and the temptation of the devil, the natural balance and harmony of the natural environment has been negatively affected and God’s creation altered:

“Assuredly I shall take of Thy servants an appointed share, and surely I shall lead them astray, and arouse desire in them, I shall command them and they will slit the ears of cattle; I shall command them and they will alter God’s creation.” (4:118-119)

Here corruption includes environmental disorder, damage and the lack of coordination, which is a violation of the covenant with God. The corruption of the earth is penalised by God with the same type of affliction forced upon His creation:

“Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of that which men’s hand earned, that He may let them taste some of that which they have done, that haply they might return.” (30:41)<sup>467</sup>

In the Qur’ān, *fasād* is also connected with the destruction of land, the fertility of the soil, and livestock:

“And when he turns away, he endeavours the earth to work corruption therein, and to destroy tillage and offspring, but God loves not corruption.” (2:205)

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<sup>466</sup> Siegel Donald, Waldman David, Orlitzky Marc (2011): *Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Sustainability*. In: *Business and Sociology* 5(1): 6-27

<sup>467</sup> See also: “As for those who break God’s pact after accepting His covenant, and sever what God has commanded be joined, and work corruption upon the earth, it is they who shall have the curse, and theirs shall be the evil abode.” (13:25)



Although *fasād* is used in the context of land and sea (30:41), it can be assumed that it encompasses all ecological systems. Land and sea symbolically describe the whole of God's creation which extend between them (25:2).

According to Nasr<sup>468</sup>, the different forms of environmental harm that we are facing today are veritable manifestations of the qur'ānic concept of *fasād*. Therefore, Islamic teachings command the believers to avoid and prevent corruption by averting exploitation and degeneration of environmental resources like water or land. In fact, from a qur'ānic perspective, Muslims that engage in *fasād* are to be considered as sinners as they jeopardise current and future generations' ability to meet their own needs. In other words, they jeopardise sustainable living.

Corruption is rooted in the psychological make- up of humans, as described in the Qur'ān:

“Nay, verily, man oversteps all bounds, whenever he considers himself self-sufficient” (96:6-7)

Advancement in science and technology expanded the possibility of a greater manipulation of nature and seemingly self-sufficiency, however, increasing at the same time the potential for corruption.

Yasin Dutton<sup>469</sup> and Fazlun Khalid<sup>470</sup>, amongst other scholars, point out that the root of environmental destruction lies not only in corruption as a human predisposition but in the enforcement of an economy based on global banking and interests taking. Such economic system is thriving on loans, debts, and interest rates. The Arabic term for such practices is *ribā*, which is generally translated as “usury”. The Qur'ān condemns the practice of *ribā* vehemently in several passages, like in surah al-Baqarah:

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<sup>468</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (2007): *Islam, Science and Muslim Technology*. Kuala Lumpur: Book Trust

<sup>469</sup> Yasin, Dutton (1998): *Islamic Law and the Environment*. In: Conference on Islam and Ecology, Harvard Center for World Religions

<sup>470</sup> Khalid, Fazlun (2019): *Signs on the Earth. Islam, modernity, and the Climate Crisis*. Markfield: Kube Publishing

“Those who devour usury shall not rise except as one rises who is felled by the touch of Satan”

(2:275)

However, it has to be noted that there is no general agreement on the exact meaning of *ribā*. Some scholars such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr<sup>471</sup>, understand it as an unreasonably high rate of interests leading to an unequal share of wealth. In both cases – usury and the unequal share of wealth- *ribā* can be seen as a cause for social injustice and inequality, two aspects deeply interconnected with sustainability and environmental conservation.

The Qur’ān provides an antidote to the human predisposition to corruption, namely the application of balance (*mīzān*) and of another core principle of the Qur’ān, namely *wasatiyyah*, which is usually translated as “moderation” or “middle path”. According to Mohammad Hashim Kamali, “*mīzān* is mainly concerned with the celestial universe and the place of the planet Earth in the grand scheme of creation, while *wasatiyyah* teaches moderation in human conduct and the use of earth’s resources.”<sup>472</sup> These three principles together are the basis of social justice which is called *al-‘adalah al-ijtima’iyyah* in Islamic Law, and intended to provide equitable distribution of wealth, resources, and opportunities for every member of society. The most relevant mentioning of *wasatiyyah* is found in al-Baqarah:

“Thus, did We make you a middle community, that you may be witnesses for mankind and that the Messenger may be a witness for you.” (2:143)

According to a hadīth *wasat*, “middle”, as used in the above verse means “just”, and a middle community is a community of just people. With regard to faith, states Nasr, *wasat* stands here for the avoidance of extremes. It also means that Islam is a middle path between Judaism, which

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<sup>471</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 120

<sup>472</sup> Kamali, Mohammad Hashim (2017): *Islam and Sustainable Growth*. In: New Straits Times News, <https://www.nst.com.my/news/2017/01/204176/islam-and-sustainable-growth#:~:text=Mizan%20is%20mainly%20concerned%20with,use%20of%20the%20earth's%20resources>. (Accessed on the 25.06.2020)

emphasises the Law, and Christianity, which emphasises love and mercy. “Islam creates a balance between the two or between emphasis on the exoteric and the esoteric.”<sup>473</sup> However, the principle of *wasatiyyah* also applies to a lifestyle of moderation in general, including the physical, moral and spiritual aspects of life. On the physical plane, the principle of *wasatiyyah* encourages a moderate, non-extremist interaction with one’s fellow humans and with the environment, moderation in speech and in the use of resources.

The notion of being a “middle nation or community” has another philosophical implication relevant to the relationship of society to the environment. According to Fazlun Khalid<sup>474</sup>, the core of the Enlightenment was the separation between reason and revelation. As a consequence, the Divine was excluded from the scientific discourse. Within Islam there is an old tradition of debating the relevance of reason and revelation and their connection. This debate led to a mostly agreed view among Muslim philosophers, according to which reason and revelation are complementary elements, with reason “encouraging intellectual freedom while revelation >giving space< for contemplating the Divine order.”<sup>475</sup> In other words, the “middle path” advocated in Islam is a more holistic approach where faith and science not necessarily contradict but rather enrich each other. Applied to climate change and sustainability, this can be regarded as a certain propensity within Islam, to recognise the spiritual dimension of the environmental crisis and to respond accordingly by connecting the spiritual with the scientific. Indeed, many respondents called for closer cooperation between their own faith community and science as a positive contribution to a sustainable society.<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>473</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 64

<sup>474</sup> Khalid, Fazlun M. (2019): *Signs on the Earth. Islam, Modernity, and the Climate Crisis*. Markfield: Kube Publishing

<sup>475</sup> Ibid., 15

<sup>476</sup> See chapters 5 and 6

### 3.3 Environmental Principles in the Ahadith

The term *hadīth* (pl. *ahadīth*) literally means “report” and refers to the written account of the deeds, actions, and sayings of Prophet Muhammad or of one of his companions, the *sahāba*. In a more general sense, they can also denote the whole corpus or the genre of such traditions.<sup>477</sup> In order to be complete, a hadīth needs to be composed of two parts, the *matn*, or text corpus, and the *isnād*, literally “support”, i.e., the chain of transmission through which the content of the hadīth is passed from an eyewitness or an earlier authority. The *isnād* is an important element for the authentication of the hadīth. The ahadīth are a relevant source regarding the exegesis of the Qur’ān as they provide information about opinions or actions concerning issues of belief, ritual, law, jurisprudence, and ethics.<sup>478</sup> They also function as one of the material sources of Islamic law (*fiqh*).<sup>479</sup> As a source of guidance and documentation they also inform the *sunna*, or the body of traditional social and legal customs and practices passed on by a community from generation to generation based on the example of the Prophet and his companions. Although the Qur’ān is the ultimate authority “the *sunna* forms the first living commentary on what the Qur’ān means, and thus becomes equally the foundation for Muslim life.”<sup>480</sup> The Sunni majority, around maybe eighty percent of the Muslim worldwide, recognises six collections of reports of the deeds and words of the Prophet, whereas Shi’ites agree only on some of reports, and have collections of their own.<sup>481</sup>

The scriptural authority for the ahadīth comes from the Qur’ān itself, which exhorts believers to follow the example of the Prophet:

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<sup>477</sup> Guezzou, Makrane (2014): *A treasury of Hadīth. A commentary on Nawawī’s Forty Prophetic Traditions*. Leicestershire: Kube Publishing Ltd

<sup>478</sup> Ibid.

<sup>479</sup> Haq, Nomanul (2001): *Islam*. In: Jamieson Dale (ed.): *A companion to environmental philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

<sup>480</sup> Boker, John (Ed.) (1997): *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 929

<sup>481</sup> Foltz, Richard (2000): *Is There An Islamic Environmentalism?* In: *Environmental Ethics* 22(1): 63-72

“Indeed, you have in the messenger of God a beautiful example for those who hope for God and the Last Day, and remember God much.” (33:21) <sup>482</sup>

The Prophet’s words and actions provide the blueprint of a proper life as a Muslim. Most importantly, the Prophet gives the example for a righteous life also in matters not addressed directly in the Qur’ān. <sup>483</sup> According to a hadīth by Musnad Ahmad, the Prophet himself stated:

“I have not been sent except for the perfection of moral conduct”<sup>484</sup>

clearly indicating that his uttermost mission is to perfect the righteous behaviour of believers and humans in general. The Arabic word for moral conduct is *akblāq*. “*Akblāq* is a crucial factor in the teaching of Islam and it also plays a role in Islamic environmental ethics.”<sup>485</sup> Hence the importance of ahadīth.

Without going into the question of authentication and recognition of the ahadīth, which are received differently in the different branches of Islamic faith, it can nevertheless be said that they play an important normative influence in establishing an Islamic environmental ethic based on the Qur’ān: they reinforce or clarify certain generally accepted principles, illustrating them with examples from the sayings and life of the Prophet. They also contain numerous reports on “general status and meaning of nature, agriculture, livestock, water resources, birds, plants, and animals.”<sup>486</sup> According to Ozgur Koca, in fact, the ahadīth “show that the Prophet of Islam aimed to install a deep sense of environmental consciousness in the minds and hearts of his followers.”<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>482</sup> See also: “*Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it; and whatever he forbids to you, forgo, and reverence God.*” (59:7)

<sup>483</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (Ed.) (2017): *The Study Quran*. New York: Harper One, 1025

<sup>484</sup> Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Musnad Ahmad, hadīth nr. 8595. In: <https://sunnah.com/ahmad:950> (accessed on 13.01.2023)

<sup>485</sup> Kadikon, Sulaiman (2004): *Analysis of Islamic Environmental Ethic with special reference to Malaysia*. PhD dissertation at University of Wales Trinity Saint David

<sup>486</sup> Haq, Nomanul (2001): *Islam*. In: Jamieson Dale (ed.): *A companion to environmental philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 112

<sup>487</sup> Koca, Ozgur (2012): *The Prophet of Islam: Muhammad and Environmental Activism*. In: *Claremont Journal of Religion*, 1(2)

The following paragraph will give an overview of relevant ahadīth concerning nature, resources, and behaviours towards creation.

The most important principle in Islam that builds the foundations for environmental consciousness is *tawhid*, the Unity of God. This principle is a recurring theme in the ahadīth, so for example, in the collection Sahīh of al-Bukhārī and the saying of the Prophet:

“The earth has been created for me as a mosque and as a means of purification.” (810-70)

Here, the whole world as a unity is described as a place of purification, as a place where one can prostrate towards God anywhere. Another aspect of *tawhid* is the interconnectedness of all life, even of the “inanimate” forms like the mountain of Uhud, about which the Prophet said:

“It is a mountain that loves us and we love it.”<sup>488</sup>

This sacredness of the earth demands from humans the uttermost respect and a common moral responsibility for nature. Hadīth *al-safīna* sums up very clearly this collective planetary responsibility in the parable of the ship, already mentioned in the first chapter:

“The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: The parable of those who respect the limits of God and those who violate them is that of people who board a ship after casting lots, some of them residing in its upper deck and others in its lower deck. When those in the lower deck want water, they pass by the upper deck and say: If we tear a hole in the bottom of the ship, we will not harm those above us. If those in the upper deck let them do what they want, then they will all be destroyed together. If they restrain them, then they will all be saved together.”<sup>489</sup>

This parable shows that, in order to save the celestial ship, the planet earth, humans need to think and act interconnectedly and share responsibility for their actions. *Tawhid* has a communitarian component that arises from balance and harmony. This balance is “demonstrated

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<sup>488</sup> Bukhārī, 24:559. In: <https://amrayn.com/bukhari:559> (accessed on 13.01.2023)

<sup>489</sup> Bukhārī, 47:11. In: <https://quranx.com/Hadith/Bukhari/In-Book/Book-11/Hadith-47> (accessed on 13.01.2023)

by the interdependency of ecosystems<sup>490</sup> and is maintained through responsible actions. In his report, Bukhari transmitted a prayer offered by the prophet that reflects the Unity of the universe, which is the home, not only of humans, but of all other living beings as well:

“Praise you, O Lord of heavens and of earth! Praise you, O the Sustainer of heavens and earth, and all who are in it. You are the light of heavens and earth.”<sup>491</sup>

The responsibility arising from the principle of *tawhid* and the role of *khilafah* assumed by human beings is confirmed by Ahadīth:

“The world is beautiful and verdant, and verily God, be He exalted, has made you His stewards in it, and He sees how you acquit yourselves.”<sup>492</sup>

More so, humans will be accountable for their actions in the hereafter, as testified in numerous ahadīth:

“Whoever kills a sparrow or anything bigger than that without a just cause, Allah will hold him accountable on the Day of Judgment.”<sup>493</sup>

In a similar line, Abdullah ibn Umar narrated the saying of the Prophet:

“A woman entered the Hell Fire because of a cat which she tied, neither giving it food nor setting it free to eat from the vermin if the earth.”<sup>494</sup>

Proper care of the environment, on the other hand, leads to rewards in the hereafter:

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<sup>490</sup> Saniotis Arthur (2012): *Muslims and Ecology*. In: Contemporary Islam 6, 155-171

<sup>491</sup> Bukhārī, 97:15. In: <https://hadithcollection.com/sahihbukhari/sahih-bukhari-book-15-the-two-festivals-eids/sahih-bukhari-volume-002-book-015-hadith-number-097> (accessed on 13.01.2023)

<sup>492</sup> Muslim, 49:12. In: [https://myislam.org/surah-hujurat/ayat-12/#:~:text=\(49%3A12\)%20Believers%2C,You%20would%20surely%20detest%20it.](https://myislam.org/surah-hujurat/ayat-12/#:~:text=(49%3A12)%20Believers%2C,You%20would%20surely%20detest%20it.) (Accessed on 13.01.2023)

<sup>493</sup> An Nasa’ I, 43:86. In: <https://sunnah.com/nasai:4446> (accessed on 13.01.2023)

<sup>494</sup> Bukhārī, 54:535. In: <https://hadithcollection.com/sahihbukhari/sahih-bukhari-book-54-beginning-of-creation/sahih-bukhari-volume-004-book-054-hadith-number-535> (Accessed on 13.01.2023)

“If a Muslim plant a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, it is regarded as a charitable gift (sadaqah) for him”<sup>495</sup>

and

“Whoever plants a tree and diligently looks after it until it matures and bears fruit is rewarded.”<sup>496</sup>

The care of the earth is a duty that should be fulfilled until the last moment in the here and now:

“If in the Hour (the day of Resurrection) is about to be established and one of you was holding a palm shoot, let him take advantage of even one second before the Hour is established to plant it.”<sup>497</sup>

This saying shows that planting is not for the immediate material benefit but is done for the sake of goodness and preservation and in the hope of God’s reward in the hereafter. According to Ömer Faruk Gürlesin, planting a tree even in the face of doomsday has another implication. Modern scientists see in planting trees an effective method to curb climate change and global warming. Accordingly, says Gürlesin, this hadith points out, that planting trees could delay doomsday.<sup>498</sup>

This care for creation is reflected in the particular care for resources, even when they are used for rituals, and in a lifestyle that we would now call sustainable:

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<sup>495</sup> Bukhārī. 39:513. In: <https://hadithcollection.com/sahihbukhari/sahih-bukhari-book-39-agriculture/sahih-bukhari-volume-003-book-039-hadith-number-513> (Accessed on 13.01.2023)

<sup>496</sup> Musnad, 61:374

<sup>497</sup> Al-Albani, 27:479. In: <https://sunnah.com/adab/27/4> (Accessed on the 23.05.2023)

<sup>498</sup> Ömer, Faruk Gürlesin (2009): *An Islamic Understanding of the Environment, Theory and Practice. A Survey on Turkish University Students*. University of Leiden, in: [https://www.academia.edu/4238682/An-Islamic-Understanding-Of-The-Environment\\_-\\_Theory\\_and\\_Practice\\_-\\_A\\_Survey\\_on\\_Turkish\\_University\\_Students?email\\_work\\_card=view-paper](https://www.academia.edu/4238682/An-Islamic-Understanding-Of-The-Environment_-_Theory_and_Practice_-_A_Survey_on_Turkish_University_Students?email_work_card=view-paper) (accessed on the 03.03.2020)



“Abdullah ibn Amr ibn Al-ʿAas reported that the Prophet was passing by Saʿd ibn Abi Waqas while he was performing wudu. The Prophet asked Saʿd, 'Why this wastage?' Saʿd replied 'Is there wastage in wudu also?' The Prophet said, 'Yes, even if you are at a flowing river.’”<sup>499</sup>

The ahadīth often mention the importance of water in relation to purity and ritual ablutions. Bukhārī reports how the Prophet said: “Whoever performs ablution, and does so in a beautiful way, his sins shall leave his body, and will even leave from under his fingernails.” And in another passage, he said: “When a person washes his face, the sins of his eyes will be washed away, and when he washes his hands, the sins of what his hands have done will be washed away, and when he washes his feet, the sins of where he walked will be washed away, and with the last drop of water, he will be free of sin.”<sup>500</sup>

Among the various resources that need to be conserved, water conservation is of central importance in Islam. In addition to protecting a vital resource, water conservation is an aspect of social justice and equity, as reflected in the sayings of the Prophet. Accordingly, in Islam, water is a common resource and a basic right of all humanity. This is emphasised in the narration of the Musnad:

“Muslims have common share in three things: grass [pasture], water, and fire [fuel]”<sup>501</sup>

According to Bukhari, there are only three types of people to whom Allah will never talk to nor look at on the Day of Resurrection, amongst them are those:

“who with-holds his superfluous water. Allah will say to him, "Today I will with-hold My Grace from you as you with-held the superfluity of what you had not created.”<sup>502</sup>

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<sup>499</sup> Ahmad Shakir, 3292. In: <https://www.almosleh.com/ar/17772> (Accessed on 16.01.2023)

<sup>500</sup>Ibid.: 1439

<sup>501</sup> Musnad, 2:22. In: <https://sunnah.com/ahmad/5> (Accessed on 16.01.2023)

<sup>502</sup> Bukhārī, 40:557. In: <https://hadithcollection.com/sahihbukhari/sahih-bukhari-book-40-distribution-of-water/sahih-bukhari-volume-003-book-040-hadith-number-557> (Accessed on 16.01.2023)

Following the advice of the Prophet, one of his companions bought the well of Ruma and made it into a *waqf*, an endowment for a collective property where water could be used freely by the entire Muslim community.<sup>503</sup> The idea of making water available for public use is central in Islam. Excess water should never be withheld but made available to neighbours, cattle and other animals.<sup>504</sup> Urwa bin Az-Zubair narrates how the Prophet intervened into a quarrel between two men regarding the use of water:

“The Prophet said: 'O Zubair! Irrigate your land first and then let the water flow to the land of others’<sup>505</sup>

According to the prophetic tradition, denying water to animals or to let them die of thirst is an unlawful act, as shown by the following hadīth:

“While a man was walking on a road, he became very thirsty. Then he came across a well, got down into it, drank and then came out. Meanwhile he saw a dog panting and licking mud because of excessive thirst. The man said to himself: 'This dog is suffering from the same state of thirst as I did.' So, he went down the well (again) and filled his shoe and held it in his mouth and watered the dog. Allah thanked him for that deed and forgave him.”<sup>506</sup>

Another, already mentioned hadīth tells the story of a woman who was condemned to hellfire because she imprisoned a cat causing its starvation.<sup>507</sup> This hadīth forms the basis of the *fiqh*-legislation that makes the owner of an animal legally responsible for its wellbeing.<sup>508</sup>

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<sup>503</sup> Sunan Abu Dawood, 1:67. In: <https://sunnah.com/abudawud:67> (Accessed on 16.01.2023)

<sup>504</sup> Imam Malik, Muwatta, 13:13. In: <https://amrayn.com/malik/30/13> (Accessed on 16.01.2023)

<sup>505</sup> Bukhārī, 40:549. In: [https://www.sahih-bukhari.com/Pages/Bukhari\\_3\\_40.php](https://www.sahih-bukhari.com/Pages/Bukhari_3_40.php) (Accessed on 16.01.2023)

<sup>506</sup> Bukhārī, 73: 8. In: <https://quranx.com/Hadith/Bukhari/USC-MSA/Volume-8/Book-73/Hadith-229/> (Accessed 16.01.2023)

<sup>507</sup> Bukhārī, 54:535 In: <https://hadithcollection.com/sahihbukhari/sahih-bukhari-book-54-beginning-of-creation/sahih-bukhari-volume-004-book-054-hadith-number-535> (Accessed on 13.01.2023)

<sup>508</sup> Haq, Nomanul (2003): *Islam and Ecology: Toward Retrieval and Reconstruction*. In Foltz Richard (ed.): *Islam and Ecology*. A bestowed Trust. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 148

From the study of the ahadīth it can be concluded, that the welfare of all creations is considered by the Prophet as an integral part of an individual’s responsibility. This is particularly true for animal welfare, as many sayings testify. While authorising the slaughtering of animals for food or their killings for self-protection, the saying of the Prophet also imposes numerous restrictions on humans’ interactions with other species: the killing of animals for sport is outlawed, camels and donkeys should not be overloaded, and the slaughtering of animals should be done with kindness, consideration for the feelings of these animals, and with awe towards Allah, the Creator and Life-giver of all creatures. Hunting animals for sport will undoubtedly lead to punishment in the hereafter, as shown in these two sayings:

“The Prophet said, 'Whoever kills a sparrow or anything bigger than that without a just cause, Allah will hold him accountable on the Day of Judgment.' The listener asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, what is a just cause?' He replied, 'That he will kill it to eat, not simply to chop its head and then throw it away.’”<sup>509</sup>

“Sa'd bin Jubair said, 'While I was with Ibn Umar, we passed by a group of young men who had tied a hen and started shooting at it. When they saw Ibn Umar, they disappeared, leaving it. On that Ibn Umar said, 'Who has done this? The prophet cursed the one who did so.’”<sup>510</sup>

The ahadīth not only regulate the slaughtering of farm animals, what needs to be done according a set of rules in order to be halāl, they also regulate the slaughtering of hunted animals:

“When you set your dog (for the chase), mention the name of Allah, if he catches the game, and you reach it while it is still alive, cut its throat quickly so it won’t suffer”<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>509</sup> Nisai, Hakim, 43:46. In: <https://sunnah.com/nasai/44> (Accessed on 16.01.2023)

<sup>510</sup> Bukhārī, 7:423. In: <https://hadithcollection.com/sahihbukhari/sahih-bukhari-book-67-hunting-slaughtering/sahih-bukhari-volume-007-book-067-hadith-number-423> (Accessed 16.01.2023)

<sup>511</sup> Muslim, 21: 4732 In: <https://hadithcollection.com/sahihmuslim/sahih-muslim-book-21-games-and-animals-which-may-be-slaughtered/sahih-muslim-book-021-hadith-number-4732> (Accessed on 16.01.2023)

The regulations extend beyond the killing of animals to include their treatment: “The Prophet not only preached to the people to show kindness to one another but also to all living creatures. He forbade the practice of cutting tails and manes of horses, of branding animals at any soft sport, and of keeping horses saddled unnecessarily.”<sup>512</sup> The Prophet’s care for animals is also reported by Mālik ibn Anas, who describes how Muhammad wiped the mouth of his horses with his own clothing, saying:

“Last night I was rebuked (by God) for not looking after my horse”<sup>513</sup>

And in the same collection it is written how the Prophet explains:

“In the forehead of horses are tied up welfare and bliss until the Day of Resurrection.”<sup>514</sup>

The Prophet not only cared about the physical wellbeing of animals, but also about their feelings and state of mind, confirming that animals have souls or, at least, an inner life comparable to that of humans, as described by Sahih Muslim:

“We were on a journey with the Messenger of God, and he left us for a while. During his absence, we saw a bird called hummara with its two young and took the young ones. The mother of the birds was circling above us in the air, beating its wings in grief, when the Prophet came back and said, 'Who has hurt the feelings of this bird by taking its young? Return them to her.’”<sup>515</sup>

To safeguard the emotional state of animals, the Prophet also prohibited slaughtering an animal in front of another one in order to not “kill them twice” once physically and once emotionally.<sup>516</sup>

A saying by Mishkat al-Masabih shows, in fact, that the treatment of men and animals are equal:

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<sup>512</sup> Muslim, 21:107. In: <https://myislam.org/surah-al-anbiya/ayat-107/> (Accessed on 16.01.2023)

<sup>513</sup> Muwattā of Mālik ibn Anas, 21:993. In: <https://sunnah.com/malik/21> (Accessed on 16.01.2023)

<sup>514</sup> Ibid., 21:990

<sup>515</sup> Sahih Muslim. In: <https://sunnah.com/muslim> (Accessed on 16.01.2023)

<sup>516</sup> Bukhārī. In: <https://sunnah.com/bukhari> (Accessed on 16.01.2023)

“A good deed to a beast is as good as doing good to a human being; while an act of cruelty to a beast is as bad as an act of cruelty to a human being.”<sup>517</sup>

As already seen in the section on the Qur’ān, slaughtering an animal for food is subjected to strict rules, confirmed in this hadīth:

“The Prophet said, 'Allah has ordained kindness (and excellence) in everything. If the killing (of animals) is to be done, do it in the best manner, and when you slaughter, do it in the best manner by first sharpening the knife, and putting the animal at ease.’”<sup>518</sup>

Within the hadīth collections there are numerous other exceedingly detailed instructions concerning animal slaughtering. Essentially it has to be done “in a good way” and “with as little pain as possible.”<sup>519</sup>

Another important aspect of sustainability mentioned in the ahadīth is that of conservation. After emigrating to Medina and surveying the natural resources of the region, the Prophet set aside an entire area of one mile by six miles as a *himā* for horses used in war.<sup>520</sup> *Himā* is a sanctuary, in Arabic, it literally means “a protected place”<sup>521</sup> and is possibly the oldest form of conservation in the world. <sup>522</sup>In pre-Islamic era such places could be denied public access and the chief of a community had the right to declare a whole *himā* as a place for his personal use.

According to a hadīth by Bukhārī, with the advent of Islam the declaration of a place as *himā* for private use was forbidden and allowed only to “Allah and His Messenger.”<sup>523</sup> Thus we read in the Qur’ān:

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<sup>517</sup> Mishkāt al-Masabih. In: <https://sunnah.com/mishkat> (Accessed on 16.01.2023)

<sup>518</sup> Muslim, 34:84. In: <https://sunnah.com/muslim:34> (Accessed on 16.01.2023)

<sup>519</sup> Mishkāt al-Masabih. In: <https://sunnah.com/mishkat> (Accessed on 16.01.2023)

<sup>520</sup> Dutton, Yassin (1992): *Natural Resources in Islam*. In: Khalid Fazlun, O’Brien Joanne (Eds.): *Islam and Ecology*. London: Cassell Publishers

<sup>521</sup> Ibrahim Irini, Khor Poy Hua (2013): *Hima as “Living Sanctuaries”: An approach to wetlands conservation from the perspective of Shari’a law*. In: *Procedia- Social and Behavioral Sciences* 105, 476-483

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.* 477

<sup>523</sup> Bukhārī 42:18. In: <https://sunnah.com/bukhari:2370> (Accessed on 16.01.2023)

“O my people! This she-camel of God is a sign unto you. Leave her graze freely on God’s earth, and cause her no harm, lest you be seized by punishment nigh.” (11:64)

Prophet Muhammad designed his first *himā* around Medina with the purpose of protecting the vegetation, water sources and the environment, making it *haram*, or forbidden, to use this space for individual gain:

“O people! Beware! Every king has a Hima and the Hima of Allah on earth is His illegal things. Beware! There is a piece of flesh in the body if it becomes good, the whole body becomes good, but if it gets spoiled, the whole body gets spoiled and that is the heart.”<sup>524</sup>

According to Islamic law, there are four conditions for creating a *himā*:

1) it should be created as a solution to a public need. The *himā* should not be governed by the greed of some powerful individuals, but should be an act *pro bono*, one for the benefit of the public<sup>525</sup> 2) its establishment should not create harm, the area declared as *himā* should not be too large 3) the chosen place should be without buildings or farms, and it should not be cultivated for financial gains 4) a *himā* should protect public interests. Its overriding aim is the economic and environmental benefit of the people. By following these rules, the Shari’ a enables human community to use ecosystems while preserving their resources. However, as the above-mentioned points already indicate, the principle of *himā* is not only concerned with ecological issues, but also with social justice and fairness, making it a truly sustainable concept, as this hadīth shows:

“Umar ibn al-Khattāb said to his freedman...whom he had placed in charge of *himā*, 'Beware of the cry of the oppressed for it is answered. Do admit to *himā* the owners of small herds of camel and sheep...By God! This is their land of which they have fought in pre-Islamic times and which

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<sup>524</sup> Bukhārī, 1:49. In: <https://www.alim.org/hadith/sahih-bukhari/1/2/49/> (Accessed on 16.01.2023)

<sup>525</sup> Haq, Nomanul (2003): *Islam and Ecology: Toward Retrieval and Reconstruction*. In Foltz Richard (ed.): *Islam and Ecology*. A bestowed Trust. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 144

has included in their terms when they became Muslims. They would certainly feel that I am an adversary (for having declared their land *himā*)- but, indeed, had it not been for the cattle to be used in the cause of God, I would never make part of people's land *himā*"<sup>526</sup>

A concept similar to *himā* is *harām* or *harīm*, a designation for a sacred enclave, or territory set apart for purposes of pilgrimage, and where certain practices, such as hunting, tree felling, and trading are prohibited.<sup>527</sup> The most important example of a *harām* place is Mecca, which was decreed a sanctuary by God Himself.<sup>528</sup> *Harām* zones are often situated around water sources, such as wells, natural springs or underground water or on so called *mawāt*, or wasteland. Such zones are established to prevent the damage of water resources, and to facilitate their management.<sup>529</sup> As already mentioned, water is considered both in the Qur'ān as in the ahadīth as one of the most important resources created by God, resources that must be protected and distributed equally to all. "This egalitarian ethical principle yields far reaching ecological consequences" so Nomanul Haq, "by virtue of this principle, no living individual, and this includes animals, can be deprived of water if it is available, likewise no piece of cultivable land, irrespective of its ownership, can be left without irrigation if water resources have the capacity."<sup>530</sup>

There are many more ahadīth concerning environmental issues. This short overview serves the purpose of showing that the sayings of the Prophet support and enhance the environmental Qur'ānic environmental principles and illustrates them with detailed accounts and stories, enriching Islamic material relevant to the question of the environment and ecology.

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<sup>526</sup> Muwattā' of Mālik ibn Anas, 716:95. In: Rahimuddin Muhammad (1980): *Muwatta' Imam Malik*. Lahore: Ashraf

<sup>527</sup> Bowker, John (Ed.) (1997): *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 408

<sup>528</sup> Haq, Nomanul (2003): *Islam and Ecology: Toward Retrieval and Reconstruction*. In Foltz Richard (ed.): *Islam and Ecology*. A bestowed Trust. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 144

<sup>529</sup> Ibid. 145

<sup>530</sup> Ibid. 146

### 3.4 Excursus: Environmental Principles and Sufism (tasawwuf)

In Sufism, nature is an essential source of spiritual insight and mystical experience. Although the knowledge of Sufism is not essential for the understanding of Islamic environmental ethics, a short section on this topic is included here because some of my respondents identified as Sufi or are Sufi-inspired activists. This section briefly elucidates some Sufi principles about nature and their potential role in the debate on climate change and environment.

Sufism is defined as the mystical side of Islam, or as the tradition within Islam that focused on the inner search for divine love and knowledge through direct experience of God.<sup>531</sup> The Arabic etymology of Sufism is Tasawwuf, a word which may derive from the characteristic robe worn by early Sufis and made out of wool (*suf* in Arabic). Other scholars see the origin of the word “Sufis” in the Greek “Sophos” for “wise person” others see it in ahl al- suffa, meaning “sitting in the mosque.”<sup>532</sup> None of those definitions is consistently accepted by all mainstream scholars. But not only the etymological origin of the word Sufi is difficult to define. Although "Sufism" is treated as a single phenomenon and tradition, in reality, it is made up of many different systems, schools of thought, and ramifications, the so-called *tariqa*. They can significantly differ from each other in terms of teachings and practices.

All *tariqas* claim a lineage going back to a Shaykh and through him to the “companions of the Prophet and to Muhammad himself.”<sup>533</sup> Presumably originating during the lifetime of Muhammad, Sufi groups established themselves in different places and regions, absorbing and integrating with each place different characteristics. The early Sufis were probably inspired by the simplicity of the lifestyle of the Syrian Christian monasteries.<sup>534</sup> From the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards, Kashmiri Sufism, to draw another example, was inspired by Hindu asceticism and founded a new

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<sup>531</sup> Bowker, John (Ed.) (1997): *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

<sup>532</sup> Ibid.

<sup>533</sup> Schimmel, Annemarie (1975): *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press

<sup>534</sup> Bowker, John (Ed.) (1997): 925



order called “Rishis” from the Sanskrit word Ṛṣi (ऋषि), meaning enlightened sage or “singer of sacred songs.”<sup>535</sup>

The appreciation of the spiritual importance of nature is deeply rooted in the Sufi tradition. The 9<sup>th</sup>-century Sufi mystic, Ali al-Khawwas, who Pope Francis quoted in his “environmental” encyclical *Laudato si’*,<sup>536</sup> stated: “The initiate will capture what is being said when the wind blows, the trees sway, water flows. Flies buzz, doors creak, birds sing, or in the sound of stirring flute, the sighs of the sick, the groans of the afflicted.”<sup>537</sup> From some of the Sufi perspectives, the Universe enfolds within God, who, although transcendent, permeates his creation. Nature is thus a manifestation of God. In his doctrine known as *Wahdat al-Wujud* (Oneness of Being), the 13<sup>th</sup>-century scholar and Sufi teacher Ibn ‘Arabi points out that the physical world, including humanity and nature, is nothing other than theophanies of God’s name.<sup>538</sup>

Another influential Sufi was the Muslim eclectic Shihab al-Din Yahya Suhrawardi. Born in Iran in 1154, Suhrawardi founded his school of philosophy and was probably executed in 1191 because of his unorthodox teachings in which he supposedly integrated Egyptian hermetic thoughts with Zoroastrian, pre-Socratic, Platonic and Neoplatonic ideas.<sup>539</sup> “Suhrawardi’s unification of Neoplatonism and Mazdeism finds expression in the conception of an animate universe”<sup>540</sup> where everything is conceived as being the manifestation of the light of God. The concept of an animate universe and his illuminationist philosophy play an important role in the

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<sup>535</sup> Bowker, John (Ed.) (1997): 926

<sup>536</sup> *Encyclical letter Laudato si’ of the Holy Father Francis on care of our common home* (2015), [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html) (accessed on the 10.01.2020)

<sup>537</sup> *Meet the Muslim Mystic Pope Francis Cited in His Encyclical*. In: <https://time.com/3927357/pope-francis-ali-al-khawwas/> (accessed on 10.01.2010)

<sup>538</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (1996): *Religion and the Order of Nature. The 1994 Cadbury lectures at the University of Birmingham*. New York: Oxford University Press

<sup>539</sup> Khan, Pir Zia Inayat (2016): *Persian and Indian Visions of the living Earth*. In: Vaughan-Lee, Llewellyn (Ed.): *Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of the Earth*. Point Reyes: Golden Sufi Center

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*: 221

new age world<sup>541</sup> as well as in modern spiritual ecology movements. Through the integration of the Neoplatonic concept of the "chain of beings" in which all creation is a successive effluence from the original Supreme being, or in Suhrawardi's words the Supreme Light of Lights (Nur al-Anwar), Suhrawardi builds a bridge between the transcendental God and Nature by showing, that all manifestations on earth have an underpinning, an archetype in the world of pure light.<sup>542</sup> Suhrawardi's universe is inherently alive and sacred.

Amongst Sufis in general, the doctrine of the two-fold Qur'ān was widely accepted. In this nature itself comprises the formative Qur'ān (*al-Qur'an al-Takwini*), the primordial revelation of God to man, while the Noted/Written Qur'ān (*al-Qur'an al-Tadwini*) is its mirror and key. By meditating upon the Arabic verses of the written Qur'ān, humans come to understand and participate in the cosmic Qur'ān, which is none other than nature itself.<sup>543</sup>

Almost a contemporary of Suhrawardi, the Persian philosopher and influential Sufi thinker, Sadr al-Din Qunawi (1207-1274), expounded the etymological connection between the Arabic word for womb "Rahim" and of God's name al-Rahmaan, "the most-Merciful", which has also been extensively explored in both ahādīth and exegetical literature. Quwani associates the feminine womb with God's essence of mercy, thus characterising nature as the "womb" of God. For Quwani, cutting oneself from nature is equivalent to cutting oneself from God.<sup>544</sup>

According to Quadir,<sup>545</sup> the Sufi path can offer a significant contribution to the environmental sustainability movement, mainly in three significant ways: Sufism regards nature as a reminder of God's presence, which "talks" to humans through visible signs (ayat). Furthermore, the Sufi path

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<sup>541</sup> Niksirat, Abdollah (2016): *Suhrawardi: A Philosopher Who Must Be Re-Known!* In: Journal of History Culture and Art Research. Vol. 5, No. 4, 686-694

<sup>542</sup> Khan, Pir Zia Inayat (2016): *Persian and Indian Visions of the living Earth*. In: Vaughan-Lee, Llewellyn (Ed.): *Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of the Earth*. Point Reyes: Golden Sufi Center, 221

<sup>543</sup> Foltz, Richard et.al (2007): *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*. Cambridge: International Society for Science and Religion.

<sup>544</sup> Murata, Sachiko (2010): *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relationship in Islamic thought*. Albany: State University of New York Press

<sup>545</sup> Quadir, Tarik Masud (2018): *Islam and Sustainability. The norms and the hindrances*. In: Caradonna, Jeremy (Ed.): *Routledge Handbook of the History of Sustainability*. London: Routledge, 125

encourages the cultivation of qualities such as contentment, simplicity, and the spirit of charity-qualities that are diametrically opposed to consumerism, greed, and wastage, which are widely recognised as culprits of the current environmental crisis. Finally, Sufism is a school of wisdom with specifically designed methods for direct spiritual experience. At the level of the heart, these provide tangible justification for the Islamic practice of environmental sustainability.

As with Islamic environmental ethics, there is a discrepancy between theory and practice in Sufi ecological principles. A separate study is needed to assess the real influence of Sufism on green activism and to evaluate the degree of implementation of Sufi ecological teachings in daily life.

## CHAPTER 4 - METHODS

### 4.1 Aims and objectives

According to Claudia Willms, “Eco-Islam is often discussed from a theological perspective, but there are hardly any studies on the activist's practices, their experiences, and reasoning.”<sup>546</sup> In other words, there is a lack of discussion about how theological beliefs about nature are implemented and put into action. Therefore, as well as providing a comprehensive and in-depth description of Islamic environmental principles, the aim of this dissertation is to analyse and describe how such principles are being translated into concrete action through the agency of Muslims living in Wales. By doing this, I hope to provide insights into how – generally speaking – religions contribute to the environmental discourse. More specifically, I aim to outline the contributions towards sustainability provided by Muslim communities within Wales. I also hope to evaluate the challenges and problems that faith-based environmentalism can face, focusing on specific challenges Muslims face. The results will help to develop policy and social guidelines to support sustainable development in Wales, and to highlight the social challenges and difficulties of different kinds faced by Muslim communities. This could ultimately contribute to a better understanding of minorities and marginalised communities in their efforts to mitigate climate change and prevent environmental injustice. Understanding such social dynamics is fundamental for the integration and inclusion of any minority. Additionally, knowledge about Islamic environmental principles is an essential tool in interfaith dialogue and environmentalism, a branch of humanities becoming increasingly important, both on a global and a grassroots level. This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section is a detailed description of the research design, including the research philosophy, research type, and research strategy. The second section discusses the limitations but also the advantages of the chosen methodology.

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<sup>546</sup> Willms, Claudia (2021): *A cultural analysis of eco-Islam: How young German Muslims live religion through environmental activism*. In: HTS Theologies Studies/Theological Studies 77(2), a6734. <https://doi.org/104102/hts.v77i2.6734> (accessed on 13.02.2022)

## 4.2 Research Design

The methodology chosen for this research is qualitative research using semi-structured interviews with relevant respondents, as will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Using Saunder's Research Onion, the different levels of research will be discussed, beginning with research philosophies and then moving to research approach, methodological choice, strategies, and finally, the more practical aspects such as time horizon and used techniques for data collection and analysis.

## 4.3 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy deals with the ontological question of what can be known and how reality is perceived. It poses the epistemological question of how knowledge about a defined phenomenon or subject is created. The topic of research philosophy is relevant because it forms the basis of ontology- the nature of reality-, epistemology - how knowledge is gained- and axiology- values, beliefs, and ethics of the research.<sup>547</sup> In other words, how the researcher perceives the world will- probably more implicitly than explicitly- affect how the research is conducted. Research philosophies could also be defined as “epistemological variations” or “the spectrum of diverse ways of knowing and making meaning of the world.”<sup>548</sup>

In social science, five types of research philosophy are mainly distinguished: from a historical point of view, the two classical research philosophies of positivism and interpretivism, and three relatively recent streams, namely constructivism, pragmatism, and critical realism.<sup>549</sup>

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<sup>547</sup> Melnikovas, Aleksandras (2018): *Towards an Explicit Research Methodology: Adapting Research Onion Model for Future Studies*. In: Journal of Future Studies, 33

<sup>548</sup> Bazeley, Pat (2021): *Qualitative Data Analysis. Practical Strategies*. London: SAGE, 30

<sup>549</sup> Mingers, J. (2006): *Realising System Thinking: Knowledge and Action in Management Science*. New York: Springer

Positivism assumes that an objective reality exists independently from the observer and can be objectively described using scientific methods. In social sciences, positivism aims to generate general laws about a phenomenon by operating direct observation by detached observers.<sup>550</sup> In post-positivism, data are still gained through objective observation. However, there is the recognition that observations can be affected by the perspective of the researcher and his/her theoretical understanding.

Interpretivism as research philosophy includes the influence of the researcher as a social actor on the outcome based on the principle that “the researcher performs a specific role in observing the social world.”<sup>551</sup> Interpretivism can be viewed as a critical response to positivism. Accordingly, this philosophy favours qualitative methods over quantitative ones. The most significant disadvantage of interpretivist studies is that primary data cannot be generalised due to the strong impact of the personal view and values of the researcher. According to interpretivism, the research outcome largely depends on the researcher's interests. The outcome of the research aims to contribute to the understanding of a social phenomenon. However, it has only a weak predictive value.<sup>552</sup>

Constructivism is based on the premise that “knowledge is constructed through discourse in the context of individual histories and social interaction.”<sup>553</sup> Social reality is, therefore, relative to the individuals involved in a particular context and can be seen as “intersubjective construction.”<sup>554</sup>

Qualitative research using constructivism as research philosophy will try to discover how participants construct meanings, for example, through language.

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<sup>550</sup> Bazeley, Pat (2021): *Qualitative Data Analysis. Practical Strategies*. London: SAGE, 32

<sup>551</sup> Žukauska P., Vveinhardt J., Andriukaitiene R. (2017): *Philosophy and Paradigm of Scientific Research*. In: Žukauska Pranas (ed.): *Management Culture and Corporate Social Responsibility*. IntechOpen (ebook)

<sup>552</sup> Ibid.

<sup>553</sup> Schwandt, T. A. (2000): *Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social constructivism*. In: Denzin N., Lincoln Y. (Eds.): *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousands Oaks: SAGE, 189

<sup>554</sup> Bazeley, Pat (2021): *Qualitative Data Analysis. Practical Strategies*. London: SAGE, 32

Another research philosophy, which has extensive overlap with constructivism, is pragmatism. Historically, pragmatic research philosophy was developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a “philosophical movement that focused on the practical consequences of social reality.”<sup>555</sup> The basic assumption of pragmatic research philosophy is that it is possible to adapt both positivist and interpretivist approaches according to what works best for a particular research question.<sup>556</sup> In fact, research based on pragmatism as philosophy will focus on “individual decision makers within a real-world situation.”<sup>557</sup> Reality is constructed through the transaction with the world as a whole- rather than with distinct aspects- and over an extended period. The research question is therefore viewed in its broadest context. Pragmatic studies often draw upon mixed methods, both qualitative and quantitative, and their findings often “results in policy suggestions, new environmental initiatives, or social change.”<sup>558</sup> A core principle of pragmatism is that research should be based on the desire to “produce useful and actionable knowledge, solve existential problems or re-determine situations, drawn from the examination of effective habits or ways of acting.”<sup>559</sup>

Critical realism focuses on understanding and investigating physical, mental, and social causal mechanisms that generate a particular event.<sup>560</sup> According to this philosophy, there is an actual reality independent from human perceptions, theories, and constructions. However, this reality cannot be observed directly. The unobservable reality is the underlying cause of observable events, and the social world can be understood only if the underlying structures that cause the

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<sup>555</sup> Ormerod, R. (2006): *The history and ideas of pragmatism*. In: Journal of the Operational Research Society 57: 892-909

<sup>556</sup> Melnikovas, Aleksandras (2018): *Towards an Explicit Research Methodology: Adapting Research Onion Model for Future Studies*. In: Journal of Future Studies, 36

<sup>557</sup> Salkind, Neil J. (ed.) (2010): *Pragmatic Study*. In: Encyclopedia of Research Design, SAGE, <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412961288> (accessed on 15.02.20022)

<sup>558</sup> Ibid.

<sup>559</sup> Corbin J., Strauss A. (2008): *Basics of Qualitative Research Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. Los Angeles: SAGE

<sup>560</sup> Danemark B., Ekström M., Jakobsen L., Karlsson J. C. (2002): *Exploring society: Critical realism in the social sciences*. London: Routledge.

events are understood. Knowledge is, therefore, obtained by discovering “generative mechanisms.”<sup>561</sup>

This research is based on a pragmatic research philosophy. Although pragmatism often uses mixed methods, and in this case only semi-structured interviews were used as a qualitative method, this research philosophy best describes my problem-oriented approach. According to pragmatism, the research question is the most critical determinant of the research philosophy. It combines the positivist approach, which believes in an objective and observable world of phenomena, and interpretivism, which considers the researcher's influence and perspective on the outcome and interpretation of data. Pragmatism seems the best research philosophy for my research question, as the dissertation topic focuses on implementing ideas on a practical level. The data analysis does not need deeper introspection of the motives of the actors, in this case, Muslims living in Wales, on a psychological or metaphysical level. The research focuses on actionable knowledge- or inquiry towards problem-solving- and interactions within Muslims and Welsh communities. Pragmatism recognises and offers the opportunity to explore the "interconnectedness between experience, knowing, and acting."<sup>562</sup> by overcoming the dichotomy between theory and action.<sup>563</sup> From an epistemological point of view, "pragmatism is premised on the idea that research can steer clear of metaphysical debates about the nature of truth and reality and focus instead in practical understanding of concrete real-world issues."<sup>564</sup> This approach suits my research question, which is of a more practical nature, and focuses on examining the practical consequences of the theoretical aspects of Islamic environmental ethics and its translation into practice and actions. Methodologically, pragmatism helps the researcher

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<sup>561</sup> Melnikovas, Aleksandras (2018): *Towards an Explicit Research Methodology: Adapting Research Onion Model for Future Studies*. In: Journal of Future Studies, 36

<sup>562</sup> Kelly Leanne, Cordeiro Maya (2020): *Three principles of pragmatism for the research on organizational process*. In: Methodological Innovations, SAGE, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2059799120937242> (accessed on 18.02.2022)

<sup>563</sup> McKenna S., Richardson J., Manroop L. (2011): *Alternative paradigms and the study and practice of performance management and evaluation*. In: Human Resource Management Review 21: 148-157

<sup>564</sup> Patton, M. (2005): *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 153



to have a flexible approach in their investigative techniques by recognising that individuals within social settings, such as organisations, can experience action and change differently.<sup>565</sup>

#### 4.4 Research approach

The research approach is the strategy used to answer the research question. It spans from the broader outlook and assumptions to detailed methodological questions of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. One possible research approach is deductive logic, often used in qualitative methodology to either confirm or disconfirm a proposition from an existing theory from literature and/or from previous investigations. In deductive reasoning, a hypothesis is first developed based on existing theories and then tested by using a chosen research strategy.<sup>566</sup>

Another research approach is induction. Here, collected data is used first to identify regular patterns and then to develop empirical generalisations which lead to the development of a hypothesis or theories. In this case, there is an attempt to answer the research question without validating or discarding previously existing propositions. Although a clear advantage of inductive logic is that it provides new, emergent theories, it also requires “a great deal of quantitative and statistical research”<sup>567</sup> as a basis.

A third research approach is abduction and retroduction. Abductive logic involves the “dialectical interplay between existing theoretical understanding and empirical data.”<sup>568</sup> This approach is used mainly when an observation does not fit within existing conceptual frameworks. Abduction is often used in combination with retroduction, which answers a question by using hypothetical thinking and working backward from empirical observation to the

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<sup>565</sup> Onwuegbuzie A., Leech N. (2005): *On becoming a pragmatic researcher: The importance of combining quantitative and qualitative research methodologies*. In: International Journal of Social Research Methodology 8(5): 375-387

<sup>566</sup> *Deductive Approach*. In: Business Research Methodology, <https://research-methodology.net/research-methodology/research-approach/deductive-approach-2/> (accessed on 20.04.2022)

<sup>567</sup> Bazeley, Pat (2021): *Qualitative Data Analysis. Practical Strategies*. London: SAGE, 46

<sup>568</sup> *Ibid*, 47

development of a theory. Since both abduction and retroduction do not follow the strict rules of logic, it is more appropriate for developing plausible interpretations of a certain reality. For my research question, this kind of approach is not needed.

Since there are numerous theories about the role of religion in shaping environmental behaviour, and since my research question may to some extent validate or dismiss such theories and thus provide new insights, the approach chosen is deductive logic. Deduction is reasoning from the general to the particular.<sup>569</sup> The starting point of this research is the theory that religions impact environmental behaviour. Beginning from this proposition, the aim is to have a closer look at how Islam in specific affects environmental behaviour within a specific community. The theoretical framework adopted in this dissertation will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

#### **4.5 Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory is often used in the research of social movements. Grounded theory was initiated by the sociologists Barney Glaser and Ansel Strauss in the 1960s while researching health and nursing studies.<sup>570</sup> Grounded Theory uses quantitative methods and systematic coding techniques. The characteristic of this methodology is that it is not based on pre-constructed hypotheses and theories, except for the theoretical framework, which makes the research question visible in the first place and gives a starting point for the analysis. Instead, it extracts observations and “sensitising concepts” from the careful examination of empirical data. Sensitising concepts “merely suggest directions to look...contrary to definitive concepts, >which< provide prescriptions of what to see.”<sup>571</sup>

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<sup>569</sup> Pelissier, R. (2008): *Business Research Made Easy*. Juta & Co., 3

<sup>570</sup> Mattoni, Alice (2014): *The Potentials of Grounded Theory in the Study of Social Movements*. In: Della Porta Donatella (ed.): *Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 21-42

<sup>571</sup> Blumer, Herbert (1954): *What is Wrong with Social Theory?* In: *American Sociological Review* 19(1): 3-10

In the early stages of Grounded Theory, too extensive theoretical knowledge about the subject of empirical research was openly discouraged, and a theoretical framework was regarded as not essential. However, during the later stages of working with Grounded Theory, the value of previous literature, of a theoretical framework, and even of reflections on the personal experiences of the researcher have been recognised as being relevant to the overall research. In particular, "the activity of self-reflection ... might help to put under critical scrutiny previous theoretical knowledge and its role in the interpretation of data."<sup>572</sup> At the same time, theoretical framework and previous knowledge about the subject might help to access the research question more efficiently.

This research will use Grounded Theory and a theoretical framework as an additional research approach. Coding and the theoretical framework will be the tools to navigate the research question and provide good insights. I will use different codes to analyse the interviews, which will allow the discovery of specific patterns between respondents and identify the most relevant themes and issues.

#### **4.6 Theoretical Framework**

As discussed in the introductory chapter, several theoretical frameworks in environmental psychology are used to understand or predict how individuals decide whether to engage in pro-environmental and sustainable behaviours.<sup>573</sup> Ghazali et. al<sup>574</sup> identified six categories of pro-environmental behaviours: *activist*, which involves any public action intended to influence sections of the population and at the same time to protect the environment; *avoider*, people who consciously boycott harmful products to the environment; *green consumer*, who works towards

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<sup>572</sup> Mattoni, Alice (2014): *The Potentials of Grounded Theory in the Study of Social Movements*. In: Della Porta Donatella (ed.): *Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 25

<sup>573</sup> Blamey, Russell (1998): *The Activation of Environmental Norms. Extending Schwartz's Model*. In: *Environment and Behavior*, 30: 676-708

<sup>574</sup> Ghazali Ezlika M., Nguyen Bang, Mutum Dilip S., Yap Su-Fei (2019): *Pro-Environmental Behaviours and Value-Belief-Norm Theory: Assessing Unobserved Heterogeneity of Two Ethnic Groups*. In: *Sustainability*, 11, 3237, doi:10.3390/su11123237

sustainability by consuming eco-friendly goods and services even when at a higher cost than conventional goods and services; *green passenger*, referring to people who try to lower their carbon footprint and greenhouse gases emission by using public transportation and by avoiding the use of cars, airplanes and other polluting means of transportation; *recycler*, individuals who are willing to use mainly recycled or recyclable products; *utility saver*, individuals who put an effort to minimise the use of utilities such as electricity or the use of water. The question that environmental psychology aims to answer is, what conditions lead individuals to choose one or a combination of the above-mentioned pro-environmental behaviours? Until today there is no simple answer to this question, but rather several theories.

The chosen theoretical frameworks for this research are the Value- Belief- Norm- Theory, an extension of Schwartz's norm activation model, and the extended version of the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA).

The norm activation model (NAM), which I will introduce first, was developed and published in 1977 by Shalom Schwartz. It is widely used to explain altruistic behaviour in general and, more specifically, pro-environmental behaviour. The core of NAM is personal norms and values. Schwartz proposed a set of values as guiding principles for any behaviour: altruistic values, biospheric values, egoistic values, and openness to change values.<sup>575</sup>

In order to act altruistically or environmentally friendly, personal norms have to be activated first, and this activation happens through "feelings of moral obligation, not as intentions."<sup>576</sup> Two factors determine personal norms, so the model: the awareness that performing or omitting a specific behaviour has inevitable consequences and the feeling of responsibility for performing a

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<sup>575</sup> Schwartz, S. H. (1992): *Universals in the Content and Structure of Values: Theoretical Advances and Empirical Tests in 20 Countries*. In: *Advanced Experimental Social Psychology*, 25: 1-65

<sup>576</sup> Schwartz, S. H. (1977): *Normative influence on altruism*. In: Berkowitz L. (ed.): *Advances in experimental social psychology*. New York: Academic Press, 10: 221-279

particular behaviour.<sup>577</sup> In other words, personal norms are activated firstly through the awareness of adverse consequences (AC) of events for other people or, in the case of environmentalism, for nature, and secondly through the ascription of responsibility (AR) to self for the undesirable consequences to others.<sup>578</sup>

The process outlined by Schwartz involves five sequential stages: the first stage is attention to the problem, awareness of the consequences of inaction, and identification of the actions required to solve the problem. According to NAM, it is only after these first three requirements have been met that an individual can move on to the second stage, which is the activation of values and responsibility. This second stage has three implications:

- a) physical or material, for example, in the form of time and money
- b) implications for the actor's held values, which are activated to the extent that they are relevant to the required action
- c) social implications, meaning that reference groups impact chosen actions and extent of involvement.

The third stage is the evaluation of the costs and benefits of a given action. This evaluation is influenced both by an individual's values and self-image and by situational cues. The fourth stage occurs when the individual experiences dissonance and conflict in stage three. In this case, individuals may use different denial strategies to neutralise feelings of responsibility: denial of need, denial of effective action, denial of ability, and denial of responsibility. Once this process of defence is complete, the individual steps into the final stage, which is "behaviour" or the decision between action or inaction.<sup>579</sup> The NAM has been widely used to explain pro-

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<sup>577</sup> Onwezen Marleen, Antoinides Gerrit, Bartls Jos (2013): *The Norm Activation Model: An exploration of the functions of anticipated pride and guilt in pro-environmental behaviour*. In: *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 39: 142

<sup>578</sup> Stern, Paul (1999): *A Value-Belief-Norm Theory of Support for Social Movements: The Case of Environmentalism*. In: *Human Ecology Review*, 6(2): 83

<sup>579</sup> Blamey, Russell (1998): *The Activation of Environmental Norms. Extending Schwartz's Model*. In: *Environment and Behavior*, 30: 679-681

environmental behaviour such as yard-burning (Van Liere and Dunlap)<sup>580</sup>, energy consumption behaviour (Black, Stern, and Elworth)<sup>581</sup> or recycling habits (Hopper and Nielsen.)<sup>582</sup>

One of the weaknesses of NAM is that the consequences and feelings of responsibility are typically “operationalised with respect to isolated individual behaviour, rather than with the context of collective action and free-riding incentives in which the behaviour occurs.”<sup>583</sup>

Schwartz's model, in fact, contains no discussion on the role of government, industries, or, more generally speaking, institutions. "This is largely a consequence of the unilateral dependence relationships with which he is most concerned, in which organisations play little or no distinct role."<sup>584</sup>, so Blamey.

This flaw is particularly relevant when looking at the effect of religious values on the individual within a faith community. This has also motivated scholars in the field, such as Russel Blamey<sup>585</sup>, to develop an extended model based on NAM, which can be applied to focus groups. The extended Norm-Activation Model also includes the influence of institutions such as governments or industry. Most importantly, it includes the influence of social norms on the activation of personal norms at the individual level. Social norms are here defined as "social pressures that an individual experiences from significant others or from society at large to engage in a specific behaviour."<sup>586</sup> Social norms as mediating variables between personal norms and pro-environmental behaviour play an important role.<sup>587</sup> Religions are not explicitly mentioned;

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<sup>580</sup> Van Liere K. D., Dunlap R. E. (1978): *Moral norms and the environmental behaviour. An application of Schwartz's Norm-Activation model to yard-burning.* In: Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 8: 174-188

<sup>581</sup> Black J. S., Stern P. C., Elworth J. T. (1985): *Personal and contextual influences on household energy adaptations.* In: Journal of Applied Psychology, 70: 3-21

<sup>582</sup> Hopper J. R., Nielsen J. (1991): *Recycling as altruistic behavior: Normative and behavioral strategies to expand participation in a community recycling program.* In: Environment & Behavior, 23: 195-220

<sup>583</sup> Blamey, Russell (1998): *The Activation of Environmental Norms. Extending Schwartz's Model.* In: Environment and Behavior, 30: 677

<sup>584</sup> Ibid., 686

<sup>585</sup> Ibid., 678

<sup>586</sup> Yadav, R. (2016): *Altruistic or egoistic: Which values promote organic food consumption among young consumers? A study in the context of a developing nation.* In: Journal Retailing Consumer Services, 33: 92-97

<sup>587</sup> Lubell, Mark (2002): *Environmental Activism as Collective Action.* In: Environment and Behavior, 34: 435

however, religious institutions can have a comparable normative influence as other relevant social institutions and are, at the same time source of social norms.

In the extended Norm-Activation Model, the awareness of need is not limited to human needs but applies to nonhuman helpes as well, such as endangered species. The extended model considers that responsibilities in the public good, such as responsibility for the environment, are often less clearly defined when compared to one individual's responsibilities towards another. This implies that direct action is often not possible or practicable in the case of sustainability and care for nature. This is why norm-activation for public goods is more dependent on situational cues and group dynamics, with institutions playing a pivotal role.<sup>588</sup>

The extended version of the Norm Activation Model is called Values-Belief-Norm Theory (VBN- theory), a model widely used to explain pro-environmental behaviour. The VBN- Theory postulates that together with norms, also values, and beliefs activate specific behaviours.

Stern<sup>589</sup> specifically developed a value-belief-norm theory of environmentalism, which “provides a framework for investigating normative factors that promote sustainable attitudes and behaviour.”<sup>590</sup> Stern's theory integrates values and beliefs with Schwartz's norm-activation theory and also integrates the New Environmental Paradigm perspective NEP.<sup>591</sup> The NEP perspective was developed by Dunlap et al. in contrast to the prevailing Dominant Social Paradigm DSP, according to which modern societies are characterised by a strong belief in progress, growth, prosperity, and faith in science and technology, to name but a few aspects, all of which contribute to environmental degradation. According to NEP, humans and their activities are

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<sup>588</sup> Blamey, Russell (1998): *The Activation of Environmental Norms. Extending Schwartz's Model*. In: Environment and Behavior, 30: 692

<sup>589</sup> Stern, Paul (1999): *A Value-Belief-Norm Theory of Support for Social Movements: The Case of Environmentalism*. In: Human Ecology Review, 6(2): 83

<sup>590</sup> Lind Hans Brende, Nordfjaern Trond, Jørgensen Stig Halvard, Torbjørn Rundmo (2015): *The value-belief-norm theory, personal norms, and sustainable travel mode choice in urban areas*. In: Journal of Environmental Psychology 44:119-125

<sup>591</sup> Dunlap Riley E., Van Liere Kent D. (2008): *The "New Environmental Paradigm"*. In: The Journal of Environmental Education, 40(1): 19-28

determined by the environment and social and cultural aspects, and humans are strongly dependent on the environment and its resources.<sup>592</sup>

When considering the implementation of values within a community, we are always looking at collective action. In particular environmental activism has public good characteristics. However, according to Mark Lubell, “the literature on environmental activism has failed to produce a model of individual decision-making explicitly linked to the logic of collective action.”<sup>593</sup> In order to consider the collective's influence and dynamics, a second theory will be implemented here as a theoretical framework, namely the extended version of the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) after Martijn van Zomeren et al.<sup>594</sup> Collective action is generally defined as “any action that is enacted as a representative of the group and which is aimed at improving the group's conditions.”<sup>595</sup> According to Zomeren, “collective action is one of the core mechanisms of social change.”<sup>596</sup> This model stresses the importance of moral convictions, defined as “strong and absolute stances on moral issues,”<sup>597</sup> as a main driving force for collective actions. The reason why moral convictions are such a significant predictor for collective action is their unique relationship with *politicized identities* or social movements, such as Greenpeace or a union. Moral convictions are absolute stances on moral issues and usually do not compromise, nor do they tolerate exceptions. Therefore, “any violation of moral convictions,” according to van Zomeren, “motivates individuals who hold them to actively change that situation.”<sup>598</sup> Collective actions, which can include anything ranging from protests to signing a petition, require identifying an

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<sup>592</sup> Park, Chris (ed.) (2012): *A Dictionary of Environment and Conservation*. Oxford University Press, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100231375> (accessed on 21.04.2022)

<sup>593</sup> Lubell, Mark (2002): *Environmental Activism as Collective Action*. In: *Environment and Behavior*, 34: 431

<sup>594</sup> Zomeren van Martijn, Postmes Tom, Spears Russell (2012): *On conviction's collective consequences: Integrating moral conviction with the social identity model of collective action*. In: *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 51: 52-71

<sup>595</sup> Wright S. C., Taylor D. M., Moghaddam F. M. (1990): *Responding to membership in a disadvantaged group: From Acceptance to collective protest*. In: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58: 994-1003

<sup>596</sup> Zomeren, van Martijn (2009): *Introduction to the Social and Psychological Dynamics of Collective Action*. In: *Journal of Social Issues*, 65 (4): 645-660

<sup>597</sup> Zomeren van Martijn, Postmes Tom, Spears Russell (2012): *On conviction's collective consequences: Integrating moral conviction with the social identity model of collective action*. In: *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 51: 52

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid.*, 53



individual with a group, for example, a faith group. Within collective action, social identity is primary and more salient than personal identity. This is a very relevant point when discussing the implementation of Islamic environmental principles by members of the faith, because it is important to remember that in addition to Islamic principles and values, social identity, personal identification with the collective or self-categorisation as a member of the group, i.e. the Islamic faith community and its dynamics and involvement in the cause of climate change, are of paramount importance. The level of identification with the faith will determine how strongly faith-based values will be implemented.

To summarise, the SIMCA model identifies four main predictors for the individual's engagement in collective action:

- 1.) individual's identification with a relevant group
- 2.) perception of group-based injustice, more specifically, the emotional experience of injustice
- 3.) group efficacy beliefs; individual motivation increases with the conviction in the efficacy of the group in achieving a set goal
- 4.) Social identity is the psychological basis for collective action, bridging the injustice/emotional and efficacy explanations with the collective action.<sup>599</sup>

Van Zomeren expanded the SIMCA model by including another often neglected yet fundamental aspect of psychology, namely *morality*. The consideration of moral conviction in explaining collective action allows to integrate religious beliefs into the understanding of activism. Psychological research has, indeed, suggested that when personal values are perceived as "absolute truths," then they build hallmarks of social actions. "When moral convictions are violated, individuals, therefore, experience strong feelings of anger towards moral transgressors,

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<sup>599</sup> Ibid., 54

seeking to punish and exclude them to defend their conviction."<sup>600</sup> According to van Zomeren, it is because morals, by definition, are set higher than any personal identity, social identity, or any other relational process that may occur for a social order that they are the strongest predictor of collective actions and social change. Furthermore, even more critical for the research question, seemingly individualistic moral convictions can have collective consequences.<sup>601</sup>

In summary, the theoretical framework of this research is based on the Value-Belief-Norm model of environmental behaviour to provide a framework for the translation of religious values into sustainable behaviour. In addition to the VBN model, the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) is also considered in order to take into account how collective dynamics and morality play a role in decision-making about pro-environmental actions.

#### **4.7 Methodological choice and research strategy**

The research is divided into two major sections, a theoretical part, and an empirical part. The first section is designed to define and clarify key concepts such as sustainability, the historical development of the concept and its different aspects. Furthermore, the theoretical part includes a scriptural analysis of the Qur'ān, ahadīth, and a literature review of the most relevant modern scholarly contributions on the topic of Islamic environmental ethics. This step is essential in order to develop the empirical research strategy and for the analysis of the data.

The second part of the study is dedicated to empirical research using qualitative methodology. More specifically, I used semi-structured interviews with a range of different respondents.

Generally speaking, qualitative methods have advantages and disadvantages, especially compared to quantitative methods. In qualitative research, the data obtained is usually in the form of words

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<sup>600</sup> Skitka L. J., Bauman C. W., Mullen E. (2004): *Political tolerance and coming to psychological closure following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks: An integrative approach*. In: *Personality and Social Bulletin*, 30: 743-756

<sup>601</sup> Zomeren van Martijn, Postmes Tom, Spears Russell (2012): *On conviction's collective consequences: Integrating moral conviction with the social identity model of collective action*. In: *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 51: 65

and subjective descriptions and not in the form of numbers like in quantitative research. This means that the strategies for analysis in qualitative research are less defined and strict. The elaboration of the data is rather hermeneutic than statistical. Therefore, multiple interpretations are possible, making it necessary to focus on those interpretations that serve the research question and are theoretically sound. When using qualitative methods, the researcher should always be seen as a "not standardised instrument," meaning the perspective and subjectivity of the research will always affect, to some extent, the interpretation of the data. In order to increase the rigour of the research process and to compensate for the impact of the researcher's subjectivity, reflexivity, or critical reflection on the researcher's role in the interpretation of the data should be included as a significant component of qualitative research.<sup>602</sup> Reflexivity can happen, for example, by asking questions such as: "How has the research question defined and limited what can be found? How have the study design and the method of analysis "constructed" the data and the findings? How could the research question have been investigated differently? To what extent would this have given rise to a different understanding of the phenomenon under investigation?"<sup>603</sup> Reflexivity includes describing the intersecting relationships between the respondents and the researcher and reflecting on how the research process has changed the researcher: "through reflexivity, researchers acknowledge the changes brought about in themselves as a result of the research process and how these changes have affected the research process."<sup>604</sup> The researcher does not hold a privileged position from which he can objectively study social reality because he is himself a part of the social world being studied and is thus affected by the same social reality he is researching. His or her social background, location, sex, ethnicity, race, and cultural assumptions affect the research practice<sup>605</sup> and the interpretation of

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<sup>602</sup> Morse J., Barrett M., Olsen K. (2002): *Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research*. In: *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(1): 1-22

<sup>603</sup> Palaganas Erlinda, Schez Marian C., Molintas Visitacion, Caricativo Ruel D. (2017): *Reflexivity in Qualitative Research: A Journey of Learning*. In: *The Qualitative Report*, 22(29): 432

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*: 426

<sup>605</sup> Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2007): *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 17

the data. However, this does not imply that results from qualitative research are less valid than quantitative research results. "The researcher's positionality does not exist independently of the research process, nor does it completely determine the latter."<sup>606</sup> The research process can instead be viewed as a dialectical dialogue between the social reality and the researcher enriching the research process and leading to valuable outcomes. Whenever appropriate (mainly in the discussion chapter) I explicitly included reflexivity in different dissertation sections. However, self-reflection was a standard method throughout the research process.

Another aspect of qualitative research is that samples are selected "purposively to meet particular investigative needs, rather than to represent a wider population."<sup>607</sup> Also, the number of samples, in this case of interview respondents, is limited compared to quantitative analysis. The main disadvantage is that the research outcome can be applied only to a specific group and cannot be generalised to a broader population. This is less problematic for this research which looks at a very specific region and population, namely Welsh Muslims. The advantage of a smaller sample is that it allows for a deeper and more individual level of investigation, which is not possible in quantitative research. Although qualitative methods deal with a smaller number of samples, the amount of produced data is usually substantial, and it is non-reductive, meaning that access to data in its original form is usually retained. The interpretation of big volume data is labour-intensive. According to Bazeley,<sup>608</sup> the amount of time needed to analyse such data quantities is at least two to five times as long as the time spent to generate the data. Contrary to quantitative analysis, the interpretation of the data cannot be supported by a software. The researcher needs to work systematically, using coding, mapping, memoing and other tools, to navigate the data volume without omitting or neglecting any information.

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<sup>606</sup> Palaganas Erlinda, Schez Marian C., Molintas Visitacion, Caricativo Ruel D. (2017): *Reflexivity in Qualitative Research: A Journey of Learning*. In: *The Qualitative Report*, 22(29): 429

<sup>607</sup> Bazeley, Pat (2021): *Qualitative Data Analysis. Practical Strategies*. London: SAGE, 22

<sup>608</sup> *Ibid.*: 23

As mentioned above, qualitative methods were chosen as an appropriate approach to answering the research question because they allowed for a plurality of views from different respondents with different backgrounds and at the same time allowed for consistency in answering the research question, which was geographically limited to a specific region. Qualitative research also allowed me to be more specific in identifying the challenges and problems, as well as the benefits and hopes, that the Welsh Muslim community faces in addressing the issue of sustainability. All in all, the qualitative method ensured a more practical outcome with results that can hopefully be useful to both Welsh society and Muslim communities.

Qualitative research involves a range of different approaches and methodologies. Qualitative research approaches are grounded theory, ethnography, action research, phenomenological research, and narrative research. Each of these approaches uses one or more data collection methods which are: interviews, observations, focus groups, surveys with open-ended questions, and secondary research, which uses already existing data collected from various sources. The qualitative method chosen for this research is semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews (SSI) are conducted with one respondent at a time and include the employment of a blend of closed- and open-ended questions. In other words, SSI is an intermediate method that pulls elements from quantitative methods in the form of highly structured surveys and open-ended sessions where respondents are left entirely free to talk about a specific topic without interference from the researcher.<sup>609</sup>

The primary partner for finding respondents was the Muslim Council of Wales (MCW), a broad-based umbrella organisation with an affiliation with the Muslim Council of Britain. Respondents were individuals from the Muslim community, mainly in South East Wales, like Imams, religious teachers, charity directors, researchers, and other individuals from the Muslim faith community

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<sup>609</sup> Newcomer E. Kathryn, Hatry P. Harry, Wholey S. Joseph (eds.) (2015): *Handbook of practical program evaluation*. New Jersey: Jossey-Bass, 493

with an interest in sustainability and the ecological crisis. In addition, academic experts in the field of Islamic environmental ethics, sustainability and faith-based environmental activism from other countries were also interviewed to provide a broader perspective on the research question. I conducted a total of 26 interviews of which 22 were selected for analysis. Thirteen of the respondents were defined as Welsh Muslims, two non-British Muslims (both experts in the field of Eco-Islam), and seven experts on sustainability, religion and environmentalism, and Islamophobia from Wales and England. 68% of the respondents were male, which were significantly over represented. This gender imbalance has different reasons. Many leading positions within the Welsh Muslim community, including religious leadership, are occupied by men. Secondly, the restrictions during the covid-19 pandemic, when I conducted the fieldwork, made it particularly difficult to find respondents. For this reason, I could not pay too much attention to the gender balance. It is also not possible for me to assess, how far the female perspective on Welsh Eco-Islam would vary from the male perspective.

The respondents were recruited using opportunity sampling. The sampling was obtained by asking members of the Muslim community in Wales and scholars from different universities if they were willing to participate in the research. The interviews conducted for this research contained a specific set of questions for each respondent, according to his background and role within the Muslim community or his or her field of expertise. The interviews lasted an average of one hour, which is considered a good time lap "to minimise fatigue for both interviewer and respondent."<sup>610</sup> The interviews were conducted either online over Zoom or in person and recorded with the informed consent of the respondent. All respondents agreed to be recorded. Most respondents agreed to be named by their real names in the dissertation. Only one respondent preferred to remain anonymous in order to be able to answer the questions more

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<sup>610</sup> Adams, William (2015): *Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews*. In: Newcomer E. Kathryn, Hatry P. Harry, Wholey S. Joseph (eds.) (2015): *Handbook of practical program evaluation*. New Jersey: Jossey-Bass, 493

freely. Prior to conducting the interviews, I underwent the ethical guidance training and ethical approval by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Being a white woman with European background (Italian and German) and being a non-Muslim might have had some impact in finding respondents. More conservative Muslims might have found it uncomfortable to talk to a woman. However, this might have been compensated by the fact that most interviews were taken online. Also, not being part of any Muslim community might have made access to mosques and other Muslim institutions more difficult. As a religious scholar, I am interested in Islam as a religion in a social context, and as a member of a Sufi Tariqa, I am also drawn to more theological and metaphysical aspects. Mentioning my affiliation with a Sufi tradition made some respondents feel more comfortable talking to me, although not explicitly.

The recordings were transcribed using the software Sonix™. The transcripts were then analysed and interpreted using relevant codes. Coding, or the labelling of data, is an essential tool in qualitative methodology for “purposefully managing, locating, identifying, sifting, sorting, and querying data.”<sup>611</sup> In addition, coding helps to become very familiar with the collected data, to build ideas from them, facilitate asking questions, and it can help to identify new connections and ways of framing and interpreting the sources.<sup>612</sup> The coding process involves reading and reflecting on the data back and forth for a holistic perspective of the sources. Also, coding is not linear but requires connecting insights back and forwards, reviewing them, and feeding back to the codes, which might change during the process. To build understanding, coding alone is not sufficient. The different insights from the coding must be connected to gain deeper insights. All these processes and the different decisions made over the codes were recorded in a research

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<sup>611</sup> Bazeley, Pat (2021): *Qualitative Data Analysis. Practical Strategies*. London: SAGE, 156

<sup>612</sup> *Ibid.*, 157

journal. This helped to prompt further insights, advance reflection, and later provide transparency and a record of the decisions and conclusions done while analysing the data.

The codes selected were: Islamic environmental principles and related beliefs, pro-environmental activities, faith-based activism, mosques, Ramadan, Muslim charities, secularism, civil society, social justice, poverty, economic systems education, Islamophobia, technology, colonialism, Intersectionalism, covid19 pandemic, animal rights and interfaith dialogue.

Semi-structured interviews were the method of choice because they allowed essential questions to be asked that were tailored to the interviewees. In this way, it was possible to discuss the topic in more depth and get to know each interviewee's independent thoughts. Semi-structured interviews generate a large amount of data, which can be very detailed.

However, like any other method, semi-structured interviews have disadvantages. Firstly, in a one-to-one interview, the respondent may, consciously or unconsciously, answer according to the interests and expectations of the researcher. Therefore, the authenticity of participants' answers can never be fully guaranteed. In addition, answers to open-ended questions are very subjective and therefore difficult to analyse and compare with the answers of other respondents. Finding suitable respondents and conducting semi-structured interviews requires considerable time and effort. The questions are not standardised, which can make it difficult to draw general conclusions for the overall interpretation of the data. The result of SSI is many hours of transcripts and data to be systematically analysed.

For this particular dissertation, the fieldwork was conducted during the covid 19 pandemic, which made finding and contacting respondents, especially during the lockdown period, even more difficult. I also contracted covid 19 myself during the early stages of the research, which added to the strain of writing and researching.



## 4.8 Ethics

According to Blumberg, within the field of research, particularly in social sciences, research ethics refers to the appropriateness of the researcher's behaviour concerning the rights of those who become the subject of a research project.<sup>613</sup> In all aspects of fieldwork, writing, and disseminating knowledge, the researcher always has to adhere to the proper behaviour which respects the situation and feelings of others by protecting the dignity of their subjects.

In regards to research ethics, there are two dominant philosophical stands: the teleological view, which holds that the ends served by the research justify the means, and the deontological view, which rejects teleology as unethical, stating just the opposite, that the ends served by research can never justify the means. Along with the Helsinki Declaration of 1964 which emphasises the protection of subjects by stressing that the well-being of individuals is always more important than scientific or social findings,<sup>614</sup> the present research is committed to the deontological approach.

Since the research question is of a more general nature, i.e., the implementation of environmental ethics based on faith, and not concerned with sensitive topics such as mental health or the use of drugs, the risk of causing emotional distress to the respondents through the interview questions can be assessed as very low. All respondents were asked to sign an informed consent describing the aim of the research and including information about the storage and future use of the data. Respondents were informed about the option to withdraw from the interview at any given time without any negative consequences for themselves. Respondents also had the choice to remain anonymous if they wished. All participants were at least 18 years of age, therefore there was no need for the consent of a guardian. Furthermore, many interviews were taken online, which

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<sup>613</sup> Blumberg, B., Cooper D.R., Schindler P.S. (2005): *Business Research Methods*. Berkshire: McGraw Hill

<sup>614</sup> Oddi L.F., Cassidy V. R. (1990): *Nursing Research in the U.S.: The protection of human subjects*. In: International Journal of Nursing Studies, 27(1): 21-34

minimised any risks of physical threat or abuse, as well as the risk of being in a compromising situation, both for the respondents and the researcher.

Ethical standards do not only apply to the fieldwork and interaction with subjects. According to Stephen Ifedha Akaranga, “it is vital that a researcher must observe appropriate values at all ... stages while conducting research.”<sup>615</sup> Therefore, other issues related to research ethics are fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, and intellectual property protection. Fabrication is the involvement, creation, or invention of data and results, falsification is the manipulation of data and materials or changing results by omitting information.<sup>616</sup> An important topic in academic research is plagiarism, or the lack of acknowledgment of the source of tests, results, or expressions, whenever they are not original by the researcher.<sup>617</sup> To avoid plagiarism, the sources used were always clearly cited. Fabrication and falsification were also strictly avoided at any point in the research process.

#### **4.9 Limitations of the research methods and results**

The most significant limitations of this study lie in the limitations of the qualitative methodology itself, which has been discussed earlier. Another limitation is the sample used for data collection. Compared to quantitative analysis, the number of respondents in qualitative research is narrowed to a small sample. Therefore, every single interview carries a more significant "weight," and there is a danger of falsification of the results. To overcome this limitation, I tried to select respondents from different walks of life and different institutions with different perspectives.

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<sup>615</sup> Akaranga Ifedha Stephen, Makau Kavitha Bretta (2016): *Ethical Considerations and their Applications to Research: a Case of the University of Nairobi*. In: *Journal of Educational Policy and Entrepreneurial Research*, 3(12), 3

<sup>616</sup> Kour, S. (2014): *Ethical and Legal Issues in Educational research*. In: *Indian Journal of Applied Research*, 4 (6)

<sup>617</sup> Mugenda, A. G. (2011): *Social Science Research Methods: Theory and Practice*. Nairobi: ARTS Press

I also compared the findings from the interviews with existing research on the same or similar topic. In most cases, the findings from the interviews were indeed supported by existing research.

The sample profile is also a limiting factor. Most respondents were academics or students with higher education degrees and social status. They were all fluent in English, and most were equipped with computers for the online interviews. This means that potential respondents from different social and/or educational backgrounds and without the economic means to own a personal computer were left out. All these hindrances make it challenging to generalise the results.

The data collection method itself might have created some not verifiable limitations.

Respondents were asked personally, and some were video-recorded about their attitudes towards nature and environmental behaviour. This face-to-face situation might have intimidated respondents not to give negative answers or to respond in such a way as to pacify the expectations of the researcher.

Another limiting aspect was the covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions implemented during the virus outbreak. Lockdowns and other measures had social and economic impacts in most of the countries applying the measures. For the present research, it meant that many potential respondents were not available for interviews either because of personal health issues or because other, more impending problems asked for more attention.

Time itself, like for any other research, was a limiting factor. The present research was completed within three years, with the fieldwork making up one-third of the used time.

In future studies, these limitations could be overcome by widening the sample used within the qualitative analysis and by incorporating quantitative methods as well. Quantitative methods

allow the use of a much broader sample, are less time-consuming, and results might be more easily generalised.

## CHAPTER 5 - RESULTS

This chapter presents the interviews conducted, recognising that the views expressed by the interviewees do not necessarily reflect the researcher's perspective. It is important to note that the views of the respondents do not represent the position of the researcher. Therefore, a critical discussion is imperative and will be addressed in detail in the concluding chapter of this study.

The chapter begins with a brief overview of the respondents' roles and expertise in eco-Islam or related fields. It then summarises and abstracts the different perspectives of the interviewees and their key statements. The complex issue of eco-Islam and Muslim environmentalism is best understood within its social, historical and religious contexts. In order to adequately capture the complexity of the issue and to promote inclusivity, the interviews included participants from a range of backgrounds, including Welsh Muslims and individuals with relevant expertise in the relevant fields. The interviews are grouped into three categories: relevant Welsh Muslim voices, including Muslim experts and imams; a second category, non-British Muslims involved in the Eco-Islam movement; and Welsh experts in sustainability and religious scholars with a research focus on faith-based environmentalism.

### 5.1 Welsh Muslims and Welsh Eco-Islam

This section presents the responses of Welsh Muslims or Muslims living in Wales and their perspective on Islam and the environment. These are first-hand accounts about lived green-Muslims engagement within their lived experience and community.

### 5.1.1 Imam Farid Ahmed Khan<sup>618</sup>

Imam Farid Ahmed Khan is an imam and the Muslim faith chaplain at Cardiff and Vale University Health Board. He graduated from the Islamic University of Jamia Madania in Bangladesh, where he was a lecturer from 1988 to 1991. In 1991 he moved to the UK and was assigned imam of the Masjid in Newport and Neath. He served the faith community here by delivering the Friday sermon, leading prayers, and teaching Islamic literature to adults and elders. He felt “very much welcome within the community.” He can speak six languages, English, Bengali, Arabic, Urdu, Hindi, and Sylheti, and could therefore assist community faith members with different national backgrounds. He was involved in Al-Falah Centre in Cardiff, the Iqra community centre in Newport, Neath Masjid, West Glamorgan, and Bilal Masjid in Bridgend. In 2003, he was appointed the first Muslim chaplain in Wales at Aneurin Bevan health board and Royal Gwent Hospital in Newport. From 2004 to 2015, he extended his service to the HMP Prison Parc in Bridgend. Moreover, in 2018, he was appointed chaplain at the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, where he provides to the day religious, spiritual, and pastoral help to Muslim patients and hospital professionals.

According to Khan, everything in nature is a God-gifted bounty. Therefore, it is a human duty to protect nature. Everything in life comes from God, even “negative” things like floods, typhoons, or other natural disasters. Natural catastrophes are, in truth, tests sent by God to either rectify our behaviour or punish humans for their sins. The task of humans is to learn from such events and rectify their behaviour.

Similarly, climate change is also a test for humanity. Climate change can be regarded as a spiritual crisis so far as humans do not listen to the teachings of the prophets, nor do they act accordingly. Changing our behaviour, so Khan is the critical factor in overcoming such challenges and tests. Spiritual principles are mostly forgotten because societies focus too much

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<sup>618</sup> All direct quotations in this chapter are from the interviews and put in brackets

on worldly issues and earthly life without considering the afterlife and mortality. This is particularly true in secular societies focused on the material aspects of life. In order to rectify these attitudes, individuals need to go back to religion.

Climate change affects everyone equally. Khan does not acknowledge any specific challenge for the Muslim communities, except for the heating costs for the mosque, where faith members pray five times a day, and need a warm environment. 2022 was colder than recent years, causing rising heating costs. However, according to Khan, the Muslim community in Wales was very negatively affected by the covid-19 pandemic. Many Muslims in Wales are migrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Africa, Asian and Arabic countries. Many of them arrived from war-ridden regions such as Iraq or Syria. They have already suffered considerable material loss or financial hardship. In Wales, many became “low-level workers,” for example, taxi drivers or deliverers. These were also the branches most negatively impacted by the covid-19 pandemic restrictions. Consequently, many Muslims faced difficulties maintaining their families, sending children to school, or paying the bills. Within the Muslim communities, members tried to support each other, for example, by opening food banks or collecting clothes and other items.

In Wales, on a community level, mosques play an important social role by engaging in interfaith dialogue, for example, organising open days, cooperating with the local government, and creating sports events. Regarding pro-environmental actions, the Welsh Muslim communities are still at the beginning, especially when compared to communities in London or Birmingham, which are far more significant in numbers than Welsh communities. According to Khan, Welsh Muslim communities are still on “level zero” regarding environmentalism. Nevertheless, he is very hopeful, mainly because of the younger generation of Welsh Muslims, who are better educated and more socially engaged. In the opinion of Khan, the Eco-Mosque in Cambridge, which he visited with his family, will become a role model even for the smaller mosques in Wales, which in the near future will aspire to become more sustainable and eco-friendlier.

Finally, climate change, environmental emergency, and the covid-19 pandemic are a reflection of God's greatness and human's dependency on Him. We have to surrender to God and develop faith and modesty, so Khan. In the Qur'an, it is said, "when you walk, do not walk arrogance." This is the way we should treat on earth. Khan regards the development of a spiritual or religious attitude towards the world as the most essential green intervention.

### 5.1.2 Dr. Meraj Hasan

Meraj Hasan trained in Pakistan in medicine and had further training in adult and child psychiatry in the UK. He has been a consultant for the NHS for over 37 years. He is a trustee of the Dar Ul-Isra Mosque in Cardiff and a trustee of the Muslim Council of Wales. He is now a retired psychiatrist who volunteers as a Muslim chaplain at Cardiff University. He is also a trustee and founding member of CCAWS (Community Care and Wellbeing Service) in Cardiff, previously known as ISSA Wales, or Islamic Social Services Association Wales. ISSA used to provide different services to Muslims in Wales, including mediation, advocacy, chaplaincy, and befriending. Today CCAWS is a mental health charity focusing on BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic). Their official goal is "to help people learn developmental, emotional, social and spiritual strength for life."<sup>619</sup>

Hasan sees his role in all these charities in promoting "good relationships between people of different faiths and people of no faith." The mosque where Hasan is active, the Dar Ul-Isra Mosque, is involved in interfaith dialogue in the form of meetings, lectures, and talks between Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists.

At Dar Ul-Isra Mosque, members have given much thought to how to live more in harmony with nature. They founded a green mosque committee, mainly with younger members of the

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<sup>619</sup> *Community Care and Wellbeing Service*. In: <https://www.ccaws.org.uk/> (accessed on 08.06.2022)



mosque, and they are working on constantly improving the sustainability of their community. One significant change was introduced during last year's Ramadan (in 2022). The mosque provided eco-friendly wooden cutlery and tin containers and refrained from distributing plastic bottles for water. These were replaced with reusable bottles which faith members were asked to refill rather than buy new ones. The main goal of this Ramadan initiative was to reduce the use of plastic as much as possible. To consume less water during the ablutions before prayers, automatically closing tabs were built in. The mosque committee is considering installing solar panels as a renewable energy source for the near future, and they have been actively promoting the use of bicycles instead of cars.

According to Hasan, Muslim communities are affected by the environmental crisis in the same way as other communities, and he does not perceive any environmental injustice.

Regarding the Islamic view of nature, according to the Qur'ān, humankind is considered an ambassador on earth. In other parts of the Qur'ān, it is mentioned that creation is there for humans. Therefore, we must be thankful and value creation as a gift from God. Hasan also mentioned the need for balance in life, a balance that has been disrupted through human actions, especially between man and nature and man and animals. God does not approve of any suffering caused to animals. Even if killing might be necessary at times, it should be done in a way that causes the least pain for the animal. Taking care of nature, so Hasan, is a religious duty.

However, many Muslims do not properly understand Islam. Often there is little, if any awareness that protecting nature is a religious duty. To counteract this "ignorance," the government, according to Hasan, must educate the public on environmental issues. This, he continued, is consistent with Islamic teachings that the government has a particular responsibility towards the public and is accountable for that responsibility before God.

According to Hasan, the Covid-19 pandemic and the environmental crisis are tests God gave to humanity. God tested human's patience, gratefulness, and willingness to help each other. "God

wants us to try.” The willingness to help others is more important than worship. To do good deeds also corresponds to the fundamental nature of the human spirit. In Islam, the natural state humans are born in is called *fitrah*. The fitrah of humankind is goodness, and humans naturally want to do good. Therefore, there is also an innate desire to look after nature. A different behaviour, which leads to destruction, is due to a state of ignorance and bad conditioning. So again, public education is crucial for which the government is responsible in the first place. Like Khan, Hasan sees the inner attitude and proper religious and scientific education as the primary intervention for sustainable development and preservation of nature.

### **5.1.3 Dr. Saad Al-Ismail**

Originally from Iraq, Saad Al-Ismail is a retired medical doctor who worked for the past 42 years for the NHS as a haematology specialist. He is still practising as a consultant haematologist and is personally involved with the Swansea University Mosque. Since his retirement, Al-Ismail is actively engaged in the running of the University Mosque as a University Mosque Management Committee member, together with the imam of the masjid. He describes his mosque as unique because its premises are within the university campus. In this way, he is closely involved with the Muslim faith community in Swansea and Muslim students. He is also the founder of a charity, the Noor Bilal Foundation, which aims to eradicate poverty in Iraq.

During the covid-19 pandemic, the Muslim community faced many unforeseen problems. One was not being able to pray together in the mosque. To solve this problem, Al-Ismail created a Zoom platform on which community members could have regular meetings, particularly during Ramadan. During the lockdown period, many community members struggled with the impossibility of meeting for the Friday prayers, considered the most important and most beneficial when done with other faith members. Muslim scholars intervened, explaining that Islam views the protection of life as the highest good, and therefore the pandemic restrictions

should be accepted as a religious duty. However, Al-Ismail said, not being able to congregate had “major effects, both psychologically and for some people physically in terms of not being able to enjoy what they have enjoyed throughout their life.” Nevertheless, looking after each other is an important religious Islamic principle, and Muslims are incited to take care of their neighbours even if they are not Muslims.

According to Al-Ismail, religious values are essential for sustainability, even within secular societies like the UK. Secular environmentalism looks at the personal gain and benefit of protecting nature. Ultimately, this will lead to a chaotic world. Religious principles go beyond selfish interests. Since most religions are very similar in their fundamental principles, it does not matter which religion is implemented. The question is how to motivate people who are not religious? For Al-Ismail, the only way is “to lead by example.”

The Swansea University Mosque actively tries to implement Islamic environmental principles to become more sustainable. One example is the plastic-free Ramadan after the covid-19 pandemic at the university mosque, which was 85 to 90 percent successful. Because of the plastic-free Ramadan, the mosques could save 20 000 to 30 000 plastic bottles. During most of Friday’s prayers, the imam reminds the congregation about the “importance of preserving the goodness” of nature and natural resources. Al-Ismail “could see that most Muslims really take that to heart and listen to.” Of course, on an individual level, it is difficult to know how far such values are then integrated into daily life.

According to Al-Ismail, Muslim communities in Wales are facing specific challenges. Because of historical reasons, the majority of Muslim communities in the UK and Wales are composed of people from the Indian subcontinent who were brought to the UK as a labour force. Many of them are not professionals and have, consequently, lower incomes. “Historically,” so Al-Ismail, “the earning of the Muslim community on average was probably below the average for the UK.”

Thereupon, most Welsh Muslims live in deprived areas and are more likely to be exposed to environmental hazards such as heavy air pollution.

Furthermore, living in deprived areas negatively impacts the children's education and, later on, their chances of getting a better job. It negatively impacts youngsters and their propensity to engage in social activities. This will hopefully change in the second, third, and fourth generations, alongside better education and opportunities to climb the social ladder.

The biggest hope for the future is that Muslims and religious people, in general, remember that their biggest duty is to "abide by our creator's instruction." For Muslims, this would be to fulfil, to the best of possibilities, the role of Khalifah, or caretaker of the earth. For example, one "cannot be a good Muslim unless one is kind to animals." However, because of the destruction of the natural environment through human activities, many birds and other species have become endangered, and we are facing a loss of biodiversity. Religious principles nowadays are supported by science which might make it easier for most people to abide by specific rules to support nature.

Other important aspects are cohesive communities and religious values within communities. Al-Ismael believes that "religion is good because it brings communities together." In modern times, there has been an abandonment and disintegration of the good values which kept communities together, such as families and neighbours looking after each other in times of hardship, respect for elders, and solidarity. Modern societies have become very individualistic. An antidote to this development is to revive spiritual values. "After all," so the concluding remarks, "we (Muslims) believe that we all come from one creator and we are not different in essence." Religious differences are due to different interpretations of one truth, but we all share core values. "To adhere more to spiritual principles would be the best for the environment."

#### 5.1.4 Sheikh Mohamed Toulba

Sheikh Mohamed Toulba is the imam of the South Wales Islamic Centre and Mosque in Cardiff. According to their website, the centre and mosque were “built in the late 1970s in the classical Arabic style by Davies Llewellyn Partnership. The building occupies 250 square meters and has an impressive bronze dome around which are 16 stained glass windows designed by students of the College of Art, Swansea. The lower parts of the structure are built of red bricks. The building includes a Women’s centre and a main area for worship. The monument is an outstanding example of a single-space domed Mosque built in the Butetown area of Cardiff with classical style and with a minaret abutting the left-hand side. Due to its architecture, the South Wales Islamic Centre and Mosque is a focal point for many Muslims in Wales.”<sup>620</sup> The centre represents one of the main Mosques in Cardiff and is visited by a considerable number of faith members and local schools. This mosque is, therefore, particularly interesting regarding the relevance of Eco-Islam in Wales.

Concerning the Qur’ān and the Ahadīth, Sheikh Toulba mentioned a few aspects that are relevant to the protection of the environment, such as cleanliness, and hygiene, which also includes keeping the space around clean (it is, for example, prohibited to urinate under a tree or into the running water), and the obligation to plant trees, as described in the hadīth Al-Albani. Even on the day of resurrection, one must plant a shoot if this is what he was doing. Planting trees, which benefits other humans and animals, is considered an act of charity. Even during times of war, it is forbidden to spoil the environment by cutting trees or damaging nature. Allah will reward humans who act accordingly. Keeping the environment clean and pure also includes certain behaviours such as not speaking loudly to not disturb the neighbours, being polite, and not hurting people with bad body smells.

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<sup>620</sup> *South Wales Islamic Centre*. In: <http://www.theswic.org.uk/> (accessed on 15.06.2022)

On a practical level, the mosque tried to improve its environment by planting flowers and other plants within its premises. They also instruct their community members and children to maintain cleanliness. During the month of Ramadan, the congregation is reminded not to waste food and water, with fasting being a practice of mindfulness towards resources. The community is also encouraged to recycle as much as possible. Living in a Western society makes it actually easier to follow Islamic environmental principles, so Imam Toulba, because society as a whole promotes pro-environmental behaviours and provides the infrastructure for it, for example, in the form of a recycling system.

Sheikh Mohamed Toulba is concerned about the present state of nature. He sees technology as one of the problems since technology created a separation between humans and nature and also increased the level of pollution and destruction.

### **5.1.5 Sami Bryant**

Sami Bryant studied Islamic studies at the University of Cardiff and gained a master's degree in Islam in contemporary Britain with a dissertation on the Muslim Extinction Rebellion XR-movement. He is also a youth ambassador for the IFEES, the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences. In this role, his task is to motivate young Muslims to act pro-environmentally and engage in environmental actions. He is also helping create an environmental branch within the Muslim Council of Wales, which, however, is still in its infancy.

His interest in environmentalism is very much affected by his father, who was environmentally active prior to his conversion to Islam. However, the discussion about the environment in his family was "always put in Islamic terms." His understanding of being an environmentalist is less an academic concern but rather his feeling of responsibility towards God and being grateful to God for His creation. Islam and environmental concern are inseparable, yet, most of his

experiences of God happened in nature, inspired by beauty, and less in the mosque. He sees the environmental crisis as caused by a feeling of disconnection with “God and the design of His creation.” From this perspective, taking care of the environment is undoubtedly a religious duty, independently of the results. Sam Bryant explains this by quoting an hadīth which prompts the believer to plant a sapling, even if the world around is ending. Bryant’s interpretation of this hadīth is that “your duty is not bounded by your chances of success.” Regarding the environment, even if the ecological situation looks helpless, it is still our duty to do our best to improve the situation and save nature.

Although Islam certainly inspired him, Sam Bryant does not view religion as the sole motivating force of green movements. On the contrary, religions like Islam can be very much focused on doomsday and the afterlife, leaving the protection of the environment a secondary aspect of religious concern. The example he gives to illustrate his point is the evangelical movement in the United States, which tends to see the earth only as a temporary abode of humanity, and thus only partially worth of protection.

Bryant’s dissertation was a sociological approach to the Muslim Extinction Rebellion movement. Although environmental activism is often seen as a white, middle-class, progressive movement within a secular society, Sam Bryant concluded that “there is a faith or religious element to the environmental movement,” which is important to recognise. This is particularly true for Extinction Rebellion.

According to Sam Bryant, making Islamic environmental principles more known to the general public, like, through the work of Muslim Extinction Rebellion, would not necessarily result in a positive effect regarding Islamophobia. In his understanding, Islamophobia in Britain is less based on the fear of Islam as a religion, but instead, it is a racist phenomenon. As a minority group, Muslims are a racialised group in the UK. Also, “Britain as a whole is not religious enough to have a religious problem with Islam.” Similarly, interfaith dialogue would not help

solve Islamophobia because it is too much of a niche interest of religious attentive people talking to each other. As a whole, Britain is too secular to be affected by such dialogues.

Another aspect is that, generally speaking, society is more comfortable with spiritual practices from religious traditions like Buddhism or Hinduism, which are not taken seriously as religions, than institutionalised religions like Islam. There are many Islamic ideas to engage with, but as a mirror of society, the environmental movement is more comfortable with spiritual traditions than with religions with capital letters.

The most significant barrier for Muslims and non-Muslims to engage in pro-environmental actions is not the religion or absence of religions but economic status and geography. The overwhelming majority of British Muslims are on the social and economic side, on the lower end of society. “They live in cities previously industrialised and now post-industrial.” This is the biggest obstacle. Muslims tend to have less contact with nature and, on average, to be excluded from the countryside. The lack of direct experience with and exposure to nature and the economic disadvantages many Muslims face are the biggest obstacles to Muslim environmentalism.

To illustrate some of the other difficulties Muslims face in British society, Sam Bryant mentioned the debate that followed from the statement of Green party co-leader Jonathan Bartley in 2019, who supported the abolishment of halāl slaughter for the protection of animal welfare. Muslim representatives felt that Bartley’s claim had “nothing to do with the green agenda” but rather “with scapegoating the Muslim community.”<sup>621</sup> Such occurrences are certainly noticed by the British Muslim community, who might feel less accepted within the environmental movement. At the same time, according to Sam Bryant, most halāl slaughterhouses do not follow halāl rules

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<sup>621</sup> Walker, Jonathan (2019): *Green Party accused of “Muslim-bashing” after co-leader says he would ban halal slaughter*. In: <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/green-party-accused-muslim-bashing-17336741> (accessed on 16.06.2022)



in their totality. This led environmentally conscious Muslims to prefer free-range, organic meat over halāl meat.

In his research into the Muslim Extinction Rebellion, composed of roughly ten active members at the time, Sam Bryant noticed that most of the Muslims involved were not “average” Muslim living in the UK. Most were either economically or otherwise privileged, had an atypical Muslim background, or showed certain aspects in their biography that created a “distance” to Islam. To explain what he means by “distance to Islam,” he mentions his most important religious and environmentalist Muslim teacher, who was married to a white, non-Muslim woman. This marriage created a “distance” from Islam, or, in my words, it allowed a broader perspective on Islam, and to incorporate “non-Muslim” perspective in regard to certain topics. Many of the Muslim activists in Extinction Rebellion were “twice migrant.”<sup>622</sup> According to Sam Bryant, “twice migrants” are generally economically better positioned than other Muslims. This privileged economic position is probably one of the reasons why they tend to be more involved in environmental activism than other British Muslims. Muslim XR also shows a high representation of converts to Islam engaging in green activism.

Another peculiarity that makes Muslim -XR stand up from more “orthodox” Islamic groups is their open support for the LGBT movement. There has been an internal debate about the consequences of openly supporting homosexual rights and the readiness of more conservative Muslims to join the Muslim XR movement. Muslim XR members discussed potential reactions of an “imagined Muslim orthodoxy”<sup>623</sup>, which Sam Bryant regarded as an interesting sociological phenomenon. Bryant disagrees with the stereotype of a Muslim orthodoxy. However, he regards it as a real possibility that “all sorts of Muslims that would be on board with environmental

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<sup>622</sup> “Twice migrant” is a term mostly used for people of South Asian origin who migrated to the UK from a different country than their country of origin. *Twice migrants: African Asian migration in the UK*. In: <https://www.striking-women.org/module/map-major-south-asian-migration-flows/twice-migrants-african-asian-migration-uk> (accessed on the 17.06.2022)

<sup>623</sup> This point will be discussed more extensively in the next chapter as it is a relevant aspect of intersectionality and the environmental movement

activism would not feel comfortable being part of a group that was so vocally affirming of LGBT identities.” This is potentially an obstacle in creating a Muslim mass movement that includes all Muslim groups.

Islamic environmentalism certainly exists in Muslim countries. In Britain, it is primarily grassroots movements within the Muslim communities, with England having far more activists than Wales. He is not sure “there is enough of an Islamic environmental movement in Wales” to begin with. However, he is more comfortable talking about British environmental movements rather than distinguishing between Wales and the rest of the UK. Most activities occur in England because England has the UK’s highest-density Muslim population.

For the future, Sam Bryant hopes for more democracy, more political engagement in environmental issues, and a widescale mobilisation of grassroots movements, which would require “mass democratic participation.” However, speaking of the future, for him, it is clear that “our job is not to hope. Our job is to do our duty.”

#### **5.1.6 Omar Sabry**

Omar Sabry was born in Cardiff, Wales. His ethnic background is Arab on his father’s side and Malay on his motherly side. By profession, he is an accountant and the Muslim Council of Wales treasurer. He also had an involvement with the Eco-Islam section of the organisation.

His involvement with Eco-Islam includes volunteering at his local mosque, the Dar Ul-Isra Mosque in Cardiff, where he is trying to make the mosque more sustainable and environmentally friendly. Sabry aims with his engagement to increase environmental awareness among the congregation and to make the mosque buildings more sustainable. For this purpose, he started a youth initiative called the Green Mosque, which fundraised for different projects in the mosque. One example is the raising of 5000 pounds invested into infrastructure changes, such as adding bike racks to the front of the mosque to encourage people to cycle instead of using the car. They

also looked into rainwater harvesting and solar panel, but decided against them. The solar panel is too costly, and the rainwater harvesting system seems useless since there is plenty of rain in Wales. When changes are made within the mosque, they need to be justified economically and environmentally, so the final rationale.

According to Omar Sabry, the Eco-movement within his Muslim community is slowly growing. The biggest challenge for him was the mixed ethnical and socio-economic background of the youth group he was working with, composed of middle-class and working-class children.

Environmental issues tended to concern more middle-class children than others ones. According to Omar Sabry, this may be because “working-class kids have greater problems to worry about.” Amongst children, an interest in the environment is mostly not existent in the first place. To explain this, Sabry gave the example of a fundraising project in which a group of young people from the mosque cycled from London to Paris. The main attraction for the children was the activity of cycling.. However, “that adventure was in tandem with the fundraising and the environmental awareness ...they slowly got the grips with and learned more about the environment and sustainability.”

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and related measures, the environmental projects in the mosque were put on hold and, and need now to find new momentum.

Another problem regarding environmental projects is the recurring question if funds from the Muslim community should be used for humanitarian purposes or for the environment. Omar Sabry feels that perhaps “Muslims locally and globally do not take the environmental crisis seriously” enough, at least in comparison with other faith communities. The foremost reason for this is the more pressing problems Muslims are confronted with, such as humanitarian and justice issues around the world. It is an ongoing debate about which problems need to be prioritised and given financial aid.

Growing up, Omar Sabry was always aware of the closeness of the Qur'ān and Hadīth to issues related to nature and the environment. He also read the Qur'ān in English to better understand its meaning. He cannot assess how far other Muslims are aware of Islamic environmental ideas. Many Muslims read the Qur'ān only in Arabic, without knowing or understanding the meaning of the verses. Therefore, he is unsure if his awareness of the connection between ecology and Islam is representative of the whole Muslim community. However, what brings a consciousness of the importance of taking care of nature within Islam, is being both informed about climate change and knowing the scriptures. Reading the Qur'ān with scientific knowledge about climate change gives the verses “a different meaning, a great meaning.” Teachers and imams have a vital role to play in imparting Islamic environmental ideas. They have more power and influence than other preachers from other faith communities. Muslims should be at the forefront of the environmental movement because the care of nature is an important “parcel and part of our faith.” The fact that Muslim communities are not at the forefront of the environmental movement is, according to Omar Sabry, “a reflection of how poorly our institutions are doing in these matters.” However, as already mentioned, the primary concern with other humanitarian and socio-economic problems might be the root cause for the lack of green engagement.

Another reason why there are fewer eco-circles in Wales than in England, for example, is that Muslim communities in Wales are smaller and more ethnically mixed. For example, there are no “Pakistani” or “Arabic,” only mosques. Different ethnicities are mixed in smaller numbers in one mosque, making it more challenging to create active circles. However, Omar Sabry also sees the small size of the communities as an advantage. In smaller communities, faith members can be addressed, directly involved, and influenced more deeply.

The Welsh government and institutions, in general, are very good at making the country more sustainable. However, because of the secular and liberal background, they are making no efforts to give religions “its due regard” in matters of environmentalism and sustainability. The

government could do more to integrate the Muslim communities into its sustainability efforts.

Omar Sabry feels that, as a community, Muslims have not been approached by the government at all, and they never received any funding, probably “because we (the Welsh) are quite determined to be quite liberal, we do not dare to do that.”

### **5.1.7 Anonymous respondent**

The following respondent preferred to remain anonymous. The respondent is a researcher at a university in Cardiff with a focus on Ramadan celebrations in Wales.

Many mosques in Wales have been involved in a Green Mosque campaign for a number of years. During Ramadan in particular, they have tried to be more sustainable, for example by distributing reusable cutlery and water bottles and minimising food waste. Online campaigns have also promoted vegan Ramadan and, more generally, a vegan lifestyle for Muslims. The interviewee believes that Muslim communities in Wales have responded well to such campaigns and that many mosques are making greater efforts to become more sustainable. Most Muslims will agree and support environmental ideas and efforts since Islam sees humans as the earth's stewards, and taking care of the planet is a religious duty. However, when it comes to practicalities, the degree of engagement varies significantly according to the individual Muslim's abilities, interests, and material-economic capacities. The biggest obstacle to pro-environmental behaviour is, in fact, the socio-economic situation of many mosques and Muslims. According to the respondent, some Muslim communities in the UK are quite deprived and poor. Moreover, "in terms of environmentalism, it can be quite costly sometimes to make these changes in people's lives." Recycling is not the issue, everybody can do it, but when it comes to buying biodegradable or reusable products or choosing eco-products, eco clothing, etcetera, it becomes too expensive and not affordable for some people.

The respondent does not regard Islamophobia as an obstacle to engaging in environmental activism. It is so that individuals choose their field of activism, and this is not always the environment.

#### **5.1.8 Dr. Amira Bahadur- Kutkut**

Amira Bahadur-Kutkut is the Muslim chaplain for Cardiff Metropolitan University. She was born and raised in Cardiff, where she became a scholar in Islamic theology. In her doctoral research, she explored the different roles of women in Islam. Amira Bahadur- Kutkut has also been involved in interfaith dialogue over the past ten years through several organisations. She is on the executive board of Dar Ul-Isra Islamic centre in Cardiff and runs several study circles teaching people about Islam.

People have become more aware of climate change and environmental issues in the past ten years. In Wales, in particular, there has been quite a massive drive towards sustainability and the environment in general. However, she is unaware of any particular activities within her faith community. According to Bahadur-Kutkut, the reason is that minority communities in general, “whether it is a religious minority or an ethnic minority, have lots of other things to deal with, and environmental issues might not be the top concern.” Environmentalism is a long-term commitment, and the effects of climate change are not felt as an immediate problem as other issues like poverty or homelessness. There is a “certain level of privilege,” so Bahadur-Kutkut, “involved with being able to engage with those issues.” Consequently, the topic of sustainability and climate change is not prioritised in her faith community.

Social and economic problems cannot be solved overnight; however, to improve the level of engagement for the environment, education plays a key role. Part of this should happen through the imams on the pulpit. However, imams also need to be educated on the importance of this matter. In the past, sensibilisation for a particular topic through education happened for different

issues, such as domestic violence and mental health, with positive results. The same sensibilisation could be achieved also for environmental topics.

One good example of Eco-Islam activism is the Eco–Mosque in Cambridge. However, the amount of money needed for such projects is, in most cases, not available in Wales, and when fundings are available, they tend to be used for other projects, like building car parking spaces in front of the mosque. This way, the ecological issues are at the bottom of the list. Mosques in Wales have limited their sustainability engagement to using less plastic and introducing renewable items. There is hope that as the congregation becomes younger, it will move to more sustainable choices.

Interfaith dialogue can help curb environmental engagement within Muslim communities; however, the motivation must come from within. Also, other religious groups often have more resources and support. Interfaith dialogue is “not a balanced playing field.” Interfaith dialogue helps share ideas, but then the respective institutions have to become active, and unfortunately, the financial resources are not equally distributed amongst the different faith groups.

### **5.1.9 Muhsen Hassanin**

Muhsen Hassanin is the owner of a farm that he runs together with his wife. The farm is named "Harmony Farm." It is 55 acres big and located between Pontypool and Mamhilad in the Welsh Valleys. Muhsen Hassanin operates his farm according to Islamic values, including Islamic environmental principles. He also adheres to the tradition of Naqshbandi, a prominent Sunni order of Sufism, which further influenced his thinking about nature and the care of the environment.

He used to work in the food industry and has always been interested in the countryside. His decision to become a farmer was a consequence of his critical questioning of the methods of

industrialised food production and the pharmaceutical and military industries. He realised that even organic farming was still heavily dependent on industrial inputs such as fertilisers, organic herbicides and glyphosate.

The name “Harmony farm” is inspired by the Islamic principle of *mizān*, which means balance or harmony. In all world religions, including the Judeo-Christian tradition, Buddhism or Hinduism, there is the idea of humans being representatives of God on earth. Because of that, humanity "has to take into consideration every being, from the molecule, the atoms, all the way to the large inanimate beings and animate beings. So, you care for the stone in the same way you care for a camel or a sheep or the water." *Mizān* is the consequence of taking this responsibility seriously.

Muhsen Hassanin was inspired to practice permaculture by an Australian teacher, Geoff Lawton, who is also Muslim. His teachings of permaculture are permeated with Islamic principles on nature and its care. This inspired him, even more to use permaculture on his farm.

Hassanin understands his farm also as an educational place that is open to the public to visit. According to his observation, most of the visitors, Muslims, and non-Muslims, are alien to the concept of farming and sustainability. Many Muslims are not aware that their faith tradition is deeply rooted in ecological thinking. Muhsen Hassanin believes that this is due to two factors: poverty and urbanisation led many people to become dependent on the food industry and the food-pharmaceutical complex. Secondly, many Muslims do not know their tradition properly. For this to be changed, proper religious education through scholars is needed.

Because of a certain ignorance about their faith tradition, many Muslims mimic the rest of the population. Most Muslims in Wales live in the city, and urban living together with poverty is causing a lack of awareness of environmental issues. However, Hassanin believes that economic growth within Muslim communities will bring more consciousness and better choices regarding food consumption and sustainability.



Muhsen Hassanin feels that living in the UK as a Muslim, even today, is "still a weird thing; there is a lot of ghettoisation, and there is a lot of Muslims feeling like they are the victim." Since 9/11, Muslims are often perceived as terrorists or a danger to society. This might result in a feeling of not belonging here. One way to install a feeling of belonging is to reconnect with the soil of the place, for example, by planting trees. People could get involved with soil and soil production, leading to food production and animal interaction. All this could contribute to an increasing sense of belonging to the local community.

The covid-19 pandemic has been an opportunity to look deeper into our habits, and to "question everything about war, feminine, disease, where the food is coming from". The pandemic shook our sense of safety, and this was needed. Activism is not helpful unless we do not look inward. Sufism is very clear about this and stresses that "we have to change ourselves first." To lead by giving a good example is crucial, and this is one of the purposes of Harmony Farm: the children that come here, even if for just one day, will go back to their city homes with a different idea about the countryside, and in future, they might be the one who trigger changes.

According to Muhsen Hassanin, the present environmental crisis, at its root, is a spiritual crisis. Climate change cannot be solved if we keep the same mentality. "We must open up to the old ways of doing things blended with modern knowledge." In Western society, materialism is very strong, and spirituality can show how to become less dependent on material gain.

Muhsen Hassanin indicated several measures which the government of Wales could take on to promote sustainability in the food system, such as funding small producers, demonstrating urban permaculture, promoting urban food production, installing green roofs, and, more generally speaking, encouraging people to grow their food, similar as it has been done during the war-period between 1938 and 1945.

Muhsen Hassanin is a registered Halāl butcher. He thinks that the halāl industry in the UK just mirrors the general food system in the sense that it is very profit oriented. The only difference is

the halāl certification. Halāl slaughter is not more sustainable than other slaughter systems. There are very few "organic" halāl butchers in Wales, but the demand for halāl meat has risen, especially after the covid-19 pandemic, even more than for vegan foods.

#### **5.1.10 Mark Bryant**

Mark Bryant is the development officer at the Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK at Cardiff University. He is also an Eco-adviser at the Hazrat Sultan Bahu Trust with a seat in Birmingham and a project development adviser at the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environment Sciences IFEES. In 2010 he supervised the Islamic Garden Project initiated by Cardiff University. Within the Muslim Council of Wales, he is establishing an Eco-group to tackle environmental questions, particularly concerning pollution. Most Muslims in South Wales live in urban areas. Consequently, they are disproportionately more affected by poor air quality than other groups. In particular, children suffer from respiratory problems. In Islam, allowing harm to happen to a child is illegal. The parents, in this case primarily Muslim parents, are responsible for preventing such harm.

Together with the Bahu Trust, he is involved in the environmental education of imams in the UK in the form of meetings where they develop ideas for more sustainable solutions for their communities. Previous to the covid-19 pandemic, for instance, they organised a plastic-free Iftar in Birmingham. The Bahu Trust is a Sufi-inspired organisation. According to Mark Bryant, it is unsurprising that many Islamic environmental movements are connected to Sufism, less because of theological differences but more because of “the way of doing things.”

For sustainable development, according to Mark Bryant, what counts are the small steps, and this is for a specific reason. The whole idea of environmentalism is a white middle-class concept, and the Muslim taxi driver in Birmingham or Cardiff will probably not resonate with their argumentation. For the Muslim community, a different approach is needed. “It is important to

explain that the world's poor are the least resilient to climate change ... and Muslim populations around the world represent a large number of those poor." Sending aid in the form of money, as it is done during Iftar, is not the most effective way to alleviate poverty. However, applying pro-environmental habits, such as reducing the use of plastic, on the long run helps to ameliorate the situation of poor people affected by climate change in other parts of the world. It is better to focus on the individual's positive contribution to the environment instead of talking about the harm people are causing.

According to research by the Bahu Trust, Muslims in the UK tend to be more motivated by their faith than other faith groups. Mark Bryant himself is a convert to Islam and has, therefore, experiences with non-Islamic religions previous to his conversion. From his perspective, Islamic environmental ethics are the strongest compared to other religions of his knowledge. At the same time, implementing those principles within Muslim communities is not always easy. One reason is to be seen in the fact that Islam is not an institutionalised religion like, for example, Catholicism, where the message of the Pope is "disseminated down through a very structured system."

However, the environmental crisis is also a chance for interfaith dialogue because climate change affects all human beings independently of their faith. According to Mark Bryant, "it is literally the first time in recorded history that human beings, in order to save themselves, are going to need to work together." This is a challenge but also a chance to recognise our basic, common humanity and work together for a better future.

As the root cause of the environmental crisis, Mark Bryant sees greediness and the unsustainable financial model based on capitalism. Only values-based systems of thought, like religions, can counteract the profit-driven economy causing so much harm.

Regarding sustainability within the Muslim Council of Wales, the endeavours are still at a very early stage. However, one of the projects the council would like to start, particularly after the

covid-19 pandemic, is offering environmental training. According to Mark Bryant, this will be a crucial step, “there is an illiteracy in the environment with many Muslims.” Once people are more familiar with the topic, there can be an exchange of ideas also based on faith. Another project for the near future is to produce and distribute resources for the various mosques to work towards an eco-mosque or becoming more environmentally friendly. The youth of the Muslim communities should be involved in creating such resources. This is a very important aspect because there is a disconnect between young Muslims and the mosques. Mark Bryant sees the role of the Muslim Council of Wales in being a consultant for sustainability issues within the Muslim community and also in bringing together environmental activists, including imams.

#### **5.1.11 Sheikh Mohsen El-Beltagi**

Originally from Egypt, Sheikh Mohsen El-Beltagi holds a Ph.D. in Islamic studies and is currently the Muslim chaplain of Swansea University and interfaith lead. Previous to his position at Swansea University, he was the local mosque's imam.

From an Islamic perspective, he considers the protection of nature as a religious duty. Many verses in the Qur'ān and stories from the life of the Prophet show this. To misuse or even destroy nature is considered to be a great sin and disobedience toward God.

However, according to Mohsen El-Beltagi, Islamic religious leaders and organisations are not doing enough to tackle the problem of climate change and environmental crisis. Other faith groups he deals with within his interfaith activity take environmental problems more seriously. Within his congregation, he is aware of only two people taking the topic seriously; one is engaging in environmental studies and sharing his knowledge with the community; the second person takes young people out in nature and encourages them to live healthy life in harmony with the environment.

What is very important and could be improved within the Muslim communities is, on the one hand, education on the topic of the environment and what Islam says about it, and on the other hand, better collaboration and communication with government representatives and politicians. Religious spaces could be opened up for consultation and discussion with the scientific community and religious leaders should become more knowledgeable about the scientific aspect of the environmental crisis. The Muslim community, so El-Beltagi, should open up more to society and be more proactive regarding environmental engagement. Currently, he does not see enough engagement, which should be changed.

#### **5.1.12 Dr. Azim Ahmed**

Azim Ahmed is the Assistant Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Wales<sup>624</sup> and the Deputy Director at the Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK at the Cardiff University. He completed his doctorate in 2016 with an ethnographic study of a British mosque. His main research interests are the history and settlement of Muslims in Wales, and he is currently (2022) working on a publication about nearly 2000 British Mosques. Ahmed is also the founder and editor of the magazine "On Religion," a quarterly publication on religion, society, and current affairs.<sup>625</sup>

Mosques commonly play an important role in the implementation of Islamic values, including environmental principles. When looking at mosques, we have on one side the institutional mosques, which focus on issues like education and communal prayer. On the other side, in Islam, the entire world is considered a sacred space. This is why, when it comes to mosques, there is no process to sanctify them compared to the Christian tradition. In Islam, worship can

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<sup>624</sup> *International Federation for interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue*. In: <https://ifdialogue.com/dr-abdul-azim-ahmed/> (accessed on 03.07.2022)

<sup>625</sup> *Dr. Abdul-Aziz Ahmed*. In: <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/people/view/1383875-ahmed-azim> (accessed on 03.07.2022)

happen anywhere, and "all space has sacredness attached to it of varying degrees of different levels of intensity." This is why one often finds Muslims praying on beaches, in the park, or "on the side of a football pitch in the middle of a game." Based on this understanding, Muslims are very likely to engage in activities such as "picking up litter, keeping the street tidy, making sure that they do not engage in any overtly harmful practices." However, according to Ahmed, such practices are not enough to tackle the problem of climate change and environmental destruction.

Some other changes can be seen around the way Ramadan is practiced. Although the covid-19 pandemic brought an immense change in how Ramadan was practiced during the past few years, many Mosques in Cardiff, Newport, and Swansea are striving to have green Ramadan, focusing on the reduction of plastic and the use of recyclable or compostable products. Ahmed was impressed by the widespread acceptance amongst Muslims of such practices and the increasing awareness about food production and how they impact the environment. Before the pandemic, "all sorts of campaigns" on sustainability and environmental issues were "really picking upstream." Even though there is "a link between the pandemic and its effects on the environment," the lockdowns and other measures have interrupted that momentum and created new priorities. "For many Muslims, it is about trying to get day-to-day life."

In terms of Islamic environmental activism in Wales, especially in comparison to activism in England, it is important to bear in mind that the Muslim population in Wales is tiny. According to a 2011 census, the Muslim population in Wales amounts to around 50 000 individuals. This is a very small population compared to the over 2.6 million Muslims in England. Consequently, there is less institutional development amongst Muslims in Wales. This weaker institutional development is also reflected in the type of mosques in Wales. In his dissertation, Ahmed mentions three types of mosques: purpose-built mosques, converted mosques, and home- or private- mosques. The majority of mosques in Wales are converted mosques. This may impact

the "visibility" of the green aspects or aspirations of mosques, as they do not attract public attention compared to the Eco-Mosque in Cambridge.

However, mosques play a central role when it comes to sustainability. Their most significant contribution is to "organise people." They build "civil society" or a "community of people organising away from the state, the government, and away from the business and market part of society." According to Ahmed, Britain has a fragile civil society. However, civil society is "the key solution" for environmental problems and sustainable development. Ultimately governments pursue their interests, and businesses are focused on profits. However, the environment is essential for civil society because it concerns them, their children, and future generations.

Muslims in Britain are the "most organised civil society groups" and have the potential to push forward issues around the environment and sustainability. This has not come to fruition yet, but according to Ahmed, the picture will be different in five or ten years, and mosques will have "a very important role to play in Wales." Also, generally speaking, religion is the heart of civil society for a few reasons: religions are good at bringing people together and organising them, and secondly, more than any other civil society, religions have a vision and a responsibility to change the world. Religions offer an alternative worldview to the one who sees the planet as a resource and the only meaning of life in wealth and power. Thus, religions play an important role in talking about the environmental crisis.

In summary, according to Ahmed, it is only natural that the Eco-Islam movement in Wales is rather small. Not only numbers of Muslims living in Wales play a significant role, but also the geography of the region. For any movement to thrive, communication and actual meetings are essential. Unfortunately, the state of Wales' infrastructure makes it challenging to travel fast, "it does not matter where you are in Wales, it is always easier to drive whether you are going from city to city" or to other parts in the countryside. The poor state of the infrastructure is an important limitation for the thriving of an Eco-Islam movement. However, on the more positive

side, Muslims living in Wales are literally immersed in nature, even living in a city like Cardiff, natural places are never too far away. That might impact Muslims in a positive way, wanting them to care more about the environment "but not in an organized way."

Ahmed identifies three major challenges for Muslim environmentalism in Wales: first, the socio-economic disadvantage of most Muslims in Wales, for which one of the primary concerns is earning enough for food, job security, and the economic well-being of their families.

Environmental problems are likely perceived as too general and too long-term: "until people have the financial confidence and security to be volunteering more and focus on other issues, they will only attend to the immediate needs."

The second challenge is Islamophobia, which is perceived as a far more imminent and significant threat than environmental issues. Muslims face Islamophobia on a day-to-day basis, for example, when looking for a job or dealing with government policies. According to Ahmed, there is a link between Islamophobia, the far-right movement, and environmentalism. With increasing climate change and decreasing natural resources, the pressure on the economy and society grows. This, in turn, strengthens right-wing political tendencies and ideologies, which form the breeding ground for Islamophobia. The third challenge is presented by the covid-19 pandemic, which disrupted everything. It is not foreseeable how long it will take to fully recover from the aftermath of the pandemic. For example, how many mosques will "survive" the pandemic remains unclear. Possibly, the number of mosques in Wales will decrease. This is due to the financial strain they are facing. As charitable institutions, mosques depend largely on donations and attendance, which are dripping. Also, maintenance costs have increased due to safety measures that need to be implemented.

One aspect missing in Wales is an interfaith alliance on the environment. Wales has a faith forum where all faith groups from Wales meet with the government ministers. This is unique in the



whole of the UK. However, till now, this forum has not been used to address the problem of climate change and sustainability.

### **5.1.13 Fahad Alshiddi**

Fahad Alshiddi has been a lecturer in architecture at the Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University in Saudi Arabia for the past 15 years. He holds a Master's degree in Building sciences from the University of Southern California. He is a member of the Holy Mosque Expansion in Medina and Mecca, a project for the architectural expansion of the existing mosques. He designed six mosques across the globe. Presently, Alshiddi is a Ph.D. candidate at Cardiff University under the supervision of Dr. Magda Sibley at the Welsh School of Architecture. He is researching ways to reduce the energy consumption of mosques with a particular focus on buildings in Saudi Arabia. However, the overall aim is to transfer the knowledge gained from his research to mosques in other countries like the UK. He was involved with Dr. Sibley in the project entitled "The Post-pandemics smart Eco-Mosque and its Enhanced Cultural Heritage Role", which ran from October 2021 to March 2022. The project was a multidisciplinary collaboration between Cardiff University and Kuwait University with the aim to co-produce strategies for the design of "Smart Eco-Mosques." These mosques use "digital technologies to enhance the energy efficiency of the building and the comfort, safety, and wellbeing of the worshippers, at different operational capacities."<sup>626</sup> The Smart Eco-Mosque designed through the project can be used as a prototype mosque that can be replicated worldwide.

One focus of the project was the "post-pandemic" world. The covid-19 pandemic deeply affected the modes of prayer in mosques. Typically, it is required that the worshippers in the

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<sup>626</sup> *The "Eco-Mosque" in a post-Covid world.* In: <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/news/view/2583553-the-eco-mosque-in-a-post-covid-world> (accessed on 29.07.2022)

mosque pray shoulder to shoulder without space between them. During the pandemic, this was impossible and marked a big struggle for people who needed to be convinced to pray separately. Many mosques did not have enough space to accommodate worshippers under such conditions. A post-pandemic mosque will consider the possible event of a pandemic in the future. It will be designed to create additional space for worship, for example, by adding more entrances or redesigning the courtyards. A post-pandemic building should be flexible enough to cope with possible future events. The word "smart" alludes to the use of digital technologies as an operational system to optimise energy consumption, calculate the optimal natural ventilation and daylight use, improve indoor air quality and regulate indoor temperatures.

Mosques are central to the implementation of Islamic environmental principles and for the development of a sustainable society because they are more than places of worship. They are the heart of the community. Beyond a place for prayers, they offer space for small markets, and they have classrooms for studying the holy scriptures or general studies. It is the place where ideas are exchanged, and a considerable amount of community life happens in the mosque. Therefore, mosques are the best place to raise awareness about environmental issues, motivate people and give guidance. Mosques can shape the community. However, the idea and concept of Eco-Mosque, though growing in momentum, is still at the beginning. "On a scale of one to ten, we are on level one or two," so Fahad Alshiddi.

## **5.2 Experts**

The second section is devoted to interviews with experts on sustainability in Wales, two religious scholars, Dr Kidwell and Dr Nita, who research faith-based environmentalism, and a leading British sociologist on Islamophobia. The following section provides a general introduction to the Welsh sustainability experts, followed by the interview questions. Unlike the other interviews,

which are introduced individually, the responses of the sustainability experts are summarised under each question to avoid redundancy.

### 5.2.1 Welsh Sustainability Experts

**Dr. Morwenn Spear** is a KESS2 (Knowledge Economy Skill Scholarship) sustainability expert. She worked for over 15 years at the BioComposites Centre at Bangor University, where she studied timber and a wide range of biobased materials. She is a fellow of the Institute of Materials, Minerals, and Mining IOM3 and vice chair of the Wood Technology Society. Currently, Spears is researching new timber treatments, strategies to make buildings more energy efficient, and the environmental effects of materials and objects such as disposable and reusable facemasks.<sup>627</sup>

**Campbell Skinner** is a Life Cycle Assessment Analyst at the BioComposites Centre and a KESS2 sustainability expert. He has extensively worked in carbon footprinting in a wide range of fields, such as agriculture, horticulture, and the development of bio-based products. In the past, he also worked at the University's School of Natural Sciences, where, amongst other things, he specialised in agriculture greenhouse emissions. He developed the Footprints4Food, where he undertook around 100 farm and food product carbon footprints.<sup>628</sup>

**George Roberts** is the Life Cycle Assessment support officer at the BioComposites Centre at Bangor University and a KESS2 sustainability expert. He has been involved in several Life Cycle Assessments, such as wood-based products, plant-based leather, and the development of an innovative carbon calculator for one of the largest timber companies in Britain. Recently, he has been researching the environmental effects of disposable and reusable facemasks.

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<sup>627</sup> *Our Sustainability Experts*. In: <https://kess2.ac.uk/sustainability/experts/> (accessed on 15.07.2022)

<sup>628</sup> *Ibid.*

**Dr. Gwenith Elias** is a former sustainable development research officer at Bangor University.

In this function, she collaborated with different projects and organisations to help implement the Well-being for the Future Generations (Wales) Act Goals and Principles and make sustainable development a practical reality.

**How would you assess the environmental situation in Wales? What are the significant problems and challenges, and in which environmental sectors is Wales performing particularly well?**

All respondents agreed that Wales is doing exceptionally well in achieving sustainable goals. As Skinner and Roberts pointed out, Wales is a rural region with a low population density, which makes it easier to implement environmental principles. Overall, Wales has excellent environmental legislation and leads the UK in many areas. Examples include efforts to recycle waste and food waste in general, to reduce air pollution through new speed limits and to build a network of cycle paths across the country. Elias pointed out that the biggest challenge remains climate change. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the difficulties people have faced in recent years, the climate change emergency has not been prioritised. The public needs to be reawakened to this issue. Another challenge, says Elias, is the loss of biodiversity, which affects Wales. According to Spear, solving the problems of the environment, climate change and sustainable development requires the whole of society - institutions, governments, businesses and individual citizens - to move in the same direction. This is the most essential and fundamental requirement for progress on the environment.

**In 2005 Marshall proposed a “sustainability hierarchy” where certain aspects of sustainability are regarded as more important than others. According to Marshall, widening the definition of sustainability to too many dimensions, like social justice, or cultural heritage, would dilute the concept of sustainability. Would you agree with this statement? And why?**

All respondents disagreed with Marshall's statements. Although there is a general recognition of the complexity of sustainability, all agreed that environmental sustainability is not possible without addressing social equity and vice versa. According to Spear, sustainable development is about tackling poverty and consumption growth. Where the priorities are, depends mainly on the context. In India, for example, the priorities for sustainable development are different than in Britain. However, globally, all sustainable development goals matter. "Sustainable development" so Spear "is about people and people sustained livelihood."

According to Skinner, the UN sustainability goals largely recognise the importance of social sustainability and social justice and acknowledge the fact that they go hand in hand with environmental sustainability. Eleven of the 17 SDGs, in fact, have social elements to them. According to Elias, sustainability has to be approached holistically. This is why the Welsh sustainability goals include cohesive communities, language, and culture.

**Two of the Well-being goals for sustainable Wales are "Equal Wales" and "Cohesive communities." Do you think that environmental and social justice is a relevant issue in Wales?**

According to Spear, environmental and social justice are challenging problems to address. Overall, she believes that the Welsh Government is putting the right efforts in the right direction, and as she mentioned earlier in the interview, it is about getting the whole of society pulling into the same direction in order to make progress in sustainable development.

According to Elias, one weakness of the Welsh Well-being goals is that they do not stress enough the environmental aspects of sustainable development. In her view, the environment is the basis for everything; once environmental issues are resolved, other aspects will naturally follow. However, she also regards social justice as a fundamental goal. The government of Wales announced that by 2050 it aims to develop a more equal Wales and to eradicate racism from

Welsh society. This is an ambitious goal, especially considering that presently the costs of living are increasing, hitting in particular minorities and the poorer communities the hardest. So, it is vital to include social justice in the environmental discourse.

**Is it helpful to include faith-based activism as part of sustainable development? What role do faith-based groups play in Welsh environmentalism?**

Often, says Spear, religious communities are the strongest motivators, providing leadership and goals for a community. Whatever the religion, religious practices often make people more aware of other people or the environment in general. They promote qualities such as humility and tend to focus on “something bigger.” This is a good starting point for environmental and social justice, although religious communities tend to be more focused on social justice and care for the poorest. They can point to our environmental problems and act on them because it benefits the community. Faith-based activism is essential to address problems that would otherwise go unmentioned. Religions also create communities. Change is unlikely to come from individuals who 'go to work, come home, watch TV, go to the pub' and live in an isolated box.

According to Skinner, activism, independently of its form, “is always important in driving issues up to the government agenda.” Also, many issues around sustainability cannot be solved by governments alone. People need to change their behaviours and lifestyles, and activists can help to catalyse such changes. However, activist groups should also be careful not to alienate the broader public by becoming too dogmatic or by choosing extreme actions such as holding up public transport.

In line with the other respondents, Elias believes that it is important to mobilise everyone in civil society and that faith groups are as important as any other group. The advantages of involving faith communities are that they have “different perspectives on things” and are already organised

communities. “People have become much more competitive with each other rather than being content with what they have and helping each other.” This is why the present environmental crisis can be viewed as a “spiritual crisis,” so Elias. Faiths provide values and might counterbalance the rampant consumerism and capitalism, which are leading causes of environmental destruction.

### **What impact did the covid-19 pandemic have on sustainable development in Wales or, more generally, Welsh society?**

On the positive side, so Spear, the lockdown period increased the general awareness of the “community side of sustainable development.” People started organising themselves to support the poorest in their community, for example, by coordinating shopping for sick people or creating food banks. There was an increased awareness of the local nature and wildlife since people were not allowed to travel far. Along with it, there has been an increased appreciation of natural places and beauty. However, the covid-19 pandemic also had downsides. Travel restrictions put “enormous pressure on the landscape and overusing parks, people leaving litter because they were not used to being in places >outdoors<.” Another problem was the littering of face masks. Roberts and his team specifically conducted a study on the environmental effects of face masks, creating lifecycle assessments for three types of face masks, the surgical mask, which is the single-use disposable mask, and the polyester and cotton mask. The study included production and packaging energy costs so that each mask received an “environmental score ...from cradle to grave.” Environmentally speaking, the biggest problem with face masks was the littering in the wilderness, but also in the streets of urban areas.

According to Skinner, the pressures of the pandemic and the government’s responses showed that if an emergency is recognised, then resources and solutions can be mobilised very quickly. The question is, why is this urgency not felt for the environmental crisis? Climate change is the

most pressing crisis we are facing at the present moment. Working with different businesses, however, Skinner noticed a growing interest and concern about climate change that goes beyond marketing strategies. There is a clear shift “towards taking environmental sustainability more seriously,” and there is a growing understanding that a business can be successful in the long run only if it takes sustainability seriously. Skinner assesses this as a very positive trend.

In line with the other respondents, Elias also mentioned the initial positive effect of the lockdown measures in terms of reducing carbon dioxide emissions and the regeneration of wildlife and natural places. The covid-19 pandemic also revealed how our impact on nature comes back to haunt us, in this case in the form of a disease. By destroying natural habitats, we came too close to wild animals that are potential transmitters of zoonoses. On the other side, other forms of pollution have increased or have been created, like pollution through face masks and covid-19 test sets, which cannot be recycled. After two years, the initial optimism has subsided to a “kind of business as usual” attitude. Other problems have become more dominant, like health care or rising living costs, and this has taken the general public’s attention away from environmental issues.

### **5.2.2 Dr. Stephen Jones**

Dr. Stephen Jones is a sociologist specialising in the study of Islam and Muslims in Britain and in the research of the religious and non-religious public perceptions of science. He has studied Muslim communities for the past 15 years and is now a lecturer at the University of Birmingham in the College of Arts and Law. In 2022 he co-authored a study on Islamophobia in contemporary Britain with the title "The Dinner Table Prejudice."<sup>629</sup>

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<sup>629</sup> Jones H. Stephen, Unsworth Amy (2022): *The Dinner Table Prejudice. Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain*. In: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/documents/college-artslaw/ptr/90172-univ73-islamophobia-in-the-uk-report-final.pdf> (accessed on 12.07.2022)



According to Jones, Islamophobia is a significant impediment to Muslim environmental activism. The reasons for this are manifold. One of the most apparent obstacles is around charitable work and charitable organisations. The regulations for the charitable bodies of Muslim civil society groups are very complicated. One example comes from the charity commission for England and Wales, which regulates whether an initiative is allowed or not to receive charitable status.

According to Jones, the charity commission "has been quite stringent on Muslim organisations and investigated them much more regularly than non-Muslim charities." The former head of the charity commission, William Shawcross, who is now leading the government's antiracialisation program *Prevent*, has been criticised in the media for making controversial statements about Islam<sup>630</sup> and thus reinforcing Islamophobic thoughts. Even if discrimination on this practical level is limited to being stronger scrutinised than other charities, "when one is possibly subjected to investigation, it already makes these carry an extra burden that it might not otherwise."

Although Britain is a largely secular society, most people are used to some level of faith-based activism as a part of the charitable sector. So was education, for example, for a long time, a domain of Christian charities, and many charitable organisations, such as the Salvation Army, have their foundation in Christian faith. However, when it comes to Muslim charities, there might be a level of suspicion around their charitable bodies. When Islamic religious values are implemented to motivate the public to act in a certain way, this tends to be seen as "Islamist" and thus politically improper or even a real threat to society. According to Jones, this is "one of the things that the country struggles with quite significantly."

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<sup>630</sup> According to an article published by The Guardian, "the Charity Commission for England and Wales under Shawcross's tenure was accused of institutional bias against Muslims by the Claystone thinktank, while Muslim groups have highlighted as concerning the comments, he made in his book *Justice and the Enemy*, which appear to support the use of torture and the detention camp at Guantánamo Bay." In: Grierson Jamie, Dodd Vikram (2021): *William Shawcross's selection for Prevent role strongly criticised*. In: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/26/william-shawcross-selection-for-prevent-role-strongly-criticised> (accessed on 12.07.2022)

On the question about the "geographical distribution" of Islamophobia, Jones pointed out that within Britain, Wales has average levels of prejudice. However, the fundamental differences are less based on geographical regions. The real divide is between urban and rural areas. So, for example, London, probably due to its diversity, is a very tolerant area. In Wales, we would probably find a similar situation when comparing Cardiff with the remaining rural area, which is more conservative. However, proper research to prove this divide is still lacking.

In his study, Jones made a series of recommendations on how to counteract Islamophobia. These will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter. During the interview, he pointed out two particular interventions to be mentioned here: one is to assure consistent pressure on the governments to address publicly the problem of Islamophobia whenever it occurs. The media coverage as well should include more consistently the issue of Islamophobia. A second critical intervention would be to provide better protection of Muslim places of worship, similar to the protection given to synagogues. A significant role plays education and the question of religious literacy. According to Jones, a lot of Islamophobias is acted by people who have very little knowledge of religions and Islam, "so, it is very easy for people to have an understanding of Shari'ah or have an understanding of Jihad that just connotes violence and the desire to overturn the British political system, which is largely the media's fault."

From a Muslim perspective, Jones would recommend networking and collaborating with other institutions that are themselves trying to oppose Islamophobia, one example being the Christian-Muslim Forum and other bishops and clergy institutions. Such networks could be used to "build a collaborative opposition to the current Islamophobic tendency that we have in this country."

### **5.2.3 Dr. Jeremy Kidwell**

Jeremy Kidwell is an Associate Professor of Theological Ethics at the University of Birmingham. In his research, Kidwell confronts the ecological crisis by interrogating the ethical issues that lie

at the intersection of "nature" and "culture," ranging from ecological ethics, activist studies, religious conceptions of labour, and the philosophy of technology.<sup>631</sup>

Kidwell endorses a holistic approach to environmentalism because "if we are to really confront the climate crisis, we need to be able to engage with whole human beings rather than partial ones." The failure of doing this, so Kidwell, was the reason for the lack of success of some of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), which were straightforwardly scientific in the pathways of change, without engaging with whole persons, that is, "human beings who have individual cultural contexts and individual geographical contexts, human beings who are subject to injustice or privilege." In the context of environmentalism, religions, even if very different from each other, have a common and unique way of formulating and mobilising values within their communities, which brings a "kind of velocity to climate change engagement for individuals." Religious communities also offer a context for the formulation of values and the cultivation of politics and unique modes of engagement.

However, it is also essential to maintain a comprehensive and open definition of what is "religion." Secularism in Britain had increased constantly over the past one hundred years, with adherence and participation to worship services falling consistently. However, when "talking with people walking around in the street," it becomes evident that a "sense of orientation towards the transcendent or towards the sacred" is widespread, and this attitude can be categorised as religious. Unfortunately, such kind of "religiosity" is seldom taken into account by the policymakers, who still work with a binary idea of religiosity and secularism.

According to Kidwell, climate change is at its root a spiritual crisis. He goes further, suggesting that "the way that we respond to an issue, >is< always spiritual in nature, provided that we define spiritual in a way that is adequately inclusive and includes non-belief as well." The word "crisis" itself has a religious connotation. Defining climate change as a crisis has already framed it

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<sup>631</sup> *Jeremy Kidwell*. In: <https://jeremykidwell.info/> (accessed on 25.07. 2022)

as a particular type of religious discourse. In the past, religions have often been seen as the source of the problem (see, for example, Lyn White) and, by extension, not as part of the solution to the environmental crisis. According to Kidwell, it is problematic to acknowledge where the roots of the present crisis lie. What we can say is, "religion is here in the midst of it, and it is being mobilised in good ways and bad ways."

Environmental activism in the West is a predominantly white middle-class movement. In Britain, various radical political movements are actively interrogating this dynamic, racism behind green movements, and the unwillingness to question and displace white privileges. They are trying to think about subsidiarity and collectively in ways that are representative. Nevertheless, according to Kidwell, "environmentalism is still probably one of the least diverse categories of social action in British movement politics." Intersectional thinking, in general, and in particular within environmentalism, has a cyclical aspect. It is a process that is not always straightforward and has many backlashes.

When we look at sustainability from another perspective, minorities and immigrants are often the most sustainable groups in society. However, their sustainability is socially invisible because it is in the form of gardening or food growing, helping each other, and being solidary within their communities. The most sustainable people in Britain are the lower-income people. As Thomas Piketty demonstrated, "the higher the income levels, the less sustainable" is the lifestyle of an individual.

On an ending note, Kidwell hopes for a more tactical engagement of faith-based environmental activism with public policy. Often such religious movements see themselves as marginal, and their participation in environmentalism as a way of addressing that marginality. It would be good to see lived religion across all these different spaces of activism being discussed openly. So, for example, at COP26, it will be difficult to find anyone "who is not religious and whose engagement with the issue of climate change does not have some kind of an affective valence

which might be considered religious. It is just not discussed. It is not allowed. We have sanctioned ways of talking about the presence of religion in these spaces."

The present-day interfaith dynamics which preserve and protect white privileges should be transcended, and the platform should be given to black and minority ethnic activists and religious leaders. Organisations need to honestly look at themselves and recognise discrimination within their institutions. Climate change is such a matter of social justice, and unless inequality is not overcome, the results of the environmental movement will be cyclical and slow.

#### **5.2.4 Dr. Maria Nita**

Maria Nita is a lecturer in religious studies at the Open University. She wrote a doctoral thesis on "Faith in Transition: Christian and Muslims Climate Activists" in 2013. Her current research focuses on climate activism and protest rituals, as well as theoretical approaches to understanding cultural change in the age of climate change. Currently (2022), she is conducting ethnographic research inside the Extinction Rebellion movement via participant observation.

According to Nita, faith-based environmentalism plays a vital role within the climate change discourse as it builds the link between the green movement and the respective religious communities. Environmental faith groups are a kind of "hybrid" because they adopt a discourse from the green movement and adjust it to their faith vernaculars. With different degrees of success, they are a "conduit of exchange between the green movement and their traditional communities." In her research, Nita observed that Muslim environmentalists tend to drift away from their communities and slowly move more towards the green movement due to failure to bring their faith community and environmental activism together. This might also be due to the "anti-religious ethos" of the climate movement, which was more evident 10 to 12 years ago

when Nita started her research. This resulted in an identity conflict between faith-identity and an identification with the green movement.<sup>632</sup>

Especially in Britain, the environmental movement was very secular and “very concerned with not affiliating with any particular religious tradition.” This changed over time, mainly when the idea of inclusivity grew in importance. Nowadays, it is much easier for faith groups to join the environmental movement and find a public voice.

The nature of obstacles for faith-based environmental groups depends mainly on the religious tradition they come from and their cultural background. For liberal Christians, for example, it is easier to adapt to the “green language” and to develop, for instance, green prayers or green religious songs than for orthodox Christians in Rumania, Nita’s country of origin. There is a spectrum of obstacles, mainly depending on the religious tradition of the faith movement. For Muslims, so Nita, it is easier, compared with Christians, to adopt a green identity that does not collide with their Muslim identity. Often Muslim green activists readily put their religious identity in the background because of their immigrant status or origin. “Being an immigrant in the UK, there is a bigger acceptance to make your religious identity less visible.” However, this trend is changing, and the environmental movement at large is far more open to include religious voices in their discourse and activism than in the past.

### **5.3 Non-Welsh Eco-Islam experts**

The last of the three sections includes two interviews with leading experts and activists in the Eco-Islam movement, Rianne C. ten Veen from the Netherlands and Dr. Fatima Kowanda Yassin from Austria.

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<sup>632</sup> To describe this identity conflict, Hussain Muzammal, founder of the *London Islamic Network for the Environment*, later renamed as *Wisdom in Nature*, coined the term “cultural commute”

### 5.3.1 Rianne C. ten Veen

Rianne C. ten Veen has a Master's degree in Law from Leiden University, a Master's degree in International Politics from CERIS, Belgium, and Paris XI University, France, and a Post-Graduate-Diploma in Environmental Policy from the Open University, UK, where she worked as an associate lecturer for over nine years. Ten Veen has a particular interest in faith-based environmental projects: she is a member of the management team of the Islamic Foundation for Ecology & Environment Sciences (IFEES) and co-founded 'Faith and Climate Change (a Birmingham Friends of the Earth project; this project was a finalist in NESTA's Big Green Challenge and won The Guardian's Community Hero award – now being replaced by wider EARTH: Environment And Religions Transformation Hub) and was the environment lead on the Committee of the Birmingham Council of Faiths. In 2009, she self-published the book "199 ways to please God. How to (re-)align your daily life with your duty of care to Creation."<sup>633</sup> In this book, she describes how Islamic principles can be implemented in everyday life to create a sustainable and eco-friendly world. Ten Veen is a former Trustee at Tree Aid and Board Member at Groundwork W-Midlands. Presently she is a fellow at Green Faith USA and founding director of Green Creation, an organisation that focuses on faith-based sustainable development and disaster management.<sup>634</sup>

After moving from the UK to the Netherlands, ten Veen became a member of several environmental organisations. Her goal is to introduce faith-based activism, more specifically, Islam-based environmentalism. However, she struggles with the secular approach of environmental organisations that are somewhat sceptical towards a religious-based approach. She faced a similar challenge in the UK, which is also a very secular nation. This is a severe problem because, according to ten Veen, the technologies to create sustainable societies are already

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<sup>633</sup> To describe this identity conflict, Hussain Muzammal, founder of the *London Islamic Network for the Environment*, later renamed *Wisdom in Nature*, coined the term "cultural commute"

<sup>634</sup> Rianne ten Veen. In: <https://www.weadapt.org/member/greencreation> (accessed on 21.07.2022)

available, but the spiritual side is not there. Excessive reliance on technology can encourage people to maintain their current lifestyle and give the illusion that there is no need to adapt to the changing environmental situation. This is dangerous, as technology alone is insufficient to resolve the climate crisis. The way we live daily life has to change alongside technological progress. On the other hand, religions aim to increase “people’s intrinsic motivation” to move towards pro-environmental behaviour. Without an ethical, spiritual framework, technology can also be misused.

Religions did not always play an essential role in ten Veen’s life. She grew up in a secular family herself, but during her university studies, she read for the first time the Qur’ān and was impressed by the environmental principles found there. In her own words, she felt the Qur’ān was an “environmental bible.” This inspired her to convert to Islam. The conversion aspect is interesting because it points out a phenomenon described by ten Veen in her book, the Mallarmé- Effect: “It is said that the 19<sup>th</sup>-century French poet Mallarmé can only be fully understood by those who are not French because they read him more slowly. Converts to Islam ...can perhaps claim the same ambiguous advantage in their reading of the Islamic narrative.”<sup>635</sup> Concerning the environment, according to this principle, converts or non-Muslims are more likely to recognise Islamic environmental principles than Muslims born into their faith. In her own experience, “most of the Muslims interested in environmental issues were actually converts.” According to ten Veen, the reason could be that born Muslims tend to read the Qur’ān the way it was passed on and interpreted by their family, lineage, and tradition. However, most verses have multiple meanings and can be read through different lenses. Of course, this observation cannot be generalised too much. The level of environmental awareness of Muslims is, for example, different according to country. Indonesia, a predominantly Muslim country, for instance, is very progressive with its eco-fatwas. However, in countries where Muslims are a

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<sup>635</sup> Ten Veen, Rianne C. (2009): *199 Ways to Please God. How to (re-) align your daily life with your duty of care for Creation*, 15



minority, like in Britain, the communities are challenged by problems like Islamophobia, racism, and poverty, and there is less readiness to think about the environment.

Another problem is of geopolitical nature. The integration of the Muslim minority in British society is still not fully achieved. A consequence is that there are not enough institutions for the education of imams, who then need to be “imported” from countries like Pakistan or Yemen. The problem with this situation is that such imams “do not know the British context” with its specific problems and social norms, including sustainable development and its goals.

Ultimately, however, ten Veen concludes that the root problem of the environmental crisis lies in man's alienation from nature. “And, how can you love and care for something,” so ten Veen, “if you have never really seen it.” From a religious point of view, it is evident that Muslims have the duty to take care of the environment. This life is a test. Being a steward of the earth is part of it, and according to Islam, we will be judged on how well we fulfilled our duties on the Day of Judgment.

Ten Veen mentions the importance of intersectionality in environmentalism. All the different strands of activism are only seemingly engaging for different goals. In reality, they have only a different timeline. For example, humanitarian aid tries to solve poverty today. Development is about the future, and environmentalism is about securing the future for all life forms. “And now, because of climate change, those timelines are colliding even more.” It becomes more evident than ever that all challenges are interconnected. Environmental racism makes such interconnectedness visible by showing that minorities are often more affected by pollution and natural disasters than society's wealthier majority. However, the environmental movement in the West is often a white middle-class movement, which in most cases is not in touch, for instance, with racial problems. The white–middle-class movement, trying to solve the environmental problems, is actually “part of the problem itself.” To be really intersectional, the environmental movement needs to engage with a more holistic view of humans and abandon old and new

stereotypes about different groups. Stereotypes created by academic research also need to be watched. In particular, after 9/11, many studies about the Muslim community in the West have been conducted. However, such studies often fail to take into account the diversity of Muslim communities. In Britain, for example, Yemenis communities were established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since then, Muslims from South Asia, Uganda, and other African nations have come, making the Muslim community in the UK extremely diverse, with religion being only one of many factors of their identity. In environmentalism, according to ten Veen, “too much of how things happen in the UK, but also elsewhere, is >to< problematise community, >in the sense, it is thinking<, it is because of their Islam that they do bad stuff.” Such a simplistic approach needs to be changed. One example of such a stereotype is halāl slaughter. Although millions of animals are slaughtered in industrial farming every day, there is much focus and critics against halāl slaughter from political parties and civil society, even though religious slaughter represents only a tiny portion of the overall slaughtering. Because of such one-sided criticism, society risks losing the participation of Muslims in supporting, in this particular case, animal rights. “Animal rights political parties,” so ten Veen, “have some very nice points. But on some of these issues, I find they are ... almost neo-colonial in their thinking.” In her personal experience, ten Veen found that secularism is also often an obstacle for faith-based environmental initiatives as there are unspoken reservations towards religions in general. It is important to remember that people are differently motivated and that religions are, for some individuals, central to their environmentalism.

### **5.3.2 Dr. Ursula Fatima Kowanda-Yassin**

Born in the UK, Ursula Fatima Kowanda-Yassin is a researcher and lecturer for Islamic and oriental studies at the Sigmund Freud University of Vienna and at the Interdisciplinary Research Centre Islam and Muslims in Europe (IFIME). Her research topics include interfaith dialogue, European Muslims, and Islamic environmental ethics. She co-founded the European Muslims

Eco Lab (EMEL), a biannual meeting to discuss current projects and research in the field of Eco-Islam in Europe. She is the author of "Öko-Dschihad. Der grüne Islam- Beginn einer globalen Umweltbewegung"<sup>636</sup>, a book on the global Eco-Islam movement.

Kowanda- Yassin is a convert to Islam. Her interest in environmental issues predated her conversion. This led to the first question regarding the awareness of Islamic environmental ethics for faith members and regarding the Eco-Islam movement. I was interested to know what is more predominant, an awareness of environmental issues leading to the discovery of faith-based environmental ethics or, the other way around, an awareness of the religious duty to care about creation combined with an awareness of the present environmental problems. According to Kowanda -Yassin, it is impossible to generalise, and the answer to this question largely depends on the geographical region under consideration. "So, when I look at specific countries, for example, where there is colonial history, there are sometimes a bit of reservation, Europe and the West come back and want to force an issue on us. Moreover, such countries have a much smaller ecological footprint than, for example, Europe and the USA. That means one definitely has to make a distinction, and that makes it very exciting. However, you can also see that, if I stay within Europe, for example, there is more and more awareness that Muslims recognise that it is part of the faith, that it is also part of their religion."

There is a full range of different motivations for environmental action. Some Muslims engage in environmental activism as a non-religious person and purely out of concern for the planet.

Others see it as their religious duty to care for the environment, and others combine the two possibilities, creating a bridge between faith and environmentalism.

How and how far Muslims engage in green activism strongly depends on their identity. Can they identify with the culture of the place they live in? Do they feel accepted by the majority of

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<sup>636</sup> Kowanda- Yassin, Ursula Fatima (2018): *Öko-Dschihad. Der grüne Islam. Beginn einer globalen Umweltbewegung*. Berlin: Residenz Verlag

society? Where is my place in society, and how recognised is my place? Similar questions have a significant influence on the attitude toward the environmental movement. Many Muslims, who migrated to Europe and still belong to the first or second immigrant generation, are often sceptical or warily towards the environmental movement, which is perceived as a white middle-class phenomenon. The "colonial thinking" or trauma is still present and affects the way Muslims engage in civil society. Once the social identity is strengthened, basic material needs must also be met before a genuine engagement in green activism becomes thinkable. Such conditions become visible when comparing Muslim-majority societies with Western societies. In the former ones, the incentive for green activism comes from the authorities from the governments, it is a top to bottom dynamic. In western countries, where Muslims are a minority, Islamic environmental initiatives are grassroots movements primarily within the mosques.

However, the above-mentioned scepticism towards the majority society also exists the other way round. When Muslim communities become very active and, for example, apply for funding, this often creates a certain suspicion about the motivation behind such activism, which could potentially have fundamentalist religious motives.

In 2018, the Interdisciplinary Research Centre Islam and Muslims in Europe (IFIME) was established with the aim of studying and understanding Muslim life, social, economic and political participation, and the different areas of Muslim activity in Europe, including the UK. In 2020 the institute organised an international conference on "Green Mosques" and the question of climate protection in the context of Muslim communities. In 2021 the first European Muslim Eco Lab (EMEL) was launched, with Cardiff University's participation and a presentation by Mark Bryant. The 2022 EMEL conference was organised in collaboration with the Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK from Cardiff University.

An early result from the IFIME research regarding green activism shows that British Muslims display a high level of environmental engagement compared to other European Muslim

communities. This is particularly true when comparing British Muslims with Muslim communities in Austria. According to Kowanda-Yassin, this may be attributed to a certain level of conservatism in Austria, where the Catholic church is still very dominant, leaving less space for diversity, and thus less space for Muslim green activism. More generally speaking, her research shows that regional differences within Muslim communities and their eco-activism are significant. Such differences largely depend on geography, location, mainly urban- versus countryside- life, as well as on education, socio-economic status, and average age. Other essential factors are mobility and infrastructure.

## CHAPTER 6 – DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Introduction

The richness and diversity of respondents' responses demonstrates the complexity of the issue of Eco-Islam in Wales. One aspect that became particularly clear was that presently there is not a mature, fully developed Eco-Islam movement in Wales, but rather attentive efforts towards sustainability and environmentally friendly behaviour among faith members. My focus is therefore not only on the description and analysis of current activities, but also on the obstacles and factors that lead to this situation.

To this end, in addition to a comprehensive understanding of Islamic environmental ethics, it is equally important to consider multiple aspects such as the social, historical, psychological and economic dimensions that shape the Muslim green movement in order to understand Eco-Islam in Wales. It is impossible to approach this issue from just one perspective. Therefore, I will discuss the most critical aspects and patterns that emerged from the interviews and were repeatedly raised by the interviewees. By looking at the different facets it is possible to get a fair picture of Eco-Islam in Wales.

Most of my respondents perceive the environmental movement as a white- middle- class, progressive phenomenon within a secular society in which to be able to engage, one needs a "certain level of privilege" (Bahadur- Kutkut). The perception of the environmental movement as a white-middle-class phenomenon is not limited to Wales. An example of this is the 2015 London Climate March. The "Wretched of the Earth", a group representing more than a dozen grassroots indigenous, black and brown organisations, was to lead the march. At the last minute, however, the organisers changed their mind, arguing that the "Wretched of the Earth" banner

with the slogan: "Still Fighting CO2onialism. Your Climate Profits Kill"<sup>637</sup> was inappropriate because its message did not match the general themes of the climate march. From the point of view of the "Wretched of the Earth" activists, the ban was provoked by their inconvenient message about corporate colonialism. This incident points to another issue discussed later in this chapter, namely colonialism, postcolonialism, and climate change. The black and indigenous representatives aimed to propose an intersectional environmentalism instead of a movement that compartmentalises the struggle into climate, racism, and migration.<sup>638</sup> Intersectionalism and its new branch of environmental intersectionalism play an important role in the discourse on Eco-Islam, as will be discussed in a later section.

One of the things that the insights from the interviews made me reflect on was my expectations prior to my fieldwork on Welsh Eco-Islam, which were unconsciously shaped by my status and experiences as a white middle-class person. I was looking for, and hoping to find, organised, independent and outward-looking organisations like Greenpeace or Extinction Rebellion that would openly write "Eco-Islam" on their banners and operate as a cohesive, public movement. However, the reality of Eco-Islam in Wales is very different. As mentioned earlier, according to the majority of interviewees, Welsh Eco-Islam is still in an embryonic state, if not non-existent. However, it would also be wrong to say that there is no Muslim environmentalism in Wales. In fact, despite the many difficulties, there is a growing environmental consciousness within Muslim communities. Environmentalism among Welsh Muslims operates on its own terms, under its own conditions, and to the best of its ability, as will be revealed step by step in this chapter.

Welsh Eco-Islam is deeply rooted and embedded in local mosques and community spaces and may therefore be less visible to the public. In addition, Muslim green activists may have to

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<sup>637</sup> Kelbert Wanjiku Alexandra, Virasami Joshua (2015): *Darkening the White Heart of the Climate Movement*. In: *New Internationalist*, <https://newint.org/blog/guests/2015/12/01/darkening-the-white-heart-of-the-climate-movement> (accessed on 18.08.2022)

<sup>638</sup> Ibid.

negotiate between a religious and an activist identity, often opting for the environmentalist identity, at least in the public sphere (Nita). This could further reduce the visibility of Muslim green activism. In addition, activism through social media and the internet is a growing phenomenon, where the identity, and in particular the religious affiliation of the actors often remains invisible. Because of the predominantly secular nature of most green activism, an activist's religious affiliation is often not obvious or kept private. This can lead to a misconception that Muslim communities and individuals are not particularly involved in the green movement. To address this potential misconception, more quantitative research is needed that specifically addresses the issue of religious identity within environmental movements.

The research results clearly show that there are several factors shaping Welsh Eco-Islam: the overall economic and social reality of Wales in relation to the rest of the UK, the small number of Muslims living in Wales, which in a 2019 population survey has been estimated to encompass around 55. 400 individuals, 1.8% of the Welsh population<sup>639</sup>, the ethnic diversity of the faith communities, the socio-economic status of Welsh Muslims, Islamophobia and lately also the effects of the covid-19 pandemic, which reflected social, economic and ethnic inequalities.

In Wales, Muslim environmentalism needs to be made relevant to Muslims through small and specific steps. One such step would be to show how people living in poverty are also the most vulnerable to climate change because they are less resilient to ecological disasters (M. Bryant).

Moreover, the most effective help for both Muslims in the West and Muslims in other parts of the world is to adopt sustainable lifestyles that will mitigate the effects of climate change and thus reduce the negative impact on poorer sections of society worldwide.

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<sup>639</sup> Torrance David, Backer Carl, Zayed Yago, Little Paul (2022): *Muslim community in Wales*. In: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2022-0037/CDP-2022-0037.pdf> (accessed on 10.08.2022)



According to the Welsh sustainability experts interviewed for this research, Wales has an excellent environmental record and the government is making reasonable efforts to meet its sustainability targets and pass effective legislation. However, climate change and environmental problems do not stop at national borders, nor are environmental problems non-existent in Wales. Civil society, government, industry, and institutions need to work together and move in the same direction (Spear). In addition, government efforts must be made to improve the socio-economic status of minorities and to address the issue of discrimination and, in the case of Muslims, Islamophobia.

## **6.2 Implementation of Islamic environmental principle**

The overview of Islamic environmental ethics presented in the third chapter shows the richness, breadth, and depth of thought that Islam gives to nature and its protection. Islam gives very clear instructions on the use of resources, the treatment of animals, and the responsibility of human beings towards God's creation, just to name a few examples.

In chapter one, I discussed the different environmental ethics and their approaches. When applied to Islam, it remains difficult, if not impossible, to give a clear answer to the question of what kind of environmental ethics is adopted. It depends to a large extent on which aspect one is looking at. For example, if we consider the principle of *tawhid*, the unity of Allah, which frames the understanding of nature as a sign of God, we could say that Islam is neither ecocentric, biocentric, nor anthropocentric, but rather theocentric, with God being both the ultimate source and the ultimate goal.

At the same time, within creation, all living and non-living beings have moral status and intrinsic value, regardless of their utilitarian value to humans. This is because everything is created by God

and has its own metaphysical existence as a sign of God.<sup>640</sup> This approach could be seen as biocentric, where all life forms are recognised as intrinsically valuable.

At the same time, Islam has two different ethical approaches to animals and plants: On the one hand, it recognises that all living creatures have rights of their own and deserve protection and respect because they glorify Allah and thus testify to His power and wisdom; on the other hand, at least certain animals, such as cattle, are subordinate to human beings, and as long as halāl rules are followed, they can be used by humans for their own benefit. This latter approach can be considered as anthropocentric. Islam thus reflects three different approaches to environmental ethics: biocentric, anthropocentric and theocentric. However, given the centrality of *tawhid*, which "dictates the acceptance of God as the sole source of all values"<sup>641</sup>, Islam's approach to the environment can be described as predominantly theocentric, since everything in creation, every single living and non-living being, deserves moral consideration for its relationship to the divine. In a theocentric worldview, nature can simultaneously have intrinsic and instrumental value, making it sometimes difficult to find clear and unanimous agreement on specific environmental issues.

Amongst my Muslim respondents, the idea of *khilafah*, of stewardship of the earth, seems to be well known and accepted. Some referred to the environmental crisis as a "test sent by God" (Khan) for humans to rectify their behaviour or, in the worst case, to punish them for their actions. God "uses" natural catastrophes, including pandemics, to remind humans of their true nature, *fitrah*, which is one of goodness towards other human beings, but also towards the whole of nature (Hasan). Other respondents see the cause of the environmental crisis in unsustainable human behaviour and in capitalism (M. Bryant, Hassanin, ten Veen) which encourages the exploitation of natural resources. And again, other respondents stress the loss of spiritual values

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<sup>640</sup> Gada, Mohd Yaseen (2014): *Environmental Ethics in Islam: Principles and Perspective*. In: World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization, 4(4): 130-138

<sup>641</sup> Ibid., 133

as the root cause behind climate change (Al-Ismail, Hassanin). In other words, “Muslim” interpretations of climate change vary and so do the ways in which individuals respond to it. This finding is echoed by other case study research<sup>642</sup>, which shows that the interpretation of the environmental crisis among Muslim communities worldwide can be broadly grouped into three categories: (1) human causes, including the economic system and western lifestyle. This view is mainly supported by Muslim leaders and scholars; (2) spiritual causes, such as loss of religious values, leading to punishments by God and end-of-time prophecies, and (3) scepticism. The last category, which describes the belief that climate change is a Western conspiracy intended to weaken the Muslim world in terms of economy and development,<sup>643</sup> was not observable amongst my respondents and might not be relevant amongst Welsh Muslims, however, it is a phenomenon registered in some of the Muslim majority countries under Islamist leadership.<sup>644</sup> These categories are not mutually exclusive, but rather overlapping. For example, many interviewees in this research consider it important to be informed about both the science behind climate change and the teachings of Islam on environmental protection (Sabry, Sami Bryant, Hasan, Al-Ismail), and other respondents viewed environmental protection clearly as a religious duty. There is no single Muslim view of the causes of the climate emergency and how to respond to it, as these categorisations and the results of the interviews show.

All my respondents saw the environmental crisis in a religious context, and most of them are aware of the spiritual implications of nature conservation, and agreed on the essential role religious values play in sustainability (Al-Ismail). A negative side of framing the environmental crisis in a religious context could be a narrowed focus on the “afterlife and doomsday” (S.

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<sup>642</sup> Yildirim, A.K. (2016): *Between anti-Westernism and development: Political Islam and environmentalism*. Middle Eastern Studies, 52(2): 215-232

<sup>643</sup> Ibid.

<sup>644</sup> Koehrsen, Jens (2020): *Muslims and climate change; How Islam, Muslim organisations, and religious leaders influence climate change perceptions and mitigation activities*. In: WIREs climate change, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.702> (accessed on 06.01.2023)

Bryant), and the impermanence of the world (a recurring theme in the Qur'ān), which might take the attention away from the necessity to act in the present situation.

The high level of agreement among my respondents about the importance of environmental protection and sustainability from an Islamic perspective, however, contrasts sharply with the limited application of these same Islamic environmental principles in everyday life. The first three principles of Islamic environmental ethics described in chapter three, namely *tawhid*, *khilafah* and *ākhirah*, provide the framework for the theological understanding of Islamic thinking about nature. However, they are rather theoretical and difficult to quantify. In contrast, other aspects are very practical. One of these is the immense importance the Qur'ān attaches to water, both spiritually and materially. As reported by my Welsh respondents, much thought has been given to the preservation of water in their mosques, mainly by controlling its consumption during ritual ablutions. However, this was the only intervention mentioned in relation to water. Another issue that has been discussed extensively in this thesis is the view of animals and the relationship between humans and animals as described in the Qur'ān. Although a vegetarian or vegan diet is by no means a religious requirement, Islamic teachings give very clear roles for the ethical treatment of animals and the correct way to slaughter them. Any unnecessary mistreatment of animals is considered a sinful act with consequences in the afterlife. Animals were mentioned by only a few respondents. Hasan mentions the necessity of preventing any unnecessary pain to animals, and the need for a balanced human- animal relationship and according to Al-Ismail, one “cannot be a good Muslim unless one is kind to animals,” which includes the protection of their natural habitats. One respondent (anonymous) mentioned the Vegan Ramadan campaign, although this was not limited to Wales. Sami Bryant and Muhsen Hassanin mentioned animals in relation to halāl slaughter. Both agreed that most halāl slaughterhouses in Wales do not follow all the roles laid down in Islam and that the halāl industry reflects the modern food system (Hassanin). However, there is a growing demand for organic halāl, which is outstripping the demand for vegan food. Beyond diet and halāl, there is

no specific Muslim movement in Wales concerned with animal liberation and ethical treatment of animals. This dissonance between religious values regarding animals and the practical application of animal welfare, and more broadly, the dissonance between the understanding of the climate emergency and the actual implementation of (faith-based) pro-environmental behaviour, is not unique to Muslim communities, but cuts across different sectors of society. In the specific case of animal ethics, there are many possible reasons why people do not choose a plant-based diet or reduce their consumption of animal products, despite the environmental impact of animal farming and the suffering it causes. Possible reasons include cultural and social norms: In Islam, for example, it is acceptable to eat meat. People may not think about the ethics of eating meat because it is so ingrained in their cultural and religious upbringing. Further, for economic reasons, some people may not be able to afford a plant-based diet or may have limited access to alternatives due to geographical or economic constraints. Muslim communities, as discussed below, are among the most economically disadvantaged minority groups in Wales, so economic constraints may play an important role in dietary choices. Although many people know that animals have a moral status, they may not be fully aware of the extent of animal cruelty in the meat industry. Further, people may prioritise their own pleasure and convenience over animal suffering. Another specific reason for the lack of engagement for animal welfare among Welsh Muslims is Islamophobia and the resulting one-sided portrayal of halāl slaughter. This is discussed in more detail in the section on Islamophobia. The recommendations section also discusses how animal welfare can be given a stronger voice within Welsh Muslim communities, and why it is important to integrate ethical treatment of animals into environmental discourse. In the paragraph "The Case of Animals vs. Humans before the King of Jinn,"<sup>645</sup> I discuss another possible reason for this discrepancy from the point of view of transpersonal ecology. The empathy gap theory of transpersonal ecology suggests that because of the psychological

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<sup>645</sup> See Appendix II

distance that exists between humans and animals, we often fail to recognise and empathise with animal's needs and experiences. This psychological distance can result from a variety of factors which have been mentioned above, such as cultural conditioning, social norms, or limited knowledge and understanding.<sup>646</sup> Transpersonal ecology advocates the importance of recognising and bridging the empathy gap by developing a sense of connectedness and interdependence with all beings and the environment. However, the alleged importance of empathy in recognising the moral status of non-human animals is met with scepticism by some ethicists. Kasperbauer, for example, argues on the basis of previous studies that empathy is not the main psychological process responsible for producing concern for animals.<sup>647</sup> According to him, because people tend to empathise with certain animals more than others, empathy is often inconsistent and can lead to biased treatment. Instead, he argues that other moral emotions, such as moral anger, "are more strongly engaged with producing moral concern for animals, and are thus more helpful than empathy in achieving various normative aims in animal ethics."<sup>648</sup> Ethical treatment of animals should therefore be based on rationality, justice and other emotional responses to moral transgression such as guilt, shame, disgust, and contempt.<sup>649</sup> The problems of implementing animal ethics alone illustrate the complexity and difficulty of understanding pro-environmental behaviour and how it can be translated into action.

Other Islamic environmental principles mentioned by the respondents were cleanliness (Toulba) and indirectly, in particularly in relation the economy, the principles of *mīzān* (balance), *wasatiyyah* (moderation), and *fasād* (corruption). Similar to *tawhid*, *khilafah* and *ākhirah*, balance, moderation and corruption are also difficult to quantify in terms of their implementation.

In summary, the results of the interviews show that there is a good understanding and knowledge of the main Islamic environmental principles among my respondents. However, there

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<sup>646</sup> Gutsell J. N., Inzlicht M. (2012): *Intergroup differences in the sharing of emotive states: neural evidence of an empathy gap*. In: *Social cognitive and affective neuroscience*, 7(5): 596-603

<sup>647</sup> Kasperbauer T. J. (2015): *Rejecting Empathy for Animal Ethics*. In: *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 18(4):817-833

<sup>648</sup> *Ibid.*, 819

<sup>649</sup> *Ibid.*, 828

is no uniform perception of the causes of the environmental emergency among them, and the wealth of environmental principles provided by Islam is not exhausted, with much potential for improvement.

This finding begs the following question: Given the knowledge and understanding, why are Islamic environmental principles not more widely applied among Welsh Muslims? There are two possible answers: first, there are several hindrances and obstacle which prevent Muslim communities from fully implementing Islamic environmental principles, second, the optimism about the “greening” of religions and the impact of religion on environmental behaviour needs to be reconsidered or relativised. According to Jens Koehrsen<sup>650</sup>, empirical research in social sciences does not support the greening of religions hypothesis nor the positive effect of religious values on the pro-environmental behaviour of faith members. My research does not necessarily support Koehrsen's view, but it does show that despite the awareness of environmental problems and the willingness to act on the basis of Islamic principles, the implementation of such values is limited. The relationship between religion and the environment is not always straightforward, and certain needs and conditions require more attention than ecological considerations. In the following sections, I take a closer look at the specific situation of Welsh Muslims and the various barriers and obstacles they face in implementing faith-based environmental principles.

### **6.3 The role of mosques and charities**

Most respondents stress the importance of mosques in their individual and community-based environmental activities. Mosques play a central role in Welsh Eco-Islam. In fact, one of the key findings of this research is that Muslim environmentalism in Wales is not characterised by

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<sup>650</sup> Koehrsen Jens, Blanc Julia, Huber Fabian (2021): *How „green“ can religions be? Tensions about religious environmentalism.* In: *Zeitschrift für, Gesellschaft und Politik* (2022) 6:43-64

independent groups or movements, but rather is deeply intertwined and embedded within local mosques. The Welsh Muslim green movement operates almost exclusively as a grassroots movement within local communities and is largely dependent on the initiative of individuals using mosques as a platform for action. Because of the importance of mosques, this section provides an overview of mosques in Wales, their contribution to environmentalism, but also the difficulties they face as charities and institutions.

According to Ahmed, British mosques display an enormous diversity that mirrors the ethnical heterogeneity of the Muslim community in the UK and Wales.<sup>651</sup> However, within this complexity, there are central aspects that unify all mosques in their role and function. Ahmed identifies three main functions: *farad*, *farad kifaya*, and *sunna*. *Farad* describes the compulsory aspects of the Muslim faith lived in the mosque; these are the daily prayers that make the essential function of a mosque. Although prayer is the fundamental function of a mosque, *salat*<sup>652</sup> itself is not dependent on a mosque.<sup>653</sup> According to a hadith by Sahis Bukhari<sup>654</sup>, the whole world was described by the Prophet Muhammed as a masjid, a place of prayer. This implies that the whole world must be regarded as a mosque and kept clean and pure. From an environmental perspective this means that the natural environment should not be polluted in any way, a religious obligation very much stressed by Sheikh Toulba.

*Farad kifaya* encompasses communal duties like education and the fulfilment of rites, mainly passage rites, which are the whole community's responsibility, not just of the singular individuals. Finally, the *sunna* indicates optional "but encouraged" actions based on the example given by the Prophet Muhammed.<sup>655</sup> The primary purpose of a mosque is to serve as a centre for divine services and rituals. It is the heart of the community and provides space for social services and

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<sup>651</sup> Ahmed, Abdul-Azim (2019): *Conceptualizing Mosque diversity*. In: Journal of Muslims in Europe, 8(2): 138-158

<sup>652</sup> Arabic for prayer

<sup>653</sup> Ahmed, Abdul-Azim (2019): *Conceptualizing Mosque diversity*. In: Journal of Muslims in Europe, 8(2): 141

<sup>654</sup> Sahish Bukhari 335. In: <https://sunnah.com/bukhari:335> (Accessed on 16.01.2023)

<sup>655</sup> Ibid., 140



education (Alshiddi). Aside from the religious and social aspects, "a mosque also embodies the identity of a community."<sup>656</sup>

Additionally, the religious personnel of a mosque "holds considerable potential for influencing and engaging the attention of their members in relation to conservation and environmental sustainability."<sup>657</sup> The relevance of mosques for sustainable development is nowadays widely recognised, as reflected by the first International Conference on the Architecture of Mosques, held in 2016 in Dammam, Saudi Arabia. In this context, over 18 scientific contributions have been made regarding energy saving, water preservation, and other aspects relevant to sustainability.<sup>658</sup> A so-called *Green Mosque Index* (GMI) was developed to assess the sustainability of mosques in Malaysia, focusing on water and resource management.<sup>659</sup> A related study about the sustainability of mosques in the USA, Sweden, and Malaysia showed that there are several obstacles in the realisation of green mosques ranging from lacking environmental awareness among mosque visitors and operators to expensive and not affordable environmentally friendly materials and resources.<sup>660</sup> According to Früliger<sup>661</sup>, one major obstacle in the Western European context is Islamophobia around mosques, which becomes a more urgent problem than sustainability. Muslim communities in Wales face all of the above barriers, ranging from a lack of environmental awareness or interest to financial barriers to affordability of sustainable measures and Islamophobia. All of these will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

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<sup>656</sup> Ahmad Tayyab, Thaheem M.J., Anwar A., Zia ud Din<sup>c</sup> (2016): *Implications of stereotype mosque architecture on sustainability*. In: Procedia Engineering 145: 96-103

<sup>657</sup> Gilliat-Ray Sophie, Bryant Mark (2011): *Are British Muslims "Green"? An Overview of Environmental Activism amongst Muslims in Britain*. In: Journal for the Study of Religion Nature and Culture. Doi:10.1558/jsrnc. v5i3.284

<sup>658</sup> *Abdullatif Al Fozan Award for Mosque Architecture*. In: <https://alfozanaward.org/the-first-international-conference-on-mosques-architecture-concluded/> (accessed on 25.03.2021)

<sup>659</sup> Afghani, Yendo Eusof, et al. (2015): *An assessment of Green Mosque Index in Peninsular Malaysia*. In: American-Eurasian Journal of Agriculture & Environmental Science, 15: 114-122

<sup>660</sup> Ibid.

<sup>661</sup> Früliger, Ernst (2013): *Moscheebaukonflikte in Österreich. Nationale Politik des religiösen Raums im globalen Zeitalter*. Vienna: Vienna University Press.

It has been estimated that the whole of Britain counts approximately 850 to 1,500 mosques<sup>662</sup>, with Wales counting around 40 mosques, mainly in cities like Cardiff, Swansea, or Newport, where most Muslims live. It is difficult to determine the exact number of mosques because, according to Sophie Gilliat-Ray, not all places of Islamic worship are registered with the local authorities and because "much depends upon the criteria used to define a mosque."<sup>663</sup> The number of mosques in a region is an important data, not only because it reflects the density of the Muslim population but also because it is an indicator of the degree of settlement. "The more invested Muslim migrant communities are in their new homes in the diaspora, the greater the likelihood that they will invest resources and capital into building institutions that meet their religious needs."<sup>664</sup> The presence of mosques is not only a building stone for "Muslim identity" but also represents the degree of integration of a Muslim community and the long-term investment for a future in Britain. The presence of mosques, thus, reflects the social aspect of sustainability. According to identity theories, and in particular, the place identity theory (PIT), which suggests that places and the physical environment can shape people's identities, behaviour and sense of self, identification with a place is a strong predictor for pro-environmental behaviour.<sup>665</sup> Research has shown that individuals with a strong place identity are more likely to engage in behaviours, such as recycling, reducing energy consumption, and using public transportation. This may be because they feel a sense of responsibility towards the environment in that place and want to protect it for future generations.<sup>666</sup> The presence of mosques is an indicator of such place identity, as it indicates a long-term commitment and involvement within a particular society and place. Following the logic of place identity theory, the more established

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<sup>662</sup> Gilliat-Ray Sophie, Birt Jonathan (2010): *A Mosque Too Far? Islam and the Limits of British Multiculturalism*. In: Allievi, Stefano (Ed.): *Mosques in Europe: Why a Solution has become a Problem*. London: Alliance Publishing Trust, 135-152

<sup>663</sup> Gilliat-Ray Sophie (2010): *Muslim in Britain. An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 181

<sup>664</sup> Ahmed, Abdul-Azim (2019): *Conceptualizing Mosque diversity*. In: *Journal of Muslims in Europe*, 8(2): 148

<sup>665</sup> Udall Alina, Groot Judith, de Jong Simon, Shankar Avi (2019): *How do I see myself? A systematic review of identities in pro-environmental behaviour research*. In: *Journal for Consumer Behaviour*, 1-34

<sup>666</sup> Proshansky H., Fabian A., Kaminoff R. (1983): *Place-Identity: Physical World Socialization of the Self*. In: *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 3:57-83

mosques are in Wales, the more likely it is that members of the faith will be involved in pro-environmental behaviours.

In *British Mosques: A Social and Architectural History*, Shahed Saleem proposes a threefold typology of mosques: "house mosques," the "non-domestic conversion" mosque, and the "purpose-built" mosque.<sup>667</sup> Ahmed identifies three respective examples of such mosques in Cardiff: The Saray Restaurant specialised in Turkish cuisine. In its basement of the restaurant is the *masjid* or prayer room, described by Ahmed Azim as an example of a "non-domestic- conversion."<sup>668</sup>

Another example is the Dar Ul-Isra Mosque, a converted church in the Cathays student area of the city. In addition to the prayer rooms, there is an activity and education centre. The mosque also houses an office, a library, a commercial kitchen, showers and other facilities. Masjid Uthman, led by the Deobandi<sup>669</sup> faith community, is an example of what Shahed Saleem describes as "house mosque." The mosque is a converted end-of-terrace residential property and counts as the oldest mosque in Cardiff.<sup>670</sup>

There are two basic ways in which a mosque can contribute to sustainability: first, through sustainable architecture and practices, and second, by spreading environmental awareness based on the teachings of Islam.

The most prominent example of an architecturally fully sustainable mosque in Britain is the Cambridge Central Mosque, the first Eco- Mosque in Europe, a purpose build mosque with an advanced eco-design and a nearly zero carbon footprint.<sup>671</sup> Although the term Eco-Mosque was coined in the United Kingdom by the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental

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<sup>667</sup> Ibid., 148

<sup>668</sup> Ahmed, Abdul-Azim (2019): *Conceptualizing Mosque diversity*. In: Journal of Muslims in Europe, 8(2): 149

<sup>669</sup> The Deobandi tradition was founded in 1867 by Mawlana Qasem Nanawtawi in India as a revivalist movement within Sunni, particularly within Hanafi Islam. The movement stresses the importance of maintaining religious roles and aims to revive the practices and theological and legal interpretations of early Islam. In: Bowker John (Ed.) (1997): *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 269

<sup>670</sup> Ahmed, Abdul-Azim (2019): *Conceptualizing Mosque diversity*. In: Journal of Muslims in Europe, 8(2):140

<sup>671</sup> *Cambridge Central Mosque*, official website: <https://cambridgecentralmosque.org/the-mosque/> (accessed on 09.08.2022)

Sciences (IFEES)<sup>672</sup>, and although the Cambridge Central Mosque is a leading example in the whole of Europe of such architecture, Eco- mosques are not present in Wales (Ahmed). The main reasons are limited financial resources, different prioritisation of needs and weak institutional development. Mosques often struggle to cover their costs, and investments in green energy may be beyond their financial capacity (Kowanda-Yassin). However, it is hoped that Eco-mosques will eventually become more prevalent in Wales, provided that the overall situation (social and economic) of Muslim communities improves. Collaborations between Cardiff University and Kuwait University are already underway to develop smart Eco-mosques, buildings with zero greenhouse gas emissions and regulated energy consumption using digital technologies (Alshiddi). Although Eco-mosques are still in their infancy and virtually non-existent in Wales, Welsh Muslims are working to make their local mosques and services more sustainable, for example by reducing water consumption.

Architecture is only one aspect of "greening" a mosque. Most respondents mentioned efforts made during Ramadan and the introduction of a "Green Ramadan" with restricted plastic use, controlled water consumption, restriction on food waste, and the promotion of fasting as a mindfulness exercise towards natural resources. The greening of the mosque during Ramadan also extended to online campaigns in favour of vegan Ramadan and a vegan lifestyle.

Every single effort is considered meaningful, for example, planting flowers and other plants on the mosque's premises (Toulba) or adding bike racks in front of the mosque to encourage the believers to reduce the usage of cars (Sabry). The use of solar panels and renewable energy has not yet been implemented. However, such measures are being considered and their implementation depends largely on the availability of funding and finance. Although a western society such as Wales, because of its secular nature and the specific situation of minorities such as Muslims, may present obstacles to the development of an Eco-Islam movement, it does offer

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<sup>672</sup> Matin, Ibrahim Abdul (2012): *Green Deen. What Islam Teaches About Protecting The Planet*. Marfield: Kube Publishing

an effective and already usable infrastructure that allows the implementation of sustainable ideas, as mentioned by Imam Toulba in relation to the recycling system.

The main contribution of mosques to sustainability in Wales is to raise awareness of environmental responsibility as a religious duty through imams and their sermons and other educational channels. However, according to some respondents, imams themselves often need to be better educated about climate change and ecological emergencies. Better education and training could strengthen the normative influence that imams have on environmental issues within their communities. In the past, relevant issues such as domestic violence and mental health have been addressed during the sermons, leading to a significant sensitisation for the topic and positive outcomes (Bahadur Kutkut). The same sensitisation could also be achieved for environmental topics. According to some respondents, educational intervention is needed, not only for imams but for the whole of the community. In line with Muhsen Hassanin, education is of paramount importance since many Muslims do not know their tradition properly and are not aware of the consequences of climate change. This lack of awareness of environmental issues is probably caused by the increasing urbanisation and the concentration of Muslims in cities which generates a certain alienation from nature and commodification of the environment. For these reasons, one of the priorities of the Muslim Council of Wales in the near future is to offer environmental training, both for imams and the faith community (Ahmed).

According to ten Veen, the issue of educating imams is of geopolitical nature. There are not enough educational institutions for imams in the UK, so ten Veen, leading to the necessity to "import" imams from other countries, who are not necessarily familiar with the specific norms and problems of Western countries. The topic of imam training in Europe is actively debated in the context of Islam in Western societies and has multiple dimensions. In 2019 the Academy of Islam in Research and Society (AIWG) at the Goethe University Frankfurt (Germany) published the study *International Report. Education and Training of Muslims Religious Professionals in Europe and*

*North America*<sup>673</sup> to provide an overview of current examples of forms of training and the situation of Muslim religious professionals in Europe and North America.<sup>674</sup> The premise for the study was the observations that “importing religious professionals and emulating models that were developed in other contexts has proven more and more unsatisfying for the different stakeholders from public, religious and civil society institutions.”<sup>675</sup> It emerged that there is a general need for a close collaboration between the secular states and the religious communities. Muslim religious professionals are confronted with a wide range of expectations, on the one side from politicians and public authorities who view them as essential players in the integration policies and security agendas and on the other side from the Muslim communities themselves, who expect their imams and leaders to give guidance in spiritual, social, and organisational issues. According to this study, today, Britain has probably between 30 to 35 institutions providing training for future imams. In the UK, the field of imam training is strongly influenced by the Dar al-‘Ulum seminars system. Dar al-‘Ulum is an educational institution founded in 1871 in Cairo and designed to provide students with Islamic education.<sup>676</sup> Such religious seminars in the UK are mainly set up by British Muslims of South East Asian background and provide traditional Islamic jurisprudential knowledge based on the Hanafi school in the Sunni tradition. The first imam seminar in Britain was established in 1973 in Bury, England. Today the education provided by such seminars has extended beyond the sole religious training to encompass classes in English, mathematics, and later also GCSE- and A-Level courses. Imams in the UK are not financially supported by the government but are paid only by the respective Muslim community. Mosques are in this independent, although denominational associations do exist and constitute

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<sup>673</sup> Valdemar Niels, Chbib Raida (2019): *International Report. Education and Training of Muslims Religious Professionals in Europe and North America*. Frankfurt: AIWA [https://aiwg.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/AIWG\\_International\\_Report\\_Webversion.pdf](https://aiwg.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/AIWG_International_Report_Webversion.pdf) (accessed on 16.08.2022)

<sup>674</sup> Ibid. 1

<sup>675</sup> Ibid. 1

<sup>676</sup> *About of the Faculty of Dar El-uloom*. In: [https://cu.edu.eg/userfiles/Dar\\_ELAllooM\\_En.pdf](https://cu.edu.eg/userfiles/Dar_ELAllooM_En.pdf) (accessed on 02.03.2023)

an informal connection.<sup>677</sup> The advantage of such financial model is that mosques and imams maintain a certain political independence. From the point of view of Eco-Islam, however, a drawback is the resulting lack of public funding for environmental projects.

In 2003 the Markfield Institution of Higher Education (MIHE) created for the first time in the UK a certificate course in Muslim Chaplaincy which runs for eight months each year. "Students are expected to spend a substantial amount of time during the course on placement, either in a hospital, within the prison service or in the further/higher education."<sup>678</sup> For a long time, chaplaincy was a role only found within Christian institutions. This changed in the 1990s, and in 1999 the British government appointed a full-time Muslim adviser to the prison service on Muslim issues for the first time. Today the number of Muslim chaplains in the UK is estimated between 350 and 400. The demand for UK-trained imams increased after the events of 2001 (9/11) and the following government counterterrorism strategies for British engagement with Muslims.<sup>679</sup> The proliferation of Dar al -‘Ulum has been increasingly viewed with suspicion by Britain's media and policymakers, exacerbating the marginalisation of an already marginalised Muslim minority within mainstream British society.<sup>680</sup>

The AIWG study further reveals that in Europe and the UK, efforts are made to provide imams with an education that both meets the requirement of Western societies and, at the same time, while maintaining the religious tradition, allows integration. However, such endeavours are still at an initial stage and face specific challenges. Imam's education must be independent of politics, not to violate religious freedom. At the same time, there is a need for a close dialogue between religious institutions, the state, and the general public. The AIWG reports conclude, in fact, that

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<sup>677</sup> Valdemar Niels, Chbib Raida (2019): *International Report. Education and Training of Muslims Religious Professionals in Europe and North America*. Frankfurt: AIWA [https://aiwg.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/AIWG\\_International\\_Report\\_Webversion.pdf](https://aiwg.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/AIWG_International_Report_Webversion.pdf) (accessed on 16.08.2022)

<sup>678</sup> Ibid.

<sup>679</sup> Kamal A., Elton-Chalcraft S. (2023): *(De)constructing a Dar-ul-Uloom Aalim's Identity in Contemporary Britain: Overcoming Barriers of Access*. In: *Religions* 14 (1): 11, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14010011>

<sup>680</sup> Ibid., 2

such relations need to be further developed and strengthened everywhere in Europe, including the UK, in order to advance the process of further inclusion of Muslims in European countries. At first glance, this might seem irrelevant to the Eco-Islam movement. However, integration, recognition, and financial support of Muslim communities within society provide much-needed resources and set free potential for activism, including environmental actions. On an ending note, the AIWG study gives four recommendations for a more sustainable cooperation between state and Muslim communities: (1) an increase in the level of institutionalisation of Muslim communities and joint councils; (2) dialogue councils between state officials and Muslim community representatives on equal footing; (3) official recognition of Muslim communities; (4) access to funding possibilities and involvement of the Muslim community in important state and societal activities. The implementations of such interventions are desirable also for Wales and might have a positive effect on the local Muslim green movement.

However, the central role of mosques in educating their congregations about environmental issues is not limited to the activities of their imams, but also depends on the initiative of individuals. A positive example of such intervention by a member of the faith community is the Green Mosque Youth Initiative within the Cardiff Mosque Dar Ul-Isra, initiated by Omar Sabry, where he mobilised young Muslims to cycle from London to Paris while learning about nature and environmental issues.

Another key aspect of mosques and sustainability is that they unite and organise people, creating cohesive communities with religious values. In his interview, Ahmed explains how mosques are the basis for building a Muslim civil society. According to him, civil society has a crucial role to play in developing a sustainable society and addressing environmental issues. As per the *Citizens' Climate Assemblies. Understanding Public Deliberation for Climate Policy*<sup>681</sup> report of 2021, published by

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<sup>681</sup> Cherry, C.E., Capstick, S., Demski, C., Mellier, C., Stone, L. & Verfuert, C. (2021) Citizens' climate assemblies: Understanding public deliberation for climate policy. Cardiff: The Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations.



Cardiff University and Center for Climate Change and Social Transformations, the national net-zero targets set by the government can be achieved only through active participation across civil society. At the UN-Climate Change Conference-UK in 2021, Dr. Stuart Capstick, one of the authors of the report, senior researcher at the School of Psychology of Cardiff University, and deputy director of the Center for Climate Change and Social Transformations, spoke about the relevance of engaging civil society in climate change action. According to him, technology and top-down political decisions alone cannot tackle climate change. Both approaches need consent and adaptation by people. He identifies different ways in which civil society can be involved, such as participation in formal or organized processes, citizens assemble, communication to and with people about climate change, lifestyle and behaviour changes to limit carbon dioxide emissions, and civil society and community-based projects. Though very important for political decision-making, protests and activism are just one of the many ways civil societies can engage. Citizen involvement is complex and interacts with different factors at different scales. There is the social and contextual dimension, where social norms, including religious values and interpersonal influence, play a central role, and the structural dimension, including infrastructure, economy, policies, and governance. And finally, the personal and immediate scale which covers knowledge and information, behaviour change, and consumer choices.<sup>682</sup> On all those scales, mosques assert a significant influence on the congregation reinforcing their central role in the Eco-Islam movement, at least at the present moment in Wales. The relevance of a cohesive community is also pointed out by Al-Ismail, who believes that the most important contribution of Muslim communities in society regarding the environment is to lead by example. As Ahmed pointed out, Muslims in Britain are the most organised civil society groups, given that Britain has a relatively weak civil society. This holds great potential for Muslim environmentalism, at least according to Ahmed. For example, mosques could play a leading role by providing a platform

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<sup>682</sup> *Tackling climate change needs civil society: insights on public engagement for climate action.* UN-Climate Change Events. In: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mB4ZT7WOvKc> (Accessed on 11.08.2022)

for dialogue between science and religion. Many interviewees wished for a better exchange and alliance between science and religion, as knowledge of the holy scriptures alone, without scientific understanding of climate change and ecology, may not be enough to motivate individuals to engage in pro-environmental behaviour (Sabry).

Another reason why mosques do not currently perform better in terms of environmentalism may be the specific regulations governing charities and organisations, which, according to Jones, can become a serious obstacle for mosques and other Muslim charities. Charities run by Muslim civil society groups face stricter regulations and thorough investigations by the Charity Commission for England and Wales (Jones). Charities, despite mosques, have an important place within Muslim communities. As specified by Mohammed Shakir, communication officer at the Muslim Charities Forum, there are probably around 2000 registered and unregistered Muslim charities in Britain. One of the most well-known charities is Islamic Relief, which provides emergency relief to disasters, orphan sponsorship, education projects, health projects, water systems, and long-term sustainable development projects.<sup>683</sup> The charity has an annual income of more than £100m.<sup>684</sup> According to a poll by ICM Research conducted in 2013, Muslims in the UK are the most generous faith group, donating an average of 371 pounds per person and year to a charity.<sup>685</sup> However, since September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in the United States, British Muslims have been subjected to stricter scrutiny. Tahir Abbas even speaks of "increasing racist attacks and Islamophobic hostility."<sup>686</sup> Several charities with Islamic or Muslim affiliations have been objects of investigation through the Charity Commission, and in some cases, bank accounts have been shut after banks judged them to be too risky.<sup>687</sup> One

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<sup>683</sup> Salik, Zia: *Muslim in Britain: changes and challenges. British Muslims and Charitable Giving*. In: Cardiff.ac.uk/\_data/assets/pdf\_file/0005/2511456/british-Muslim-and-charitable-giving-transcription.pdf (accessed on 08.08.2022)

<sup>684</sup> *Muslim charities: A question of identity*. In: thirdsector.co.uk/muslim-charities-question-identity/governance/article/1317839 (accessed on 11.08.2022)

<sup>685</sup> Ibid.

<sup>686</sup> Abbas, Tahir (Ed.) (2005): *Muslim Britain. Communities under Pressure*. London: Zed Books

<sup>687</sup> *Muslim charities: A question of identity*. In: thirdsector.co.uk/muslim-charities-question-identity/governance/article/1317839 (accessed on 11.08.2022)

example of the specific challenge Muslim charities face is given by Syria Relief, a charity set up in 2011 to aid war afflicted Syria. In an interview with the third Sector Journal, Ayman Jundi, trustee, and general secretary of the charity, explained that in order to abide by the Charity Commission regulation and British law, Syria relief must provide unambiguous receipts and must be able to track all movements of the donations. Because of this regulation, Syria Relief "would refrain from distributing aid in areas that have not been able to provide ... appropriate documentation. This in itself creates a certain moral dilemma because these areas are often the ones that are in the direst need of aid."<sup>688</sup>

While certainly not the only reason, such a difficult situation for Muslim charities, according to Jones, creates, if not a factual, then certainly a psychological burden on Muslims involved in charitable work, including environmental activities.

In summary, mosques and charities in Wales have not reached their full potential in terms of their contribution to sustainability. This is largely due to the many barriers identified in this section. Another important barrier, often mentioned by my interviewees, is Islamophobia.

#### **6.4 Islamophobia**

Broadly speaking, the term Islamophobia is understood to describe the "fear and dread of Islam or Muslims."<sup>689</sup> The United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination agreed on the following definition, which is generally accepted:

*Islamophobia is any distinction, exclusion or restriction, or preference against Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise, on an*

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<sup>688</sup> Ibid.

<sup>689</sup> Abbas, Tahir (2005): *British South Asian Muslims: before and after September 11*. In: Abbas Tahir (Ed.) (2005): *Muslim Britain. Communities under Pressure*. London: Zed Books, 11

*equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other fields of public life.*<sup>690</sup>

The term itself was coined relatively recently; however, the feeling behind it has deep historical roots. According to Abbas Tahir, Muslims have always been portrayed negatively, mainly to consolidate established powers, to prevent conversions to Islam, and motivate the European populations at the borders to resist Muslim forces.<sup>691</sup> In 1996 the Runnymede trust, a UK-based race equality think tank, established the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia to study and understand Islamophobia and provide recommendations on how to tackle the problem. The final report identified eight main anti-Muslim prejudices at the root of Islamophobia: (1) Muslim cultures are seen as monolithic and unresponsive to new realities; (2) Islam is perceived as being separate without common values with other cultures; (3) Islam is considered as inferior to Western cultures, as barbaric, irrational and sexist; (4) Islam is seen as violent and supportive of terrorism; (5) Islam is understood not only as a religion but also as a political ideology; (6) any form of criticism made by Islamic voices to the West is rejected out of hand; (7) discriminatory practices towards Muslims are perceived as being just; (8) Anti-Muslim hostility is accepted as natural and normal.

According to "The Dinner Table Prejudice"<sup>692</sup> a study conducted by the University of Birmingham in 2021 under the supervision of Jones, Muslims in the UK are the second "least liked" group after Gypsy and Irish Travellers. Almost 26 % of the British public feels hostile towards Muslims, with 9.9 % feeling "very negative." 26.5% of the British public believes that there are areas in Britain that operate under Sharia law and are not accessible to non-Muslims, 36.3% agree that "Islam threatens the British way of life." There is wide support for the

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<sup>690</sup> *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*. In: <https://www.ohocr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cerd.aspx>. (Accessed on 19.08.2022)

<sup>691</sup> Ibid. 11

<sup>692</sup> Jones H. Stephen, Unsworth Amy (2022): *The Dinner Table Prejudice. Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain*. In: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/documents/college-artslaw/ptr/90172-univ73-islamophobia-in-the-uk-report-final.pdf> (accessed on 12.07.2022)

prohibition of all Muslim migration to the UK (18.1%), 4 to 6% higher than other ethnic or religious groups. Almost one-quarter of British people (21.1%) believe Islam is more literalistic than other religions and that the Qur'ān must be read verbatim. According to Jones, this is to be considered as a crass stereotype since, according to his survey, the majority of Muslims supports the notion that interpretation of the Qur'ān is necessary and that "the Qur'ān's truth should not be understood in a narrow, literalistic sense."<sup>693</sup> Another interesting finding is that people from the middle- and upper-class occupational groups are more likely to hold prejudiced views of Islamic beliefs than people from working-class occupational groups.

Over the past twenty years, the phenomenon of Islamophobia has experienced a shift from being mainly anti-religious prejudice to include racial aspects as well. As Jones and his team found out, Islamophobia in the UK has both a racial and a religious dimension. This is an important differentiation because, while racism is mostly sanctioned by public opinion, mockery of religion is, on the contrary, often tolerated and seen as a positive sign of a secular, tolerant and liberal society. This might be one of the reasons why Islamophobia, even when acted by members of the parliament, is not appropriately sanctioned. Islamophobia, and with it the attempt to racially and culturally profile Muslims under a single and recognizable category, result in structural disadvantages and have "pushed Muslims as a group toward lower positions within the British ethnic-racial structure."<sup>694</sup> In other words, Islamophobia is one of the leading causes of the weak socio-economic status of many Muslims in Britain and Wales. Often, employment opportunities are denied to Muslim community members based on the assumption that they are less productive than other groups. Candidates from minority groups, so Macey and Carling<sup>695</sup>, "are seen as less worthy, less relevant, and less important than applicants from other groups, and

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<sup>693</sup> Ibid., 19

<sup>694</sup> Khattab Nabil, Johnston Ron (2014): *Ethno-religious identities and persisting penalties in the UK labour market*. In: The Social Science Journal

<sup>695</sup> Macey Marie, Carling Alan (2010): *Ethnic, racial and religious inequalities: The perils of subjectivity (Migration, Minority, and Citizenship)*. London: Palgrave Macmillan

in contemporary Britain are more likely to be Muslim, given the current hostile climate, than even the long-discriminated-against Black."

Not only economically but also physically, Muslims are subjected to threats and disadvantages. Since the murder of Lee Rigby<sup>696</sup> in 2013, around forty-four mosques and Muslim institutions in the UK have been attacked. According to Jones, this reality finds little attention from the media and politicians. One reason for this is the difficulty of clearly defining Islamophobia. In fact, sometimes, it is seen as a racist phenomenon, and other times, the focus lies on religion.<sup>697</sup> As mentioned earlier, Jones argues that there are two overlapping types of Islamophobias, one based on race and most widespread amongst Conservatives and Brexit voters, and one based on anti-Islamic prejudice, which is more evenly spread across the political landscape and more common among higher social grades.<sup>698</sup>

Another aspect relevant to Islamophobia, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, is the secular character of British society and the role of religions in Britain. In recent decades, secular and non-religious identities have become increasingly dominant, to the point that, according to Woodhead, Britain has become "one of the few >no-religion< countries in the world today"<sup>699</sup> together with China, Hong Kong, North Korea, Japan, the Czech Republic, and Estonia.<sup>700</sup> In 1983, 31.4% of British people would report themselves as having "no religion." This percentage constantly increased over the decades, reaching 50.6% in 2013. Woodhead,

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<sup>696</sup> Lee Rigby was a British soldier murdered by two British Nigerian ascendants who converted from Christianity to Islam. The killing was officially condemned by the then-general secretary of the Muslim Council of Britain, Farooq Murad. In: Dodd Vikram, Halliday Josh (2013): *Lee Rigby murder: Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale found guilty*. In: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/dec/19/lee-rigby-murder-michael-adebolajo-adebowale-guilty> (accessed on 19.08.2022)

<sup>697</sup> Jones H. Stephen, Unsworth Amy (2022): *The Dinner Table Prejudice. Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain*. In: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/documents/college-artslaw/ptr/90172-univ73-islamophobia-in-the-uk-report-final.pdf> (accessed on 12.07.2022)

<sup>698</sup> Ibid.

<sup>699</sup> Woodhead, Linda (2016): *The Rise of "no Religion" in Britain: The Emergence of a New Cultural Majority*. In: *Journal of the British Academy* 4, 245-61

<sup>700</sup> Pew Research Center (2012) *Global Religious Landscape*. In: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/#:~:text=A%20comprehensive%20demographic%20study%20of,world%20population%20of%206.9%20billi> on. (Accessed on the 20.08.2022)

however, also stresses that being "non-religious" does not automatically imply adhering to secular values. In fact, only 13 % are secular in the sense of being hostile towards public religion, for example, faith schools. This amounts to under 5% of the population.<sup>701</sup> However, when it comes to the attitude towards religiosity, which differs from the attitude towards religions, 36.5% of Britons believe that "religious people tend to be less rational than non-religious people." A clear majority of 64.6% believe that "people with very strong religious beliefs are often too intolerant to others."<sup>702</sup> In the "Dinner Table Prejudice" study, 20.3% of the respondents named Islam the "most negative religion."<sup>703</sup> In his interview, Kidwell spoke in favour of a more open, comprehensive, non-binary (secularism versus religiosity) definition of religion. This could potentially soften the general negative attitude of the public towards religions and help faith groups to articulate their perspectives more freely also within the environmental movement.

Still according to Woodhead, an average non-religious person in the UK is "white, British-born, liberal about personal life and morals, varied in political commitment but cosmopolitan in outlook, suspicious of organised religion but not necessarily atheist."<sup>704</sup> According to Peter Berger, the refusal to belong to a specific religion is a product of cultural pluralism in modern societies. "In the context of diversity," so his argument, "it becomes harder and harder for religion to be an unquestioned part of the culture."<sup>705</sup> And British society is one of the most pluralistic countries worldwide. This secular character of British society is reflected in the environmental movement, which is predominantly secular. The implications of this for the Eco-Islam movement will be discussed later.

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<sup>701</sup> Woodhead Linda (2016): *The Rise of "no Religion" in Britain: The Emergence of a New Cultural Majority*. In: Journal of the British Academy 4, 250

<sup>702</sup> Jones H. Stephen, Unsworth Amy (2022): *The Dinner Table Prejudice. Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain*. In: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/documents/college-artslaw/ptr/90172-univ73-islamophobia-in-the-uk-report-final.pdf> (accessed on 12.07.2022), 16

<sup>703</sup> Ibid., 18

<sup>704</sup> Woodhead, Linda (2016): *The Rise of "no Religion" in Britain: The Emergence of a New Cultural Majority*. In: Journal of the British Academy 4, 252

<sup>705</sup> Berger, Peter (2014): *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton

Of the fourteen Muslim respondents to my research, six directly mentioned Islamophobia as a barrier to the Eco-Islam movement in Wales, with only one respondent not seeing anti-Muslim prejudice as a barrier. However, all respondents who addressed Islamophobia concur that Islamophobia is one of the primary issues affecting Muslim communities and their activities. According to Ahmed, there is a direct link between climate change, the rise of right-wing politics due to the resulting pressures on the economy, and Muslims facing Islamophobia on a day-to-day basis which leaves them with little space and resources to engage in society. According to Joshua Jackson and Michele Gelfand, from the University of North Carolina and the University of Maryland, there is a direct and often overseen connection between climate change and right-wing ideologies: "the effects of climate change- and the way it makes societies feel threatened- may be one of the elements fuelling the rise of right-wing nationalism."<sup>706</sup> The flexibility or strictness of culture has always been shaped by external factors, one of them being the climate. Famine and land scarcity, for example, are predictors of cultural tightness in historical societies. This also applies to modern societies. Jackson and Gelfand could prove that "nations that have endured the highest rates of drought, food scarcity, natural disaster, and climate instability have the tightest cultures today."<sup>707</sup> The tightening of culture can have a functional aspect by making society more efficient and cohesive. On the other side, however, cultures most vulnerable to climate change and consequently with the strictest cultural norms are also most intolerant against religious, ethnic, and sexual-orientation minorities. This effect can also be observed in political elections. "Voters who felt the most threatened were most likely to support harsher punishment for rule-breakers, more adherence to traditional norms, and expressed the highest level of

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<sup>706</sup> Jackson Joshua Conrad, Gelfand Michele (2019): *Could climate change fuel the rise of right-wing nationalism?* In: <https://theconversation.com/could-climate-change-fuel-the-rise-of-right-wing-nationalism-123503> (accessed on 22.08.2022)

<sup>707</sup> Ibid.



prejudice."<sup>708</sup> This can lead to a vicious cycle since far-right politics tends to ignore climate change and its effects, thus exacerbating the effects of environmental threats.

According to Sami Bryant, Islamophobia in the UK is more of a racial phenomenon, and Muslims a racialized minority. Britain, so Sami Bryant is far too secular and non-religious to be "bothered" by Islam as a religion. This view has been relativised by the research of Jones, which shows how different prejudice against Muslims have different roots according to social class and political views. Nevertheless, Sami Bryant agrees that Islamophobia is a relevant impediment to the growth of Eco-Islam in Wales. He is echoed by Amira Bahadur Kutkut, who sees environmentalism as a long-term commitment for more privileged sections of society who do not face racial challenges. According to Muhsen Hassanin, being a Muslim in the UK still poses many challenges, especially after the 9/11 terrorist attack. This "ghettoization" of Muslims, as he calls it, can lead to a feeling of not-belonging and not identifying with British society. Already in the section on mosques, it has been mentioned how place identity plays an important role as a positive predictor for pro-environmental behaviour. Place identity is a multidimensional construct comprising place attachment, place dependence, and place social bonding.<sup>709</sup> If one of such dimensions is lacking, for example, social bonding, which evolves when individuals develop communal bonds with other people through people-place interactions<sup>710</sup>, the development of place identity becomes very difficult. Muhsen Hassanin illustrates this theory with the personal story of a Lebanese boy living with his family in Australia. For many years he could not feel at home in either Australia or Lebanon. Then he started planting trees at home and from that moment on he knew that Australia was his home. This story shows again how a connection to

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<sup>708</sup> Ibid.

<sup>709</sup> Ramkissoon Haywantee, Weiler Betty, Smith Liam David (2011): Place attachment and pro-environmental behaviour in national parks: the development of a conceptual framework. In: *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 1-20

<sup>710</sup> Hammitt, W.E., Backlund, E.A., Bixler, R.D. (2006): *Place bonding for recreational places: Conceptual and empirical development*. In: *Leisure Studies*, 25(1), 17-41

the land can create an identity with a place. But the broader conditions for such identification also need to be in place.

For Rianne ten Veen, a typical example of how Islamophobia is expressed in the UK is the debate about halal slaughter. According to ten Veen, political parties and civil society have focused a lot of attention and criticism on halāl slaughter. However, industrial slaughter is comparable to, if not crueller than, halāl slaughter. Furthermore, halāl slaughter represents only a tiny proportion of all slaughter in the UK. Because of this one-sided criticism and misunderstanding of halal slaughter and animal treatment within Islam, Muslims, so ten Veen, may feel discouraged from engaging in animal welfare advocacy, which is an integral part of environmental activism.

Another obstacle posed by Islamophobia, according to Kowanda-Yassin, is the general scepticism that arises when Muslim communities engage in activism and seek funding for their activities. Probably more so since the 9/11 terrorist attack, Muslim social engagement has been viewed as a threat and reason for concern about potential fundamentalist religious motives.

Jones confirms in his interview the suspiciousness that arises from Muslim charities.

Implementing Muslim religious values is often portrayed as "Islamist" and thus as a threat to society. In his study on islamophobia, Jones gives five main recommendations on how to deal with the problem of Islamophobia:

1. The lack of social sanction for Islamophobic practices and remarks should be addressed by the government and other public figures, "political leadership is required to acknowledge the pervasiveness of anti-Muslim stereotypes."
2. There is a general need to address miseducation about religious traditions which lead to hostility towards Islam (or Judaism)
3. Media regulators and equality bodies should provide clear guidance on how to avoid harmful and stereotyped representations of Islam and Muslims.

4. In order to develop a cohesive society, religious literacy should become a core component of promoting equality and be seen as a necessary measure for a just and tolerant society.
5. Society should strive for better and more inclusive coverage of religion in the media as an intervention toward more religious literacy.<sup>711</sup>

In his interview, Jones also mentions the better protection of Islamic places of worship.

According to the House of Common report of 2022, up to 45% of the 6,377 religious hate crimes recorded in 2021 in Wales were committed against Muslims. In comparison, Jewish people, the second most targeted religious group, faced 22% of religious hate offences.<sup>712</sup>

The implementation of such recommendations could have a positive impact on the Muslim green movement by alleviating some of the pressures Islamophobia places on faith communities and Muslim individuals. At the same time, it would be helpful for the Muslim side to seek cooperation and networking with other institutions or bodies working against Islamophobia. An example of such cooperation is the Christian-Muslim Forum in Britain or other clergy institutions. Islamophobia remains the most pressing issue facing Muslim communities in the UK, affecting all areas of activity, and posing a serious obstacle to the Eco-Islam movement.

## **6.5 Socio-economic status of Muslims in Wales**

Muslims in Britain, including Wales, show a remarkable diversity of ethnic and geographical origins, roots and backgrounds, and therefore a wide range of traditions. In other words, there is

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<sup>711</sup> Jones H. Stephen, Unsworth Amy (2022): *The Dinner Table Prejudice. Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain*. In: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/documents/college-artslaw/ptr/90172-univ73-islamophobia-in-the-uk-report-final.pdf> (accessed on 12.07.2022), 37-38

<sup>712</sup> Stevenson Jacqueline, Demack Sean, Stiell Bernie (2017): *The Social Mobility Challenges Faced by Young Muslims*. Social Mobility Commission. In: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/642220/Young\\_Muslims\\_SMC.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/642220/Young_Muslims_SMC.pdf) (Accessed on 24.08.2022)

no single or monolithic Muslim community in Britain, but rather a diverse landscape of traditions. However, with some individual exceptions, all Muslim communities have one aspect in common: they are all economically disadvantaged.<sup>713</sup> Religion is often closely intertwined with ethnicity making it challenging to discern if the cause of poverty is religious or ethnical. However, the question of whether Muslims as a religious group is more affected by poverty can be answered to some extent by comparing them with other ethnic categories, such as white, Black African, and Indian groups, which are composed of individuals with different religions. A study conducted by the Centre for Social Investigation in Oxford<sup>714</sup> shows that "Muslims, after taking account of their ethnic background, are indeed more likely to be in poverty than members of other religions or those with no religious affiliation...with 50 percent in poverty on the standard definition."<sup>715</sup> The Joseph Rowntree Foundation describes poverty as the inability to heat the home, pay the rent, or buy essentials for the children. Because of such financial circumstances, individuals are at risk of facing marginalisation or even discrimination.<sup>716</sup> Over half of Pakistani, 57%, and nearly half of Bangladeshi, 46% in Britain, live in poverty. In comparison, poverty concerns around 37% of black Africans and only 16% of whites. Another striking figure is that white Muslims are – with 30%- nearly twice as likely to find themselves in poverty as the white population. Similarly, around 56% of black African Muslims are in poverty compared with 37 % of black Africans as a whole group. This shows that there is a link between religion and socio-economic status and that Muslims are more likely to face poverty than people of other religious affiliations.<sup>717</sup> However, according to the Centre for Social Investigation study,

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<sup>713</sup> Jones, Stephen (2021): *Islam and the Liberal State. National Identity and the Future of Muslim Britain*. London: I.B. Tauris, 29

<sup>714</sup> Heath Anthony, Li Yaojun (2015): *Review of the relationship between religion and poverty- an analysis for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation*. CSY Working paper 2015-01. Downloaded from <http://csi.nuff.ox.ac.uk/> (Accessed on 23.08.2022)

<sup>715</sup> Ibid., 2

<sup>716</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation: *What is poverty?* In: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/our-work/what-is-poverty#:~:text=Poverty%20means%20not%20being%20able,because%20of%20your%20financial%20circumstances>. (Accessed on the 24.08.2022)

<sup>717</sup> Heath Anthony, Li Yaojun (2015): *Review of the relationship between religion and poverty- an analysis for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation*. CSY Working paper 2015-01. Downloaded from <http://csi.nuff.ox.ac.uk/> (Accessed on 23.08.2022)

within the Muslim collectives, the likelihood of economic disadvantage depends on various factors such as language skills, migration history, education, first migrant generation versus the second generation, and family structures. The study does not mention islamophobia as a cause of poverty, but we can deduce that it plays a significant role, as indirectly suggested by findings of the 2019 and 2011 census for Wales. According to the 2019 population survey, Muslims in Wales make up 1,8% of the population, with 62% being either Pakistani (24%), Bangladeshi (21%), and Arab (17%). Most Welsh Muslims (58%) were born outside the UK, and 66% outside Wales. Muslims were the faith least likely to identify as "Welsh only." The 2011 census also shows that, on average, Welsh Muslims are higher educated than the national average, with 27% having level 4 and above qualifications. This is two points higher than the national figure of 25%.<sup>718</sup> However, even though young Muslims in Wales and the UK are more likely to succeed in education and go to university, they still experience the greatest economic disadvantages of any group in UK society, according to the Social Mobility Commission report.<sup>719</sup> The report concluded that there is “a broken social mobility promise for young Muslims where educational success did not translate into good labour market outcomes.”<sup>720</sup> Education alone – in the short run - seems insufficient to change the socio-economic status of many Muslims, and it remains an open question of how far Islamophobia plays a role in blocking social and economic mobility for Muslims.

Overall, it is safe to say that the data mentioned above provide an explanation of why economic issues are at the forefront of Muslims' concerns not only in Britain and Wales but across Western Europe.<sup>721</sup> They also confirm one of the significant findings through my interviews: eleven of

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<sup>718</sup> *Muslim community in Wales* (2022). House of Commons Library. In:

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2022-0037/> (Accessed on 24.08.2022)

<sup>719</sup> Stevenson Jacqueline, Demack Sean, Stiell Bernie (2017): *The Social Mobility Challenges Faced by Young Muslims*.

Social Mobility Commission. In:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/642220/Young\\_Muslims\\_SMC.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/642220/Young_Muslims_SMC.pdf) (Accessed on 24.08.2022)

<sup>720</sup> Ibid.

<sup>721</sup> Jones, Stephen (2021): *Islam and the Liberal State. National Identity and the Future of Muslim Britain*. London: I.B. Tauris, 29

fifteen Muslim respondents mentioned poverty and the socio-economic status of Muslims in Wales as one of the main impediments to the Eco-Islam movement. According to Ahmed, only when the immediate needs are met, such as housing, children care, financial security, and confidence, will people feel free to volunteer and put energy into environmental activism. Nevertheless, for most Muslims living in Wales, the primary concern is still earning enough for food, housing, and to provide for the family. Some of the Welsh Muslims, according to Imam Farid Ahmed Khan, come from war-torn regions such as Syria or Iraq and have already suffered substantial material losses and now forced to take low-paid jobs. According to Al-Ismail, one of the two main causes of poverty among Welsh Muslims is their migrant background, mainly from the Indian subcontinent, and a lack of professional training. This creates a vicious circle. Because of their lower economic status, the majority of Welsh Muslims live in deprived areas, which negatively impacts the children's education and their chances of getting better employment later in life. According to the majority of the respondents, this problematic situation also has repercussions on the willingness of younger Muslims to engage in social activities such as green activism or to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle. However, according to my anonymous respondent, choosing a sustainable lifestyle is not only a matter of personal motivation but also of affordability. For example, eco- or biodegradable products tend to be more expensive than standard products, putting environmentally sustainable consumption out of reach for many Muslims. While there is a general consensus among the interviewees about the impact of poverty on environmental engagement, and the existing literature supports this view, it is important to emphasise that this consensus should not lead to a stereotypical portrayal of the working class. While taking respondents' perceptions and experiences seriously, it should also be recognised that working class and socio-economic disadvantage is not in itself a barrier to active engagement in environmentalism. The assumption that people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are less inclined or able to participate in environmental initiatives oversimplifies the complex dynamics at play. In reality, members of the working class often have a deep

understanding of the environmental challenges they face on a daily basis, making them potential advocates for sustainable practices. Moreover, grassroots movements and community-based environmental initiatives often emerge from socio-economically marginalised groups, demonstrating that a lack of financial resources does not necessarily equate to a lack of environmental awareness or commitment. By recognising the diverse perspectives within the working class and promoting inclusive approaches to environmentalism, we can harness the potential for collective action across different socio-economic strata.

Having said that, the socio-economic deprivation experienced by many Welsh Muslims does exist. In order to overcome the socio-economic barrier and to still motivate Muslims to engage in pro-environmental behaviours, Mark Bryant suggests making the intersectional nature of environmentalism more visible and to make the approach to climate activism a less white-middle class concept. For the Muslim community, a different approach is needed. It must be made clear that climate change affects primarily poor people, in many cases Muslims living in environmentally fragile regions, and that there is a direct link between poverty, environmental destruction, and other forms of deprivation. Pro-environmental behaviour, even if from far away, in the long run, has a positive impact on the environment and the socio-economic status of Muslims living in regions more affected by climate change.

Another obstacle to eco-activism related to the socio-economic status of Welsh Muslims is their geographical distribution. Recruited as labourers, the mass migration of Muslims to the UK began in the 1850s when the development of coal-fired steamships in port cities such as Cardiff, Liverpool and London's Docklands opened up employment opportunities for workers from British colonies. A second and third immigration wave happened after World Wars I and II, as an aftermath of the war and British male workers shortage.<sup>722</sup> Muslim immigrants were thus

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<sup>722</sup> Jones, Stephen (2021): *Islam and the Liberal State. National Identity and the Future of Muslim Britain*. London: I.B. Tauris, 19-20

concentrated in industrialised regions, now post-industrial neighbourhoods. According to Sam Bryant, the consequence of such geographical distribution is that Muslims, mainly living in urban areas, are cut off from the countryside and nature. These two components, the lack of direct experience of nature due to urban living and economic disadvantages (linked to Islamophobia), emerge as the main barriers to Muslim environmentalism. (Sam Bryant, Hassanin). Ten Veen also emphasises the effects of alienation from nature. In order to take care of something, she argues, we first need to know it. Following the same logic, one of Hossain's motivations for creating his 'Harmony Farm' was to reconnect children with nature and give them a direct experience of what they are supposed to protect.

Alienation from nature is also a central topic in the writings of Seyyed Hossein Nasr. In *Man and Nature*, he states: "Today, almost everyone living in the urbanized centres of the Western world feels intuitively a lack of something in life. This is due directly to the creation of an artificial environment from which nature has been excluded to the greatest possible extent. Even the religious man in such circumstances has lost the sense of the spiritual significance of nature."<sup>723</sup> Of course, alienation from nature, its "secularisation" and commodification affect almost everybody living in urban areas, regardless of religion. Resolving this issue might need a more profound social and cultural reform. Nasr proposes a re-discovery of metaphysics and the rejuvenation of theology and philosophy, which also embrace a theology of nature.<sup>724</sup>

## **6.6 Effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on Muslim environmentalism**

The coronavirus pandemic had a disproportionate impact on ethnic minorities in the UK, including Wales. It exposed existing deep-rooted inequalities and racist structures in an unprecedented way. It also created new ones. These inequalities have a particular impact on

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<sup>723</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (1997): *Man and Nature. The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man*. Chicago: ABC International Group, 17

<sup>724</sup> Ibid., 114



members of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, which include Muslims.

Based on analysis from the 2021 census in England, and according to the Office for National Statistics, during the period between January 2020 and February 2021, people identifying as Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, or Jewish had higher age-standardised mortality rates for deaths involving coronavirus than those identifying as Christian.<sup>725</sup> The likelihood of infection with and /or mortality through the coronavirus depends on a range of interrelated factors such as living conditions, type of accommodation people live in, household size, access to information, working conditions, means of transport to work, and pre-existing health conditions.<sup>726</sup>

The age-standardised mortality rates (ASMRs) for coronavirus-related deaths were the lowest in men and women identifying with "no religion" or "other religion." For both men and women, the highest ASMRs related to coronavirus were observed in Muslims, whose death rate was statistically significantly higher than for all other religious groups.<sup>727</sup> Muslims have a vast ethnic background, and often it is difficult to separate between religion and ethnicity. However, the pandemic exposed existing inequalities between ethnic groups. Since there is no genetic evidence or genetically related biological factors underlying this higher mortality, it is safe to say that such inequalities are the result of longstanding social deprivation in the form of overcrowded, poor-quality housing and living in deprived neighbourhoods, economic disadvantages, such as poorly paid and insecure employment, which forced many people to continue going to work, and

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<sup>725</sup> *Deaths involving COVID-19 by religious group, England: 24 January 2020 to 28 February 2021*. In: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/deathsinvolvingcovid19byreligiousgroupengland/24january2020to28february2021> (Accessed in the 30.08.2022)

<sup>726</sup> Nazroo James, Bécares Laia (2021): *Ethnic inequalities in COVID-19 mortality: A consequence of persistent racism*. Runnymede Trust. In: <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/ethnic-inequalities-in-covid-19-mortality-a-consequence-of-persistent-racism> (Accessed on 01.09.2022)

<sup>727</sup> *Deaths involving COVID-19 by religious group, England: 24 January 2020 to 28 February 2021*. In: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/deathsinvolvingcovid19byreligiousgroupengland/24january2020to28february2021> (Accessed in the 30.08.2022)

entrenched structural and institutional racism and racial discrimination.<sup>728</sup> Health inequalities can be observed across all ethnic minorities and are manifested early in life. Amongst other things, they result from psychological stress due to a system of oppression and disadvantage. "As a result," so a study by Runnymede, "ethnic minority people on average show the rates of health typical of white people who are significantly older."<sup>729</sup>

The economic impact of the coronavirus crisis was also unevenly distributed across the population. While a sector of the population was able to work from home, primarily lower-income workers or workers in the health sector were not able to be away from their working place, putting themselves at a higher risk of infection. Several minority groups live in single-earner households, which are less able to buffer short- and long-term cuts in income, forcing them to continue to work even under critical circumstances.<sup>730</sup>

Another factor influencing coronavirus mortality and infection rates is the geographical distribution and population density. Minority ethnic groups are disproportionately likely to live in urban areas with high population density and thus to be more exposed to the virus.<sup>731</sup>

Most of my respondents mentioned the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their faith community or, more broadly, on Muslims in Wales. According to Imam Farid Ahmed Khan, Muslim communities in Wales were significantly negatively affected. He mentioned the economic dimension and loss of income for many families. As a response, many mosques created food banks and clothing banks to provide for essential needs. Imam Khan and Al-Ismaïl also mentioned the psychological aspect, which is often overlooked in ethnic studies of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Many Muslims who saw themselves forced to get food from

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<sup>728</sup> Nazroo James, Bécares Laia (2021): *Ethnic inequalities in COVID-19 mortality: A consequence of persistent racism*. Runnymede Trust. In: <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/ethnic-inequalities-in-covid-19-mortality-a-consequence-of-persistent-racism> (Accessed on 01.09.2022)

<sup>729</sup> Ibid.

<sup>730</sup> Platt Lucinda, Warwick Ross (2020): *COVID-19 and Ethnic Inequalities in England and Wales*. In: *Fiscal Studies*, 41 (2): 259-289

<sup>731</sup> Ibid.

food banks felt ashamed, and some of them covered their face in order not to be recognised.

Such feelings of shame added psychological trauma, or at least psychological debilitation, to the already existing material hardship.

Additionally, in Islam, so Imam Khan, it is considered essential to pray together. The Friday prayer cannot be done alone but requires the presence of three to four people at least. Prayers at home still have benefits but are not as rewarded as prayers in the congregation (Al-Ismail). Also, praying shoulder to shoulder symbolises an important theological concept of equality between faith-members that could not be fulfilled during the crisis. Life passages rituals such as weddings and funerals, typically done with the community's support, could not be done publicly. Though the coronavirus measures were entirely accepted by the faith community, they had a "major effect, both psychologically and for some people actually physically in terms of not being able to enjoy what they have enjoyed throughout their life." (Al-Ismail)

Many Muslims coming from war-ridden nations faced additional trauma. Imam Khan gave the example of a Syrian refugee in Wales who came from a very wealthy family who lost all his possessions due to the war. He worked then in Bridgend as a deliverer until he lost his job due to the coronavirus restrictions. He faced significant difficulties in maintaining his family. However, despite such individual hardships, Imam Khan and Hasan agree that the Covid-19 pandemic and the environmental crisis have a positive aspect. They are tests that God gives to humanity.

Through difficulties and hardships, God tests man's patience, gratitude and willingness to help one another. Through challenges, man's true nature, *fitrah*, can shine through, also for the benefit of nature, for the desire to care for creation, says Hasan, is innate in man.

Similarly, Hassanin regards the pandemic as an opportunity to look into our daily habits and question some of the biggest global challenges such as famine, wars, and diseases. He particularly stresses the need to question the source of our food and how much impact it would have if we even just planted a few tomato plants on our balcony. The pandemic is a reminder that before

changing the world, we must change ourselves; only then, we can introduce change by giving a positive example (Hassanin). Everyone should become proactive, even in the small actions of daily life.

Another positive effect of the pandemic was that many people were prevented from travelling abroad. Instead, they began to explore the Welsh countryside and became more aware of nature and the importance of nature in their lives (Hassanin).

As far as the Eco-Islam movement is concerned, the Covid-19 pandemic temporarily halted most of the green projects that had been initiated before (Sabry). Now there is a need to find that momentum again. The pandemic disrupted everything, and according to Ahmed, it is not even clear if the number of mosques post-pandemic will remain the same or eventually even decrease. Not having the same income as in "normal" times, many mosques may be forced to close. Mosques are "charitable led, community-led, and the numbers and attendance are all dropping. And it takes much more resources to run a single activity" (Ahmed). At the same time, as Alshiddi's research shows, serious thought is being given to the future architecture of 'post-pandemic mosques', including the possibility of future epidemics or crises. It remains an open question, however, to what extent modern, digital technology will be implemented in Welsh mosques due to financial constraints. Another open question is the extent to which technology will exacerbate alienation from nature, doing more harm than good to the ecological cause in the long run.

In order to assess the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on a range of lifestyle behaviours with environmental impact, the Welsh government commissioned in May 2020 the Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformation (CAST) and YouGov to undertake a survey among the Welsh population. At the time of the survey, most respondents were primarily concerned about Covid-19, followed by the destruction of nature and wildlife, plastic pollution, and climate change. However, behavioural changes imposed during the peak of the pandemic are not lasting. For example, traveling to work by car or public transportation returned to almost the same pre-

pandemic level. Meat consumption even increased over time, and no considerable changes in food waste have been observed. Generally, pro-environmental behaviours were reduced during the peak of the pandemic, to increase again afterward to the same or only slightly different levels. Participants were also asked if the government should focus more on recovering the economy, even if that meant taking some actions that are bad for the environment. During the peak of the pandemic, only 35% of the respondents agreed, while after the pandemic, this number increased to 39%.<sup>732</sup> This survey shows that environmental concerns among the general Welsh population have taken a back seat to economic concerns in the aftermath of the pandemic, reflecting a similar situation among Muslim communities. These findings echo the assessments of the sustainability experts in my research. The overall impression was that after an initial positive impact of the lockdown on the environment, the general attitude was one of 'back to business as usual', with other issues such as health care, rising living costs and economic concerns receiving more attention. Other downsides of the lockdown were the increased pressure on the local landscape from overuse of parks and the increased littering of natural spaces, particularly with face masks and non-recyclable covid-19 tests (Welsh sustainability experts). Although the pandemic, economically, mentally, and health-wise, had a lasting effect on all of the population, many studies have reported that the measure for tackling the pandemic has had the most significant negative impact on racially minoritised communities such as Muslim communities.<sup>733</sup>

The Runnymede Trust developed a series of recommendations to mitigate such devastating effects on ethnic minorities. The recommendations included the following:

- Further research aiming the identification of racial discrimination in housing, health services, employment, and criminal justice and on how those affect the health outcomes of ethnic minority communities.

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<sup>732</sup> Tipping, Christianne (2020): *The effect of COVID-19 on lifestyle behaviours that impact the environment: waves 1 and 2 (summary)*. In: Welsh Government, <https://gov.wales/effect-covid-19-lifestyle-behaviours-impact-environment-waves-1-and-2-summary-html> (accessed on 06.08.2022)

<sup>733</sup> Harris Scarlet, Salisbury Remi Joseph, Williams Patrick, White Lisa (2021): *Collision of Crises: Racism, Policing, and the COVID-19 Pandemic*. In: <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/collision-of-crises-racism-policing-and-the-covid-19-pandemic> (accessed on the 06.08.2022)

- Commissioning of Equality Impact Assessments on all government actions concerning the management of the pandemic
- Strengthening the social security safety net to mitigate the impact of social and economic inequalities on the health of ethnic minorities with a focus on employment, education, economic security, and housing
- Increase of the Statutory Sick Pay and widen eligibility for it
- Implementation of the public information campaign and ensuring suitable, secure accommodation and housing for people who live in overcrowded housing and/or intergenerational households.<sup>734</sup>

Although not directly related to Muslim environmentalism, such measures to mitigate the disproportionate negative impact of the pandemic on ethnic minorities could have a positive impact on Muslim green activism by alleviating some of the most pressing problems Muslims face in the aftermath of the Covid-19 emergency.

## 6.7 Colonialism, postcolonialism, and environmentalism

The relationship between colonialism, post-colonialism and environmentalism is complex and multifaceted. Colonialism, as a political and economic system, involved the exploitation of natural resources and the subjugation of indigenous communities. This often led to environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity.

Postcolonialism is a theoretical framework that seeks to understand the ongoing effects of colonialism and its practices on the social, cultural, economic and political systems of colonised countries. Postcolonial theorists argue that colonialism has left a legacy of inequality, poverty and environmental degradation in these countries, with repercussions in the West. Such repercussions in the West can be seen, for example, in relation to ethnic minorities. The postcolonial perspective around climate change and environmentalism are not widely

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<sup>734</sup> Nazroo James, Bécares Laia (2021): *Ethnic inequalities in COVID-19 mortality: A consequence of persistent racism*. Runnymede Trust. In: <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/ethnic-inequalities-in-covid-19-mortality-a-consequence-of-persistent-racism> (Accessed on 01.09.2022)

represented in Western discourses.<sup>735</sup> However, in order to fully understand the dynamics around Eco-Islam in Wales, it is important to address the post-colonial structures that still exist in the UK and continue to assert an influence on Muslim communities and their activities.

Colonial history can be traced back to the final decades of the fifteenth century which marked the beginning of colonial powers and hegemony. With the crossing of the Atlantic Ocean since Columbus and the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope with Vasco Da Gama began an unprecedented spread of a single culture over the whole globe: "prior to the European incursions, the world had always been culturally multi-polar, and the historical tendency has been towards differentiation."<sup>736</sup> However, from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onward, this cultural heterogeneity was systematically replaced by political, economic, and cultural domination by European settler populations.<sup>737</sup> According to Kochar and Khan, it was not difficult for Western colonisers to dominate and eventually harm nature. They had the cultural and even religious legitimacy to subjugate nature, as suggested by Lynn White in his essay "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis."<sup>738</sup> The decree of God, so Kochar and Khan, to dominate nature, was taken very seriously by European colonisers. Alfred Crosby argues that colonists were successful because of their ability to manipulate native ecosystems and because they exposed Indigenous societies to foreign markets as well as new invasive species. The economic and biological aspects made indigenous populations vulnerable to colonial powers.<sup>739</sup> In fact, many native cultures were

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<sup>735</sup> Williams, Jeremy (2021): *Climate Change is Racist. Race, Privilege and the Struggle for Climate Justice*. London: Icon Books, 120

<sup>736</sup> Khalid, Fazlun (2019): *Signs on the Earth. Islam, modernity and the Climate Crisis*. Markfield: Kube Publishing, 5

<sup>737</sup> Ibid., 5

<sup>738</sup> Kochar Shubhanku, Khan Anjum (Eds.) (2021): *Environmental Postcolonialism. A literary Response*. Lanham: Lexington Books

<sup>739</sup> Crosby, Alfred (1993): *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

destabilised by the creation of global infrastructures that encouraged wealthier countries to exploit the natural resources of poorer countries.<sup>740</sup>

According to Fazlun Khalid, founder of the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences IFEES, imperial power and hegemony remain to this day and exert a relevant impact on the environment and environmental movement. First of all, the loss of cultural diversity through colonialism preceded and caused, at the same time, the loss of biodiversity that we are witnessing today. British colonisers in India, for example, caused deforestation in many regions of India. Wood was needed for railway construction for commercial and administrative needs, but also for the export to Europe. The introduction of plantations of crops like cotton, opium, and tea further led to the uprooting of woods and the loss of biodiversity.<sup>741</sup>

There is a close link between human culture, heritage, history, and nature expressed as ecology and biodiversity.<sup>742</sup> Culture is not only architecture, arts, music, and literary tradition. It also includes the knowledge and skill related to traditional craft and the creation and maintenance of traditional landscapes and their ecological systems.<sup>743</sup> Meanwhile, it is generally recognised that the separation of nature from human culture is a severe problem in the conservation of both nature and heritage.<sup>744</sup> Therefore, UNESCO and similar institutions have adopted the concept of *biocultural diversity* to describe the need to preserve local cultures alongside biodiversity.

The hegemony of power started by European imperialism is carried on in some forms of liberal capitalism and globalisation in the postcolonial era of our days. One example of this is the so-called *Biocolonialism* which can be defined as "a trend in western bioscience in which indigenous

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<sup>740</sup> Stoll, Mary Lyn (2018): *Environmental Colonialism*. In: The SAGE Encyclopedia of Business Ethics and Society, <https://sk.sagepub.com/reference/sage-encyclopedia-of-business-ethics-and-society-2e/i15679.xml> (accessed on the 20.09.2022)

<sup>741</sup> Tharoor, Shashi (2016): *Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India*. New Delhi: Aleph Book Company

<sup>742</sup> Bridgewater Peter, Rotherham Ian D. (2018): *A critical perspective on the concept of biocultural diversity and its emerging role in nature and heritage conservation*. In: *People and Nature*, 291-304

<sup>743</sup> Agnoletti, M. (2006): *The conservation of cultural landscapes*. Wallingford: CAB International, 320

<sup>744</sup> Rotherham, I. D. (2008): *The importance of cultural severance in landscape ecology research*. In: Dupont A., Jacob H. (Eds.): *Landscape ecology research trends*. New York: Nova Science Publishers



knowledge of biological resources (like medical plants) as well as indigenous biological material is extracted and patented by western scientific, medical, and pharmaceutical institutions without granting credit or remuneration to the indigenous sources."<sup>745</sup> Vandana Shiva explains that colonies have now expanded from outer places to inner spaces by creating a monopoly over the genetic codes of life forms from plants, animals, and humans.<sup>746</sup> Biocolonialism can therefore be seen as a form of neo-colonialism with a clear structure of dominance and oppression. A controversial example that elucidates the consequences of biocolonialism are the suicides of over 300,000 Indian farmers over the past two decades. Activists, such as Vandana Shiva, attribute the majority of the suicides to the monopolisation of the cotton seed sector by patent control, intellectual property rights, and the introduction of GM seeds by corporations such as Monsanto. Farmers did not have alternatives to buying seeds from Monsanto at significantly higher production costs. Essential local agricultural practices, which are seed sharing, exchange of ideas, and knowledge gained by working with indigenous seeds, were prevented by the Indian Patent Act in favour of corporations.<sup>747</sup> Even if the real cause of the farmer's suicide remains controversial, biocolonialism, or the monopolisation of life through patents, has become a reality in the modern world with far-reaching consequences for the environment and society and must therefore be taken seriously.

Many so-called developing countries still suffer from the impact of colonialism in terms of depletion and polluted resources,<sup>748</sup> disrupted social structures, loss of biodiversity, and loss of indigenous knowledge and practice. Capitalism, as already mentioned, is viewed by different scholars as an extension and progression of colonialism<sup>749</sup> and as the primary cause of

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<sup>745</sup> *Biocolonialism*. In: <https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/postcolonialstudies/2020/09/09/biocolonialism/> (accessed on 09.09.2022)

<sup>746</sup> Shiva, Vandana (1997): *Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge*. Boston: South End Press

<sup>747</sup> Thomas Giges, De Tavernier (2017): *Farmer-suicide in India: debating the role of biotechnology*. In: Life Sciences, Society and Policy. 13:8

<sup>748</sup> Kochar Shubhanku, Khan Anjum (Eds.) (2021): *Environmental Postcolonialism. A literary Response*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 7

<sup>749</sup> *Ibid.*, 8

environmental destruction. Colonialism and postcolonialism affect migration patterns till today. When looking at minorities in Western countries, imperialism has its psychological and sociological effects, mirrored in modern social structures in the form of environmental racism, which is probably best understood as a "sociological phenomenon, exemplified in the environmentally discriminatory treatment of socially marginalized or economically disadvantaged peoples, and the transference of ecological problems from their 'home' source to 'foreign' outlet."<sup>750</sup> The resulting hegemonic centrism accounts not only for environmental racism, so Plumwood<sup>751</sup>, but also for speciesism or the rationale behind the systematic exploitation of animals and animalised humans. By prioritising human needs and privileges over animals and other living species on the earth, the old racist ideologies of imperialism are perpetuated on a planetary scale and used as justification for global exploitation.

Going back to Eco-Islam in Wales, two of my respondents mentioned "neo-colonialism" in their interview. Rianne ten Veen sees the predominance of white people in the environmental movement as a problem. According to her, not everybody seems to recognise that environmental issues affect people differently and need different approaches. Instead, ten Veen observed a widespread "white saviour" mentality, where "white knowledge" is seen as the best way to solve environmental problems, and thus showing what she calls a "neo-colonial attitude." Similarly, Paul Driessen described the phenomenon of forcefully imposed Western environmentalist views on developing countries and environmental movements as *Eco-imperialism*.<sup>752</sup> According to ten Veen, the solution to such Eco-Imperialism would be the adoption of an intersectional approach to environmentalism, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

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<sup>750</sup> Huggan Graham, Tiffin Helen (2010): *Postcolonial Ecocriticism. Literature, Animals, Environment*. London: Routledge, 4

<sup>751</sup> Plumwood, Val (2001): *Environmental Culture. The Ecological Crisis of Reason*. London: Routledge, 8

<sup>752</sup> Driessen, Paul (2005): *Eco-Imperialism. Green Power Black Death*. New Delhi: Academic Foundation

Kowanda Yassin sees the problem of colonialism and postcolonialism in more psychological terms. "Colonial trauma" is still present in the psyche of minority groups, and this trauma affects how Muslims, for example, engage in civil society. There is a particular reservation, mistrust, or even rejection of environmental ideas coming from "white-dominated" movements, also because Western countries are by far more responsible for the ecological crisis than so-called developing countries.

On the other hand, probably at an unconscious level, 'colonial thinking' also influences how most of the society perceives the 'other' and integrates it as part of its culture. Capitalism, as the new face of neo-colonialism, certainly plays a role in the marginalisation of minorities, thus creating obstacles to the active participation of minorities in civil society movements. Even if tackling the question of the economy would go beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is worth mentioning that some scholars, such as Fazlun Khalid, see in Islamic principles a good alternative to Western liberal capitalism and its destructive effects on the environment. Islamic political economy was established by the Prophet through the introduction of the *shūra*, or decision-making through consultation, in order to ensure a fair distribution of wealth amongst the Muslim community. Equal distribution was guaranteed through *zakat*, or obligatory charity, as one of the pillars of Islam. Zakat was not only intended to help the poor but also to prevent the accumulation of wealth. One of the characteristics of the Islamic economy is, in fact, the absence of a bank system as known in the West. Usury (bank interest), or *ribā* in Islam, is completely forbidden. According to Yasin Dutton, the issue of *ribā* is central to Eco-Islam because "it is the economic activities of present-day humankind that are the main cause of the environmental destruction that we see happening around us."<sup>753</sup> Islam encourages moderation in every aspect of life. So are the "good things" that God grants to humans not to be rejected; at

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<sup>753</sup> Dutton, Yasin (2003): *The Environmental Crisis of Our Time: A Muslim Response*. In Foltz, Denny, Baharuddin (Eds.): *Islam and Ecology*. A Bestowed Trust. Harvard: Harvard Divinity School, 331

the same time, consumption limits should not be overstepped.<sup>754</sup> Hoarding and accumulation of wealth are discouraged, whereas distribution and sharing, as well as caring for the environment, are encouraged. Other examples of principles regulating the Islamic economy are, *Mudārabah*, an agreement between the capital provider and labour, *Shirkah*, a partnership in which the leader shares the risks, and *Qard hasan*, a loan without interest, to name a few.

This excursion into Islamic economic principles aims to show that the environmental solutions proposed by Islam are far-reaching and go beyond mere interventions that directly affect nature. It also shows the close link between environmental degradation and the economic system, and some alternatives to the current capitalistic system.

In summary, it can be attentively said that colonialism and postcolonialism till today have had an impact on minorities and the environmental movement, including Eco-Islam in Wales, on three levels: first, by creating a certain distrust towards "white" dominated environmental reasoning. Secondly, by preserving racist structures and thinking, such as Islamophobia, in Western societies. After the two World Wars, many Muslim labours from former British colonies found work in specific industrial sectors in the UK. However, with the economic recession in the late 1950s and the decrease in laborers' demand, hostilities towards ethnic minorities and Muslims began to rise and are still present today.<sup>755</sup> A third negative effect of colonialism and postcolonialism is the creation of certain migration patterns where people from so-called developing countries see themselves forced to migrate to Western countries for survival. These minorities often face problems of poverty and marginalisation, which is an additional burden on the existing local communities, which in turn have to prioritize humanitarian aid over environmental engagement.

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<sup>754</sup> "Do not forbid the good things that God has made lawful unto you, and do not transgress. Surely God loves not transgressors." (5:87)

<sup>755</sup> Abbas, Tahir (2005): *British South Asian Muslims: before and after September 11*. In: Abbas Tahir (Ed.) (2005): *Muslim Britain. Communities under Pressure*. London: Zed Books, 9

## 6.8 Role of religion and secularism in environmentalism

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, there is a growing body of literature on the role of religion, and respectively, on the role of secularism in shaping environmental movements. The importance of religion in environmentalism is widely recognised amongst the respondents for this research. Although, as Kidwell notes, secularism has increased in Britain in recent decades, this does not mean that there is an absence of spirituality or a sense of transcendence among people. On the contrary, most environmental activists show an affective attitude towards nature and its destruction that can be considered religious. Kidwell supposes that the perception of environmentalism as a secular movement widely depends on how religion is defined. By narrowing the definition of "religiosity" to membership of an officially recognised faith group, environmentalism is artificially emptied of any religiosity or spirituality and is thus perceived as secular. In a more and more technological, digitalised, and materialistic world, policymakers often fail to consider religion as part of the solution to the environmental crisis. However, as Kidwell points out, the term "environmental crisis" is a religious term in itself.<sup>756</sup> Despite theological differences, religions have a unique way of mobilising communities and re-orient them towards ethical and moral values. The failure to acknowledge their role in environmentalism is equal to the failure to recognize that humans per se are holistic beings that need to be addressed as "whole persons," not just as consumers, polluters, or as homo faber. Kidwell sees, therefore, the need to leave behind the binary idea of religion versus secularism and to make the environmental movement, which in his view is the least diverse movement in Britain, more intersectional, inclusive, aware of discriminations, and open to other categories of thinking, without sanctioning the presence of religions.

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<sup>756</sup> Although the term "crisis" is not strictly a religious term, many religious traditions recognise that crises are an essential part of the spiritual journey, as they are tests of faith and character. In addition, many religions teach that crises can serve as a call to action to address social, environmental and humanitarian challenges.

According to Nita, environmental faith groups are an essential link between green movements and traditional faith communities. Establishing such a link has become easier over the past ten to twenty years as the green movement has become more inclusive. However, it is difficult for all religious traditions to adapt to a "green, environmental" language. Much depends not only on the environmental movement outside the faith communities but also on the willingness of faith communities to open up and possibly reinterpret religious teachings and beliefs. Sometimes religious and environmental identities cannot coexist to the same degree. Depending on the social acceptance of a religion, such as Islam, activists may want to shed their religious identity in favour of a green identity. However, as societies change, identity issues may also change (Nita). One might expect that in a more tolerant and open society, Muslims would feel less need to hide their religious identity and be more open about their religious motivation for environmental activism.

There is also the need to recognise the contribution of minorities and immigrants, which often display a more sustainable living through their traditional lifestyle than the majority society. This recognition should be practically translated by giving ethnical minority activists and religious leaders a platform and a distinct voice in the environmental discourse (Kidwell, Sabry).

According to Sabry, the Welsh government is making many efforts toward a sustainable society; however, to maintain liberal values, not much has been done to involve Muslim communities in environmental projects. There is a need for better collaboration between Muslim faith communities (or faith communities in general) and the Welsh government (El-Beltagi).

Beyond the problem of inclusivity, another aspect of secularism mentioned by some respondents is an overreliance on technology while "neglecting" spiritual and religious values needed for a real, sustainable society. As pointed out by ten Veen, seeking only technological solutions to the crisis might encourage people to maintain the same lifestyle and the same attitude towards nature. Technology would then only temporarily solve a problem by shifting its causes or

creating new ones. This is why religions are so important, because they address root causes, have the potential to activate intrinsic values and motivation beyond materialistic needs, and can thus be agents of real change. Purely secular environmentalism looks at the gains and benefits of protecting nature and is utilitarian. A religiously inspired environmentalism, on the contrary, tends to go beyond selfish motives (Al-Ismail) and teaches us how to become more independent from material gain (Hassanin). According to Imam Toulba, rather than being part of the solution, technology is part of the problem by making vast-scale destruction and pollution possible, and most of all, by creating an artificial separation between humans and nature. Precisely this alienation from nature, so ten Veen is the root cause of the environmental crisis. In societies that promote individualistic values, alienation also occurs between people. Again, religions offer an alternative by bringing communities together (Al-Ismail), organising people and giving them vision and responsibility (Ahmed). According to sustainability experts, faith-based activism is essential to address issues that would otherwise go unmentioned (Spear) and to provide solutions beyond government action (Skinner).

On the other hand, as Kowanda-Yassin points out, secularism can have a positive impact on faith-based activism. In Austria, for example, where Catholicism is the dominant religious tradition, other minority faiths have less space to express their ideas. Kowanda-Yassin hopes that once the idea of religious involvement in environmental discourse becomes more familiar to the public, a chorus of different religious voices could participate equally in the green movement. Still, efforts need to be made. Not only does the dichotomy of secular vs. religious needs to be transcended, but also the binary concept of religion and science needs to be overcome. Religious ideas need to be applicable to present-day challenges like climate change. For this to happen, the knowledge from the scriptures must go along with understanding scientific facts (Sabry). This way, we can "open up to the old ways of doing things blended with modern knowledge" (Hassanin). According to studies by the Bahu Trust, British Muslims tend to be more inspired by religious values in their life than other faith groups (Mark Bryant). However, despite these

positive considerations and optimism about the role of religion in environmentalism, Eco-Islam in Wales is still in its infancy and far from reaching its full potential.

## 6.9 Interfaith dialogue and Eco-Islam in Wales

As mentioned in Chapter 2, faith-based environmentalism has been seen as an appropriate topic for interreligious dialogue, for bringing together different religious traditions to establish an alliance for environmental interfaith partnership, at least since the Assisi Declarations on Nature in 1986.<sup>757</sup>

The idea behind interfaith dialogue and environmentalism is that all religions share a global responsibility for the planet and its ecology. Since all human beings share the same planet, regardless of their faith or beliefs, environmental protection is not only a priority for all religious communities but also an area where dogmatic and theological differences may become less dominant leaving room for joint efforts in the same direction. According to Ursula King Frsa, professor emerita of Theology and Religious Study at the University of Birmingham, “we have to ask ourselves in what way the deepest insights of our faiths can contribute to the spiritual transformation of the contemporary world, to an ecology of the mind as well as to an ecology of the environment... By way of example, just think how much could be achieved if Muslims and Christians in the world, who represent half the global population, worked closely together for the well-being of the whole human community.”<sup>758</sup>

In 2008 the United Nations launched the *Faith for Earth Initiative* “to encourage, empower and engage with faith-based organizations as partners, at all levels, toward achieving the Sustainable

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<sup>757</sup> Koehrsen Jens, Blanc Julia, Huber Fabian (2022): *How “green” can religions be? Tensions about religious environmentalism.* In: Zeitschrift für Religion, Gesellschaft und Politik, 6: 43-64, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s41682-021-00070-4>

<sup>758</sup> King, Frsa Ursula (2002): *Ecological and Mystical Spirituality from an Interfaith Perspective.* <https://repository.uwtsd.ac.uk/id/eprint/461/1/RERC2-048-1.pdf> (accessed on 06.12.2022)



Development Goals and fulfilling the 2030 Agenda.”<sup>759</sup> As these few examples show, there is much optimism and hope in the potential of faith-based organizations and interfaith dialogue regarding ecology.

However, despite the generally shared optimism, interfaith dialogue and environmentalism can be challenging as not all religious traditions share the same perspective on environmental issues, required interventions and the role of religions in addressing them. Such differences can potentially even create new tensions and prejudices between the congregations.<sup>760</sup> Koehrsen regards interreligious tensions as one of the biggest limitations of religious environmentalism. Different views on environmental problems and their solutions can even increase tensions between the different traditions or make prejudices against each other visible.<sup>761</sup> To make an example, during the interreligious conference “Religious Week of Nature Conservation” held in Germany, an anti-Muslim preconception became visible, as non-Muslim participants were suspicious of the other Muslim participants, “questioning the credibility of their environmental engagement.”<sup>762</sup> Such interreligious tensions can also be caused by a certain competition between religious groups contending over the credibility of their environmental activities.<sup>763</sup>

My respondents were asked to assess the effectiveness of interfaith dialogue and ecology within their communities also in terms of preventing Islamophobia. The responses were very mixed.

According to Ahmed, not enough happened on the front of environmentalism and interfaith dialogue in Wales. There are different local interfaith initiatives and, most of all, the Welsh

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<sup>759</sup> *Faith for Earth Initiative*: <https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/faith-earth-initiative> (accessed on 07.12.2022)

<sup>760</sup> Koehrsen Jens, Blanc Julia, Huber Fabian (2022): *How “green” can religions be? Tensions about religious environmentalism*. In: *Zeitschrift für Religion, Gesellschaft und Politik*, 6: 43-64, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s41682-021-00070-4>

<sup>761</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>762</sup> Dohe, Carrie (2021): *What does religion have to do with nature conservation? Investigating the tensions in an interreligious nature conservation project in Germany*. In: Koehrsen Jens (ed.): *Global religious environmental activism: emerging conflicts and tensions in earth stewardship*. London: Routledge

<sup>763</sup> Huber, Fabian (2021): *Environmentalism in the religious field. Established vs. newcomers in Switzerland*. Koehrsen Jens (ed.): *Global religious environmental activism: emerging conflicts and tensions in earth stewardship*. London: Routledge

Interfaith Forum, where, unique in all of the UK, representatives of the different Welsh faith groups meet with representatives of the government and ministers. However, Ahmed said, this forum has not yet been used to discuss the climate emergency and the contributions that faith communities could make to mitigate the problem, even though such an interfaith alliance on the environment is "potentially very powerful". Meraj Hasan and Omar Sabry report on local interfaith initiatives at their local mosque Dar-Ul-Isra Mosque in Cardiff. However, the environment is not a topic of those interfaith meetings.

According to Mark Bryant, environmentalism in interfaith dialogue has great potential because "it is literally the first time in recorded history that human beings, in order to save themselves, are going to need to work together ...it means we have to look at our common humanity."<sup>764</sup> Bringing ecology into interfaith dialogue has the advantage of addressing a pressing issue and mobilising people from different backgrounds to work together. Dogmatic and theological differences are, moreover, less pronounced, and it is easier to find a consensus. As Mark Bryant puts it, all religions have a common interest in protecting the planet, humanity's common home, and this can be done by finding the "common humanity" in all faiths.

Bhadur-Kutkut also agrees with the benefits of interfaith dialogue. However, she has doubts about the effectiveness of interreligious dialogue as a measure to tackle environmental challenges. Individuals have to "start from within"<sup>765</sup> and change their attitude towards nature. Furthermore, the relevance of environmental action "has to be stressed as almost a religious importance for people to take it seriously amongst their holistic concerns."<sup>766</sup> As already mentioned, the Muslim communities in Wales and their members are often faced with existential challenges which overshadow environmental engagement.

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<sup>764</sup> Mark Bryant interview, Chapter 5

<sup>765</sup> Bhadur-Kutkut interview

<sup>766</sup> Ibid.

Another problem of interfaith dialogue is its inherited asymmetry of power and communication. Communication asymmetry in interfaith dialogue refers to an unequal distribution of power or influence between participants from different faith traditions. It can manifest itself in a number of ways, including differences in language proficiency, educational background, cultural norms, social status or institutional support. Bhadur-Kutkut describes this asymmetry follows: "I sometimes think when there is interfaith dialogue, there is an element of certain religious groups who are more able to engage in these things or they have more resources available, they have more support available. So, it is not a balanced playing field. I think in terms of interfaith dialogue, what would be useful is sharing of ideas, but I think it is going to have limited impact ...we do not all have the same resources, sadly." Here Bhadur-Kutkut addresses a fundamental problem of interfaith dialogue. The faith groups involved often do not share the same level of access to power, wealth, and privilege based on gender, ethnic background, socio-economic status, nationality, sexual orientation, and other markers.<sup>767</sup> The asymmetry of interfaith dialogue is particularly relevant for faith- minorities, such as the Muslim minority in Wales, which in many cases lack the institutional support, funding and infrastructures needed to initiate or sustain interfaith dialogue.

Another aspect of asymmetry concerns the relationship between the interlocutors. In inter-religious dialogue, communication is often characterised by two relationships: the relationship of guest and host, and the relationship of stranger and friend. In an ideal situation, both relationships would be equal. However, there is always a dynamic imbalance between the four variables, which changes over time and space. According to Rötting, this imbalance, or asymmetry, "is an essential motivating factor of the learning process. The necessity of the hermeneutic change of perspective is not only the basis of interreligious learning but also

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<sup>767</sup> Safi, Omid (2015): *The Asymmetry of Interfaith Dialogue*: <https://onbeing.org/blog/the-asymmetry-of-interfaith-dialogue/> (accessed on 07.12.2022)

motivation.”<sup>768</sup> However, when religious minorities are involved, such asymmetries in relationships can be intimidating and discourage participation in dialogue.

To overcome communication and power asymmetries in interfaith dialogue, it is important that participants recognise and address such imbalances and work to create an inclusive and respectful dialogue environment. This may involve providing interpretation services if needed, facilitating cultural awareness training, or creating opportunities for marginalised voices to be heard. This is particularly relevant to the Eco-Islam movement, as the Muslim voice on green issues is an important contribution to interfaith dialogue and sustainability in Wales.

#### **6.10 Intersectional Environmentalism**

Inclusivity is an essential element for the success of inter-religious dialogue, but also for the success of the green movement. A related concept to inclusivity is intersectionality. While the practice of inclusivity focuses on ensuring that all people feel welcome, valued and respected, regardless of their race, gender, sexuality, religion, ability or any other aspect of their identity, intersectionality focuses on the idea that individuals can experience multiple forms of oppression or discrimination simultaneously based on their intersecting identities.

The theory of intersectionality was first developed in 1989 by the US-American law professor Kimberlé William Crenshaw, who exposed several instances of structural inequalities leading to the over criminalisation of Black children in the US. In the same year, she published a paper titled "Demarginalizing the intersection of Race and Sex," examining three court cases simultaneously showing racial and sexist discrimination. William Crenshaw defined intersectionality as "the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect, especially in

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<sup>768</sup> Rötting, Martin (2011): Religion in Bewegung. Dialogtypen und Prozess im interreligiösen Lernen. Münster: LIT

the experience of marginalized individuals."<sup>769</sup> Leah Thomas expanded the concept of intersectionality to environmentalism, coining the terminology of *intersectional environmentalism* (IE). She defines IE as the “inclusive approach to environmentalism that advocates for the protection of both the people and the planet. It identifies how injustices happening to marginalised communities and the earth are interconnected. It brings injustices done to the most vulnerable communities, and the earth, to the forefront and does not minimise or silence social inequality. Intersectional environmentalism advocates for justice for people and the planet.”<sup>770</sup>

The main message of intersectional environmentalism is that social and environmental justice are intertwined and must be addressed simultaneously. An example of intersectional environmentalism is recognising that marginalised communities, particularly communities of colour and low-income communities, are often disproportionately affected by environmental problems such as pollution, climate change and natural disasters. These communities may also have limited access to resources and decision-making power, making it difficult for them to advocate for their own environmental needs and priorities. Ignorance of such connections in the green movement could be the cause of incomplete or harmful actions. Another example for intersectionality is Singer’s animal liberation movement. As already discussed in Chapter 1, in the context of intersectionality, Singer's argument goes beyond the ethical treatment of animals to a broader understanding of justice. He emphasises the need to recognise the intersections between different forms of oppression and acknowledges that the struggle for justice should not be compartmentalised. Animals, like humans, are sentient beings capable of experiencing pain and suffering, and Singer argues that their interests deserve to be considered in the broader context of social justice. Intersectionality as a theoretical framework urges us to examine how different systems of power and privilege intersect and reinforce each other. Singer's ideas on animal

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<sup>769</sup> Thomas, Leah (2022): *The Intersectional Environmentalist. How to dismantle systems of oppression to protect people +planet*. New York: Voracious, 26

<sup>770</sup> Ibid., 31

liberation contribute to this discourse by highlighting the interconnectedness of oppression and challenging us to question the arbitrary distinctions that society has drawn between different forms of life.

One focus of IE is to give historically excluded minorities a voice and to stress the importance of inclusivity in environmental education and policy, which should give space to all forms of social injustice and marginalised groups. The main argument for this inclusivity is that the system of oppression towards people, which is basically colonialism, postcolonialism, and industrialisation rooted in capitalism, is the same system that causes the planet's degradation.<sup>771</sup>

Intersectional environmentalism is therefore very relevant to the Eco-Islam movement in the West, including Wales, because it takes into account the particular situation of minorities in their social and environmental context. As the interviews for this research have shown, although Islam clearly regards the protection of nature as a religious duty, and although the community perceives this ecological mandate as a religious obligation, the Eco-Islam movement in Wales is at a very initial stage. This is not due to the absence of motivation or to the incapacity of religions or Islam to mobilise their faith members. The "embryonic stage" of Welsh Eco-Islam results from a cluster of deeply interconnected conditions. As Mark Bryant points out, to engage the majority of the Muslim community, it needs to be made clear that environmental destruction affects most of all marginalised and ethnic minority groups both in the UK and abroad. The environmental crisis must be made relevant to all Welsh Muslims. This can be achieved by using an intersectional approach.

From a Muslim perspective, humanitarian aid is often seen as more urgent than environmental intervention. However, all the different strands of activism, says ten Veen, only seem to be working towards different goals. Environmental racism, in particular, shows how all challenges

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<sup>771</sup> Ibid., 32

are intrinsically interconnected and the result from the same or similar patterns of power. Therefore, resolving or supporting one aspect will lead to the improvement of all the others.

It is worth noting that, as Sami Bryant mentions, not all intersectional efforts can lead to broader community engagement, as the example of the Muslim Extinction Rebellion group's support for the LGBT movement shows. Although it is not possible or desirable to generalise about the attitude of 'Muslim orthodoxy' towards LGBT rights, it was discussed within the Muslim Extinction Rebellion movement whether an open statement in favour of gay rights would prevent the engagement of other members of the faith. A separate study would be needed to answer this question. However, this issue shows that intersectionality can also be a challenge in terms of inclusion and motivation.

To make Welsh environmentalism more intersectional, the green movement needs to become more inclusive and open to diversity, including an openness to faith-based activism. At the same time, there is an urgent need to address issues of minority poverty and, in the case of Muslims, Islamophobia, which has emerged as the biggest barrier to the flourishing of the eco-Islam movement.

## 6.11 Theoretical Framework and Sustainability

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, Ghazali et al.<sup>772</sup> identify six categories of pro-environmental behaviours. Although quantitative research would add insight in the individual behaviours, the results from my qualitative interviews let suppose that amongst Welsh Muslims the categories *recycler*, *utility saver* and partially *green consumer* are the most common. As Sheikh Toulba pointed out, Muslim communities can make use of the already existing recycling system,

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<sup>772</sup> Ghazali Ezlika M., Nguyen Bang, Mutum Dilip S., Yap Su-Fei (2019): *Pro-Environmental Behaviours and Value-Belief-Norm Theory: Assessing Unobserved Heterogeneity of Two Ethnic Groups*. In: *Sustainability*, 11, 3237, doi:10.3390/su11123237

which is very well developed in Wales.<sup>773</sup> In particular mosques are making efforts to reduce the consumption of water and other resources like heating and electricity. Green consumerism, which is closely linked to the avoider behaviour, highly depends on the economic possibilities of the individual, and those are affected by socio-economic conditions often beyond individual control. Respondents identified the poorly developed infrastructure in Wales as one of the barriers to green activism. This leads to the assumption, that *green passenger* is a less likely category amongst Welsh Muslims, together with the *activist* category. To better assess how these categories match Muslim green environmentalism further research using quantitative methods would be helpful.

Research in the sciences and the humanities does not take place in a vacuum. It needs a theoretical framework that enables the researcher to navigate through the data and put the results into context. For this research, I choose the Value-Belief-Norm Theory (VBN), a model extensively used to explain pro-environmental behaviour. The need to explain pro-environmental behaviour and the factors and conditions that lead to it stems from the urgency of the environmental problem and the recognition that all available resources must be activated to address it. According to the VBN theory, sustainable and environmentally friendly behaviour is activated by norms, values, and beliefs. In this context, values include ecological worldviews, or "how people think the world should be and what they believe their role in the world should be."<sup>774</sup> For believers, their religion can provide the basis for such an ecological worldview. In chapter three, I have attempted to provide a comprehensive introduction to the main Islamic environmental principles and the theological rationale for humanity's role in creation. All

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<sup>773</sup> See chapter 2 on sustainability

<sup>774</sup> *Environmental Worldviews, Ethics, and Sustainability*. In:

<https://www.houstonisd.org/cms/lib2/TX01001591/Centricity/Domain/5363/ch%2025.pdf> (accessed on 20.10.2022)



interviewees agree that Islam provides clear guidelines for human behaviour towards nature and that protecting the environment is a religious duty.

Further, the VBN theory includes beliefs, or the perception of the personal ability to reduce a specific environmental threat, or beliefs about the adverse consequences of not acting environmentally friendly. Together with personal norms, or the sense of obligation to take pro-environmental actions, values and beliefs lead to a particular behaviour, which in the ideal case would be eco-friendly.

The VBN model proves too simple when applied to the results of my research. According to my interviewees, there is a general understanding of Islamic environmental principles among Muslim communities in Wales, although some interviewees felt that more education was needed. At the level of values, beliefs and norms, all respondents agree on the importance of pro-environmental behaviour based on their religion. However, the research shows that despite clear faith-based pro-environmental values and beliefs about personal responsibility and obligations, this does not necessarily translate into individual pro-environmental behaviour or sustainable lifestyles. This is not due to ignorance or a lack of motivation. Other factors influencing the behaviour include socio-economic status, historical background, social identity, and integration, to name the most important. The VBN theory places considerable responsibility on the individual, without taking into account such external factors that an individual cannot change.

Another major limitation of the VBN model is the absence of 'identity' as a predictive factor. For this reason, I have incorporated the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) into the theoretical framework. Social identity theory postulates that "the sense of belonging to a group predisposes an individual to adopt the values and norms of the milieu". The SIMCA model includes collective action and an individual's identification with a particular group as a driver of social change. As mentioned in chapter four, the SIMCA model identifies four main predictors of an individual's involvement in collective action, such as a protest or an environmental project:

1) Identification with a group, 2) perception of group-based injustice, 3) beliefs in the efficacy of the group to achieve a set goal, and 4) social identity.

During my research, it became evident that mosques and local Muslim communities are the main platforms for Welsh Eco-Islam. It can be said that for the majority of my Muslim respondents, identifying with their religious community is easier than creating an identity around the mainstream green movement that has often been portrayed as a white middle-class movement. In other words, for the purpose of studying and understanding the Muslim green movement, the SIMCA model is very much applicable. Identity is an essential factor also concerning the broader Welsh and British society and concerning the influence of racial discrimination and Islamophobia on the social engagement of Muslims.

With the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, the Welsh government officially recognizes language, culture, and heritage as one of the seven well-being goals. According to the Anti-Racist Wales Act, published in 2022,<sup>775</sup> culture and heritage are “fundamental to people’s identities” because they reflect the values, beliefs and attitudes that define individuals. The act also recognises that misconceptions and ignorance about cultural diversity can be a driver of inequality. Because of the culture and heritage aspect of sustainability, I have dwelt on various sections of the thesis on the history of Muslims in Britain. Muslim history in Wales raises a number of questions that remain unanswered: To what extent is Muslim history in Wales recognised as Welsh heritage? To what extent is the cultural contribution of Muslims in Britain seen as part of Welsh culture? How can historical recognition of Muslims in Wales and the UK facilitate identification and integration? On the basis of my findings I hypothesise that the recognition of Islam as part of the cultural heritage of Wales would facilitate the integration of

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<sup>775</sup> *Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan*. In: [https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-06/anti-racist-wales-action-plan\\_0.pdf](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-06/anti-racist-wales-action-plan_0.pdf) (accessed on 11.01.2022)

Muslims by promoting place identity (an indicator of pro-environmental behaviour), and in the long term, it would support the development of a Muslim green movement.

The Anti-Racist Wales Action plan further recognises that “differences in our culture and heritage can often be used to define those who are considered to be insiders and outsiders.”<sup>776</sup>

This can lead to an attitude that only individuals with an “indigenous ancestral heritage” are considered “Welsh” or “British”. “Anyone else can be excluded from the privilege of belonging and from the benefits of insider status.”<sup>777</sup> These are very important considerations when looking at Muslim environmentalism. The negative perception that someone who is not white or does not conform to certain cultural norms does not belong to the local culture has a negative impact on the level of social engagement (including environmental engagement) of minority groups, including Muslims. Therefore, the definition of culture and heritage needs to be openly challenged and re-thought to be more inclusive. In order to achieve this goal, the Welsh government aims “to work with public bodies to fully recognise their responsibility for setting the historic narrative, promoting and delivering a balanced, authentic and decolonised account of the past.”<sup>778</sup> An essential step is to recognise historical injustices as well as the positive impact of ethnic minority communities on Welsh culture. Only time and more research can show if and how far such aspirations will have a positive impact also on Muslim communities and their green efforts.

Another limitation of the VBN- theory, particularly when applied to understanding the normative influence of religions, is that individuals are very different, and their source of motivation can vary considerably over time and under different circumstances. When studying the role of religions in environmentalism, therefore, it is essential to maintain a holistic approach that acknowledges as many factors as possible. The actual influence of religions may indeed

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<sup>776</sup> Ibid., 101

<sup>777</sup> Ibid., 101

<sup>778</sup> Ibid., 107

remain theoretical, as it is impossible to scientifically measure the motivation of individuals. The lesson to be drawn from the data I have collected is that religions in general, and Islam in particular, have considerable normative potential with regard to the pro-environmental behaviour of their respective adherents. However, both individual, intrinsic motivation and a number of external conditions, often beyond the individual's control, must be in place for faith-based values to be implemented. In Kidwell's words, "religion is in the middle of it (the environmental crisis), and it is being mobilised in good and bad ways."

In chapter two, I discuss the idea of sustainability. As defined in the Brundtland report, the concept of sustainability has often been criticized as being a buzzword, too vague and difficult to operationalise.<sup>779</sup> According to the United Nations Agenda for Development, sustainability is based on three pillars: the social, economic, and environmental pillars. The UN-definition recognises the interdependence and interconnectedness of these three dimensions, which must be addressed equally and simultaneously. This is reflected in the findings of this thesis. As discussed in the section on intersectionality, environmentalism needs an inclusive approach that works to protect people and the planet. Protecting people requires social and economic justice. Social justice is particularly important for minorities and marginalised groups. The need for holistic sustainability that takes all these aspects into account is also essential for Western countries, as this thesis could show. Issues of social and environmental justice are often located in so-called developing or distant countries. However, social, economic and environmental injustices occur in the midst of our Western societies and need to be addressed.

## **6.12 Conclusions and recommendations**

This thesis aimed to conduct a comprehensive exploration of Eco-Islam in Wales, examining the conceptual convergence of Islamic principles with environmental and ecological considerations.

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<sup>779</sup> Chapter 2

As already pointed out in the introductory chapter, Eco-Islam is not a formalised movement with a centralised structure but rather a broad concept that investigates the harmony between Islamic teachings and environmental stewardship. The findings from my research validate this assertion by revealing that Eco-Islam in Wales does not conform to a formalised movement. Instead, it exemplifies a more comprehensive concept that explores the alignment of Islamic teachings with environmental stewardship and its implementation. Eco-Islam in Wales is a relatively modest phenomenon, still in its early stages of development, without a central organisation nor presence in the wider public sphere. Most of Eco-Islam related activities takes place within the local community and local mosques, which play a crucial role in the growing Muslim green activism. Mosques are vital to green movements in two ways. Firstly, by implementing sustainable measures in building and architecture, and secondly, by spreading environmental awareness through education and Islamic teachings, both through imams and members of the faith community. In Wales there are no so-called eco-mosques, built from the outset using sustainable principles and architecture. However, efforts are being made, for example through research at Cardiff University, to gain more knowledge about eco-mosque architecture that can be implemented in Wales and globally. The most significant contributions that mosques in Wales are making to sustainability are through education and small-scale interventions such as the greening of Ramadan or more sustainable waste and resource management. One of the main obstacles to green Muslim activism is the socio-economic status of most Muslims living in a region that, in relation to other parts of the UK, is economically poor. This implies a less developed infrastructure, generally lower wages, and a low population density.

Another serious obstacle to green Muslim activism is Islamophobia and its consequences in everyday life. To give two examples, Muslim charities face stricter roles and controls, and despite higher education, it is more difficult for Muslims to climb the social ladder to improve their socio-economic status.

The Covid-19 pandemic not only reflected many ethnic inequalities and social vulnerabilities related to long-standing ethnic discrimination, but also temporarily crippled Welsh Eco-Islam by creating financial hurdles for community members. Recovery, both financial and psychological, is expected to be gradual.

Religious values are a powerful driving force behind Muslim green activism, channelling the principles of environmental stewardship and responsibility embedded in religious teachings. The intrinsic link between faith and environmentalism has the potential to inspire meaningful change within Muslim communities. However, the effective integration of these values into environmental activism requires the creation of specific living conditions, such as socio-economic factors and supportive community infrastructures, which have been described in detail in this chapter.

Another aspect affecting Eco-Islam in Wales is the relatively small number of Muslims living in this region (again compared to the numbers in England) and, at the same time, the broad ethnic mix within each mosque, which makes it more difficult to organise the faithful and create active circles.

In summary, while religious values are important motivators for Muslim environmental activism, their effective implementation depends on the presence of specific living conditions. Educational programmes, socio-economic stability and a supportive community infrastructure all contribute to the successful integration of religious principles into meaningful environmental action within Muslim communities. For this to occur, based on the data gathered in this research, the following suggestions can be proposed for both Muslim communities and the broader civil society in Wales:

Continued efforts must be made to inform and educate the public about environmental problems and possible solutions. This is especially true in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis, which has shifted attention from the environment to seemingly more pressing issues such as the economy.

Civil society should be more involved in sustainable development and democratic decision-making on environmental issues. In terms of a sustainable food system, the Welsh Government could increase its support for small-scale producers, demonstrate urban permaculture, promote urban food production and install green roofs;

In the realm of Eco-Islam, a paramount imperative arises to enhance educational endeavours directed at local mosques and Muslim communities. The focus of these efforts should extend beyond mere environmental issues and climate change; they must also delve into the elucidation of the religious duty ingrained within Islam to protect and preserve nature. The imperative to safeguard the environment ought to be communicated as an integral facet of Islamic teachings.

A crucial facet of this educational initiative involves dispelling the notion of an inherent dichotomy between science and religion. Instead, these realms should be regarded as cooperative partners in the collective pursuit of cultivating a greener, more sustainable society. By fostering an understanding that scientific advancements and religious principles can seamlessly align, we pave the way for a holistic approach to addressing contemporary environmental challenges.

Moreover, within the scope of education, particular emphasis must be placed on animal welfare awareness. This includes fostering an understanding of the ethical considerations associated with halāl slaughter practices. Efforts should be intensified to enlighten communities about humane and sustainable approaches to halāl practices that align with both Islamic religious principles and contemporary standards of animal welfare. In doing so, we not only fortify environmental consciousness but also nurture compassion and ethical considerations in the treatment of animals within the context of religious practices. These comprehensive educational initiatives represent crucial steps toward fostering a community that is not only environmentally conscious but also attuned to the welfare of all living beings.

Despite the liberal and secular values of Welsh society, better co-operation between the Welsh Government and other public authorities and faith communities is highly desirable. Religious

minorities in particular need sustained support, not only in terms of funding, but also in terms of integration and recognition. In particular, to support the flourishing of Muslim communities, there should be more thorough social sanctioning of Islamophobic practices by government and other public bodies. This goes hand in hand with promoting religious literacy and education to improve social equality and overcome prejudice and religious stereotyping. This could be achieved through better and more inclusive coverage of religion in the media and clearer guidance from media regulators and equality bodies on the appropriate portrayal of Islam and Muslims.

At the same time, the involvement of Muslim religious leaders, who hold significant status within their communities, is crucial in promoting the principles of Eco-Islam and fostering a non-anthropocentric ethic. These respected leaders have the influence to shape attitudes and values within Muslim communities, and therefore play a key role in promoting environmental awareness. Recommendations for their involvement include incorporating Eco-Islam values into sermons and teachings, and highlighting Qur'ānic injunctions and ahadīth that underscore the importance of environmental stewardship. By contextualising ecological concerns within Islamic teachings, these leaders can instil a deep sense of responsibility towards nature in their followers. In addition, the promotion of sustainable practices in daily life, such as responsible consumption and waste reduction, can be woven into the religious discourse. Working with environmental experts to provide accurate information on climate change and its impact on ecosystems could further empower these leaders to disseminate knowledge within their communities. It is also imperative that they address the ethical dimensions of animal welfare and promote compassionate and sustainable practices, particularly in relation to halāl slaughter. In addition, these influential figures can champion green initiatives within mosques and community spaces, setting an example for their followers. By using their status, Muslim religious leaders can be catalysts for a profound shift in attitudes and values, promoting a non-anthropocentric ethic



rooted in Islamic principles and making a significant contribution to the global quest for environmental sustainability.

Intersectionality is of immense importance to the concept of Eco-Islam as it underlines the interconnectedness of different forms of oppression and highlights the overlapping interests of humans, animals and the environment. In the context of Eco-Islam, recognising the intersectionality of these issues is central to promoting a comprehensive and inclusive approach to environmentalism. The wellbeing of humans, animals and the environment are intricately intertwined and require an understanding that transcends narrow perspectives. The lack of awareness of animal welfare issues within Muslim communities is a particular challenge that intersectionality can help to address. By recognising the common interests of humans and animals, intersectionality calls for a re-evaluation of animals' treatment, emphasising ethical considerations of animals, as pointed out by Peter Singer.<sup>780</sup> This framework encourages educational initiatives within Muslim communities to raise awareness of the environmental impact of certain practices and the importance of compassion towards animals. Overcoming this lack of awareness is crucial to building a more sustainable and ethically conscious community in line with the principles of Eco-Islam. The question of empathy towards animals and the resulting treatment has been widely debated throughout history without a clear outcome. Appendix II mentions the Ikhwān al Safā and their treaty on animals, and the observation that humans are capable of adoring certain animals, such as dogs, while being cruel to other non-human animals. Transpersonal ecology calls this apparent dissonance the "empathy gap". Rooted in the intersection of spirituality, psychology and environmentalism, transpersonal ecology places a profound emphasis on expanding human consciousness to recognise the interconnectedness of all life forms. Within this framework, empathy for animals is seen as an integral aspect of promoting ecological harmony. Transpersonal ecology suggests that by cultivating a heightened

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<sup>780</sup> See Chapter 1

awareness and empathy for the experiences of animals, individuals can forge a deeper connection with the natural world. This perspective encourages a shift from anthropocentrism to a more inclusive, ecocentric worldview in which animals are perceived not merely as resources for human use, but as sentient beings with intrinsic value. By fostering empathy towards animals, transpersonal ecology seeks to promote a compassionate and sustainable coexistence that recognises the interdependence of all living beings within the intricate web of life.

Through an intersectional lens, Eco-Islam can evolve into a holistic philosophy that not only addresses environmental concerns, but also promotes social justice and ethical treatment of all beings, creating a harmonious balance between humanity, animals and the environment.

However, to be truly inclusive and intersectional, environmentalism must also address social issues such as racial discrimination and other social concerns in all sectors of society. This includes housing, health services, employment, education, justice, social and economic security; indeed, the eradication of racial discrimination must be recognised as an important goal towards a sustainable society. This means also greater inclusiveness within the green movement, particularly towards minority and faith groups which could be achieved by broadening the definition of religion and moving away from the secular/religious dichotomy which is often felt within the environmental movement.

Other measures include the promotion of democratic participation and the wider mobilisation of grassroots environmental movements; an open debate and confrontation with history and historical legacies, especially with regard to colonialism and colonial practices, in all sectors of society, including the environmental movement; and finally, the integration of environmental issues into interfaith dialogue, with dialogue taking place on an equal footing between different faith groups;

Of course, such recommendations cannot be implemented overnight. However, it is my hope that through the joint work and efforts of Welsh civil society and government, together with

Muslim communities, tangible progress can be made. I hope that my dissertation has provided a fair picture of Welsh Eco-Islam and some of the facets, obstacles and challenges it faces, but also of its enormous potential for growth, provided a cohesive and collective effort is made by all sides. I also hope to have provided helpful suggestions and inspiration for further research in this area, as many questions remain open or need to be explored in greater depth. On a positive note, I would like to end this thesis with the words of Dr. Azim Ahmed:

"Eco-Islam in Wales has not come to full fruition yet. But I think, in five, ten years' time, the picture will be different, and I think we will have a very important role to play in Wales."

Islam, and religions in general, can contribute to alleviating the environmental crisis only to the extent that individuals are committed to their religious values, and only to the extent that they are able to be committed given their social, economic and psychological situation. The role of religion in environmentalism has therefore often been overestimated. However, the presence of religions in the environmental discourse remains essential, as religions offer alternative perspectives and unique values, adding an important voice to the chorus of environmental activism in a predominantly secular and materialistic society.

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#### **APPENDIX I: Forty-six national well-being indicators according to the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015<sup>781</sup>**

1. Percentage of live single births with a birth weight of under 2,500g.
2. Healthy life expectancy at birth, including the gap between the least and most deprived.
3. Percentage of adults with fewer than two healthy lifestyle behaviours (not smoking, healthy weight, eating five fruit or vegetables a day, not drinking above guidelines, and meeting the physical activity guidelines).
4. Levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) pollution in the air.

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<sup>781</sup> *How to measure a nation's progress? National Indicators of Wales*. In: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/national-indicators-for-wales.pdf> (accessed on 12.08.2020)

5. Percentage of children who have fewer than two healthy lifestyle behaviours (not smoking, eat fruit/vegetables daily, never/rarely drinking and meeting the physical activity guidelines).
6. Measurement of development of young children.
7. Percentage of pupils who have achieved the "Level 2 threshold," including English or Welsh first language and Mathematics, including the gap between those who are eligible or are not eligible for free school meals. (To be replaced from 2017 by the average capped points score of pupils).
8. Percentage of adults with qualifications at the different levels of the National Qualifications Framework.
9. Gross Value Added (GVA) per hour worked (relative to the UK average).
10. Gross Disposable Household Income per head.
11. Percentage of businesses that are innovation-active.
12. Capacity (in MW) of renewable energy equipment installed.
13. Concentration of carbon and organic matter in the soil.
14. The Ecological Footprint of Wales.
15. Amount of waste generated that is not recycled per person.
16. Percentage of people in employment who are on permanent contracts (or on temporary contracts, and not seeking permanent employment) and who earn more than 2/3 of the UK median wage.
17. Gender pay difference.
18. Percentage of people living in households in income poverty relative to the UK median: measured for children, working age, and those of pension age.

19. Percentage of people living in households in material deprivation.
20. Percentage of people moderately or very satisfied with their jobs.
21. Percentage of people in employment.
22. Percentage of people in education, employment, or training, measured for different age groups.
23. Percentage who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area.
24. Percentage of people satisfied with their ability to get to/ access the facilities and services they need.
25. Percentage of people feeling safe at home, walking in the local area, and when traveling.
26. Percentage of people satisfied with the local area as a place to live.
27. Percentage of people agreeing that they belong to the area, that people from different backgrounds get on well together, and that people treat each other with respect.
28. Percentage of people who volunteer.
29. Mean mental well-being score for people.
30. Percentage of people who are lonely.
31. Percentage of dwellings which are free from hazards. Number of properties (homes and businesses) at medium or high risk of flooding from rivers and the sea.
33. Percentage of dwellings with adequate energy performance.
34. Number of households successfully prevented from becoming homeless per 10,000 households.

35. Percentage of people attending or participating in arts, culture, or heritage activities at least three times a year.
36. Percentage of people who speak Welsh daily and can speak more than just a few words of Welsh.
37. Percentage of people who can speak Welsh.
38. Percentage of people participating in sporting activities three or more times a week.
39. Percentage of museums and archives holding archival/heritage collections meeting UK accreditation standards.
40. Percentage of designated historic environment assets that are in stable or improved conditions.
41. Emissions of greenhouse gases within Wales.
42. Emissions of greenhouse gases attributed to the consumption of global goods and services in Wales.
43. Areas of healthy ecosystems in Wales.
44. Status of Biological Diversity in Wales.
45. Percentage of surface water bodies and groundwater bodies achieving good or high overall status.
46. The social return on investment of Welsh partnerships within Wales and outside the UK is working towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

## **APPENDIX II: The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn**

The Ikhwān al Safā' or The Brethren of Purity were anonymous members of a fourth to tenth century esoteric Muslim fraternity based mainly in Basra and Baghdad.<sup>782</sup> Influential within the Islam, they occupied a “prominent station in the history of scientific and philosophical ideas in Islam owing to the wide intellectual reception and dissemination of diverse manuscripts of their famed philosophically oriented compendium, The Epistles of the Brethren of Purity (Rasā' il Ikhwān al-Safā').<sup>783</sup>

The exact date of the epistles is not known, nor is the identity of the authors. The Ikhwān were distinguished by their eclectic approach to the search for truth and their scrupulous development of rational pursuits. In addition to observing the Qur'an and the ahadīth, they also referred to the Torah and the Christian Gospels, and paid attention to the Stoics, Pythagoras, Hermes Trismegistus, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Nicomachus of Gerasa, Euclid, Ptolemy, Galen, Proclus, Porphyry and Iamblichus. In their writings and essays, however, they clearly refer to the Qur'ān as their primary source. For this reason, the Ikhwān played an important role in the cultural history of Islam, as Goodmann describes: “By influencing a variety of Islamic schools and doctrines, the legacy of the Brethren acted as a significant intellectual catalyst in the development of the history of ideas in Islam. As such, their work rightly holds its place among the distinguished Arabic classics and the high literature of Islamic civilisation.”<sup>784</sup>

Between 960 and 970 A.D., an unnamed group of authors from the Brethren of Purity composed one of the longest zoological essays pertaining to the epistles titled “The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn.” Unlike the other chapters, this epistle is

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<sup>782</sup> Goodmann E. Lenn, McGregor Richard (2012): *The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn. A translation from the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

<sup>783</sup> Ibid.: XIV

<sup>784</sup> Ibid.: XIV

written in the form of an Aesopian fable, a narrative strategy that made it very popular in the Middle Ages and was translated into several languages, including Latin, Hebrew and later Yiddish and German.

The fable tells of a case brought by the animals before the king of the Djinn. The animals ask for recognition of their endless suffering caused by humans. The first accusation raises a demographic issue. Humans, the animals argue, do not confine themselves to a single habitat, but breed indiscriminately, spreading across the earth, over land and sea, mountain and plain. At first, when humans were few, they feared wild animals and lived on fruit, seeds and vegetables. As Goodmann and McGregor (2012) comment, the vegetarianism of the first humans was a widespread motif in religion and mythology.<sup>785</sup> In Genesis, man has God's permission to eat from any tree - except the tree of knowledge (Genesis 2:16-17). Furthermore, in Genesis 2:29-30 God says: "Behold, I have given you every herb that has seed on the face of the earth, and every tree whose fruit has seed in it. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the sky, and to everything that creeps on the earth, whatever has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food. And it was so."<sup>786</sup> It is only after the flood that humans are given permission to eat animals: "Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything" (Genesis 9:3).

Accordingly, the Ikhwān assumed a vegetarian epoch in early human history. According to Goodmann and McGregor, both texts, Genesis and the Epistle, give a moral meaning to this vegetarian phase, with Genesis emphasising human sensitivity to food culture and the Epistle maintaining a more ascetic and ecological attitude.

After this prelude, a litany of torture and abuse by humans towards animals is recited to the King of the Jinn to arouse pity for the animals' plight. As an example, the complaint by the rabbit:

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<sup>785</sup> Goodmann E. Lenn, McGregor Richard (2012): *The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn. A translation from the Epistles of the Brethern of Purity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 99

<sup>786</sup> New International Bible

“...these humans drink the milk of cattle as they drank their mother’s milk and ride on beasts’ shoulders as they rode on their father’s shoulders when small. They use animals’ wool and fleece for coats and upholstery, but in the end, they slaughter, flay, disembowel, and dismember them, set them to boil or roast, unfeeling and unremembering all the good, all the blessings, lavished on them.”

Similarly, the donkey, ram, camel, elephant, horse and mule raise their voices to denounce the beating, kicking and abuse they receive from humans, followed by the skinning, roasting and boiling of the animals used for food: “You would have pitied us,” so the ram to the King, “had you seen us their prisoners, when they seized our smallest kids and lambs and tore them from their dams to steal our milk. They took our young and bound them hand and foot to be slaughtered and skinned, hungry, thirsty, bleating for mercy but unpitied, screaming for help with none to aid them. We saw them slaughtered, flayed, dismembered, disembowelled, their heads, brains, and livers on butcher’s blocks, to be cut up with great knives and boiled in cauldrons or roasted in an oven, while kept silent, not weeping or complaining. For even if we had wept, they would not have pitied us. Where then is their mercy?”<sup>787</sup>

With this epistle the Ikhwān give voice to the animals in order to articulate their plight caused by humans. The animals here “present themselves not as mere objects of study but as subjects with an outlook and interests of their own...the animals warmly appreciate the bounty of creation but passionately criticize human domination and systematically indict its underlying rationales as the products of human arrogance.”<sup>788</sup> The main aim of the animals is to disclaim human’s innate superiority over nature and their claimed right to treat all creatures as they please. The Ikhwān finally conclude the trial with a clear sentence: “Man at his best, we shall show, is a noble angel, the finest of creatures; but at his worst, an accursed devil, the bane of creation.”

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<sup>787</sup>Goodmann E. Lenn, McGregor Richard (2012): *The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn. A translation from the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

<sup>788</sup>Ibid.:1

Another important issue implicitly raised by the Ikhwān is empathy. Why are humans able to adore certain animals, such as dogs, cats or horses, but show the utmost cruelty towards others, such as cattle? The topic of empathy has been widely discussed in environmental psychology and remains one of the major unresolved questions: how and when do humans feel empathy towards the environment, including animals and nature? Transpersonal ecology sees transcendental self-expansion and identification or sense of commonality with nature as the key feature of empathy and as the universal solution to accommodate the ecosphere and solve the environmental crisis. However, a phenomenon called the "empathy gap" seems to be the reason why human beings do not automatically empathise with other beings and nature, especially when they cannot relate to them.<sup>789</sup> Gutsell and Inzlicht<sup>790</sup> have developed a perception- action model of empathy based on neuronal stimulation. When a person sees another individual expressing an emotion, this emotion will trigger similar neural networks in the observer. This mechanism helps evaluate the emotional state of the other person. However, studies show that this mechanism is widely applicable only to individuals of the same group. "An fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) study has shown that neuronal activations are more prominent when members of the ingroup are hurt, but they are barely firing when members of the outgroup are experiencing the same thing."<sup>791</sup> These discrepancies in neurological activities are potentially culturally learned prejudices. This difference in empathy is called "Empathy Gap".<sup>792</sup>

Fortunately, the study also shows that people of high empathy are able to empathise with both members of ingroups and outgroups, showing that the empathy gap can be eclipsed. "Gutsell

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<sup>789</sup> Guzman, Veniz Maja (2016): *The Human Element: Transpersonal Ecology, Empathy Gap, And the Environment*. Paper presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> DLSU Innovation and Technology Fair 2016. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331310977\\_The\\_Human\\_Element\\_Transpersonal\\_Ecology\\_Empathy\\_Gap\\_and\\_the\\_Environment](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331310977_The_Human_Element_Transpersonal_Ecology_Empathy_Gap_and_the_Environment) (accessed on the 03.02.2020)

<sup>790</sup> Gutsell, J.N., Inzlicht, M. (2012): *Intergroup differences in the sharing of emotive states: neural evidence of an empathy gap*. In: *Social cognitive and affective neuroscience*, 7(5), 596-603

<sup>791</sup> Ibid.: 600

<sup>792</sup> The "Empathy Gap" theory opens up another important issue, namely the process of identification and its effects on pro-environmental behaviour. In chapter 6 I argue that identification with the local community and with the (natural) environment are positive predictors for engaging in eco-friendly behaviours and lifestyles. In my opinion, this is particularly relevant for minorities, such as the Muslim minority in Wales.



and Inzlicht's study showed that it is in fact possible to transcend one's cultural prejudices through the development of one's empathy."<sup>793</sup> Applied to animals, human compassionate behaviour would depend on the ability and readiness to see similarities between "us" and "them". The paradox of human culture is the polyvalence of men's affections about life and its violation.

It seems that the Ikhwān were addressing and condemning exactly this "empathy gap" by showing that animals are not as different in their feelings and abilities than humans and that the cruelty they suffer is due to the inability of humans to recognise their true value. "The moral point that the Ikhwān make is not that animals ought to be cherished for being created in our image, but that they deserve human treatment despite being so very different."<sup>794</sup>

Although the epistle doesn't advocate the abolition of domestic animal use, it concludes that human dominion does not rest upon any intrinsic merit or superiority. Animals have their own intrinsic values and perspective on life. Every living individual is precious, because it is God "who gave all things their natures and let to what is useful and helpful to them" (Quran 20:50).

Human hegemony is solely due to the grace of God, "whose chief epithets are those of mercy and compassion, and whose cardinal expectation of his creatures is that they share His bounties with those less fortunate than they- as the stars shed God's grace on those below them."<sup>795</sup>

Human talents and skills are seen as not self-created gifts to be thankful and humble about, so the conclusion of the Ikhwān. Nothing in nature exists by itself and of itself. According to the Ikhwān all of reality is a manifestation of God. "That is why no species has a right to boast of what it is- any more than it can take credit for the sheer fact *that* it is."<sup>796</sup> Humans, therefore, have no claims to feel superior. The Ikhwān clearly reject anthropocentrism, embracing instead

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<sup>793</sup> Guzman, Veniz Maja (2016): *The Human Element: Transpersonal Ecology, Empathy Gap, And the Environment*. Paper presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> DLSU Innovation and Technology Fair 2016, 5

<sup>794</sup> Goodmann E. Lenn, McGregor Richard (2012): *The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn. A translation from the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 42

<sup>795</sup> Ibid.: 15

<sup>796</sup> Goodmann E. Lenn, McGregor Richard (2012): *The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn. A translation from the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 25

the intrinsic value and beauty of all living beings. As the beetles scout the earth for themselves and for others, so the whole living system is the goal “and, high as man may rise in God’s intent, no single member of God’s symphony suffices to the exclusion of the rest.”<sup>797</sup>

From an ecological point of view, the Ikhwān stand for the necessity of harmonious living with all creation, a creation which is seen as an act of God’s grace. The intrinsic value of nature’s components, including all living beings, is not dictated by human interests and needs but is God-given and therefore sacred. And even if humans are appointed as God’s vice-regent, as the Qur’ān teaches, the Ikhwān make a point that this does not confer absolute and indiscriminate powers. For, a right ruler governs in the interest of everyone and dominion imparts moral responsibility. That the animals did not find justice is not due to the acceptance of human’s behaviour, but rather to a cyclic ontological understanding of the cosmos, in which angels and jinn, once on the top of creation, had to give place to humans. At the end everything culminates in the final Day of Judgment according to a teleological design known only to God:

*“I know what you know not”*

*(2:30)*

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<sup>797</sup> Ibid.: 35

